

December 1980

70p \$2

Sound International

incorporating **BEAT**
Instrumental

**On
The
Road
Again...**



**Reviews: Hamer Explorer; Frunt bass amp;
Roland Master Clock; Tape Echo Boxes**



Designed specifically for today's guitarist and bass player, the new JX series amplifiers provide warmth, power and outstanding definition that are perfect for contemporary playing styles. The highest quality materials and construction are used throughout, so reliability and durability are superb. But more important — the latest Yamaha music technology makes these amps amazingly responsive. They serve as an extension of your instrument — your music — so you can control the sound rather than fight it.

Plus the incomparable G 100/112 and G 100/212 II giving almost unlimited control to produce clear, dynamic, rich and powerful sounds.

When you choose Yamaha amplification, you can be sure that the only sounds you hear are the ones you want.

 **YAMAHA**
Craftsmen to the world's
musicians since 1887.

ROAD TOUGH? PROVE IT.



It's six long feet to the floor. What will happen when our great sound hits bottom? How long will it still sound great? We had to find out. So we picked an ATM41 Dynamic and an ATM91 Fixed-Charge Condenser out of stock, tested them, and started in.

Each was dropped seven times on its side from six feet onto the office floor. Nothing much was happening. So we repeated the series, this time dropping each microphone on its nose. Seven times from six feet. Still no problems. They looked good and sounded good, but we were getting tired.

So we moved to an unyielding slate floor. Here it took three more drops on its side from six feet, and three more on its nose from four feet to finally affect the ATM41. A truly remarkable record!

But what about our ATM91 Fixed-Charge Condenser? It should have given up long before a dynamic. But quite the contrary! The ATM91 withstood four side drops onto slate from six feet, three drops right on the

nose from four feet, and another six drops on the nose from *six* feet and still tested OK for sound! Granted it looked anything but new, but it *still performed*.

Our little test left us arm-weary but convinced that the ATM Series microphones could easily earn their "Road Tough" name in the field. That's the testing which really counts. Try us.



Part of the secret of ATM toughness is this 3-layer windscreen. An outer heavy wire, a finer wire screen just inside, and an inner layer of woven bronze. All soldered to each other and to a solid brass ring. There's nothing else like it on any microphone.



This ATM91 survived 27 drops from as high as 6 feet!



audio-technica
INNOVATION □ PRECISION □ INTEGRITY

Brodr. Jorgensen (UK) Ltd., 983 Great West Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9DN.
Tel.: 01-568 4578. Telex: 934470.



13 On The Road: League Of Gentlemen



'This visceral irritant is a foul and corrupting influence and is to music what pornography is to human beings.' Thus small, mobile, intelligent (etc) Fripp defines muzak. He also explains Hep-taparaparshinokh and expostulates interestingly on touring Europe with the League Of Gentlemen.

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Dave Stewart, keyboardist with the eponymous Bruford, tours the so-called United States of America and lets you in on The Average Day for a touring rock person. But what does the phrase 'Come friendly bombs' have to do with this distant land?

26 Richard Thompson

Reticent guitarist gets down to the nitty gritty of how he gets that fantastic sound. Ralph Denyer strums along.

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Ben Duncan compares the sound levels of Prime Minister's Question Time, machine tools and what people with degrees from Oxford have described as rock music.

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Who else would give you a brief historical sketch of the genesis of English land law? John Morrish continues to aid your absurd desire to build a studio.

41 Burns Battle Of The Bands

Your very last chance to win £10,000 worth of equipment in the nation-wide talent contest sponsored by Burns and SI/BI.

Members and non-members of Bruford ask: Is this what being On The Road is all about? Our Road-shaped two-parter attempts some answers.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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How do you feel about voting? Put aside thoughts of that bad actor who's just been voted in as Top B52 Salesman in the US of A – after all, us British chaps can hardly criticise electorates who endorse seemingly stupid policies, and anyway, Reagan could just turn out to be... but enough of politics. What I'm really wondering, in this round-about sort of way, is what you feel about voting in an SI/BI poll? It would aim to find out who or what you (collectively) reckon to be the best guitarists, keyboardists, producers, instruments etc: we'd run such a poll early in the new year, once you're well over the effects of a little too much Christmas fare. In the meantime, however, how about letting us know the sort of categories we should have? Do we need to know that your favourite TV programme is *Tiswas*? Is it necessary that you make it clear that synthesisers are the instruments which drummers understand least? And so on. Our rather modest little title for the project is The Musicians' Musicians Poll – in other words, who do musicians (you) vote to be the best musicians? So let us know the categories you think it would be useful to vote in, and we'll get round to printing a voting form early next year.

Tony Bacon



NEWSLINK

audio-technica

AUDIO-TECHNICA/B.J. Challenge the Microphone World



Abba — voulez vous Audio-technica mikes?



George Benson — in flight with Audio-technica.

Backed by the marketing and service resources of Brodr Jorgensen UK Ltd, a new line in quality microphones emerges to challenge the élite German and American manufacturers who have previously dominated the music scene.

The name of Audio-technica may perhaps be more readily associated with the prestige end of the Hi-Fi market. But the technology that has given Audio-technica a reputation for excellent home audio equipment is equally applicable to precision microphones for stage and studio use. The Audio-technica Artist range offers technical features to meet the requirements of serious musicians and recording engineers — at prices that, for professional quality microphones, are revolutionary.

In designing the Artist microphones Audio-technica have paid considerable attention to the range of applications for each model. Instead of the bewildering variety of microphones that some other leading manufacturers offer, each with a narrow range of suggested uses, the Artist range comprises just six models. Divided into three Vocal microphones and three Instrumental microphones (each available

with or without Audio-technica's high efficiency Shock Mount), these models cover all normal uses in studio and on stage. Musicians who can afford to work with the highly specialised *Prima Donnas* of the microphone world are not particularly numerous!

Although Audio-technica microphones have met with remarkable success in many parts of the world with leading musicians such as George Benson and Abba choosing them in preference to any competitor, they have been relatively unknown in the UK. Until now, with Brodr Jorgensen taking over their marketing.

Why B.J.? Firstly, because Audio-technica's own British operation is geared to Hi-Fi. The microphones are high quality products designed for pro and semi-pro musicians, and the feeling is that a distributor who enjoys a strong rapport

with musicians is essential. B.J. engineers have already completed training at the Audio-technica factory in Japan, and B.J.'s standards of quality control, service backup, and product education are already being extended to Audio-technica microphones. Musicians being a breed apart, and Audio-technica mikes being a breed apart, B.J. are proud to have been chosen to bring the two together. From our point of view, we like to give a well-rounded range and up until now a good microphone has been one of the few products we could not offer the demanding musician.

With the linked resources of Audio-technica and B.J. and a product of original and imaginative design, there is now a new name that will be heard when microphones are discussed. And it will be heard as a loud, clear challenge to the microphone 'establishment'.

Know Your Microphones

We believe that the more you know about microphones, the more likely you are to choose one of ours! For those who are thinking of buying a

first microphone, the following basic terms provide a comprehensive check list for assessing any product.

DYNAMIC
Microphone output is generated by sound striking a diaphragm which moves an attached coil of wire in a magnetic field. Resembles a small loud-speaker that "listens" rather than "talks". Very rugged.

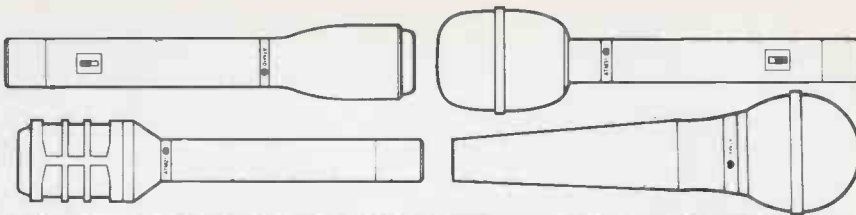
PROXIMITY EFFECT
The bass boost heard when most unidirectional microphones are used very close. Can add fullness to light voices and some variety when used creatively.

LEGEND: ———— 1"
..... 2"
———— 12" or more on axis

CONDENSER
Sound strikes an electrically-charged diaphragm, which acts like a variable capacitor as it moves near a fixed plate of opposite polarity. Ultra-low moving mass insures extended frequency response.

SENSITIVITY
The higher sensitivity microphone will generate greater output voltage than lower sensitivity microphone when exposed to the same sound source. 1:1 microphone sensitivity matches the needs of virtually all tape recorders and amplifiers.

 **audio-technica**



Vocal Microphones

Audio-technica vocal microphones combine exceptional performance with very reasonable prices — the ATM.41 in particular having found enormous popularity among the world's most discerning musicians. They are assembled at Audio-technica's own manufacturing plant and are progressive designs with precise and robust construction. This contrasts with the microphones that many music companies produce as 'side lines', which are likely to be bought in from mass-production specialists and merely marketed by the companies whose names they bear.

Model	Additional Specifications	Application	Price (inc. VAT)
ATM31 40-18000 Hz Fixed Charge Condenser	SENS. -55dBm IMP LoZ Balanced 600 ohms BATT. 1.5V AA Penlight SWITCH Recessed ON/OFF	For Natural Reproduction of Vocals Instruments	£51.01
ATM41 50-20000 Hz Dynamic Unidirectional	SENS. -56dBm IMP LoZ Balanced 600 ohms	For Penetrating Vocals in High SPL Conditions	£60.28
ATM91 50-15000 Hz Condenser	SENS. -56dBm IMP LoZ Balanced 600 ohms BATT. 1.5V AA Penlight SWITCH Recessed ON/OFF	For Natural Reproduction Of Vocals Under Quiet or High SPL Conditions	£62.57

Instrument Microphones

Audio-technica Instrumental microphones cover all normal instrumental uses, excelling in clear, accurate reproduction on stage and in studio. Like the Vocal mikes, they are tough, pre-eminently road-worthy and give a flat response across a wide frequency range making each one suitable for many different types of instruments.

Model	Additional Specifications	Application	Price (inc. VAT)
ATM10 40-20000 Hz Fixed Charge Condenser	SENS. -48Bm IMP LoZ Balanced 600 ohms BATT. 1.5V AA Penlight SWITCH Recessed ON/OFF	Piano; Hi-Hat; Snare; Acoustic Guitar	£44.07 £53.30* (inc. shock mount version)
ATM11 50-16000 Hz Dynamic	SENS. -56dBm IMP. LoZ Balanced 600 ohms BATT. 1.5V AA SWITCH Recessed ON/OFF	Brass; Reeds Hi-Hat; Snare; Piano; Overhead Drums	£51.01 £60.28*
ATM21 70-18000 Hz Fixed Charge Condenser	SENS. -60dBm IMP LoZ Balanced 600 ohms	Amplified Instrument Brass; Reeds; Bass Drum; Vocals with Windscreen	£53.30 £62.57*

* Instrument microphone. Includes shock mount.

CHOOSE WITH  →

ACCESSORIES

A number of accessory products back up the Audio-technica microphone range. The shock mounts are among the most effective damping devices available today, as well as being easily the most competitively priced.

All Audio-technica microphones are supplied without cables, and these are available as accessories so that the user can decide on exactly the cable and the type of connector he requires, instead of having it dictated to him by the manufacturer. Other 'extras' include line transformers (the microphones are all made to professional low-Z specifications and require a transformer to adapt them to high-Z inputs), wind screens and clamps.

	AKG	BEYER	E-V	SENNHEISER	SHURE	SONY
ATM10 £44.07	C-502E D-160E	M10P	CD15 RE55 DD54	N/A	SM60 SM76 S76	ECM-64p ECM-170A
ATM11 £51.01	C-501E C-505E	M69 X1N	0535 670A	MD402 MD421	545 548	ECM-23F ECM-33FP
ATM21 £53.30	D-140E D-190E D-200E D-202E D-1000E D-2000E	M69 M260	D535 DE10 DE11 660 670A 671	MD402 MD416 MD421	SM53 SM54 SM57 548 545	ECM-65F F560 F660
ATM31 £51.01	C-451E D-224E D-202E D-2000E D-1000E	M260 M500	C515 DE20 DE15 DE16 1776	MD421 MD441 MD416 MD431	Sm81 SM58 SM59 565 585 588	ECM 65p ECM-33F
ATM41 £60.28	D-140E D-170E D-190E D-1000E D-2000E	M500 M260	D535 1776 671	MD441 MD421 MD416 MD431	SM58 SM89 565 588 585	F660 F560
ATM91 £62.57	D-140E D-170E D-190E D-1000E D-2000E	M800 M260	D535 1776 671	MD441 MD421 MD416 MD431	SM58 SM59 SM78EB SM78TN	F660 F560

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SOUND INTERNATIONAL

incorporating Beat Instrumental
 is written for musicians by musicians and published monthly. We aim to provide a magazine available to all for the exchange of ideas, views, techniques and experiences relating to music making, and welcome comments, opinions and contributions: this includes you and yours. Being non-bionic we do make mistakes – we want these rectified as soon as possible – please let us know about any errors you have spotted. We will always make space available for replies, corrections and counter-attacks. However, we cannot be held responsible for errors, loss or damage to items contributed. The contents of this magazine are copyright but we'll generally give permission to reprint provided this is requested in writing.

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SI/BI is a sustaining member of the Audio Engineering Society.



Beatles in early Abbey Road pose



The auction



Oldfield n' Mellotron



'I've got it!'

Beatles For Sale

It seemed quite likely that at any moment the ghosts of The Beatles would waltz through the downstairs projection room in EMI's Abbey Road studios, such was the prevalence of Beatles' memorabilia at Jackson Music's auction held there on October 16th this year. In the same week 18 years ago the first Beatles single, *Love Me Do* on Parlophone R4949, had entered the UK charts. Nearly five years later the Liverpoolian quartet were to record *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The album has become laden with all manner of critics' praise since, though many now feel that it is overshadowed by the more truly innovative *Revolver*, recorded in mid 1966 (specially if you've been listening to *The Jam* recently).

None of this stopped Andrew Stirling of Turnkey, a Hertfordshire-based recording equipment company, from paying £500 for one of the two Studer J374-track recorders used on *Sergeant Pepper* and offered for sale at the auction. The machines were accompanied by a letter of authenticity from EMI and, it must be admitted, looked rather battered. The Studers were used on *Pepper* by remixing from four to two tracks between the two machines. On *A Day In The Life*, however, the two recorders were linked together by a 50Hz tone from the first machine driving the second, giving seven tracks. So, yes, *Sergeant Pepper* was twelve-thirteenth 4-track. But one-thirteenth 7-track. The second of the Studer J37 machines went for £450 at the auction.

The next lot, number 59, was in fact a fascinating instrument – the Mellotron used by The Beatles. 'on various recordings, with original tapes,' as the sale catalogue claimed. Which recordings, you ask? Well, Chris Thomas (an engineer who also played keyboards) is reported to have played Mellotron on *The Continuing Story Of Bungalow Bill* from *The Beatles* 1968 'white' album, though there's no particularly distinguishable sign of it on the final mix apart from some very low-level sounds way back in the mix on the verses, or perhaps the woodwind-ish line on the outro. However, the most obvious use of the Mellotron on a Beatles tune is found on the instrumental *Flying from the Magical Mystery Tour* double-EP (UK) or album (US), recorded late in 1967. John Lennon plays the instrument throughout the track to excellent effect: it's particularly noticeable on the left channel where the sound is (if there is such a thing) classic Mellotron. (For more details of the instrument, see

The Mellotron Story in *SI* Nov '79).

The auction for the very Mellotron mauled by the mitts of the melodious mop-tops began at £160, with Mike Oldfield, seated in the third row of punters, bidding enthusiastically. It looked like Mr *Tubular Bells* was going to get a real bargain when the bidding hovered at £300. But suddenly the offers came flooding in, racing up to £950. Oldfield finally secured the keyboard-driving-tape instrument with his bid of £1000, and seemed very happy about his purchase. 'I haven't tried it out yet,' Mike told me afterwards. 'I was prepared to pay up to £1500 for it. I used to record here with Kevin Ayers And The Whole World, and I used to play that Mellotron.' Mike in fact played bass, then guitar, for Kevin Ayers' band in the early 70s – and presumably, from what he says, a bit of keyboards too. Meanwhile, he beamed at his new keyboard. 'I've finally got it,' he said, beam changing to grin. Mr Oldfield has never owned a Mellotron before. 'A Mellotron's still a viable instrument,' he explained, 'although they stopped making them. This particular model is great – you can change the speed of the tape. All kinds of possibilities.' The happy buyer also collected a couple of valve limiters used on *Tubular Bells* for £220 the pair, and an early 1900s gramophone for a mere £360. Mike downed the last of his Guinness, did a quick interview for a BBC film crew who were muttering something about a documentary on 50 years of Abbey Road studios, and disappeared off into the wilds of north west eight.

Back inside, other Beatle-related items turned up for sale: the brass ashtray used by one Richard Starkey to contain his dog-ends, ring-pulls, drum parts etc during his lengthy percussion stays in Abbey Road sold for £130; a silver disc designed by the fabulous foursome fetched £950; a bronze sculpture of the group's heads by David Wynne sold for a staggering £6500; a roll of 'loo paper', as the sale catalogue quaintly put it, stamped EMI Ltd and rejected by The Beatles as being 'too hard' (that's the story...) fetched an unlikely £85; Brian Epstein's book *A Cellarful Of Noise* signed by The Beatles and George Martin went for £210; and the Tannoy loudspeaker 'used on The Beatles EMI audition by Paul McCartney' went under the hammer for £160. Has anyone got hidden away in their attic a jar of the air through which the feedback on the opening of *I Feel Fine* travelled.

Tony Bacon

Most pix Roger Phillips



Brenell's Mini-8: a typical 8-track machine. 8-track offers extra space over the 4-track format, along with greater flexibility for working out overdubs, special effects etc. But when booking studio time, be sure to check that you wouldn't be able to get away with 4-track - 4-track studios are, after all, cheaper!

Horses For Courses, Racks Of Tracks, Deals For Reels

Any band looking to record a demo tape or budget single at a reasonably low-priced studio is soon faced with a profusion of choice. Classified pages of the weeklies and monthly magazines - don't forget to check out *SI's* Studio Focus on page 66/8 - list literally dozens of 4-, 8- and 16-track facilities eager for your business. Having worked out how much recording time you can afford, which should narrow down the choice by a certain degree, how do you find out which is best suited to your requirements?

If your needs are rather modest - and each song comprises a simple backing track with only a limited number of solos and harmony vocals - a respectable demo tape can easily be achieved using 4-track. For most of us, however, the extra track space of 8-track offers greater flexibility for working out more complex overdubs and special effects. Sixteen-track, on the other hand, is probably more appropriate to productions which may eventually be released as a single or album track.

But even when you've reduced the list of possibilities down to a manageable number of studios (don't forget the cost involved of hauling the

band's gear to an out-of-the-way location), what's the best way of telling how good a particular place will be at capturing your band's efforts for posterity? Short of visiting them all in turn, and having a careful listen to a selection of master tapes, there is one sure-fire way I've found of discovering just how clued up a studio is at helping out a band new to the art of multitrack recording.

As regular readers of *SI* will be well aware, to make the most of the limited amount of time you can afford to hire in a studio it pays to be well-rehearsed beforehand. Also, since the rhythm section will be recorded first, try and get the drummer and bassist - plus the keyboard and guitar players if they will need to contribute to backing tracks - to practise playing on their own. Make sure that the drummer, in particular, can easily keep up a steady rhythm for an entire song, without visual or audible cues from lead instruments. And, if at all possible, the vocalist and solo instruments should aim to practise playing by themselves while wearing headphones - even if it means simply jamming with a favourite album track. It's perhaps surprising how many musicians find it difficult to sing

or play on their own, with only cans to monitor what's happening around them.

Having become reasonably *au fait* with what's going to happen when you eventually get into the studio, now try ringing around the studios on your shortlist to find out what sort of advice they offer you about preparing for your first session. Try and plead complete

happens to be a musician, which can help to improve communications during a session.

It's worth asking if the studio can send you a cassette of the sort of music that's been recorded there, but don't take any guff about not paying too much attention to the final quality. Admittedly there's bound to be a difference between the master tapes and a cassette copy, but avoid like the plague any studio that claims that final quality doesn't matter too much on a demo cassette. Many successful budget releases have been mastered on 8-track, so it's well worthwhile going for the highest possible quality on a demo. Who knows, you may end up wanting to put it on an independent label.

Talking of which, many small studios can arrange cutting, pressing and printing of labels for a limited-release single. Be suspicious, however, of studio owners who spend a disproportionate amount of time extolling the virtues of their production company or in-house label. At this stage you're only looking to book studio time, not to be launched on a recording career. It goes without saying that you should keep as many options open as possible, and don't commit yourself to anything without knowing a lot more about what's involved in the deal.

When you've finally settled on recording at a reasonable-sounding studio, try and visit the place before the session and, if at all feasible, get to know the engineer. Aim to take along a cassette recorder at one of your live gigs - it doesn't really matter too much about the technical quality - so that everyone involved knows the kind of sound you're aiming for. It's been my experience that musicians who are well clued-up before even committing a single note to tape stand a far better chance of coming away with a respectable demo of their efforts. Happy hunting.



Another 8-track machine: this from Japanese manufacturer Otari. Knowing a particular studio's choice of hardware can be an advantage.

ignorance of the recording process, and listen carefully to what the studio manager or engineer has to say about how your material will be recorded. Obviously it's difficult for them to be specific - you might endeavour to get his or her ideas on how to handle a particularly bizarre combination of instruments, such as a six-piece brass section and electric kazoo - just to see what the reaction will be. Also, ask if the engineer you'll be working with

Densim's Seminars Clarify View Through Studio Glass

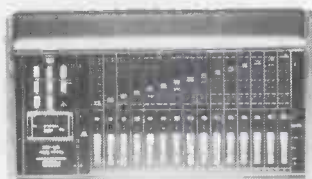
Densim Music are organising an introductory series of weekly seminars on multitrack recording techniques. Each 3-day course has been designed especially for musicians wanting to know more about what happens the other side of the glass, or who have just set up their own home studio. The courses, which cost a mere £100, are being held from 11.00 to 5.00 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each week at Cherry Studios in Croydon (see *SI* March issue, page 11), and started in mid-May. To make sure that everybody involved receives individual attention, each weekly course is being limited to a maximum of five participants.

Co-organisers Rick Sims and John Dendy say that the course begins with a basic introduction to studio construction - soundproofing, acoustic treatment and so on - followed by a discussion of microphone technique. Day two will be devoted to exploring

the intricacies of a typical recording console, including equalisation, foldback and echo sends, metering and monitor mixing, and how to line up a multitrack machine. Also covered will be the use of ancillary equipment, ranging from graphic equalisers and compressor-limiters to ADT, flangers, and reverb units. And on the last day participants will be able to try their hand at remixing a 16-track session tape.

Densim also has plans to offer a more advanced multitrack course in the near future; I'll let you have more details when they become available. There is even talk of a special weekend course for people who cannot make it during the week. In the meanwhile, contact Rick or John at the following address for full particulars of their 3-day introductory course of seminars: **Densim Music Productions, 41 Leslie Park Road, Croydon, Surrey.** Tel: 01-654 3325.

turnkey mix



AUTOMATION NOW

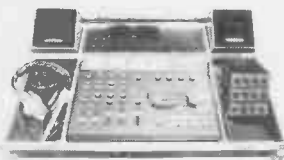
The Roland Compu-Editor, is the first console automation system we have seen that does not use up valuable tracks and is also sensibly priced.

This self contained unit will control up to 15 channels of audio (inputs, outputs or auxiliaries), and stores all the working level information internally or dumps to tape. You can update, override manually and lock up to any tape machine using the internal SMPTE generator/decoder. Many advanced features make sophisticated automation possible for any studio. On demo now or send for details.

ANNIS MAGNET-OMETER



It works somewhat like a compass, but tells you when. Put it next to a tape head, guide or capstan, and you get an accurate reading of the residual magnetic field. The scale is accurately calibrated, 5-0-5 Gauss, and an extension probe for awkwardly positioned heads is available. Exclusively from Turnkey.



ONE FOR THE ROAD

We've put TEAC's Portastudio into a roadcase with all the facilities you need for a working portable studio setup. A pair of Auratone monitors are driven by a custom 30W stereo amp, and we include, headphones, mikes, a patch bay and a selection of Accessit signal processors. All parts available separately or customised to requirements.

SHORT TAKES

Flight cased eight track system available for hire **ASC** machine now sold but we can do a great deal on Wollensak copiers **bulk** tape scheme operating **we** wire a double decker bus for eight language guided tours of London **variable** delay GBS available soon **name** band buys 5 portastudios to take on tour and be creative in hotel rooms **Turnkey** monitor system completed, call in for a demonstration **New TEAC** sixteen track here at last **Plans** afoot to double the size of our present premises **number** one album made using Projkit/Seck mixer

MIKE BOX

We now have a range of exclusive wall or cable mounting connector boxes. The standard type takes 8 female XLR's and 4 jacks, the large version is exactly twice that, and the two smaller boxes accept 2 jacks or XLR's respectively. All types have back and side cable entries and fixing holes, and are available with or without connectors.



EXR EXCITEMENT

Introducing the alternative aural exciter that you can purchase outright. Employing patented circuitry, this stereo processor provides psycho-acoustic enhancement for any signal. Connect simply to auxiliary send and return, or process stereo direct, and stereo spreads, clarity increases, putting it basically, everything sounds crisper. It is not a fancy tone control or compressor, call for a demonstration, and be convinced. An exclusive US import from TURNKEY.



ADVANCED AUDIO DESIGNS DDL

New from America, this processor makes full band delays up to 250ms available in 1ms steps. A front panel digital display shows the programmed delay and full footswitch remote functions are available. As well as normal delay effects, (enhanced by a feedback control) the circuitry allows effects such as flanging, pitch alterations, frequency modulation and infinite repeat hold. Exclusively from Turnkey.

GREEN BOOK

Much more than a catalogue, the new "Turnkey by Mail", 28 page book includes hints on setting up a studio, choosing equipment, and other practical advice. Call or write for a copy or use the reply coupon in the September issue of Studio Sound.

key

5 STUDER 24 TRACK'S DELIVERED

The Soundcraft 1624 is the most sophisticated mixer in its price range. The Studer A80 twenty four track is the most reputed, and now at revised prices offers the best value in the market. Put them together and you have a package set for the eighties. Our experience of both private and commercial installations enable us to tailor this package to your exact requirements. Prices start from around £30,000. Call Andrew Stirling on 01-440 9221 for full details.

All the products that we sell can be bought using Access or Barclaycard/Visa. Order by phone for fast delivery. Call or write for a copy of our new "Turnkey by Mail" catalogue or visit our demonstration room in North London during normal office hours. Our business is helping you with yours.



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Abandoning Socio-Sexual Mores In Stress-Inducing Road Related Situations

Due to the unfortunate illness of our regular columnist, Gary Cooper (who is recovering in a west London nursing home following an operation for the removal of an ingrowing wallet) we reprint the following extract from the *New Dworkin Journal Of Analytical And Behavioural Psychology*, which we feel might be of some interest to our touring readers.

The Transpersonal Crisis Aspects Of On-going Touring Environmental Stress Situations by Hiram X Warzburger DPsy, Walter Streizmeyer DPsy, UT Cobley, and others.

'Road Fever' or Touring Environmental Stress Situations, as the syndrome is more properly known, seems to affect otherwise perfectly normal members of society when engaged in pursuits of a musically electrified nature.

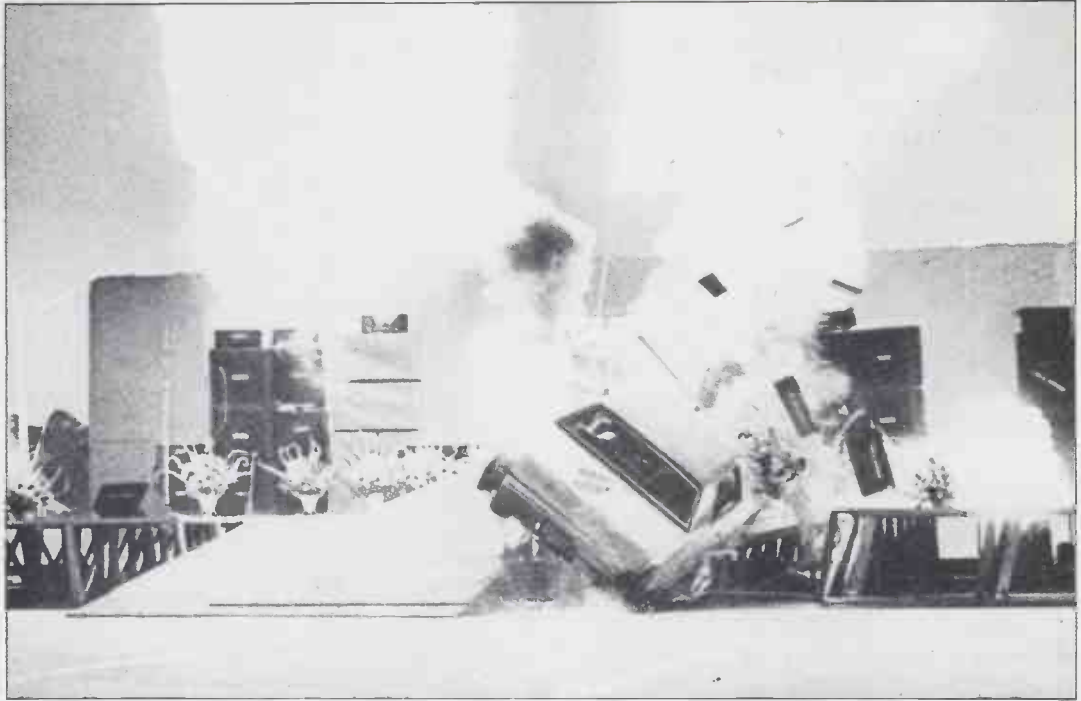
Those subjects studied by Lisa Gropa in her memorable doctorate thesis on the life of a touring musician (MIT 1979, later reprinted by Tail Publications Inc as *64 Days On My Back Beneath English Rock Stars - A Confession*) showed that strange behavioural patterns are set up between members of group co-responsive musically creative entities, known in the vernacular as 'bands'.

Gropa showed that within two hours of landing in New York, the average British musician (studies are currently in a state of on-goingness with American 'bands') has abandoned previous socio-sexual mores and is obsessively hunting down what the English refer to as 'crumpet'. Studies by etymologists Blatt and Grodzinski have thus far failed to reveal quite what the derivation of this word is, but we are sure that an explanation would prove revealing.

In one sense, the behaviour of these subjects does not appear to differ from that of the average insurance sales person on the firm's annual sales convention in Miami, except for the extreme promiscuity which Ms Gropa so adroitly described as being 'like a non-stop gang bang from New York to LA and back again'.

The problem is further compounded by irrational outbreaks of violence in which subjects under study have been known to hurl colour televisions, pool tables, pinball machines and members of the hotel staff into swimming pools.

As Adler and Hedges have reported (Harvard, 1976), one subject, apparently unable to obtain a foodstuff known as 'black pudding' in a New Jersey hotel at 5am in the middle of a



One of the many painstakingly staged photographs from *Having A Good Time For Free* - this contrasting the affluent consumer society of the west (the car, the Marshall stacks) against idealistic sixties non-materialism (the flowers, the wooden stage). Or could it be *The Plasmatics* getting a bit of a free plug?

December snowstorm, actually set fire to a Holiday Inn, burning it to the ground. Questioned by police officers, the anonymous musician is reported as having been baffled by his behaviour which he claimed to be quite out of character.

What then is it that causes these young English people to behave so oddly when on tour in the USA? The department of Freudian psychology here at New Dworkin Tech have maintained in their paper *Having A Good Time For Free* (New Dworkin, 1980) that, and we quote, 'Any bunch of previously impoverished Englishmen, let loose with unlimited supplies of drugs, women and alcohol will, naturally enough, wish to give vent to those repressed inner tensions caused by being bottle fed.'

A behaviourist might disagree. Certainly, as a professor of sociological research at Wyoming, Larry Spock, has pointed out, there could be an on-going televisual deprivation situation at work just now. Spock has said, 'After two years spent watching *Batman* and *Hawaii Five-O* who wouldn't want to burn America to the ground?'

This stress-induced condition not only affects musicians, of course. Those colourful characters known rather quaintly as 'roadies' suffer even worse from the syndrome. Normally regarded (and treated) as extremely mentally sub-normal by their employers, these people seem to suffer outbursts of melancholia, followed by savage and seemingly mindless attacks on their employers. Water coolers are urinated in. Beds are set on fire. Air conditioning equipment is tampered with to exude the smell of human faeces when the device is switched on in mid-orgy.

One subject we studied (known to the music industry as Smasher) has been known to exhibit manic violent outbursts on a variety of occasions. During one memorable outburst he

emptied the starboard fuel tanks of his band's 747 over the White House. Fortunately he was stopped before he could do any damage to human beings. 'I don't know what came over me, squire,' Smasher said later when we questioned him, 'I just suddenly went very confused and angry - must have been something I ate. Ha ha.'

The syndrome can reach truly awesome proportions as in the case detailed by Marks and Spencer (Gotham City, 1977) when one English band, the Leg Crushers, were said to have toured the country in a barely-converted B52 armed with a nuclear device. It is rumoured that members of the band's road crew actually detonated this during the band's last night of their tour, on stage in Salt Lake City. Despite repeated attempts, we have been unable to ascertain whether Salt Lake City has been the subject of a nuclear explosion. Local residents say that it always looks like that.

The late Professor Rickenbacker (who met his untimely end during our sessions when a roadie attempted to 'straighten his neck'), felt that he was on the verge of a major breakthrough when he uncovered a vast stock of what he took to be talcum powder in the suitcase of a leading musician. 'Was this,' he wrote, shortly before his death, 'the cause? Are the English, brought up in a primitive Old World culture where talcum powder is both a luxury and a rarity, so unfamiliar with it that they are actually allergic to it?' Alas he did not live more than three hours after this potentially amazing discovery. His loss will be greatly felt.

Another possibility is that deafness caused by high sound pressure levels (see Watt and Watt, Chicago 1978) leads to feelings of acute withdrawal perhaps similar to the catatonia experienced in advanced schizophrenia. Confused and dissociated from their environment, the subjects make

one last desperate plea for attention (see *Football Violence In Iceland*, Magnusson and Magnusson, Reykjavik 1954). If no-one takes any notice of the syndrome and the victim's plea for attention, the cries for help merely escalate before the victim collapses into a stupor from which he will only recover in time to perform the 'gig' the following night.

Whether 'road fever' represents the results of physical and emotional stress, a political action against America, or some deeper, more primal attempt to relate to a de-personalising environment, one thing is sure, these young people are deeply disturbed and are to be pitied.

As Senator Walter J Gibson said in his address to the Senate Committee which followed the Psychedelic Ashtrays concert in Milwaukee in 1974, 'We deeply regret the necessity to behead the Mayor and County Sheriff on stage and, moreover, are worried by the continuing levels of bacterial and radiological damage which are still present in our fair city. At the same time we do wish to put it on record that we are greatly indebted to these four young men from Barnsley, England, for their genuine European artistry and culture.'

Road Fever may be a syndrome of the Twentieth Century which we cannot avoid. It may, indeed, be the disease of the future. Even members of our own research team have found themselves affected. After six minutes in the company of the Shuddering Orgasms, UT Cobley and Dr Streizmeyer ripped apart a Holiday Inn with their bare hands. After much research we here at New Dworking admit that we cannot find the true cause of the puzzling syndrome. Under sponsorship from Westinghouse, General Motors and the Department Of Defense we are, however, trying to find a way of marketing it.

Man in Jam says ‘Vox got me into it’

We're in a caff (spelt cafe) somewhere in the West End of London. The tape recorder's on, sausages are off and the tea is verging on the drinkable. We're talking to Paul Weller and Dave. Paul Weller is the man in the Jam. Dave is the chap who looks after his equipment and stuff. We're the italics and ask the questions.

... So when did you first get hold of an AC30?

Soon as we got signed up. This geezer Chris Parry from Polydor came down the Marquee. Polydor were looking for a token punk band. So they signed us. Soon as we got some money, I went out and bought a few AC30's...

How do you find them on the road?

Ahh... well for what we're doing now they aren't loud enough... but for your small halls and middling venues they're great... we used them a lot at the beginning... and of course we always use them for recording... all the new album has been done on AC30's... most of the previous stuff too... (AT THIS POINT DAVE INTERJECTS) They need to be broken in as well... you get a new one and the sound isn't quite there... you need to burn the valves a bit... get the thing hot for a while...

Do you find much difference between what you're doing now and what you were doing a while back...?

... well last year we went back and played the Marquee... that was a bit of fun... it's stupid trying to hang onto that kind of thing though... five hundred people is the same as five thousand... it's the same feeling... you're not losing contact...

How about touring now?

Knackered and boring apart from those two hours you're on stage...

What do you think of record companies?

Well, the deal we've got with Polydor has got better as we've got more successful, but the thing I'd say to young bands is keep your eye on them. Even when you get successful and it's all smiles and handshakes, it's a fickle business... you see young kids getting really screwed up... when we first signed we'd take anything we could get our hands on... we were skint. It's good to see all the independent labels coming up now...

Any final words on the business in general and Vox in particular?

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LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

by Robert Fripp

European tour

In between the gigs on the recent League Of Gentlemen tour of Europe, Robert Fripp managed to rest in cafe/restaurant/bars and to survey architecture

Restaurant de Volder; Eindhoven. 14:15 May 1st 1980.

Beginning my journal of the tour of the League Of Gentlemen.

This is what happened yesterday. My alarm, set for 8:00, did nothing to disturb me. I woke at 9:57 having got to bed at 6:30 subsequent to spraying burning guitar over David Bowie's new album and not leaving the studio until 5:00. As I leapt into my trousers the VW microbus, itself one hour late, appeared at the end of the road. My packed suitcase and guitar waited by the door, an old gigster's instinct proving valuable. Seeping into the VW I discovered Barry was missing: because of a misunderstanding over arrangements he was awaiting collection in a distant component of London. He arrived by 10:30 and we went to Chart Vantage for rites of necromancy to be uttered over the 'bus. The van was a mess. Whenever idling at traffic lights it stalled. The journey to Chart Vantage at Clapham was a series of interruptions, more disturbing because we had by now one hour to drive the 70 miles to Dover. Chart Vantage car surgeons failed to persuade our small immobile to action. At 12:30 we drove to St John's Wood, the only VW service station prepared to handle the wagon within 10 days. The journey was complicated by delays resulting from the

closure of Knightsbridge to traffic after the seizing of a policeman at the Iranian embassy. We left St John's Wood at 15:30 for Dover with no likelihood of mounting a sea leviathan for the mainland of Europe, conveniently separated by God from England to prevent escargots becoming an English national dish.

Unfortunately, the van still had engine problems despite four hours of attention and invocations to deity. We stopped outside an Iranian bank in east London so that Johnny Too-Bad, ironically half Persian and formerly a mechanic, could fiddle with the engine conveniently placed at the end of the Rent-a-Heap. The policeman outside the bank watched us non-committally. Then we continued for Dover through the East End and rush hour traffic.

The 10 miles from St John's Wood to the outskirts of London took 80 minutes. We stopped for petrol at a service station. When we went to leave, the ignition failed so we bump-started the van. I opened the left-side sliding door and pushed. The engine started and while Johnny used his right foot to hold down the accelerator, he hit the brake with his left foot, causing a sudden stop. This made the sliding door of the van abruptly slam upon my right hand. I screamed, confronting intimately the terror of every craftsman who relies upon

his hands. Fred Schuchman, the sound mixer, opened the door and released my hand.

We continued to Dover and arrived at 18:30, missing the hovercraft, and caught a car ferry at 19:30, landing at Calais about 21:00, or 22:00 local time. Fred drove through Belgium to Holland and we arrived at the hotel in Eindhoven at 3:00 this morning. The hotel was closed and the receptionist was woken to let us in. Imitable and rude, he allowed us to our wardrobes in which were placed beds.

As I sit here drinking coffee, a member of a group for the first time in nearly six years, I notice and am reminded of the excellent cut of trousers in Europe. I notice that the Dutch women are most attractive and that I do not feel compelled to rut arbitrarily with them. I reflect that this is a considerable freedom for me. I notice by the behaviour of the young animals in this handsome afternoon that they do not have this same freedom.

My current reading is *The Psychology Of Military Incompetence* by Norman F Dixon. My swollen hand hurts. In two hours we leave for the sound check so I shall do some practice.



Eindhoven. May 2nd.

Currently I am in the third floor buffet restaurant of a large modern store, drinking coffee following a salad, and reflecting upon the information given to me yesterday by a Dutch record man at the gig. None of the reviewers in Holland could understand RCA's refusal to release Daryl Hall's *Sacred Songs* for 2½ years. Even now I have difficulty in understanding how anyone could take offence at that entirely moderate record, a tribute to quality MOR/pop crossover appeal. In fact, I have spent the morning reading *The Psychology Of Military Incompetence* in an attempt to clarify the matter. What seems the asinity of morons is better understood as the working of systems which are governed by rules and operating in accordance with norms entirely at variance with my own, and yet which can be approached and understood rationally. This implies that the laws which govern the behaviour of these (to me aberrant) systems are open to enquiry and can be discovered. The alternative to enquiry is surely despair and madness.

In battle, the bottom line for outmoded ideas is victory or defeat. In industry, the crunch for historic notions is profit or loss. This is one of the few redeeming features of our market system: Big Turkey at Megabucks Records can come up for roasting. I remember that Decca Records, an institution of shuddering stultification with whom I recorded my first album (*The Cheerful Insanity of Giles, Giles and Fripp*) in 1968, has just been sold to Phonogram and that EG Records (with whom I work) have a relationship with Phonogram. This will enable my office to regain the album. I remember the collapse of EMI, another dinosaur which advocated paralysis as a reasonable mode of behaviour by force of example.

But wait: bitter experience interrupts the cool flow of rationality.

Yesterday the League Of Gentlemen played their first gig on the continent at a government-funded Head Centre in the premises of a former school in Nijmegen. Here one can come to buy hash legally, as one would liquor from a bar. There is a coffee bar which sells health food nibbles, drinks and alcohol, with servers serving while smoking joints. Service is friendly but very slow. Music of another era plays. The atmosphere reminds me of Holland in 1973 and America in 1969.

We played two sets and left the building at 1:00. The petrol tank was on reserve and rather than having committed 10 minutes to the venture earlier in the evening we went in search of petrol in a country where all garages close at 22:00. There was *definitely* an open garage five kilometres this side of Arnhem (that is, in the opposite direction to the hotel). We entered Arnhem, 19 kilometres from the hotel, having passed one closed garage. There was *definitely* an open garage on the way to Utrecht. We discovered it, closed, some seven kilometres outside Arnhem. With only 15 kilometres of petrol left we returned to Arnhem and were informed by two taxi drivers that: 1. The only petrol available was on the road to Appel: seven kilometres. 2. The only petrol available was on the German border: 23 kilometres.

We found the police station and Big Muscles of the Arnhem Division sold us enough to return to our cupboards in Eindhoven, where at 3:45 Chuckles the receptionist had one big round of laughs waking up to let us in.

Brussels. May 5th. 18:30

We have just arrived in Brussels and, contrary to my general luck, I have an excellent room in our cheap hotel. There is a balcony on which I can place my smelly Continental cheese outside my room. Our four gigs in Holland were at Nijmegen, Eindhoven, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. In Rotterdam the band found a new spirit. Walking to a *café* after the gig Barry was talking about the possibility of music reaching a level that made measurement of music in terms of units sold quite meaningless. This galvanised some of my thinking since David B asked me last week what it was that I wanted to do. Simply, in a musical sense it's to open the door to that possibility, but with an audience and the group together to take suddenly a tangential curve and fly off. The first Crimson had it but I couldn't work on that much negative energy anymore; Frippertronics can do it in a completely different way.

Meanwhile, it continues to amaze me that such a disparate crew of individuals can possibly work as a team but, judging by last night's performance, there is a growing coherence. Every group I've belonged to has been at least as disparate but this is the only one which lacks brutality and malice among its members. My frustration at the lack of experience is balanced by the good hearts.

My hand, within two inches of crushing two fingers and ending the tour, is much better although weak. The VW microunit has been repaired again, in Eindhoven. The band continues to be advertised as the Robert Fripp Band. My reading continues apace. *The Psychology Of Military Incompetence* has helped me understand the ossifying tendency of institutions and I've begun *Just And Unjust Wars* by Michael Walzer. Somehow, writing and reading books seems an unreal and antiquated action.

'... the finest part of touring: sitting quietly without the pressures of normal routine and chores, with a book'

I am writing this in a fine old-fashioned bar/*café*/restaurant and either the muzak has just begun or suddenly its inappropriate presence has penetrated me. This visceral irritant is a foul and corrupting influence and is to music what pornography is to the dignity of human beings. The past three pieces have been banjos, up-tempo Little Richard-type rock and a simpering female continental ballad singer with a plagiarism of *Spanish Harlem*. Now a bland orchestra attempt to divorce *Que Sera Sera* from its fatalistic philosophy. Even this is not enough to spoil the finest part of touring: sitting quietly without the pressures of normal routine and chores, with a book, reflections and a coffee. A shirt and tie, perhaps a jacket, open doors which the normal accoutrements of rock firmly close, particularly in Europe where, unlike the US, rock is not an indigenous folk music.

Brussels. May 6th. 13:30.

Once again I am writing in the fine old restaurant/*café*/bar, although a punctilious, polished waiter has asked me to move from my table to another, smaller table. He is shooed away by the earthy politeness of *Madame Waitress* to ooze the brilliance from his

moustache upon someone else's tablecloth.

Last night those of the team capable visited *la Grande Place*, the centre of old Brussels. This is the most remarkable area of architecture I have visited. The first time I saw *la Grande Place* was last May during the Frippertronics tour of Europe when Small Ears from Megabucks Records was given the chore of entertaining me for the evening and, after eating an excellent meal in an unpretentious restaurant, he took me to a spot which gave him a lot of pleasure – *la Grande Place*. As we walked into the rectangular cobbled area at 23:30, where 14th century buildings on the long sides face off 16th century buildings on the short sides, he pointed out the 14th century town hall. This staggeringly impressive building has a steeple which gives me the impression that it is just about to take off and leave the rest of the building behind. The steeple is not in the middle of the building, but just to one side of centre. Small Ears told me of the legend that the architect, who had spent his life building the town hall, came to see the work finished and when he discovered that the steeple was off-centre climbed to the top and jumped off. My reply was that the man who had built this would jump off and fly away.

The most striking feature of the town hall is its precise architectural expression of what Gurdjieff referred to as Heptaparaparshinokh, the Law of Seven. If one missed the clue of the steeple it would be impossible to overlook the rows of statues in sevens with pillars under the first and fourth of each: C, D, E, semitone; F, G, A, B, semitone; C, etc. *La Grande Place*, and the *Christiani* district of Copenhagen, were my two deepest experiences from last year's European tour.

Meanwhile, I have read a review in a French music paper, *Rock and Folk*, of *God Save The Queen/Under Heavy Manners*. It deals mainly with the aims of the Drive To 1981 and, as far as my schoolboy French can decipher, considers me to be a brilliant self-publicist and manipulator of the media, very charming, who comes on like a priest but is a charlatan. This highlights two points for me:

1. Confusing the raincoat with the flasher beneath. For me to have expressed the ideas which I have in the past two years, and made a commitment to them in public, has been very difficult for me having an intimate and well researched inquiry into my shortcomings and weaknesses. Fripp is an uncomfortable beast to live and work within but since he is all I have he'll simply have to do.

2. The importance of criticism as a levelling force in a profession where perspective is easily lost. Scepticism I welcome as a positive force in nourishing impartiality. I wish nothing for cynicism, a destructive and wholly negative characteristic. Sceptical criticism is of great value to the artist, particularly in the rock industry which isolates and insulates the performer, and the seductions of that isolation are very strong.

Brussels. May 7th. 12:45.

Today I am in the more modest *café*/restaurant/bar opposite *La Belle Vue café*/restaurant/bar which has claimed me for the preceding two days. This is smaller, cheaper, funkier and smokier. Fred, the mixer, and Tubs PA come here to eat. I have just pumped down an omelette fromage opposite Tubs' omelette jambon. Tubs comes from the Bournemouth area and played bass in local groups 18 years ago; the first League Of Gentlemen played the same circuit. This leads to a discussion of

Bournemouth musicians who pop up regularly, most notably at the moment Andy Summers of The Police. It was Andy's job at the Majestic Hotel (in the dance band) that I took over and paid my way through college with when Andy went off to London with Zoot Money's Big Roll Band in 1965.

The team are getting to know each other better. Barry, from Swindon, tells us about Colin O, a brutish thug who terrorised a smaller youth into digging a trench below the peak of a hill because the Germans were coming over the top. Barry's dialect is impeccable. Johnny Too-Bad is a problem child with a high IQ who never fitted into ordinary school life and was sent to Tavistock Child Psychology Unit, who proffered him associational tests. John responded: 'Death! Death!' to all of them, enjoying himself immensely but convincing the child psychologists that he had a death fixation. Sara used to work in Polydor and is as committed to playing as John is not. I am intrigued to discover how the increasing presence of women in rock will change its character. Sara tolerates us all gracefully.

The amount of smoke in public places here rivals the sodden public atmospheres of England. This café is almost insufferable with Bad Lungs next to me hacking over his latest Death Weed. Having nearly expired, he's just lit another Air Pollutant and is sharing this habit with others. The Dolly Parton Pintable records its score, digitally, regardless. The clubs we play in are a torment to breathing, the stale insidious product of normal cigarettes aromatically sweetened (but fouled all the same) by the large presence of Mary Jane as the rock addicts break out in Reefer Madness. More likely caused by the lack of oxygen in the blood stream.

But now off for guitar practice prior to collection by Megabucks Records, Belgian Division, for two interviews.

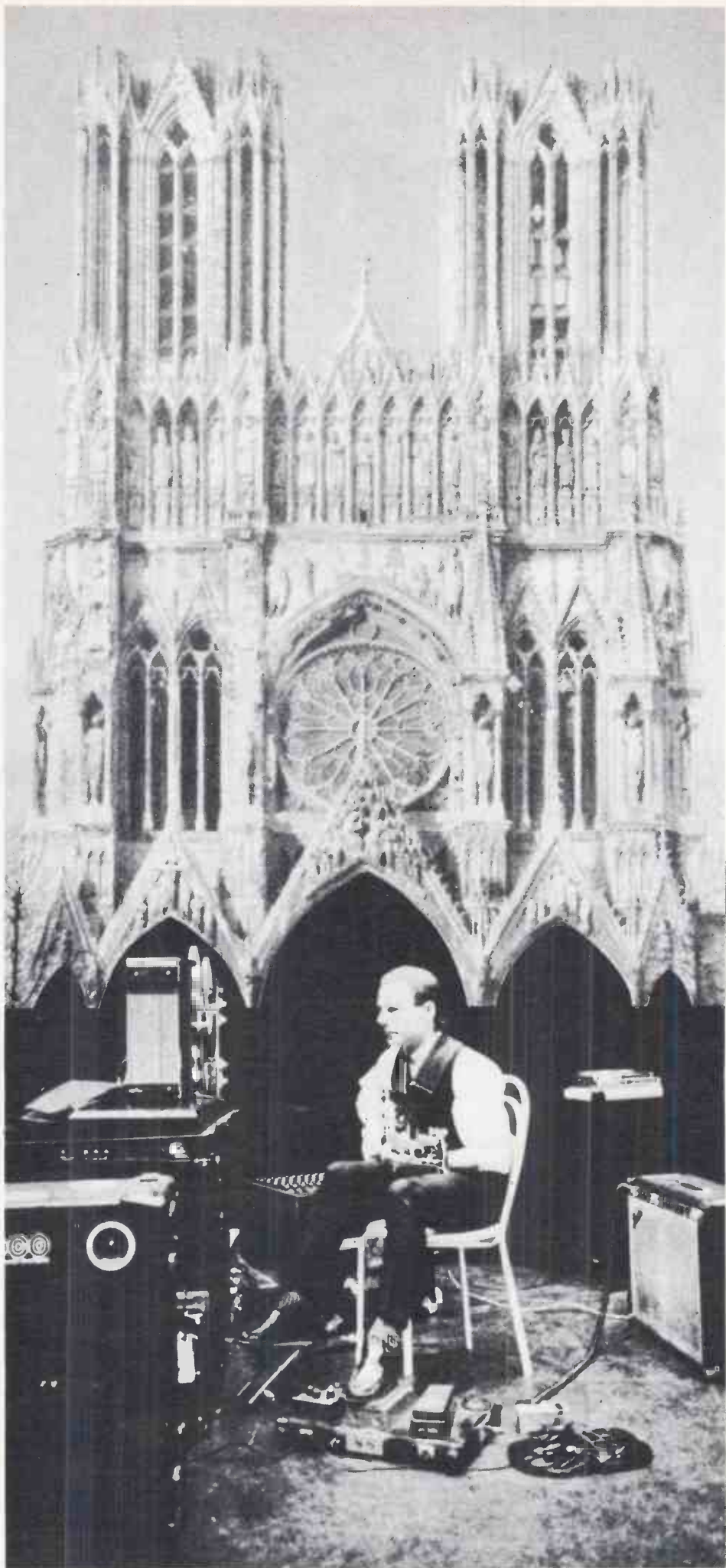
Brussels. May 8th. 9:45.

At least my halting French can order breakfast. The dance last night at the Circle Club put us up a step. A lot had to do with the audience, which was remarkably supportive and had a wide age range, probably 12 to 35. The manager of the club gave us a bottle of champagne afterwards because 'it was the best concert we ever have here'. One musician didn't like it because 'it was not the music of the future' which he had expected. Another man liked it for exactly the same reason. Although we were between innocence and incompetence, generally embracing both, the spirit is growing despite Barry's heavy cold, John's lung problems (accentuated by smoking) and the beginnings of 'flu with me.

Somewhere near Cambrai, France. May 9th. 12:40 over lunch.

Last night we played at Roubaix, near the Belgian border. Before rehearsals for this band began I stipulated that the kind of venue this band needed was a club with room for dancing and a bar. Therefore, last night we played a small, formal theatre without bar: the League Of Gentlemen, with the names in alphabetical order, is billed everywhere as the Robert Fripp Band, or Robert Fripp with rhythm section. The promoters have only been receiving the rider (conditions of performance) two days before the shows. Having made these stipulations two months ago, one should not have expected otherwise.

Only about six people walked out, two immediately. The warmth of response in such



'The idea of a Frippertronics tour of European cathedrals is a dear one: the acoustics would be perfect for what I have in mind.' Above, a little snipping and glueing realises Mr Fripp's dreams - Reimsatronics.



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inappropriate surroundings was most encouraging.

Metz. May 9th. 19:25.

After an eight-hour journey we arrived – at last – and are staying opposite *la Gare*, in the Hotel Metropole. The cathedral here has already made a considerable impression upon me, and that only from a quick look driving by.

As I sit here at dinner in the Metropole Restaurant the waiter has wheeled by a trolley with portable gas rings: the brand name of the gas rings is formidably imprinted 'ENO'. Eno is now being pressed into service by a semi-smartly attired Loon Pants in black, with moustache and sideboards, to cook a steak with cognac. My spirits are recovering as good soup and fish descend but my throat and chest continue to deteriorate. My head hurts from a high leap and karate kick in the dressing room yesterday, surely the most stupid action of the week as I failed to notice a low concrete beam directly above me.

Rouens. May 11th. 17:30.

The bells in this unbelievable cathedral have begun on the half-hour. We arrived in town half an hour ago and I walked straight here, now sitting at a table of a *café/bar/restaurant* underneath. The 'flu prevented me from investigating the cathedral at Metz. The cathedral at Reims, just off the motorway, we passed driving here. It was smaller but gave me the same impression of colossal rocket ships from another world, barely held on this earth and ready to take off. If only I knew what they are trying to tell me. A musician from Brussels was explaining *la Grande Place* to me and how all of old Brussels was built to express, what he termed, an alchemical vision. The town hall's statues point to different parts of the old town, each building teaching a particular lesson. The many fountains, and even the 'little man pissing', are all part of the alchemical journey and externalised in architecture; the town itself is the complete vision, so the musician said.

The idea of a Frippertronics tour of European cathedrals is a dear one: the acoustics would be perfect for what I have in mind.

21:15

Writing this in a Chinese restaurant after spending two hours with three local musos who live opposite another gravity-defying building. They drove up as I was looking at it and wondering about the good fortune of anyone to live opposite. They live opposite and asked me in for coffee. The first record the guitarist among them bought was *In The Court Of The Crimson King*.

Rouens. May 12th. 11:15.

Here I am again, sitting in front of this symphony in architecture but tone deaf. The assumptions behind sacred music are the same as those behind sacred geometry; ie that the proportions are universally consonant. With a note of music, one strikes the fundamental and in addition to the root note other notes are generated: these are called the harmonic series. However many notes of the harmonic series are generated by striking the fundamental determines the idiosyncratic timbre of the instrument. For example, the English horn sounds less than the piano, which gives the *cor anglais* its *cor anglaisness*. These harmonics can be expressed mathematically and related as functions of each other.

In terms of Western culture the mathematics

of music were explored by Pythagoras. Since colours have vibration rates, colours can also be expressed mathematically and as functions of each other. These mathematical propositions, extrapolated from natural qualities of sound and colour, can be expressed architecturally. So one can say analogously that this cathedral expresses, in mathematical propositions, combinations of propositions and distances of a form of universal order. As one fundamental note contains within it other notes in the octave, two fundamentals produce a remarkable array of harmonics and the number of possible combinations between all the notes increases phenomenally. With a triad, affairs stand a good chance of getting severely out of hand. For this reason the tempered scale was developed: to compromise the natural consonance in order to reduce dissonance. For this reason I frequently avoid striking major thirds in chords (the major third being present in the harmonic series) as do Peter Gabriel and Peter Townshend.

It is easy to imagine the difficulties in constructing a symphony and the triumph of Beethoven who wrote at a quality as much music as a modern day copyist would spend his life copying. Analogously a cathedral is a symphony, the statues and ascending spires leaping harmonics from the fundamentals yet all held together in a terribly inspiring harmony. Since music is a very high order of language, and according to some schools has an innate capacity for 'physical' change, so this symphony in stone continues to sing to me but the music is falling on deaf ears. My head doesn't know the language. The function of real art is to present solutions consonant with a natural order in a high order language which can't really be understood with the mind but is better approached through the heart.

All over Rouens, all over France and throughout Europe, a symphony was constructed over a period greater than the lifetimes of its individual builders, who nevertheless shared and worked towards a common vision. They constructed in front of everyone all that was ever needed to be known about political, social and personal organisation. As the harmonic series can be contained within one note, all the Gothic cathedrals within one idea, so political and social order must be able to be found within one person. I suppose that would be enlightenment.

Dijon. May 15th. 22:00.

Last night was Paris: a success at the Bataclan. Not so much a sudden improvement in the group as a warm audience. This did a great deal to restore the slump in spirits and my despair from the evening before in Rennes, where not only did the group make some inexcusable blunders but they were presented to a seated audience in a small theatre. As a dance band with the emphasis on spirit rather than competence we had specified rock clubs with dance floors. In other words, while I was busy with writing, rehearsing and touring with a new, inexperienced band, the office in London was unable to take care of basic matters. Four out of seven gigs in France are seated. Were it not for Paris, always a tonic to one's pecker, I considered cancelling the tour outright as being more than I could honourably bear.

A pleasant afternoon in Paris, my favourite city along with New York. A visit to the cathedral of Notre Dame. It didn't have the strength for me of Metz or Rouens from the outside, but inside was impressive although

spoiled by hordes of Tramping Cameras. I should love to play a Frippertronics tour of the French Gothic cathedrals. Touring Europe is much more difficult than North America: the Continental pace of life is geared to eating, the American to working.

Berlin. May 19th. 10:15.

Sitting after breakfast exhausted from the 18½-hour drive from Clermont-Ferrand yesterday. A pot of muscular coffee is exercising itself within me.

The theatre we played in Dijon on the 16th (my 34th birthday) was a beautiful and old-fashioned affair with five tiers of balcony: a part of the old France that I so love, but for this group a specific example of what we should avoid. Despite the warmth of the audience and attempts from the group it was like trying to throw a vegetarian barbecue in Alaska at Christmas. Receiving birthday calls from several well-wishers and friends swung the balance. The appalling organisation of this tour is all good research for my strengthening ideas of the future of touring, which are becoming clearer. The spectator might notice that the French and German gigs have been strategically located to help build character among group members. If those in the offices who plan the logistics of these tragic spectacles were to experience the consequences of their decisions, touring would cease.

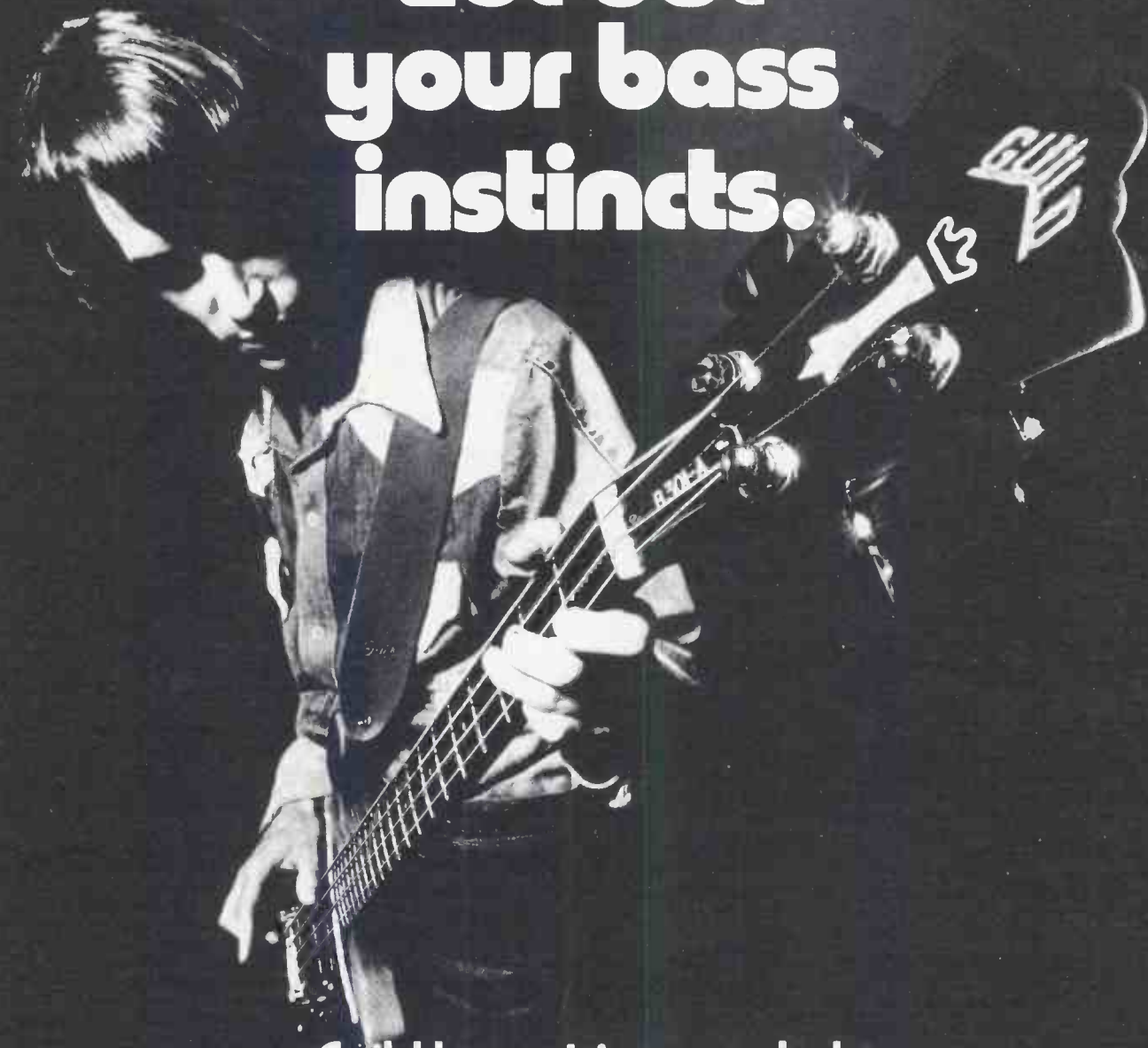
The journey here yesterday was made worthwhile by the remarkable succession of spires and steeples for the entire 900 miles. Band humour is developing and insults multiply. We discover that John's grandmother, who has lived in England for 45 years, only speaks five words of English, hates goyim and blacks and doesn't much like Jews. Barry's grandfather, a cockney, talks gibberish in rhyming slang while drunk.

The music develops slowly. It seems we would rather tour endlessly and fake honest labour than sit critically with oneself for a morning. But every group has its own working characteristics and one is stuck with them: at least this group isn't lost in a haze of cerebration.

I am still angry about Megabucks Records in Paris, whose sole interest seems to be to feed me, and if not me then anyone remotely connected will do. In the industry's present state, at least, eating in expensive restaurants is inappropriate and for me personally offensive. And yet after the Paris show, when I disappeared for an interview, the band and friends went out with Megabucks to an expensive restaurant. The band, knowing my feelings, declined even a bottle of wine and was unable to afford the food. Meanwhile the Megabucks, unable to spend on me or the League Of Gentlemen, instead managed to form a party of 15 or 16 with the promoters of the gig. The bill for 15 in an expensive Parisian restaurant would be very high and passed on as-a *bona fide* promotion expense for Robert Fripp, even though the occasion contradicted all my stated aims and wishes. To make it worse, Barry cannot afford the £290 for a new organ, which would have been paid for by this one meal. The matter will not stop there. ■



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BRUFORD

U.S.  tour

by DAVE STEWART

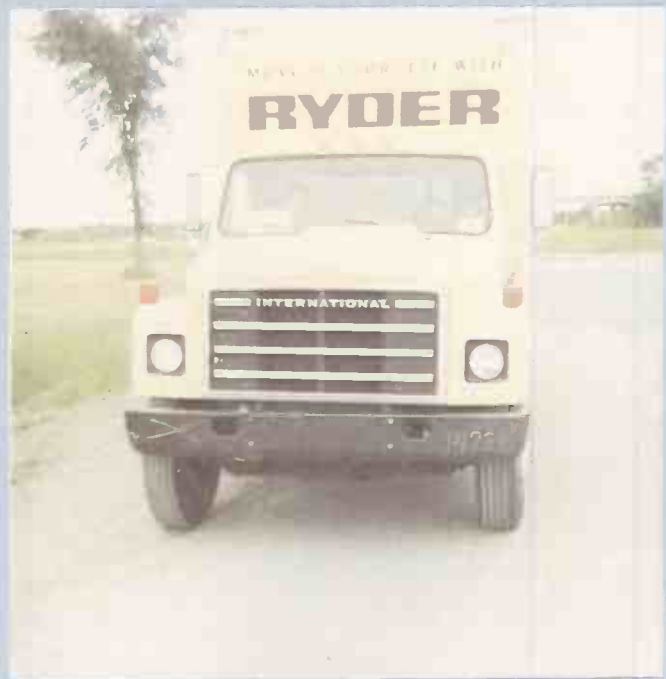
Summer, 1980: Hostages still held in Iran. Thatcher aims for 3 million unemployed. Stormclouds gather over Slough. England beaten in European championships. Bruford tour US. *SI* picks one of these earth-shattering events to cover. Well, you know about all the others, don't you?

I t's been a while since my stumbling prose style last (dis)graced these pages, but the boys in the office had a whip-round and asked me to write an article on the Bruford 1980 Summer Tour of the US and Canada. Realising the potential for cheap glory (and virtually unlimited blackmail income I could elicit from members of the Bruford *entourage* for not revealing certain activities), I naturally jumped at the opportunity, like all great social histories, this one has been written some time after the events in question took place, to allow the writer time to reflect on the effects of doing 57 shows in 57 daze and why exactly it was that the road crew bought a goat in Lubbock, Texas (*etc.*). Come with me now to this great land, and with the help of my WH Smith's diary I will painstakingly recreate our miraculous expedition.

June 4th. Fly to Canada

Having done 14 or so of these tours, Bill Bruford assures me that in the old days (before the New Pessimism) the passengers would be treated to all manner of luxuries, plied with alcohol, invited below decks to drink port with the captain and fly the aeroplane for a while. Not so nowadays. John Clark (unknown guitarist), Spencer Allen (roadie) and I are herded on to our flight by massive Amazonian stewardesses whose fixed smiles defy you to look at their legs. Strapped in our tiny seats amidst crowds of uncomfortable, arguing humans, we pluck up

▷▷



Dave Stewart



ON THE ROAD

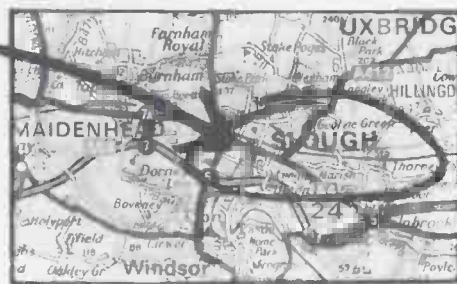
courage to ask one what lunch she recommends, to which she replies with a winning smile that it's all garbage anyway so our choice is immaterial. Hmmmm. Actually these girls aren't as bad as I'm making out, for as soon as we're airborne and the awful ritual of lunch is out the way, the passengers happily settling down to indigestion and the 'free' (earpieces \$2) in-flight movie (usually featuring adolescents on bicycles, love affairs between marginally eccentric New Yorkers or animals with astonishingly high IQs rescuing their owners from peril), Spencer reveals to one of them that we're IN A BAND, which produces an absolute snowstorm of *bonhomie* and free drinks. Quite forgetting our aching bottoms, we begin our descent into New York in considerably better spirits (vodka and scotch) than on our ascent from Heathrow.

Customs 1

At this stage we're only passing through America to connect with our flight to Canada, but nevertheless have to go through Immigration Control, standing for ages in a queue watching people of all races and ages being quizzed and checked for criminality. We while away the long minutes trading roadie atrocity stories: little Nick Bell the lighting engineer, who reduced UK's road crew to helpless hysteria by coming up on the luggage chute in some airport baggage claim area, sprawling amidst everybody's bags and suitcases; Big Ben le Fevre of Led Zeppelin who climbed the mast of a British Rail Sealink ferry in a force nine gale, burst dripping into the captain's control tower and persuaded him to let him steer the boat part of the way to Calais. When it's our turn to face the Attitude Test, we repeat the lines so glibly drummed into our skulls by tour manager Paddy Spinks, ie we haven't got our US visas yet, but as we're only passing through to Canada could you kindly extend to us the hospitality for which your nation is rightly famous. We are immediately placed under an armed guard.

Paddy has, quite sensibly, taken the precaution of not being here, and we three dishevelled Britishers are obviously suspected of waiting our moment to burst out of the airport building, run screaming through the streets of Brooklyn, marry an American girl apiece, and set up businesses left, right and centre. Nervously recalling scenes from *Midnight Express* (our late mood of airborne drunken euphoria quite shattered by this new turn of events), we wait in trepidation for the advent of our captor, some Cyclopsian brute with harelip and sub machine-gun, no doubt. In fact he turns out to be quite a nice little old man from Wells Fargo Security, 5ft 2in, 60 years old and wizened, who ushers us into a waiting room and offers us coffee. We decide we like him and ask him if he'd like to accompany us round the States as John

Clark's bodyguard (a sort of *undemanding* job, a bit like snow-clearing in the Bahamas), but he regretfully declines. John phones Denise in Slough



to tell her he's all right, and then our armed pensioner directs us to the appropriate Air Canada flight along with hordes of confused Asians. By this time I am pretty confused myself and can recollect little of the ensuing flight to Montreal and drive to Ottawa, save a dim memory of delirious phrases like, 'Lonnie Origami's folding washboards,' going round and round in my brain, signalling my imminent mental collapse.

Double Shows

As I mentioned, we're here to do 57 shows in 57 days, headlining in clubs. This gargantuan feat is achieved by doing a good number of double shows: for example, at The Bottom Line in New York we played for three nights, two shows per night, and at The Roxy in LA we played eight shows across four nights. Nobody really enjoys doing these doubles, as the tendency is either to try to conserve



Author Stewart proves strong-arm keyboard technique

energy for the second show by holding back during the first, thereby running the risk of turning in a rather tame first set, or to go completely loony in the first and crawl on stage a wheezing zombie for the second. Also, Bruford attract a lot of barny fans who think nothing of buying tickets for all six shows, so when the houses are turned over one sees the same smiling faces in the front two rows. This can sometimes give the impression of playing a gig in someone's front room and being forced to play the same set eight times till you get it right. However there are advantages. One gets to know the waitresses. (Hi, Debby! Howya doin', Sandy? etc). The gear can be left set up between shows, enabling the roadies to get drunk and also get to know the waitresses. Many of these waitresses (he said, warming to the subject) are worth getting to know, the ones at the Park West (extremely flash club in Chicago) being attired in a particularly savage red satin uniformette which makes loading the gear excruciatingly slow and soundchecks impossible unless everyone's wearing blinkers. But enough of this later. Let me tell you about our Average Day, before you start getting all interested.

The Average Day

Anyone vaguely familiar with touring knows that the glorious hour on stage each night (in which the boys give their all and make the accumulated misery of their and their audiences' lives fade into insignificance etc) can be achieved only after wading through eight hours of tedium. ('And bloody hard graft mate!' - A roadie.) One of the paradoxes of supposedly glamorous travel across America is that when your friends ask you what Oklahoma's like, you can only vaguely describe a road a bit like the M1, a truck-stop more or less like Leicester Forest East except everyone's wearing cowboy hats, and a Holiday Inn room exactly the same as the ones in Liège, Swiss Cottage and Bangkok. I'm far from being an old hand at US tours, having been there only three times and still inclined to be very affected by the glamour of it all - the first time John Clark and I went out on the streets of Manhattan we were like two kids, muttering, 'New York, cor,' under our breath and gawping at the skyscrapers - but even I have to admit that one motorway is very like another. Because of the essential homogeneity of reality as perceived bleary-eyed from the back of an Oldsmobile flying up the New Jersey Turnpike for the fifth time in one week, one can reduce many of the 57 days on tour to a kind of porridge Average Day.

On the Average Day, one gets up, has breakfast. (Fascinating stuff, eh? Eat your heart out, Pinter.) First problem is you can't get a cup of tea. I spent *ten weeks* without having a single cup of tea, *Midnight Express* nowhere, as I simply refuse to acknowledge that what the Americans

offer under that name is anything like the real thing. One early, foolish attempt to purchase a cup at Kennedy Airport resulted in the arrival of a plastic beaker of liquid the colour and temperature of a polar bear's bottom. Ugh! But I digress: Get up. Fail to get tea, shamble upstairs to room, find socks etc strewn about and gather toiletries. Phone Denise in Slough



to tell her you're all right. (John spent the first three days in Canada with his watch still set to what he called 'Slough



time', determined not to give in to the Transatlantic way of life.) Look hopefully at suntan in mirror and wonder if anyone but you can see it. Take elevator down to lobby, greet Jeff, Bill and Paddy with the group noise. (All groups have a noise - ask any musician's girlfriend or wife.) (Or boyfriend or husband, *typist*.) In the case of Bruford (an all-male band, *typist*), the usual mindless catchphrase or sexual slur ('Peeled Prawn,' 'Mudshark' etc) has mutated and evolved, ceasing to be conventional human speech and moving beyond into realms of pure sound. 'Hounh,' we go - a bronchial exhalation conveying nothing except perhaps a weary acknowledgement of one's continuing communal existence: *Hounh*. Get in the hired car, play with automatic windows a bit, desist when finger gets stuck. Sit in silence for a while listening to the natives calling each other 'chickenshit motherfucker' and other, even less comprehensible insults on the CB radio. Someone (usually Jeff Berlin) tells a joke or reminds another member of the group of a particularly horrendous mistake he made last night. Many hours of gaiety ensue, interspersed with periods of boredom. Arrive in town, go to hotel, carefully scan front desk for signs of paternity suit or threatening telegram. Get assigned room. Rush upstairs and phone Denise, tell her you're all right; it's raining in Slough.



Jacquie Deegan

The band relax apres-gig avec friend The Bat (honest...)

Go to club and do soundcheck, watching waitresses for signs of sociability. Eat meal in hotel restaurant, watch TV for an hour. 'Ladies! Does your kid just hate goeey muck?? Kid's voice: Mom, I just hate goeey muck. Then don' give him GOOEY MUCK, give him ZULTO. Kids *lurve ZULTO*' (click) 'Craig, why do you still see her after all this? Can't you see, I'm the one who' (click) 'Zulto' (click, click) 'Noo cer' (click) '. . . for only 7,000 dollars' (click) (click) (SMASH). Paddy phones, *Hounh*. Go to club and play well/all right/badly. Drink lots of beers afterwards, wonder vaguely why the sociable waitress went home so early. Talk to hordes of young Americans about Hugh Hopper, Soft Heap and other allegedly fascinating topics, smile a lot, drink lots more beers. Decide the gig went pretty well, get driven back to the hotel in high spirits. Don't smash up room, go to sleep.

Get the idea?

The fans

Perhaps I'm making it all seem a bit joyless, but I must point out that as a band we did some really steaming sets. Doing more or less the same tunes for 57 shows means you have to use your imagination to find ways of keeping the music fresh, and the most enjoyable and memorable bits of playing we did were when we improvised together with no fixed structure - something very few rock bands have the courage to do. We were assisted in this enterprise at all times by our fans, who are WONDERFUL. Most of the gigs were sold out and packed with raving enthusiasts who followed every note. When you come on stage they make so much noise you can't hear a note out of the monitors for several minutes, and when you come off stage and meet a few of them after the gig they talk so fast and loudly that your brain turns into a prawn cocktail. For me, they're the best audience in the world, because they make you want

to play well. 'Dave!!! Hey, Dave!! Hey, man, WHOOOO!! National Health! ALL RIGHT!!!' To these bellowed imprecations a polite, murmured 'hello' seems an inadequate response . . . *Hounh!*

The gurls (Where?)

Much as we *lurve* our audiences, Bill and I have remarked on many occasions that it's a pity they're all boys. (Or to look at it another way, 'If I were gay I'd have a fucking great time on the road.' - Pip Pyle.) This has led to a 'spot-the-girl' contest at Bruford gigs.

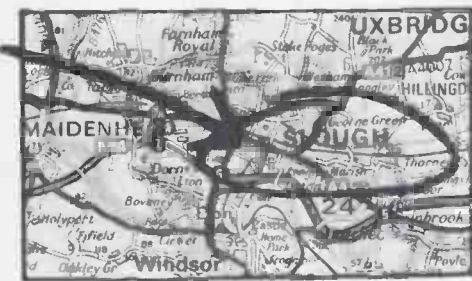
'Look Jeff! A girl!'

'Nah, can't be. It's probably a bloke.'

'No, really, look, she's got a Bruford LP under her arm!'

'Probably belongs to her boyfriend. She'll be asleep after the first five minutes.'

However, on this tour we've been crossing over pretty well, and our suspicions that we've been coerced into driving 420 miles to Cincinatti



in order to play to every male musician in town have been somewhat allayed by the presence of (gasp) *women* in the audience. Now this leads me to a rather touchy subject. I know you've been scanning the pages eagerly.



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for mention of the word GROUPIE and I would like to put you straight on this matter. As you may be aware, American girls are by and large rather *forward*, and I would not deny that in certain circumstances some members of a few British rock bands (not necessarily ours) have perhaps come into contact with one or two girls who might have (at one time or another) slept with musicians. As I am the possessor of a lovingly-compiled, detailed dossier listing regrettable activities gone into by close friends and acquaintances, it is naturally worth more to me in blackmail fees to keep my mouth shut, but things do get very amusing sometimes. Larf? Nearly kissed meself. Holding forth one night *après-gig* in Tempe, Arizona, I found myself surrounded by the usual crowd of young fans and admirers who were desperately interrogating me about my fuzz box and so on. Amidst this hubbub I suddenly became aware of a hand on my thigh and a hot blast of tequila breath in my ear inviting me to all manner of intimacy. Unable to compete, the crowd melted away and before long I was in the dressing room trying to defend what was left of my honour.

'Hey, let's go to your hotel,' she said, 'I'm pretty high . . . it's so great being with you, y'know, like it's a *real honour*.'

'Oh give over. What makes you say that?'

'Well, you know, like *all those guys* wanted to talk to you an' all. And you're such a *great musician*.'

'What instrument do I play, then?'

' . . . drums?'

Oh well, she had a one-in-four chance of being right, I suppose.

Customs 2 and Two Atypical Gigs

From Canada we dragged our alternately weary and vibrant carcasses into New York, Connecticut, Washington, New Jersey Boston Baltimore Cleveland Philadelphia, AlbanyDetroitSlough



RockfordCincinnati, ChicagoMilwaukee Madison(Bismarck City)Minneapolis KansasCityOklahomaCity, Houston-DallasAustinPhoenix, Losangelessanfrancisco. We broke box-office records, hearts, wind; Bill broke a door ('Cost \$50 to put that right, Mr Buford'). Customs had not had their final say – at Peace Bridge on the Canada/US border we were subjected to something far worse than the armed guard: The Corny Banter. While Paddy was taken off to one side and grilled over some minute discrepancy in his passport (a too-thick serif; date written January



An unposed shot of the wonderful Bruford personnel not taken in a studio, oh no. Left to right: Jeff Berlin (bs); Dave Stewart (keys, artikuls); Bill Bruford (traps, toys); John Clark (gtr. fame).

25th instead of 25th January; slight smudge of four-year-old stamp, etc), Bill, John and I stood squirming under a deluge of unfunny gags from The Customs Official's Joke Book (a slim volume). 'Hey. You guys in a band??!! You gonna be as famous as the BEATLES???! (yuk, yuk, yuk). Hey, the only sort of music I like is PETER, PAUL an' MARY, that's the stuff for me, yes sir. You guys play music like that?' Of course, officer. After ten minutes of this we were almost ready to plead with them to take us in the Detention Shed and let the Alsations sniff our bums, but in the nick of time Paddy (prone to fits of stuttering when under pressure) let loose such a machine-gun burst of reiterated consonants that they panicked and let us free.

Two gigs stick in the memory: one in Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa, on Saturday July 12th. For some reason our scheduled appearance at one of Tulsa's swishest nite-spots was cancelled and Cain's put in its place. Seeing as important showbiz personalities such as Gene Pitney have chosen to actually sing about the place, you'd imagine Tulsa to be quite swinging, but Saturday night there is like Aldersgate tube station at 7am on a Sunday morning. The only activity was bits of tumbleweed blowing about and as we trudged through the dust at the back of the club I noticed an animal skull lying there grinning up at me ('You'll be sorry,' it seemed to croak). It was 108° at 10pm and as the nearest thing Cain's has to air-conditioning is a few holes in the roof, the promoter had decided to entice the audience by declar-

ing the gig free, planning to make his money on the bar. Consequently, the place was packed . . . not, however, with our normal audience (every musician in the area eagerly clutching copies of *Modern Drummer* with a picture of Bill on the front), but instead an alarming variety of US low life. Hell's Angels, men in cowboy hats, 50-year-old women in hot pants . . . fortunately the bucking bronco machine over in the corner was broken, but one began to wonder if we shouldn't brush up on a few Gene Autry tunes in the dressing room.

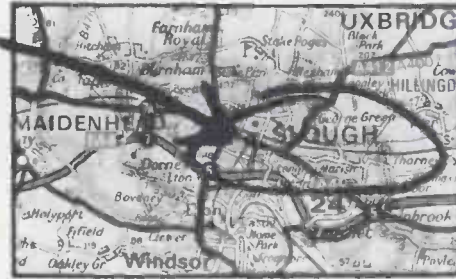
Up on stage, an alarmingly awful group was rampaging Napoleon-like through a variety of forgotten R&B favourites, to the audience's total disinterest. The only sound at the end of each tune was the sound of beer pouring down throats and the occasional 'yii-haar' accompanied by the sound of breaking glass. John Clark and I looked at each other in dismay and I'm sure we both would have leapt on the nearest jet to Slough had the opportunity





presented itself. But the SHOW MUST GO ON (why?). We went tearing on stage in best Sha-Na-Na fashion and hurtled through an astonishingly iconoclastic version of *Hell's Bells*. Finishing the tune in a Rototom air-raid with fixed grins a mile wide, we prepared to duck a volley of missiles but were amazed to receive a rapturous reception. The next three tunes all went down a bomb too; even the Hell's Angels leered at us in gap-toothed approval.

By this time we were starting to get really cocky, John Clark leaning back against his amp pulling outrageous faces and making with the SOUND OF



SLOUGH (yeah), Jeff Berlin dancing like a maniac and even I managing to smile a bit, when suddenly disaster struck. My Amcron amp, unable to withstand the Danté-esque temperatures and savage surges of volume, overheated and blew a fuse, taking out with it the whole back line. In the 20 minutes it took to switch amp and speakers, the whole audience lost interest and went home. We finished the set in front of 50 or 80 aficionados (and

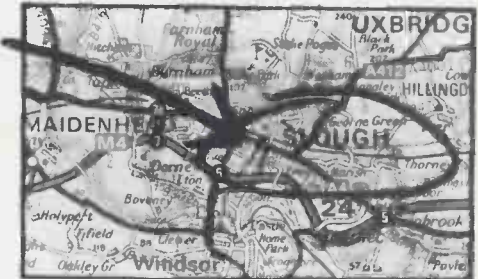


B Bruford practices Rototom air-raid somewhere in Tulsa

the skull, presumably). Shucks.

Last but not least: Folsom Field, Colorado, Saturday 19th July. We open for Cheap Trick, REO Speedwagon and Sammy Hagar, all enormous in the States, at a football stadium. We are what is laughingly referred to as 'the breakfast act', meaning we have to open the show at midday. 25,000 slack-jawed delinquents watch our unique blend of rock, jazz, heavy metal, new wave, art rock incompetence, and although many of them probably interpret our performance as some kind of weird interference on the PA system, we get a reasonable round of applause and only a few things thrown at us. What a racket, 25,000 people clapping. Crikey. We get thrown out of the dressing room to make way for Rick Nielsen's 35 guitars (I counted them). Bill, Jeff and I slap each other on the back and start planning ways of headlining at such a

gig next year. John goes off to phone Denise in Slough to say he's all right, and



the camera pulls away revealing our four heroes waving into the sunset as the final credits roll up. And here we must leave this fascinating fairground, this cornucopia of conifers, this rollicking rodeo of wrestling roadies and randy roughnecks, as we wait with bated breath for the next soundcheck. For tomorrow is another day, and with that comes, *etc, etc*, many clichés, blāh, blāh, blāh, the end. ■

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Richard Thompson

by Ralph Denyer

Richard Thompson is the reluctant guitar hero. He is always somewhat mildly surprised by the fact that anyone should want to interview him despite the critical acclaim his work always receives plus the unswerving support of his dedicated following. His answers to questions are frequently peppered with self-effacing remarks while at the same time he will defend the standards by which he creates his music to the last. And those standards are almost daunting.

There is a quality to the music he has created. He was a prime creative force in Fairport Convention, then a solo artist and session guitarist and, since 1974, one half of the Richard and Linda Thompson duo. It is a quality that is hard to define: it can be heard in the guitar playing of few others apart from Richard. Two names that spring to mind are Robbie Robertson and Ry Cooder.

All pix Ralph Denyer

Though many of the sessions on which Richard has played guitar fall within the folk-rock idiom, one was most definitely not. Both Richard and Linda contributed to Gerry Rafferty's *Night Owl* album.



The latter part of this year found the Thompsons without a record deal. Gerry and his co-producer Hugh Murphy have stepped into the picture to both produce and finance a Richard and Linda album. They have been recording at Chipping Norton studios and when they finish work – probably some time during this month – a deal will be sought. Richard wouldn't be drawn too much into discussion about the tie-up, only mentioning that it was partly a result of 'a common heritage' and that they were having 'a bit of a stab at the American market'.

When it comes to the tools of his trade, Richard is a musical equipment marketing manager's nightmare. The last time he bought any guitars a few years ago he told someone he knew in a music shop to look out for pre-Sixties Fender models only. He has also fallen foul of the shrink-wrapped pre-selected standardised marketing revolution in guitar strings and the only endorsements he knows about are the kind you get on your driving licence.

Richard uses a relatively small battery of instruments. He has 100% preference for vintage guitars, his main electric at the moment being a 1958 Fender *Stratocaster*.

'It's got a nice tone,' he says of it. 'The tone of the new ones isn't always that good. The old ones seem to have a real tone as opposed to Japanese tone which never sounds quite real. With this *Strat* I think everything is just deteriorating nicely. I use an old amp which is the same, it's got a better tone. I don't know why. The *Strat* is standard except that it hasn't got a volume control. It has got a master tone control instead of volume so if you want to switch it off, you can't. I've got a '52 *Telecaster* as well but I can't show you that because it's just being re-worked at the moment, undergoing a re-wire and things. It needs a bit of a gee-up.'

At the moment Richard doesn't have a

regular guitar repairer so he ropes in whoever he can or has a go himself. His third and in fact only other electric guitar at the moment is a Rickenbacker 12-string.

'I think I got this one in 1971 or 2. I bought it off Stephen Delft and he claims that The Byrds left it behind in England because the neck broke. So it might have played *Mr Tambourine Man* a few times, who knows? It's quite an old Rickenbacker, I lost it for about three years. I didn't know where it was and then it turned up in Fairports' lock-up and someone had put a new head on it. This is the third new head on this one: Rickenbacker necks are absolutely useless, made of oak which is the strangest guitar-building material of all time, it tends to warp a bit. So it's in a bit of a state but it's got a great noise, the real Rickenbacker 12-string noise. In the studio it sounds really good. They're always out of tune, the bridges and that are never built well.'

Richard's acoustic guitar is a Martin 00018 made in 1966. He bought it second-hand while touring in America with Fairport Convention and had a Barcus Berry transducer fitted himself. And surprisingly that completes Richard's collection of guitars. He does however have two other string instruments at the moment, one being a mandocello.

'It's like a cello mandolin. Again, this one needs a little work, a new bridge. It records very well. Getting strings for it is absolutely murder. Clifford Essex still do a mandocello string but I find them a bit too light really to tune to a cello tuning. So I find that electric bass strings give the best sound. This one is made by John Dallas of the Strand but the more common ones are made by Gibson. It really records in a very interesting manner. It sounds fantastic on record, it really jumps out at you.'

As I sat directly in front of Richard while he played the mandocello I could clearly hear as much – if not more – sound

coming from the wide bell of the instrument as there was coming from the relatively small soundhole. Richard went on to say, 'You have to mic it at both ends really, there's a lot of sound comes off the bottom, a lot of ambience. It's good played an octave under a mandolin.'

And Richard's current collection of working instruments is completed by a mandolin, made by Gibson in the Twenties when in fact the company made more mandolins than guitars. 'Yes, Gibson used to make a smaller guitar and mandolins. They were making mandolins very early on. I think this one was made in the 20s.'

Though Richard has in recent years been very much associated with music forms of which the acoustic guitar is an intrinsic part, he is himself first and foremost an electric guitarist. It was the early American rock guitarists who impressed Richard most with their playing. Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry were prime influences. Early James Burton guitar licks also found their way into Richard's style. He would listen endlessly to things like the Burton solo on Ricky Nelson's *Hello Mary Lou*.

Richard's father – a policeman – had a guitar up until the time Richard was five years old but then sold it. However the instrument had made an impression on young Master Thompson, but for several years his requests to be given a guitar of his own were fobbed off with tin banjos. Eventually someone gave his father a damaged, throwaway acoustic guitar which was passed on to Richard and guided by the learned technical work, *Bert Weedon's Play In A Day*. He was on his way in earnest. He had classical lessons for a year or so. Though he found the likes of Carcassi and Sor boring, he did take a shine to the superb music of Villa Lobos before the lessons came to a rather abrupt end when his teacher was sent to prison!

It was however the best of the American guitarists who were to continue influencing and inspiring Richard. Whether he realised it at the time or not he was developing a taste for refined musical ability combined with the indigenous and ethnic qualities of American popular music. Thus, Burton and Roy Buchanan were the kind of guitarists he found himself emulating.

By the time he was 14 years old he was the proud owner of his first electric guitar – a Hofner V3 – and playing 'in imitation Who bands'. However, he continued to be more inspired by the pure quality of more ethnic musical forms. Before Fairport Convention formed as a band, Richard worked with Simon Nicol and Ashley Hutchings in various small groups playing what can broadly be called folk-rock but taking in jug band music and the like. It was the American folk-rock scene that inspired them to form Fairport with people like Dylan, Lovin' Spoonful, the Byrds and Paul Butterfield as their guiding



lights.

After an initial period the group grew dissatisfied playing American-based music which they felt was better played by its originators. As a group they had interests in the traditional music forms of the British Isles. Soon the band left American music behind completely and before long Richard was being singled out as a major songwriter and a superb guitarist. With regard to the latter it is interesting that although different phases in his career have taken him through various musical styles, his playing has always kept that basic raw essence which can be detected not only in his own early playing but also in that of his influences of the Sixties.

These days Richard doesn't practise or spend a great deal of time working on his guitar technique as such. 'I should practise but I don't very much. I suppose that is because I am not a single-minded guitar player, I spread myself out too much. I'm quite interested in songwriting so a lot of my energy goes into that.

'I don't practise every day but I should. If I'm touring it usually takes me about three days to get into it, to get the kind of fluency. Then if you are doing 15 or 20 gigs, on the last three I get a bit stale but the middle periods are usually OK. Sometimes.' Though the electric guitar is Richard's main instrument he does play quite a bit of acoustic as well. How does he get on with the different characteristics of the instruments?

'If you are using your fingers and playing a lightly strung electric guitar it's entirely different from playing an acoustic guitar. They're two totally different attacks. Obviously you usually play a lot harder on an acoustic and on electric you just have to feel it. I've been using my fingers (right hand) on electric for so long now that it is just something that I developed, a feel that seems fairly satisfactory. But on the whole it's a lot lighter on electric and if I do pick harder it is for an effect, to get a twang or a

buzz off the string. Or to imitate pipes or another instrument. You can get really staccato notes by hitting the strings a lot harder.

'Tuning is always a problem. You have to allow a lot in what your left and right hands are doing. How hard you hit it and stuff, you have to be careful with your tuning. I find that when I play an electric solo I can compensate for the tuning in the way that I play. Like you compensate by bending a string slightly sometimes.'

On right-hand technique Richard went on to say 'I pick all the time. I don't know why or how it happened but I hardly ever strum the guitar. It occurred to me the other day that I don't actually strum unless somebody tells me to, it's really strange. I play a sort of pedal-steel style with the right hand using two fingers and a pick. (Pick held between the thumb and index finger with the second and third fingers individually playing notes.) So I'm playing three notes all the time. And that's really what I do, I didn't realise until recently, it's funny really. Sometimes I use the pinkie for a flourish or something but it is not very strong.

'I'm not really an acoustic guitar player. I love playing acoustic but I haven't spent enough time on it, I've still got a lot more I would like to do. Yeah, I am basically an electric guitar player.'

Richard recalled that the last time I had interviewed him one result was that he received a letter from a person who claimed to be 'a classical music fan'. He reprimanded Richard because the photographs showed the guitarist's left-hand thumb hooking over the top of the fingerboard of his guitar. 'That is true if you are playing classical guitar. You have to have the proper hand positions, there's no doubt about it. Otherwise you just won't make it.'

Perhaps the classical music fan who wrote thought the Thompsons a classical guitar group? The fan certainly displayed a distinct lack of knowledge about guitar

playing in general. Over the past 10 years the most influential books on contemporary guitar technique have been those written by Mickey Baker: his chord shapes rely on the use of the left-hand thumb to hold down bass strings.

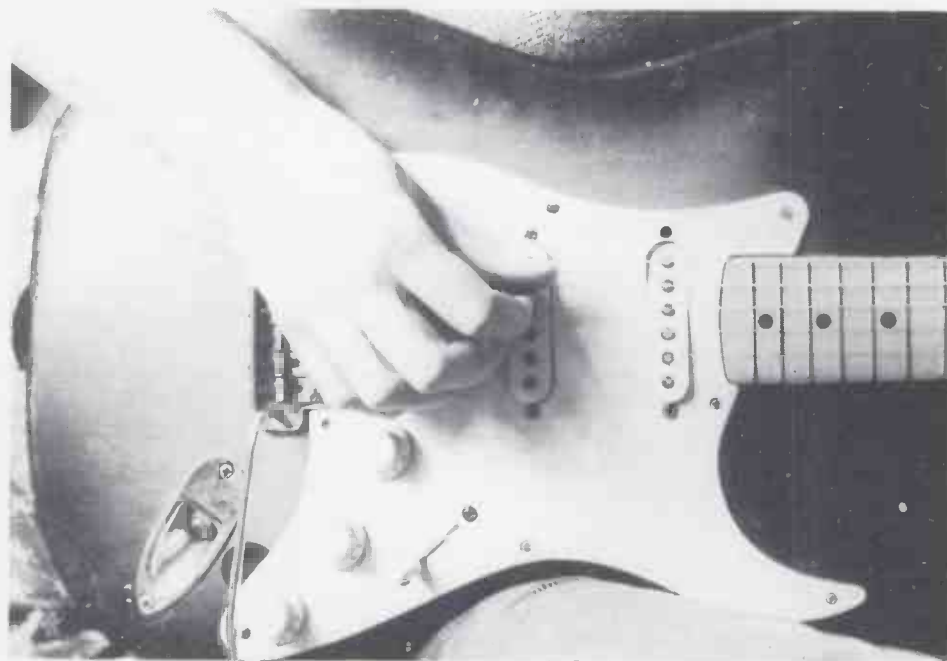
Richard continued, 'With the jazz and blues-based styles there is a lot of what you might call self-styling. You find things you can do and the way that you do them is not always orthodox. A lot of guitar players do things in different ways. For instance, the way that people produced left-hand vibrato, people do it in about 50 different ways. I think it is because so many people learn off records and they learn how to imitate a sound without actually seeing anybody playing. Or they may see someone at a gig but it's from the back of the Rainbow Theatre or somewhere. I think that a lot of technique is self-taught these days.

'I think it's interesting that way. A lot of the blues players were self-taught and they just imitated noises and things. B B King said that he started to use vibrato because he wanted to get the sound of someone playing bottleneck but he couldn't figure out how it was done. Robbie Robertson says that same thing. He just heard somebody on the radio and he was trying to copy it. I think a lot of technique comes from people trying to imitate other instruments, trying to sound like a saxophone the way Allan Holdsworth can. He gets a saxophone sound out of a guitar, he makes it sound like John Coltrane or something. He's got a unique technique.'

On the subject of developing his own technique Richard said, 'I don't work at it as much as I should but I still experiment a lot with sounds, styles and techniques. I think everybody is always looking for a better guitar sound, I know I always am. One tends to try everything new and take from it but basically one often reverts to what you've already got. You take a bit here and a bit there and adapt it to the technique you've already got.'

I mentioned to Richard that I read a Paul Simon interview in which he said that ideas for songs produced fresh ideas on guitar playing and *vice versa*. 'That's true. I think I often do a lot of my guitar playing in my head which is a strange place to do it. Also I think that a lot of songwriting is visualising something. I might be listening to a piece of music and simultaneously hear another piece that hasn't been written that is at the same time entirely different. I have a total sort of finished thing... the song, the musicians who'll be playing it, everything. So for me a lot of songwriting is visualising the end product and then trying to find it and then trying to find the guitar playing that fits it which I've already heard, I've already seen the whole thing.

'I might envisage myself on stage playing a song which would fit very well into our existing repertoire. I sort of



envisage that and then try to hear it all going on as closely as possible in your mind's eye and then try to arrive at it. Funny business, isn't it? Is it certifiable?

When it comes to stringing his electric guitars, Richard goes a little lighter than standard. 'I go from an extra light top which is an .008 gauge, to an .042 bottom which is kind of regular/light.' The other string gauges Richard uses are as follows: B .010 or .011, G .015 or .016, D .022 and A .032. 'As to brand, I'm slightly bamboozled at the moment because I keep asking for particular sets of strings and being told: We haven't got those any more, try these. So at the moment I'm trying Gibson, Dean Markley, Ernie Ball and La Bella.'

What of the story which has been going round for some time now about most of the different brands of strings all being made at the same two or three factories in America? 'This is absolutely true. There do seem to be differences though in the quality of manufacture. There are differences in the kind of tone and sustain you get. But the strings I always used to use were the La Bella *Super Slinky* which I really liked. I used those for years and then they stopped making the individual gauges. I had to change to Ernie Ball which I don't think are that well made. Then I tried Dean Markleys and they are very sort of growly but I don't think the tone is very good. I've just gone back to Gibsons which – after the others – sound pretty good. I'm using them at the moment.'

'I don't really like them this light but if you are bending chords, doing country licks bending two or three strings at the same time, up a tone or semitone, then you really need them that light. The tone is certainly better if you use slightly heavier strings.'

Richard demonstrated how he holds a vibrato at a stretch, first bending a string to take a note up in pitch and then using vibrato on the higher note. 'I can't even do that on a .009 top E, to be honest. For those sort of things I need the strings to be

a little bit lighter than standard.'

As we went on to talk about different guitar tunings I asked if *The Calvary Cross* was a number using such a tuning. The song received considerable critical acclaim when first released in 1974 on the *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* album for both the song and Richard's guitar playing. Richard confessed, 'I don't remember that one too well, actually.' After tinkering on his *Strat* for a minute or so he decided that it was probably in G played in standard tuning, but that the drone or modal effect was the result of him using two of the open strings as drones.

'On electric guitar I frequently use a bottom (E) string tuned down to D and also I use a D modal.' The modal tuning is as follows: Top E string tuned down a tone to a D, B string tuned down a tone to an A, G remains standard, D remains standard, A remains standard and the bottom E string is tuned down a tone to D.

'In the studio you can create particular effects and I probably retune a lot more. I might retune for one song or change strings completely.' Virtually creating a new tuning on the spot to make a musical idea physically possible? 'Yes, just to get a sound or a particular line. And sometimes something might sound a bit sloppy in the studio so you want to find a better way to do it. But basically on stage I don't retune that much at all. It's just too much hassle, tuning up and tuning back until everyone has fallen asleep by the time you have done it. The great one is to go into a funny modal tuning and forget about it and go straight into another number. That's always a great one, you have to be thinking incredibly quickly about how you're gonna play the song in the wrong tuning (laughs).'

Though Richard still basically goes for the traditional Robbie Robertson/Richard Thompson Fender guitar sound he does use a discreet amount of more recently developed processing between his vintage electric guitars and his vintage Fender *Deluxe Reverb* valve amp. He in fact

employs a Boss *Chorus*, a Boss *Echo Delay* unit and an MXR micro-amp. A Shobud volume pedal completes the circuit.

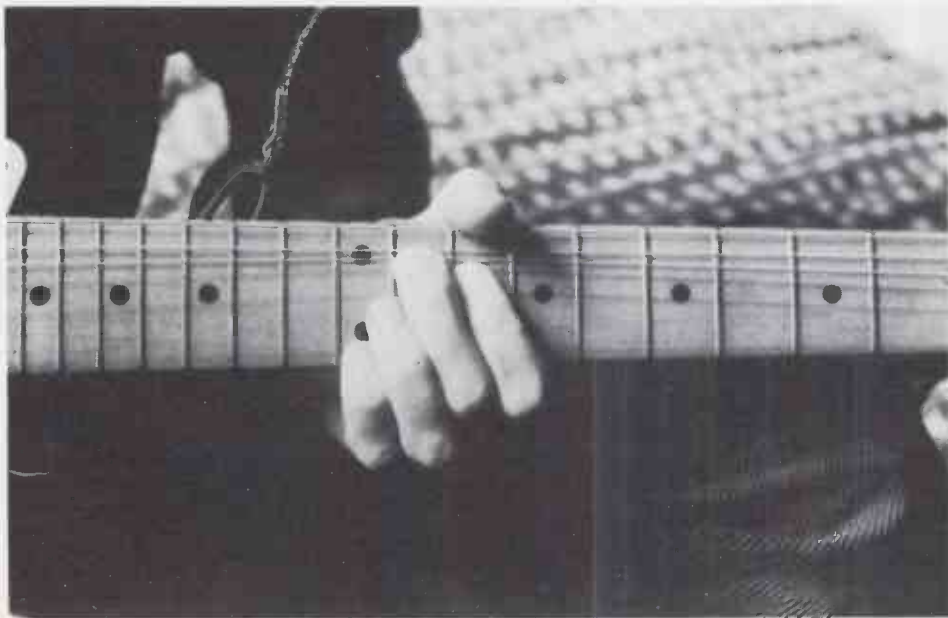
On the subject of live work I asked Richard for his feelings about his last tour which was the first series of dates on which he and Linda were a support act. Previously they have always headlined their own concerts (albeit at smaller venues) so they have always been virtually preaching to the converted on live dates. Supporting on the last Gerry Rafferty tour, they had to play to a huge new audience, many of whom were only there to hear *Baker Street*. I saw the Albert Hall gig. So how did Richard feel about going out on stage to convert an audience not composed of the fiercely loyal Thompson following?

'I find it very hard to convert people (laughs). I really enjoyed the Albert Hall because I thought we played really well. I thought the sound wasn't that bad for the Albert Hall and that's saying something. In the Albert Hall I think it is subjective, it depends on where you are sitting or standing, but I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it but I don't know if I could do it again, particularly in this country. I like the idea of larger bills, I think that is a good idea when you get three or four bands that have a similar audience. Like ourselves and the Albion Band or perhaps the McGarrigles or someone. Putting a package like that together I think is a good idea.'

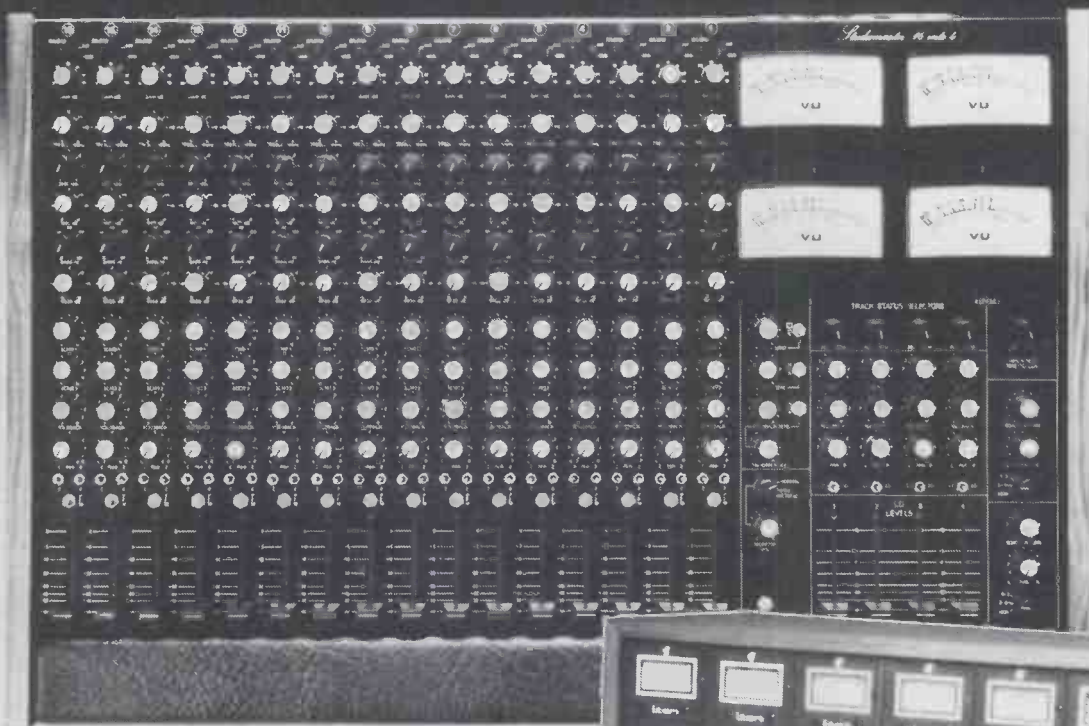
'I found it quite hard to play to Gerry's audience because I found them slightly immobile. Also the time we had: at the end of 45 minutes – which is what we had – I'm just about there. But it's interesting, I'm glad I did it but I don't know if I could do it again... willingly (laughs).'

On a point of personal preference I told Richard that I would have liked to hear *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* on the last tour. Is he in fact against playing better known songs from the Thompsons' early days? 'No, as long as it is brief and painless I don't mind. If it is painful I don't really think you are doing your audience a service at all. You can look happy, jump around and look as if you are enjoying yourself but if you are not really, I think people can tell. On the whole I think that the people that come to see us want to see something different.'

'That's the sort of feedback I get from people. They're always interested in new stuff and changing stuff. We try to rearrange numbers from the records as well, not play to the record but do new arrangements for our own interest as well as everybody else's. I think that music is really basically experimental and unless you keep changing it, it is dead. The definition of life is something which is moving. If it doesn't go anywhere you become trapped in the Bill Haley gig. The Kiss Curl Syndrome: keep your kiss curl plastered in the same place for 25 years and you'll be all right.' ■



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Hello? Hello? HELLO?



DOES ROCK MAKE YOU DEAF?

Noise is any random, meaningless sound – such as Prime Minister's question time, jets screaming overhead and howling machine tools. Power looms and steam engines are the first in a series of horrifically noisy British inventions, beginning *circa* 1760, so there is 240 years of evidence that noise can cause hearing loss. But *how much* noise causes *how much* hearing loss?

In an effort to find out, volunteers are subjected to high noise levels and the hearing loss of lifelong employees in noisy factories is tested. Unfortunately, the accuracy of audiometric tests is poor – say $\pm 10\text{dB}$ – because the subjects become familiar with the test method; daily variations in their states of consciousness and health, their imagination and their judgement and the amount of hair/wax blocking their ears all have a large bearing on the results!

It is rashly assumed that susceptibility to hearing loss is equal in all humans. Using classical statistics, we come up with a noise level that marks the onset of hearing loss. Finally, we assume causality – that is, loud noise *causes* hearing loss. An alternative and equally valid view in some of the hundreds of hearing loss cases is that noise-induced hearing loss is a *symptom* – not a cause; the 'he would have gone deaf anyway' argument.

Thus we have legislation based on the above assessment of 'how loud is dangerous', making a 90dB noise level the maximum you're permitted to endure in a 40-hour week at work. Of course this level is largely arbitrary because of the inaccuracies discussed above, but nobody is going to complain about enforced quietude at work. In addition, each 3dB

If you indulge in Tangerine Dream in the early hours of the morning, it's quiet; but nonetheless rock music is essentially loud. That's a reflection of its predominantly earthy, sensual, passionate and powerful nature, **writes Ben Duncan.**

Enter: Do-gooders, double standards, dubious statistics, measurements and scientific theories.

Exit: Personal liberty, common sense, democratic... (drone, drone)

Results: (1) A notable absence of rock music in Leeds, excluding the university.

(2) Musicians playing around the country are fearful of self-expression, lest they be cut off in their prime by blinking orange balls.

Officially, loud rock music is damaging to your health. But loud opera singers and cabaret acts are conveniently ignored, and local authorities may lay down maximum sound levels in their licensing conditions.

increase in level halves the permissible exposure to noise at work, hence 20 hours at 93dB, 10 hours at 96dB, and so on ad nauseum.

Then the 1984-style enemies of the human race/do-gooders made the *a priori* jump that they could equate punk rock with industrial noise. Whereupon an average (114dB) rock concert would be illegal after 9.4 minutes, while Ted Nugent would be deported after 17.2 seconds on stage! Fortunately it was 'noticed' that rock actually varies in sound level, so an SPL (Sound Pressure Level) equivalent to continuous industrial noise was de-

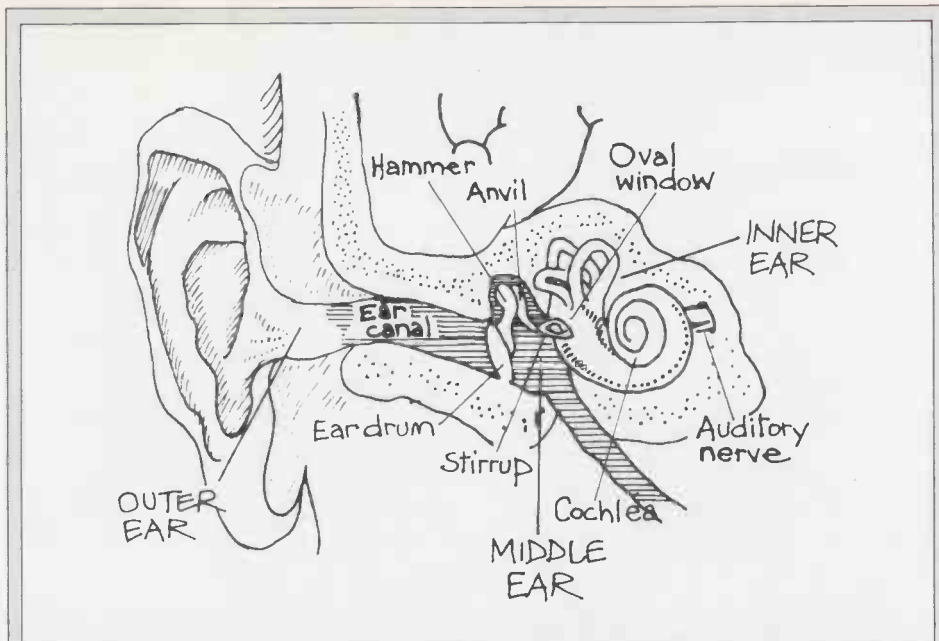
vised, called Leq (Equivalent Level).

For instance, a concert at an average level of 114dB might have an Leq of 108dB, because the music varies in level from 90 to 121dB. But while Leq might allow music to attain more realistic levels, a maximum level is then quoted that cannot be exceeded at any time. This is against the spirit of music which generates excitement by massive dynamic range – usually beginning quietly and building up to a crescendo of perhaps 120dB. For while the average level (Leq) might be low, the crescendo would exceed the maximum level. And Leeds city council ignores Leq altogether and merely quotes maximum level (102dB). In addition, sound level measurements are frequently 'weighted' – this means accounting for the subjective 'annoyance' of the noise. Weighted decibels are given subscripts – letters after – like: dB(A). This implies that low bass frequencies are largely ignored by the sound level meter, while midrange frequencies are slightly boosted.

But rock music exhibits wide variations in spectral density; disco material often has little midrange and lots of bass, so dB(A)s would allow quite high sound levels, while bands with strident midrange would be unduly penalised. None of the weightings currently in use could possibly suit the range of spectral density from Steve Hillage and Bob Marley to XTC and Sister Sledge! So every band, even every number, needs a personal dB weighting to give fair and consistent results!

Apart from the fact that rock music simply doesn't exist at levels below 102dB, the complexity of the legislation depletes and destroys creativity in musicians;

Illustration: Dave Henderson



The human ear is like a huge fish, it has gills through which it can breathe and . . . sorry. The human ear consists of three main areas when seen in cross section as above: the Outer Ear, the Middle Ear and the Inner Ear. Sound waves enter the Outer Ear along the Ear Canal on to the Ear Drum, making it vibrate. These vibrations are passed on to the Middle Ear's three tiny bones (the Hammer, the Anvil and the Stirrup), which transmit the vibrations through the Oval Window and into the Cochlea, a coiled tube filled with fluid that contains the organ of Corti, passing signals to the brain via the Auditory Nerve.

virtuosity evaporates when you have to worry about whether you've exceeded your Leq level or your maximum level or whether that bureaucrat out front with the sound level meter is reading dB(A)s or dB(C)s, and will they pull the plugs? Nor are there consistent standards: Leeds is so over-protective that rock fled, while elsewhere in the country you might meet out-of-action 'orange balls' in clubs and halls.

Moreover, double standards and the self-evident falsehood of applying industrial noise limits to music looks very much like a conspiracy against rock musicians. An opera singer, so journalist Barry Fox reminded us, can easily notch up 104dB (and therefore exceed the Leeds noise limit); a big band orchestra might reach 125dB; and *horror of horrors*, a rock drum kit can achieve 130dB! Mere audiences can make up a hearty 120dB and can therefore make the gig illegal before the first note is played. Naturally, other sources of loud noise such as

football matches, rallies, airports and urban motorways are largely exonerated from control, and local council guidelines are applied in a fashion that exclusively persecute rock music. It's sad that the manufacturer of an 'orange ball' noise controller provides an override switch which is, to quote, 'Useful for times when noise is not a problem, or during cabaret when cut-off is embarrassing.' Supposedly rock musicians suddenly finding themselves clutching dead guitars view their predicament with wild enthusiasm. It is a pity that psychiatric illness is so common in the UK manufacturing sector - can't the manufacturer grasp that arbitrary stops in any performance, be it drama, ballet or music, is as psychologically damaging to performers as withdrawal is to heroin addicts or unprepared lovers? And the sudden cessation of a high-energy concert with a psyched-up audience is not only distinctly unpleasant, but has potentially lethal consequences. Perhaps people *still* have

problems equating rock music with the other arts?

But let's shut the door on sophistry and exude the pragmatism that is so rare in zealous university professors and geriatric legislators. (*You what?* - Ed.) Live music is loud! For thousands of years, music has been loud! Jazz musicians using purely acoustic instruments experience very similar SPLs to many rock musicians. Unfortunately, after 80 years of jazz, the epidemic of widespread deafness that could be inferred from Leeds City Council's dilettantism is only notable by its absence. Heavy metal, characteristically extreme and invariably played at brain damage levels, has been with us 12 years. Where are all the stone deaf punters? Why doesn't Ozzy Osbourne have a hearing aid? Certainly some musicians are deaf; so are some conductors. And while 99% of British sex offenders drink tea, nobody has yet suggested that tea is a heinous aphrodisiac.

It's even been suggested that musicians who need more power on their monitors than 'out front' are showing signs of hearing loss. Emphatically, loud monitor systems are purely a result of musicians' natural cravings to bathe themselves physically in their music; a sensual desire that any rock aficionado will empathise with.

Finally, many speaker stacks are capable of producing levels of 135-140dB at zero distance. Levels of this order are capable of producing instantaneous hearing damage, yet punters who climb inside

Double standards and the self-evident falsehood of applying industrial noise limits to music looks very much like a conspiracy against rock musicians

bass bins and sound engineers who stand by their stacks to locate faulty drivers don't appear to suffer any permanent harm.

It seems reasonable to suggest that provided we *enjoy* what we hear (the difference between noise and music being in *your* head), provided we hear *music*, then we can tolerate levels way beyond industrial limits. Perhaps it's no coincidence that acoustic instruments developed over hundreds, even tens of thousands, of years can approach or exceed the threshold of pain (120-130dB) at close range. Loud music appears to be relatively harmless because: (1) If you like something, you can push back the threshold of discomfort, and 'if it doesn't hurt, it can't harm'; (2) Music, particularly rock, induces altered states of consciousness and normal physical limitations can be 'uprated'. Sceptics can go and study firewalkers or meditate on psychosomatic illness in reverse.

However, although the psychic mani-

Decibels dB	Relative power or intensity	Relative SPL (Sound Pressure Level)	Approx. apparent change in loudness to human ear	Typical relative amp powers	Music levels
140	x100,000	x330	x32	1000kW	Instantaneous hearing damage
130	x10,000	x100	x16	100kW	PAIN THRESHOLD ROCK JAZZ CABARET
120	x1000	x33	x8	10kW	
110	x100	x10	x4	1kW	
100	x10	x3.3	x2	100W	CLASSICAL DOMESTIC HI-FI
LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MAXIMUM LEVEL FOR MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT					
90	0	0	0	10W	
80	-10	-3.3	x.5	1w	



Punter narrowly avoids hearing damage by side-stepping Iron Maiden side fills; luckily this music lover enjoys a good sound system and is therefore unlikely to go stone deaf

festations inherent in a good concert appear greatly to uprate tolerance to high SPLs, there is one proviso: *loud* music must be *clean* music! Or, as studio designer Tom Hidley puts it, 'The ear wants to hear purity and will take more level when it hears it.'

'Dirty sound' is a product of muddy intermodulation distortion (or dissonance if you prefer) and gross colouration is the result of severely overdriven, under-powered rigs. It's simply *obnoxious* and you're probably familiar with the effects: nausea, giddiness, lassitude (ironically, very loud, very dirty sound is an *excellent* soporific), and crackling and buzzing in the ear lobes. These effects can occur well below the pain threshold: you can see from these symptoms that dirty sound has little to do with fuzz boxes and wound-up Marshalls. In this context, transistor PA amps are usually the culprits. By comparison, a clean sound system with low colouration (no painful 3kHz peaks please) can be simply wound up until bingo! it hurts: there are no immediate effects.

It's also been observed that very loud but clean sound systems don't cause ringing in the ears after the gig. Another useful danger sign is the degree and duration of threshold shifts. Naturally after a few hours of loud music, your ears take half an hour to adjust to everyday levels. But if you find you can't hear the cars in

the street for the next three days, then beware! This is temporary threshold shift as opposed to permanent threshold shift, which is jargon for stone deaf.

Temporary threshold shift is only dangerous insofar as music is concerned if it happens often; regular threshold shift leads to titinus (persistent ringing in the ears) and eventually to severe hearing loss – though it may take five to 25 years to manifest itself. Again, severe threshold shift doesn't seem to manifest itself in people who listen daily to very loud, yet clean, sound systems. Nonetheless, if your livelihood depends on sound, it makes sense to check out your pinkies, even if merely for reassurance. You may as well get value for your contributions to HM Inland Revenue by engaging in freebie NHS audiometric tests.

Bearing in mind that loud but dirty sound systems appear to be the *bête noire*, it's interesting to note that the original and frightening hearing loss statistic upon which Leeds City Council based their overprotective overkill limits were gathered from discotheques which almost invariably employ underpowered/overdriven 'devil may care' sound systems; presumably discotheques were thought to be 'representative' of live rock music throughout the land? On second thoughts, perhaps Robin Trower . . . On third thoughts, perhaps the MU should be printing 'Keep Music Loud' stickers. ■

MADE FOR EACH OTHER



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Letters

Write to: Sound International, Link House, Dingwall Avenue, Croydon CR9 2TA, England.

Lincs Lad Loves London Luthier

First I must thank you for an excellent magazine which I have been reading now for longer than I care to remember, and now the combination with *Sound International* makes it really value for money.

You asked on Gary Cooper's news page (October '80) to let you know of experiences with custom guitar makers and I am pleased to say mine has been a pleasant one. I have two bass guitars built by Chris Eccleshall of Ealing Common, London. I met him quite by accident at John Birch's in Birmingham while colliding with a Gretsch bass which had been customised. He asked me to visit his workshop in Ealing which I did and we have been good friends ever since. A design for a bass was discussed and eventually built.

The neck is similar to that of a double bass with a scroll on which the Schaller machine heads are mounted facing backwards – the neck is also easily detachable. The fingerboard is rosewood, slightly curved, narrower than normal at the nut broadening out like a double bass, scale length 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The body is shaped similar to a Gibson 335, being solid mahogany with a domed maple front. This was a compromise as a piece of maple thick enough for the whole body was not obtainable. There is no pickguard and all metal parts are gold-plated. The pickups are John Birch, the one at the bridge having been later replaced with a Fender Precision. The bridge/tailpiece is also by John Birch.

The guitar is now over ten years old and cost £150. At that time a Precision was £168, so it was real value-for-money. Pickups were a problem as there was not much choice at the time.

Strings have always been a sore point with me and I would welcome an article on different makes with players' views. I must have tried most makes over the years and have mainly used Gibson and Fender until I recently discovered La Bellas which are available in four gauges and are the best strings I have used so far. The worst set I ever bought were Rotosound and after playing for an hour had to change back to the ones I'd just taken off.

The guitar has stood the test of time very well and has had no major repairs or adjustments. The second bass was made as a spare. It has a standard Gibson 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ in scale neck with a TV Les Paul-shaped mahogany body, a single Guild pickup and a Fender bridge/tailpiece. Both guitars are a joy to play and have a good range of sounds through a trusty old Fender Bassman amp (pre-1960 vintage) with either two Goodmans 18in or two Celestion 12in speakers.

I would like to add that Chris also makes acoustic guitars and solid elec-



Rose-Morris stand under construction at Olympia earlier this year: see second letter for one reader's view of the British Music Fair.

tric mandolins. I hope you will follow up the article I mentioned with some of the experiences and views from readers, and will look forward to next month's issue.

From: Robert Geeson, South Witham, Grantham, Lincs, England.

Tony Bacon replies:

We published a bass string review some time ago in *SI* (March '79), when Steve York passed his comments on Ernie Ball, Fender, Rotosound, La Bella, Gibson, GHS, D'Angelico, Music Man, Guild, Darco, Dean Markley, Nashville Straights, Picato, Vinci, D'Addario and Sound City bass strings – and incidentally, Steve's favourite flatwounds at the time of the review were La Bellas. But it'd be good to find out guitarists' and bassists' current likes and dislikes in strings, so why not write and tell us about your experiences? Thanks for the compliments, we love 'em.

R-M Reach Olympian Heights

In your editorial (October '80) you asked for views of the British Music Fair. We were a little surprised when we arrived at Olympia and, dutifully following the signs marked Public Car Park, we found our entrance barred by a sign saying Advance Bookings Only. Must be a mistake, we said, and drove round again negotiating the seemingly unending line of tourists queuing at the Motorail next door ('Honest, Officer, I wasn't trying to hit them!'). But yes, the public car park was reserved for advance bookings, which presumably means the company reps.

Having parked in a side road half a

mile away we walked back to the exhibition hall and parted with the admission fee of £1.50 each. It is iniquitous to be charged to watch people selling their goods!

The main purpose of visiting the fair was to see if the Korg KR55 Rhythm Unit was as good as *SI* (July '80) and the fellas in Rose-Morris were saying ('Sounds just like drums, mate!'). So we made straight for the Rose-Morris stand which was conveniently placed right by the main entrance. (It became apparent later than this was because it was the only stand worth visiting.) Despite the alleged shipment problems which R-M had been pleading for the previous month ('They promised it would be here last week'), there was the machine we wanted to see, and what a machine! Everything our group needs in a drummer and as the R-M fella said, it doesn't get drunk and fall off his stool (I'm sure he knows our drummer). The important thing was that R-M had set up two demonstration booths with 'shows' every half hour and were willing to show anyone who wanted to listen how the equipment worked and to discuss it sensibly and fully. In two visits to the stand, we spent about half an hour listening to and discussing the machine, as a result of which we are buying, or have bought one (depending on the same shipment problem!).

Here was an example of a company who were prepared to demonstrate their products to the retailers and the public, who knew what they were talking about and were certainly not just there for the beer.

The other item we were keen on buying was a lead combo and so, after we had exhausted all the possibilities of the KR55, we naturally made for the Peavey stand. Reasonably priced,

good quality amps are their speciality, we thought (we already have a bass combo), and it was the natural place to look.

A greater contrast to R-M could not be imagined. There were plenty of amps on the stand, but no specifications were apparent and none were available for demonstration. After a time, one of the reps reluctantly came to talk to us. 'What's the output of this one,' we said. 'Don't know, it's written on the back!' We asked, foolishly, about the features of this particular amp and were told that if we turned this switch on, we'd get distortion, but if we turned on this switch we'd get more distortion and if we turned on all the switches, we'd still get distortion! He didn't bat an eyelid when I asked if we could still get distortion with the mains switched off, but when we asked if the amp could produce a clean undistorted sound he decided we were either practical jokers or drunk.

We found a better response on the Laney stand, but still no demonstration facilities and no reps who gave the impression that they had actually used the equipment they were trying to sell. The rest of the show was largely a waste of time (with the exception of the Shergold stand which was manned by the owners of the company who were obviously knowledgeable and very friendly, and which offered some demo facilities, although limited).

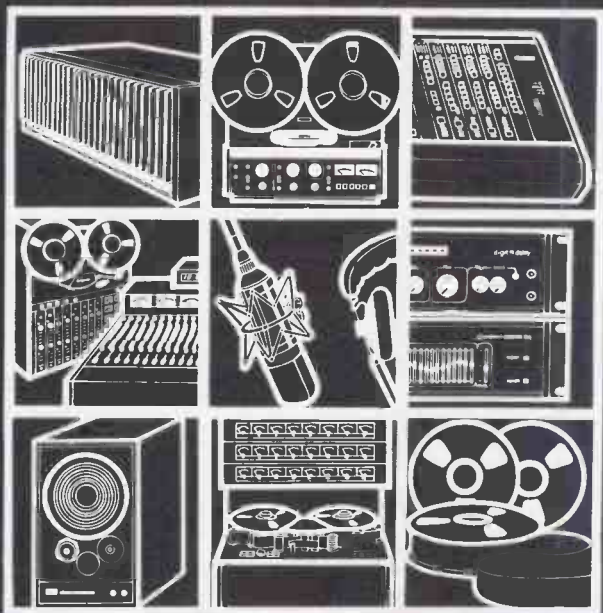
Where was the imagination and co-operation needed to produce an interesting show which could stimulate the public's interest and boost sales considerably? For example, why not a Shergold/Peavey demo stand? There was a demo for the Teac Portastudio (perhaps combined with a good microphone manufacturer), or if you want to be really ambitious, why not a small 8-track studio to demonstrate guitars, amps, mics, mixers, ADT and echo units and recording equipment and even perhaps drums as well?

It all depends on whether the makers and distributors really want to sell their goods or whether the reps regard the show as a short break from work. It can't be coincidence that Rose-Morris can't get enough Korg equipment to meet the demand because they were the only exception to what was otherwise a musical Smithfields market.

Incidentally, we found the *SI/BI* stand and there were a lot of people around, but it was close to the bar...

From: R P Hoyles, Beckenham, Kent, England.

What do you think of music shows? What do you think of the magazine? What do you think of the weather? This is the page to air your views – so be sure to drop us a line at the address above. You know it makes nonsense.



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The DIY Studio: Part Four

After an unfortunate two-month absence we're back on the DIY trail once again, and this month we'll be looking at property and how to deal with it. The first lesson is of course that all property is theft, but then you know that already and it hasn't helped you much so far. Specifically you need a home for that studio of yours, and you aren't going to get it without some sort of encounter with the complexities of land law. Of course, unless you are very brave or very stupid this is one job you will have to entrust to a solicitor, but so that you will have some idea what is going on this month's DIY Studio takes a look at what is involved when property changes hands. Let us begin with a brief historical sketch of the genesis of English land law, with apologies as usual to those north of the border and overseas. Perhaps one day we'll get round to doing the 'International DIY Studio'.

The first principle of land law is that all land belongs notionally to the Crown. This idea dates back to the Norman conquest, when land was surrendered to the new king. William himself found all this a bit of a bore and looked for ways to rid himself of part of the burden. He started to make grants of land to noblemen in return for certain services. In turn the noblemen did the same, and so on all the way down the chain, not including the Common People, who were serfs. Some of this land was permitted to be passed on from father to son, some of it returned to the Crown on the nobleman's death, and some was granted for a set term of years. The picture became more complicated when those nobles with an eye for a quick groat began to buy and sell their rights over land, and the original simple pattern quickly collapsed and was replaced by a multiplicity of different types of 'estate' or land interest. Things became clearer only in 1925 when the passing of the Law of Property Act reduced the number of legal estates that can exist in land to two, 'freehold' and 'leasehold'.

Freehold is a straightforward concept: it is the nearest our society comes to absolute ownership of land (and land includes any buildings thereupon). Leasehold is the type of relationship a tenant has with a 'landlord, but it is nonetheless a very powerful estate in land. Tenants have (in abstract terms) the same rights over a piece of land as a freeholder, providing they keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement. They can do what they like on the land, they can sell it or pass it along to their descendants during the years of their tenancy. In practice, there is a wide range of leaseholds, from the 999-year lease at a small ground rent,

to the periodic tenancy with a basic time period as short as one week, and each type has its own rules defined both by statute and the terms of the tenancy agreement. These serve to cloud the simple issues established in common law.

You will by now have decided whether you wish to lease premises or purchase. You have found a building you are interested in and have made initial checks on planning permission. The next step is opening negotiations. Since leasing is marginally less complicated let's look at that first.

Leasing

Necessary preliminaries for leasing include inspection of the property to see that it is everything it seems to be and that

Starting from the premise that 'All property is theft, but...' John Morrish untangles more of the tangled webs of intrigue called British law. This month: Getting Your Mitts on the Land.'

it is suitable for your purposes. Then you must discuss your proposed conversion work with your prospective landlord and confirm that he or she has no objections. You should discuss rent, the length of lease and all the other terms of the agreement. The lessee will ask you for references. You are in turn entitled to know whether the lessee is a freeholder or a leaseholder, in which case your solicitor is entitled to examine the terms of his or her lease to make sure he or she is permitted to sub-let and to permit change of use. After investigation you should be completely happy. This is your last chance to exit stage left before you enter upon the second phase, the 'contract or agreement for a lease'. This is a promise by both sides to conclude a lease. The landlord promises that he or she will grant the lease and the prospective tenant promises that he or she will take the lease upon the terms agreed. The agreement must be in writing and signed by both parties, and must state all the material terms of the agreement, in particular:

- a) the identification of landlord and tenant.
- b) the land and buildings to be leased.
- c) the commencement and duration of the lease.

d) the rent.

Alternatively, both parties may agree to move straight to the lease without first recording all the above details on a separate contract, but there must still be a memorandum recording the intention to conclude a lease.

The final stage is the lease itself. In practice, though there are exceptions, all transfers of land must be carried out by deed. This means an agreement drawn up by a solicitor and signed (in the presence of a witness), sealed and delivered. A lease by deed comes in two parts, the *lease* which is executed by the landlord and delivered to the tenant, and the *counterpart* which travels in the opposite direction. All the details should be identical. If they should differ the lease prevails. The documents are usually on parchment or special durable paper.

The lease is a very complicated document, drawn up in most cases by the landlord's solicitor. Any book on Landlord and Tenant law will give you examples of what it includes, but here's an outline. A lease by deed comes in seven parts:

- a) *The Preamble* comprising the date of the lease, and the names and descriptions of the parties.
- b) *The Parcels*, that is the property changing hands.
- c) *The Demise*, the operative words for the hand-over of the property.
- d) *The Habendum* specifying the quantity and quality of the lessee's estate, starting with the words 'to have and to hold', and stating the duration of the lease and when it is to start.
- e) *The Reddendum* specifying the rent to be paid, when and how.
- f) *The Covenants* which are the formal obligations of each party to the other.
- g) *The Provisos and Conditions* giving details of how the lease may be terminated before time and how the landlord may enter in cases of non-payment of rent, and other incidental conditions.

Of these, the only one likely to differ widely in each individual case is the list of Covenants, which are the rules of the leasehold agreement. Certain covenants are implied by the law, like the covenant by the tenant to pay rent, and by the landlord to allow the tenant 'quiet enjoyment' of the property. Most are expressed, in the lease, and are wide-ranging, including in some cases prohibitions on sub-letting the property, or worse in this case, on 'developing' the property by changing its use or making alterations. Before you sign on the dotted line you should obviously study the lease carefully with assistance from a competent solicitor.

Small Island off the Coast of Europe Discovers Land Law

1066 - NORMAN CONQUEST

Once you've got the keys and are occupying the building as a *bona fide* business tenant you are then in a good position. Providing you abide by the covenants and pay your rent on time, your security of tenure is well protected by the law, even once the original lease has run out. Recognising that eviction at the end of the period specified in the terms of the original lease would mean disaster for most business users with an established trade and customers ('goodwill'), the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act made provision for the business tenant to be granted a lease or given compensation.

Despite the undoubted theoretical complications of Landlord and Tenant law it all works smoothly in practise, providing, of course, that you can establish a reasonable relationship with your prospective landlord. Cave Studio were lucky in this respect, their landlord allowing them access even before they'd signed the lease. 'In short, he said he didn't really care at all what we did with the place,' recalls Andy, and Bill concurs, 'He could see that we meant business and we were going to upgrade it... (he) was very sympathetic to us.'

So now all you prospective tenants can go and get on with something useful like reading up on acoustics for next month, while the rest of us delve into that quaint old institution, property ownership. In practice, of course, the division between freehold and leasehold is not clear-cut. If you wish to take occupancy of a piece of land which the present occupier holds on a 999-year lease at a small ground rent you will have to purchase the leasehold of the property in exactly the same way, and for a similar amount of money, as if you were purchasing the freehold. The practical differences between purchase and leasing are significant only when short leases are involved at rents that accurately reflect the current value of the property. Leasehold and freehold are both purchased in the same way, by a process called 'conveyancing'. Conveyancing concerns itself with establishing and transferring the 'title' (that is the *entitlement*) to a piece of land.

Purchase of freehold or long leasehold property

Traditionally, title is proved by producing all the documents relating to the property and its various changes of ownership from what is called 'the root of the title' (usually a purchase deed at least 15 years old) down to the present owner. This is still the case with a large number of property dealings where the title is said to be 'unregistered'. Registered title on the other hand is proved by one document, a *Land Certificate*. This system was introduced by the Land Registration Act of 1925 and so far it covers Greater London and all the large cities and is gradually being extended elsewhere. When a title is said to be registered it means that Land



William, the Conqueror, is a tough ruler into D.I.Y. theft (all property is theft, already!) He owns all the land, but soon gets into wheeling and dealing (like most rulers)...

LISTEN, BARDON, I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR CASTLE AND ESTATE IF YOU HELP ME KNOCK THOSE ANGLO-SAXONS DEAD...

The Common People (or Serfs) don't get a look in - centuries pass before they get rights to own land (time drags by real slowly when you're dispossessed)...



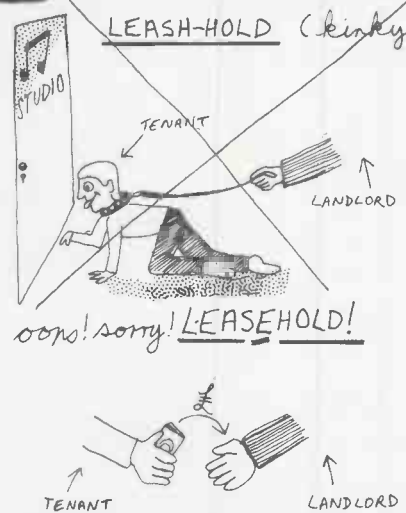
BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES FOR ONE AND WAVES THE RULES FOR THE OTHER.

1925 - LAW OF PROPERTY ACT

FREEHOLD



LEASE-HOLD (kinky!?)



(still looks kinky to me...)

P.S. Give me the English Land Law and I'll set it to music, but please, not another cartoon...

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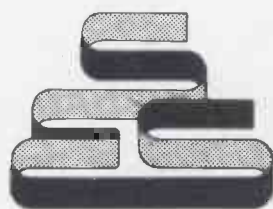
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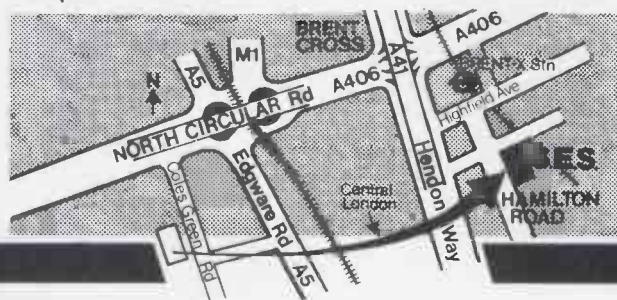
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Registry officials have investigated the title and have issued a Land Certificate which is then the only document needed to deal with the property and prove ownership, except in the case of short leasehold property where you need the land certificate and the appropriate lease.

Sadly, whether the piece of land you wish to purchase has a registered title or not is unlikely to make much difference to the length of time the process takes or the size of the bill you get from your solicitor.

Once again, this is not something you can tackle without the help of a solicitor, although some plucky souls have been known to do their own conveyancing in the case of house purchase. The added complications of commercial conveyancing render this less than practical as a DIY exercise. But here's an outline of the procedure to help you keep up with your solicitor.

The first step depends upon you deciding whether you want the property and whether you are prepared to pay what is being asked. You should have the property valued by a qualified surveyor and valuer. If you are borrowing money and securing it against the property, the people lending it to you will send a valuer, but despite the fact that you will have to pay for the survey you probably won't be allowed to see it. So you are well advised to have your own valuation done, especially if you are planning alterations, since you will need to know accurately the condition of roofs, walls and floors. If satisfied you can tell the vendor that you are seriously interested in buying the property and between you, you can agree a price, but you must not sign anything, and must make it clear that any verbal agreement you have made is 'subject to contract'.

From now on both parties, purchaser and vendor, will have to leave things very much in the hands of their solicitors. Obviously they must keep in close touch, but beyond that their involvement is not likely to extend much beyond signing the necessary legal documents. The first of these is the 'contract'. This states the terms of the sale: the identity of the land, the people involved, the price, the nature of tenure to be transferred, and any restrictive covenants or provisos. It is not unlike the 'contract for a lease' mentioned earlier. A draft of this is drawn up by the vendor's solicitor and a copy sent to the purchaser's solicitor.

The purchaser's solicitor has, meanwhile, been making various local enquiries, specifically to the Register of Local Land Charges to see what outgoings the land is liable to, and to the Local Authority to check on anything that might impinge upon the property or its value. Next the draft contract is looked over to discover the type of title held by the vendor, the existence of any restrictive covenants and so on. In the light of this information (or the lack of it) a list is then drawn up of what are called 'preliminary

enquiries' pertaining to the vendor's title, and are sent to the vendor's solicitor. The vendor's solicitor replies, and if the purchaser's solicitor is satisfied he may make what are called the 'pre-contract searches'. The first goes to the Central (not local) Land Charges Register, where entries against the name of the vendor and previous owners (rather than against the land) are checked. The second (if dealing with unregistered property in an area of compulsory registration) is a search of the Land Registry's Index Map. The purchaser's solicitor then examines all the replies to these searches, and if both the ps and client are satisfied and if all the financial arrangements of the purchaser are secure they arrange a date for completion of the sale with the vendor and the solicitor. Any final modifications to the contract are now made, and it is then 'engrossed' (unlike anybody wading through this) which means two identical copies are made. The purchaser now signs his or her copy and sends it to the vendor's solicitor with the deposit. In return, the vendor signs his or her copy and sends it to the purchaser, with the title **THE AGREEMENT FOR THE SALE OF THE PROPERTY IS NOW LEGALLY BINDING**, even though the conveyancing procedure is only half completed.

By now, the purchaser has paid a deposit on the property, and would be well advised to take out insurance since he is now legally responsible. And the vendor's solicitor has provided the purchaser's solicitor with the title, that is proof of ownership. In the case of unregistered land this means copies or abstracts of the chain of deeds from the root of title to the present owner. In the case of registered land, all this was checked at the time of registration, so the vendor need only provide office copies of Land Register entries (plus in either case a copy of the lease if the property is leasehold). The purchaser's solicitor then checks these documents rigorously to seek out any irregularities or illegalities. If there are any queries he or she draws up a list, called 'Requisitions on Title' and sends it to the vendor's solicitor.

If the replies are satisfactory, the purchaser's solicitor draws up a draft of the all-important purchase deed. This will be either a 'conveyance' (for unregistered freeholds), an 'assignment' (for unregistered leaseholds) or a 'transfer' (for registered titles). Of these the simplest document is the transfer. The draft is sent to the vendor's solicitor who checks it and returns it. The purchaser's solicitor now engrosses the deed (ie, prepares a fair copy in the prescribed style) and the stage is set for the deed's execution.

In more leisurely times, this momentous act would be performed with both parties meeting at the offices of one's solicitor. Nowadays the deed, after being signed and sealed in the correct fashion and before a witness by the purchaser, is

often delivered by Royal Mail. The vendor's solicitor receives it and holds it while the final stages before completion take place. The purchaser's solicitor, meanwhile, goes back to the central Land Charges Register or the Land Registry just to make sure nothing has been added since having last looked. And the purchaser makes arrangements to hand over the money for the property. Cash is rather impractical, and your normal cheque book and £50 guarantee card is not quite up to the job. Nor is Access acceptable. The answer is a bank draft, a cheque drawn not on your account but on the bank's. Rest assured, this is not a gift. The bank will expect you to give them the money first.

Then, at long last, comes completion. And even here it seems unlikely that both parties and their solicitors will meet face to face. The vendor sends the original title documents (up till now only copies have been seen and your solicitor checks them). You hand over the money, and in return you receive the purchase deed duly signed, sealed, and delivered, and the keys, although you may well have been given these at an earlier stage. For you then, the purchase is completed, all you have to do now is pay for it. Your solicitor has a few more chores like informing the Inland Revenue and Land Registry of the transfer.

The above account is based upon the usual progress of a domestic conveyance. Commercial property makes everything that little bit more complicated in that full attention must be paid to establishing the the property's proposed use is not prevented or hindered by any long-standing covenant or by any decision of the Local Authority. This means that you must keep your solicitor accurately informed of your intentions.

If you need any convincing that property transfer is a no-go area for all but the highly experienced professional, the convoluted saga of Spaceward's negotiations to purchase the freehold of their old school should serve that purpose. When they heard about the building through the regular mailing list of a local estate agent they were immediately sufficiently impressed to have a survey done and to have plans drawn up by an architect and submitted to the local planning authority. Then, having ascertained that there was a strong likelihood of permission being granted, they started negotiations to purchase and almost immediately ran into problems. It seems that the price at which the building was originally offered was subject to a certain amount of 'upward mobility' when a rival buyer (whom Gary now considers 'totally fictitious') entered the fray, enabling the vendor to ask for more money. In terms of money already spent Spaceward were already committed so they were unable to call the vendor's bluff. Next: designing to your own specifications. ■

Sound ADVICE

edited by

Gary Cooper

Only published letters will receive replies:

Putting The Juice Back In Orange

Following Gary Cooper's recent article regarding the shut-down of Orange Musical Industries' manufacturing plant, in which he suggested serious implications for musicians who now own either Orange or Omece products, or are considering a future second-hand purchase: As a main dealer and service centre for Orange prior to their closure, we feel we should clarify the position.

Since the shut-down earlier this year, we decided to take the initiative in providing a central service facility for their range of products currently in use. With the co-operation of the various manufacturers we were able to advise all dealers, in the form of a mailing shot, that all schematics, circuit diagrams, spare parts and general service information were now available direct from ourselves. Each week this information was included, together with our weekly advertisement, in the *Melody Maker*.

As we both have a mutual concern in providing continuity of service data and parts for Orange owners, and in the interests of your own readership, perhaps you may consider this information worth publishing.

From: K Ireland, Rhodes Music Co, 22 Denmark Street, London WC2, Tel: (01) 836 4656.

What 'kin Speaker?

My speaker in my WEM Dominator Mk III combination has finally passed on and I have therefore decided to perform a major transplant operation with two new speakers (one in a separate cabinet). What I would like to know is a) what is the recommended speaker impedance of this amp? and b) if I used two 8Ω speakers, how shall I wire them, series or parallel?

From: B Hadley, Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex, England.

The WEM Dominator runs normally at 16Ω and so your best bet is to replace your existing speakers with two 8Ω units (capable of handling the WEM's 50 watt output) and wire them in series to give you a total of 16Ω.

Reels Of Rust For Revox

I own a Revox B77 (Lo-Speed) tape deck and plan to buy a second-hand Teac 3340 deck in the next few weeks. From reading the stereo tape recorder

To Lab or To JX, Is That A Question?

I was interested to read the article on discount retailers in this month's *SI/BI*. As a newcomer to the district I would be grateful to know of any discount dealers in the London area. Also, have you tested any of the Yamaha JX Series or Lab Series amps and if so, can I obtain the appropriate back copy of *SI*?

From: R Lee, Beckenham, Kent, England.

I've published this letter at least partly to further the whole discussion on

but, hopefully, better service. For that reason I would suggest that you are very careful where you tread in the discount market and look around for dealer ads which will tell you where these people are. I honestly don't know enough about them to recommend anyone in particular. Any other readers got opinions on this subject?

The fact that you are looking for reviews of both JX and Lab Series seems very odd indeed. Surely the Yamaha JXs are cheapies and the Lab Series high quality and fairly high-



discount retailing. Since the column which brought this subject up was published, a few disturbing stories about discount retailers have filtered back to me from manufacturers and their customers. To combat what they see as a service problem, Peavey, for example, have announced that they are to operate a franchise-only system from now on. In other words only dealers who are tied to Peavey (and a condition of this is attendance at a Peavey service and sales clinic) will be allowed to stock it. No discounts now

reviews in your October issue I gathered that some adjustments need to be made to the machines for using different types of tape. I would be grateful if you could explain exactly how this is done with reference to these particular decks and what the required settings would be for which tapes? Also, what are the most suitable types of tape for these machines?

From: Phil Cockerham, Leeds, England.

The answer to this is a rather petulant. 'No! shan't!' I'm afraid. It's a bit like that old story about Rolls Royce: if you need to ask the price then you can't

priced pro ranges? The Yamahas haven't been tested for this mag, but a Lab Series L5 was reviewed back in June '79. From personal experience (limited with the Yamaha to a JX 30B bass combo) I'd say that the Lab Series are excellent (especially at the new lower prices), and the JX range is OK for what it is if my one sample was anything to go by. Not at all in the same league, however. If you want a Yamaha which rates nearer to the Lab, try the Yamaha G100 212 Series II - now that is a nice tranny guitar amp!

afford it. In this case if you need to ask what to do then it's a fairly safe bet that it's a bit too technical to undertake. The best way to handle this tape compatibility problem is to take both machines along to a pro-audio dealer and pay them to adjust the bias levels to suit one particular brand of tape which you intend to use as standard. Just for the record, Teac UK recommend Maxell UD and if this would be the tape that you'd want to use then you should tell the service agent that you want both machines set for this tape. You could try contacting Erricks of Bradford who should be able to help.

Parisienne Pickups: Power Or Polepieces?

I've got a problem. Well, that's an understatement, I've got several problems but this one concerns my 1972 Gibson SG Special which I value higher than life itself. It's perfect except for one annoying thing. When bending a string I totally lose sustain when it travels between two polepieces. When playing a slow melody such as Gary Moore's *Parisienne Walkways* or Santana's *Europe*, any time I bend a string and it ends up directly between two polepieces the sustain decays. Is there any way I could connect the polepieces along the top so as to balance their pull? I have never been a great believer in pedals or effects boxes as I think that artificial aids only spoil the sound of the guitar and I prefer to use just the guitar and a good valve amp. I'd be grateful for your advice.

From: Alan Kennedy, Sheffield, Yorks, England.

Firstly, excuse me for shortening your letter slightly. To try and cram as many as I can on to one page it would help if readers could try and keep things as succinct as possible. Now to the question. It's almost impossible to answer one like this without seeing you play because there could be many causes, not least of which could be technique. Assuming that this isn't the problem and that your amp is properly steaming when you're playing then it's probably down to the guitar itself. Several possibilities are that a) the strings are too low and that as you bend up the next fret cancels (at least in part) the note you're reaching for, b) the strings are too light gauge, c) you're going for a sound which Gary Moore gets from a much more powerful guitar (a '58 Les Paul). This guitar of yours isn't the most powerfully picked-up axe that Gibson have ever made and it might be that you may have to replace the existing pickups with other Gibsons to get the power you need. I do rather suspect the strings and action here, though, and would recommend that you take the guitar along to your largest local Gibson dealer to see what he reckons. Without seeing the axe for myself it is hard to be more accurate than that. Sorry.

Keep 'Em Coming!

Don't forget to keep your odd queries piling in to the address shown below in the black panel. Try to give as much information as possible about your problem, and (as I've pointed out in the letter above) try to keep your questions as brief and to the point as you can. So, out with those pencils!

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BATTLE OF THE BANDS



This is your last chance to enter the Burns Battle Of The Bands, the nationwide talent competition sponsored by Burns and *SI/BI*, now reactivated after some previous technical problems. To all those who entered the competition via the July issue of *BI*, or the August and September issues of *SI/BI*, you will be shortly receiving a letter informing you of the time and the venue for your heat.

Heats will start in the new year, and bands entering on the coupon below will also receive details of their heat by post. The closing date for ALL entries is 31st December 1980. Backline, PA and mixing-person will be available at all heats and the final. The judges will comprise a representative of Burns, a member of the editorial team of *SI/BI* and a local person involved in music.

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Please note that the employees of both Burns Redmere and Link House Publications Ltd are ineligible for entry.

THE RULES

The competition is open to all amateur and semi-pro bands and soloists in Britain. There is no entry fee: simply fill in the appropriate form below and send it to BURNS BATTLE OF THE BANDS, 22 Coronet Street, London N1. If possible, send a photo of your band, but remember photos cannot be returned.

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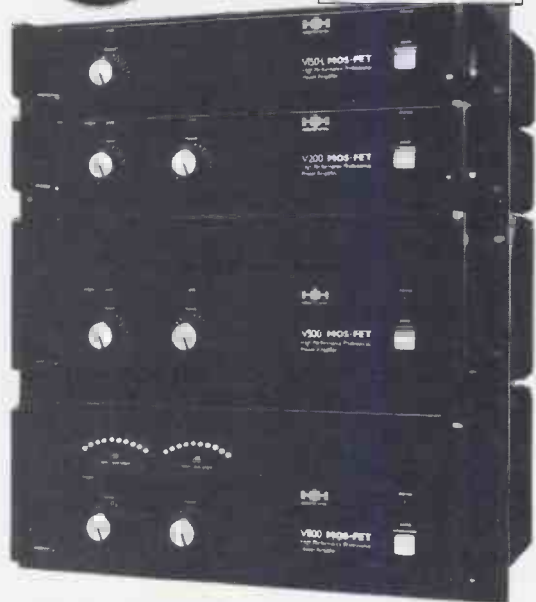
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Roger Adams



And now, over to our history department, he announced, donning his 'Connoisseur of modern electric guitar design as an art-form' hat, surreptitiously nicked from beneath the folds of the Ayatollah Delft's burnoose while he was looking for someone to talk to at the recent Olympia shindig. Actually, he may not be an Ayatollah at all, you know – he probably thought that as he was visiting Olympia, he'd better go as a god. Only kidding Stephen, you are (*were?* – Ed) doing a grand job.

In 1958, the Gibson guitar company built 100 guitars of an unprecedented design, called them *Explorers*, and promptly ceased production because popular opinion regarded them as being hideously ugly. Result – a collectors' item, and a real status symbol for certain rich guitar heroes of the present day, whose taste is all in their mouth. Yes folks, I've given it away already: this is one of those guitar designs I wish I'd never laid eyes on – if only they'd sent me the Hamer

Roger Adams is guitarist with High Profile, and drives 3-tonners too.

Sunburst! Anyway, fair's fair – I'll do the test blindfold.

Back to the history lesson. According to the text and photographs in Mr Bishop's book, *The Gibson Guitar From 1950*, which has become something of a work of reference, in this country at least, the originals had korina bodies, two humbuckers, three rotary controls and a large and unsightly scratch plate covering approximately 30% of the top of the body. Apparently, most of the originals are now accounted for, belonging to players like John Entwistle, Eric Clapton and Rick Derringer. The Book also informs us that good examples have changed hands for \$5000, which comes as no surprise bearing in mind their scarcity. This sort of price tag is actually one of the few cases for calling the Hamer *Standard* a value-for-money instrument at its UK recommended retail price of £790, with case.

Paul Hamer and his partner Joel Dantzig, presumably having gained close experience of *Explorers* as authorised repairers of Gibson guitars, saw a need for the re-introduction of this legendary design, with one or two modifications. Their *Explorer* has now become a familiar sight, in various wild colour schemes,

dangling from the neck of Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen, who would seem to bear the same close identity with the *Explorer* design as Eric with 'Stormbringer', with equally lethal results.

When I first saw the guitar, it took a long hard look to figure out which way up it's supposed to go; I could have referred to a photo of Rick Nielsen in action, but I would have first had to decide which way up Nielsen was. Tricky. I tried playing it instead, and soon had the thing sorted out neck to the left, and the various other angles and promontories distributed across the front of my torso and below my right forearm. It started to feel fine till I glanced in a mirror and immediately lost my balance! Also, I still can't get used to the way the head appears to be pointing to something interesting on the floor. But this is getting silly. You want to know how good the guitar is, how good Hamers are in general, and whether or not to spend your (presumably) hard-earned money on this instrument. I shall endeavour to be of assistance.

Finally made it to the Review again!

Let's make one thing clear from the start. No matter what I think of the *Explorer* design, and with the exception of a few small criticisms I have of this particular instrument, I bear the news that Hamers seem excellent instruments, not especially from the point of view of revolutionary features, advanced electrics or miraculous hardware. They impress me with their exceptional playability, and their standard of setting-up. The guitar reviewed felt so comfortable I had to keep reminding myself that there were odd bits sticking out here and there that might catch on furniture, mic stands, drum kits *etc* when manoeuvring the instrument in confined spaces (*eg* most of the gigs I seem to do!). You feel so much at home playing the instrument you'd better be careful not to casually prop it up against your amp afterwards as you would most guitars, because of course it can't stand up on its own. This brands the guitar as an expensive toy, not a guitar for everyday use. I should imagine a busy session player would soon want to be rid of it.

The Hamer differs from the original Gibson in several respects. The obvious departure is in the use of a one-piece mahogany (with added book-matched carved maple) top, bound around the





(for Hamer) twist in the market, the pickups do actually sound OK, giving as full a tone as can be expected from such a light, slim guitar.

They appear, allowing for the black and white rhythm pickup, to be of the PAF type, which gives a much sweeter tone than the *Super Distortion*, featured as an option on many other makes. As the purpose of the guitar is to re-introduce a vintage design, the PAF is a good choice; it is supposed to emulate the sound of the original large Gibson humbuckers as used on the first *Explorers*. One must remember, however, that at current prices, the pickups account for a mere £40 or so of the £790 asking price. And there is a certain amount of string pull up the neck on the bottom E string, giving the familiar *Strat* 'double note' problem.

There is not a plethora of potentiometers! (A what?) Two volumes, one tone and a three-way selector switch is the sum total of the electrics. Actually, there is a jack socket as well. It takes a lot of finding when you've got the guitar strapped on, but I know it's there somewhere.

The distinctive features of the electrics are a) the tone control is very effective indeed and b) the middle position of the selector gives both pickups 'out of phase' – stinging treble, no depth. If you back off the tone rotary, some nice bluesy sounds à la early Fleetwood Mac are available. It would have been nice to have the choice of in or out of phase, though, as the sound of two humbuckers in phase is useful for melody lines.

Guitar reviewers used to comment about the proximity of the volume control for 'violin' effects, but as nobody seems to do that anymore, I won't bother to tell you that the positioning facilitates this effect.

I am quite in favour of reducing the number of controls from Les Paul's conventional layout, so often copied with no thought, and the Hamer's controls are simple and effective, despite offering limited permutations. I don't, however, find much to like about the shape of the knobs – they're difficult to grasp and too small.

On to the hardware. Machines are the small, metal-cased Schallers, mounted Fender-style down one side of the absurdly-angled head. Tuning on this head is far from comfortable, and the player ends up doing a passable impersonation of a limp-wristed Larry Grayson as he or she fumbles for the correct machine. Individually, however, they all work well, as

edge, instead of the original solid korina body. I always

like to see this kind of top to a guitar body, as it is one of the best areas for guitar makers to show their worth on a solid electric.

Bearing in mind the shape of this instrument, the decision to do the top of the body this way shows imagination and great confidence. The sunburst effect is extremely tasteful, not too violently red or orange, as only natural dyes are used. The plain white binding, however, leaves room for elaboration on an instrument of this price, without going beyond the bounds of good taste. One thing this firm does not worry about generally is going over the top (quadrophonic 12-string basses?).

I note incidentally that Hamer have done without a scratch plate of any description. Whereas I agree that Gibson had it all wrong with their piece of plastic, there must be a complimentary shape somewhere in the further reaches of geometry to suit the body, and surely that fine top deserves some protection from fierce picking? It is my experience that scratches appear on a guitar top all too frequently as a result of the plectrum-hand scrabbling for the selector switch, and with this instrument's layout, a pick-guard of some description would help greatly.

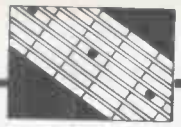
My major criticism of this guitar is that, apart from its shape, you get nothing out of the ordinary. You can specify crown-shaped fingerboard inlays, of course, but that's about it. Pickups are DiMarzio humbuckers; Larry D being a friend of Paul Hamer, the Hamer guitars were the first to feature DiMarzio pickups. Unfortunately, following ruthless price-cutting in this country, the DiMarzio is now one of the cheapest and commonest custom pickups available, and has consequently undergone a lessening of status. For the price of this guitar, you could reasonably expect a pickup unique to Hamer, not this sort of readily-available replacement humbucker – although in Hamer's early days before DiMarzio flooded the market this was true. One presumes DiMarzio and Hamer still have an arrangement for something a bit special to be set aside for the oldest customer! Disregarding this unfortunate

we expect from Schallers. The small bridge offers individual tuning for scale length on each string, plus height adjustment of the whole unit. The height adjusting screws can be turned easily enough while the guitar is tuned up, although the lack of width of the bridge unit, and its close proximity to the bridge pickup surround, mean that a lengthy turn is impossible as there's not enough room for your fingers to get a good grip.

The nut is interestingly cut, with some of the slots at a rakish slant to accommodate the strings stretching across from the steeply angled head. What the long term effects on string wear may be, I cannot say, but the guitar is tunable, and you can bend strings quite easily. It is a relief to find that the nut is well set up, as it would surely be a difficult task to lower the action at this end, retaining the correct shape of the slots.

Although I appreciate that a good rosewood fingerboard is acceptable on a professional-quality guitar, I always prefer good ebony as it is a much harder and more durable wood. I suspected at first that Hamer decided to use rosewood to preserve the 'vintage' feel of this particular model, until I read in the accompanying literature that all Hamer's guitars, including the *Sunburst* models, which are an original design, use rosewood. I conclude that he avoids ebony either out of personal taste, or from lack of suitable quality timber.

There are many areas of construction where this instrument, were it not *Explorer*-shaped, could be said to deny its price: for example, the ordinary cheap-looking Gibson-style tailpiece; the rosewood, dot-inlaid fingerboard; the orthodox pickups. There is nothing either exclusive or expensive about any of these items individually. Therefore, the guitar must justify its price purely and simply by its quality of construction and its standard of setting up. Luckily, with the possible exception of a rather 'flexible' neck, in both these areas it excels. It is beautifully finished and the slim neck, highly reminiscent of the Guild *S60*, plays well enough right up to the top fret to attract top players. (Short-sighted top players?) Having presumably been asked as repairers and customisers to apply their craft to some slipshod examples of American guitar manufacture, Messrs Hamer and Dantzig realise only too well that there is no substitute for painstaking care in finishing the job properly. Their standard of fretting is proof enough of this. Whereas many a top name production guitar must pay a visit to the workshop to realise its full potential, the manufacture



of the Hamer guitar obviously rests in the hands of craftsmen. I hope for this reason that the Hamer company does not out-grow itself, for its strength lies in its attention to detail. However, perhaps a cautionary note: I should mention here that there is a very slight blemish in the lacquer where the bottom edge of the fingerboard overlaps the body, between the 21st and 22nd frets, and that the tone pot, effective though it is, feels rough. Watch it, lads!

Conclusion

For £790, you can buy yourself one helluva guitar if you shop around among the various vintage instruments available privately, or from specialist dealers, although you probably won't find an original *Explorer*. The Hamer, excellent guitar though it is, is not in itself a collectors' item, and this factor must be borne well in mind when parting with this sort of cash; at this end of the market you ought either to be buying something absolutely revolutionary, like a B C Rich for example, or making an investment. You don't get £790-worth of materials, gadgetry etc with this guitar, but craftsmanship has a price of its own. The real crunch is, however, that you can get an equally well-finished Hamer, with the same electrical components, beautiful woodwork and the rest, for over £300

cheaper (if you can possibly force yourself to live without the *Explorer* shape) by buying one of the *Sunburst* series; these look like real value-for-money instruments and don't have the obvious working pitfalls of that crazy shape.

However, I wish Hamer guitars in general a happy future in this country. Now that Gibson have themselves reintroduced the *Explorer* (the *Explorer II*, rrp £000) in a flashily-equipped guise with all their current features – which I deliberately refrained from mentioning earlier for fear of prejudicing the reader from the start – I personally feel that Hamer could think about removing this model from their standard-production plans, and concentrate on their *Sunburst* design, with perhaps more variety available in the electrics offered. While the Gibson *Explorer* was unavailable, Hamer filled a gap in the market. This is not so now, especially if our 'slightly potty' (sic) colleague Robin Millar is to be believed when he suggests that Gibson are currently making excellent up-market guitars (see *Les Paul Artist* review, Sept '80). Nor should one disregard Washburn who have introduced in the *A20 Stage* series a very *Explorer*-influenced instrument with many interesting features for £500 less. Who knows, if Hamer were to withdraw their version, it might become a collectors' item itself, a couple of decades from now!

Addenda

- i) Regarding the case – the shape of the guitar dictates a vast carrying case, thankfully included in the price. The fit is not quite perfect, and I am a little worried about a conventional case offering sufficient protection for that strangely-angled head, although I am prepared to admit that it probably looks more fragile than it is.
- ii) Regarding the inlays in the fingerboard – as I have said, you pay an extra £55 for crown inlays on the *Explorer*-shaped Hamer *Standard*, whereas if you wish to have crown inlays on the Hamer *Sunburst*, the price increases from £420 to £450 – a difference of only £30, which is a substantially smaller charge for what appears to be the same job. Why the extra £25, Paul?

Postscript

I have just witnessed what appeared to be Carlene Carter (Mrs Nick Lowe to you) strumming an *Explorer*-shaped acoustic of unknown manufacture, complete with deep body and round hole, on that well-known televised lunatic asylum *Tiswas*. Never have I seen a more justified custard pie than that which terminated the appearance of the monstrosity. □

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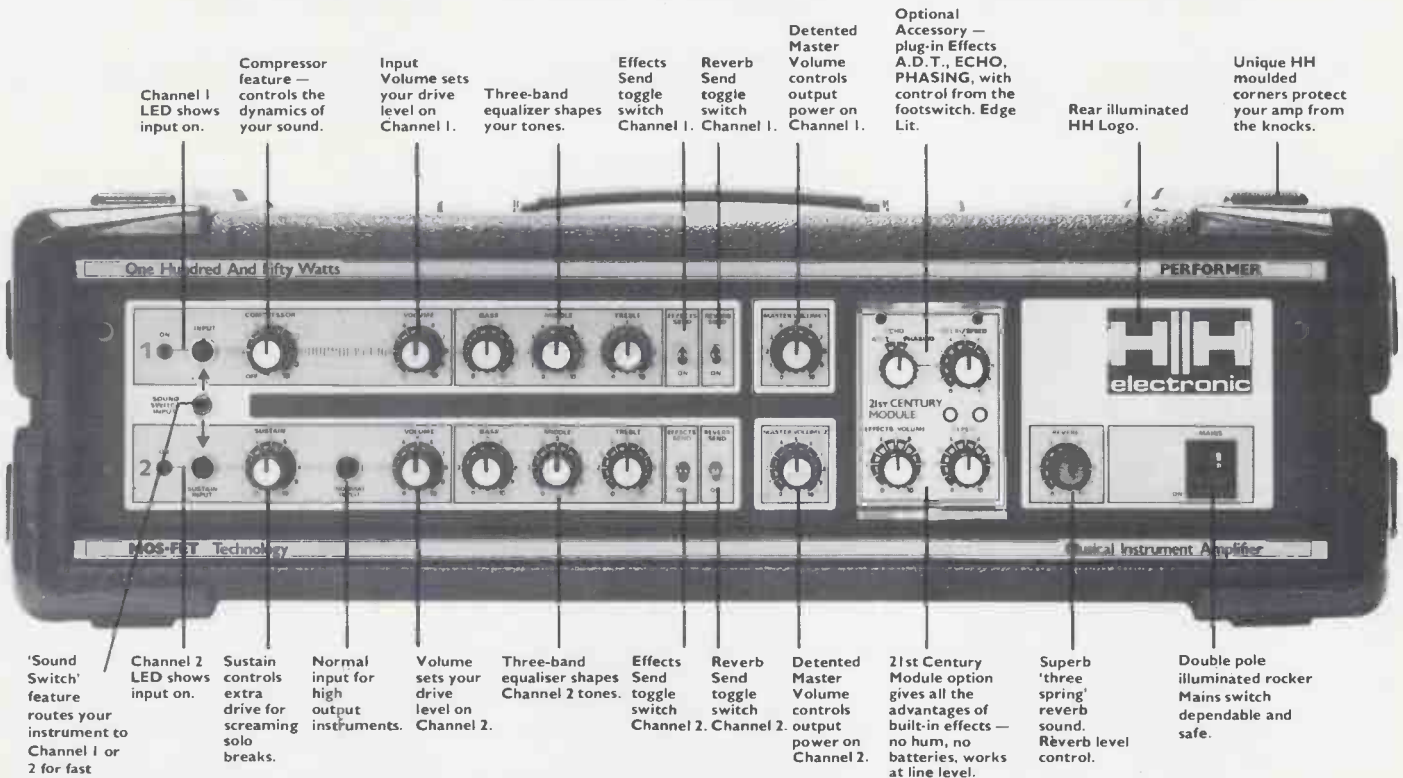
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Roland Clock System

Dave Crombie

This month, something a little different: I'm reviewing a package. No, it doesn't come wrapped in brown paper and string and contain white powder, it's three products that complement each other and provide an interesting and extremely useful set-up. So there! The products in question all emanate from the East, from that far off Land Of The Rising Sun, Japan (not Canvey Island), and from factories with the most un-Japanese sounding name of Roland. The products in question are the CR78 Rhythm unit (mp £505), the SH-2 monophonic synthesiser (mp £559) and the new CSQ600 digital sequencer (£799). The sum total for this system comes to £1863, if you go by the recommended retail price. However, Roland offer a very generous discount arrangement to their dealers and consequently you can find these products advertised at a much lower price. Looking through the back pages of *Melody Maker* (gulp!) I found that you could get this system individually for £1300, and probably far less if you bought all three units from the same store.

As I understand it, the original idea to promote this system came from Roland endorsee Patrick Moraz (he of the bushy hair and more recently of the Moody Blues). Patrick records a fair amount of his solo projects in Brazil with the help of the Percussions Of Brazil, and it was during these sessions that he developed the master clock approach. Being dead keen on the Roland gear (as it says in the Roland ads), he returned to Britain extolling the virtues of this system, which he sometimes supplements with a *Jupiter-4* polyphonic. As a result, Brødr Jørgensen, the European distributors for Roland products, have decided to give this set-up the 'big push'.

I would consider this system to be of particular interest to the recording synthesist, whether a big name pro (like Vangelis Papathanassiou) or someone just into synthesisers as a hobby, because the possibilities offered by such an arrangement are, to say the least, considerable. That being said, it isn't for me to rule out all possibilities of live performance with such a configuration; indeed, with the memory capabilities of the CSQ600 digital sequencer, it is quite feasible to use the master clock system most effectively live. If you're into one-synth shows (although these seem somewhat dated these days), then a set-

Dave 'Receptions' Crombie plays keyboards and then writes about them, usually in that order.



up like this is going to solve an awful lot of problems. I shall start by looking at the individual units in turn before considering the wider possibilities of the link-up, so...

Roland SH-2 monophonic synthesiser

It's quite a while since we've looked at a monophonic synthesiser, so the SH-2 comes as quite a refreshing unit. The instrument is very compact, housed in a moulded plastic/metal case. It measures 26.4" (w) x 12" (d) x 3.9" (h) and weighs a mere 15.2lbs.

The keyboard is a bit of a disappointment. For some unearthly reason, Roland have decided to incorporate a three-octave (37-note) F to F job. F to F ??? Maybe they've run out of Cs at Roland HQ, because that's what this keyboard should be - a 37-note C to C type. The keyboard has the usual clunky action that has come to be characteristic of Roland synthesisers, though I understand that type of keyboard is soon to be phased out. Keyboard priority goes to the lowest note played.

Now we've got most of the bad news out of the way, on with the good. The SH-2 is a dual-oscillator synthesiser which greatly enhances the performance capabilities of the instrument. Oscillator (VCO) 1 can be pitched at 32', 16', 8', 4' or 2', with sine, ramp, square and pulse waveshapes (width variable). Oscillator 2 can also be pitched over the same range, and comes with oscillator 1's waveform possibilities except the sine wave which is replaced by a noise source. A lot of synthesiser manufacturers adopt this single sine wave approach which seems a

pity to me. I know that in electronic terms it is more difficult and costly to produce a sine wave (or triangle wave) than the other waveshapes, but to my mind a pure waveform (which is what a sinewave is) is far more useful musically. Doesn't anyone agree?

To tune the unit there is a small master tune knob (for both oscillators) and a corresponding control for oscillator 2 only so it can be detuned against oscillator 1. A slide switch is used in conjunction with this control to give a 'narrow' range (around a tone) and a 'wide' range (around a fifth); a good idea, Roland. In addition to the outputs from both oscillators there is a sub-octave facility from oscillator 1. This generates a square wave that is pitched exactly one octave below that of the oscillator. So at the audio mixer stage there are three sliders: VCO-1, VCO-s, and VCO-1 SUB.

Oscillator modulation is provided by an LFO (low frequency oscillator), the master envelope generator and by some auto slow signal from the keyboard. The LFO generates sine, square and random waveshapes at a rate from 0.2 to 25Hz, with delay times of up to two seconds, and an LED shows how fast it's ticking over. The LFO, then, has all the facilities you are going to need, and can be used for frequency and/or pulsewidth modulation. Similarly, the ADSR (attack, decay, sustain, release) envelope generator can be used for both modulation functions. The Auto Bend is the only slightly unusual feature of this section, providing a variable fast slur of the pitch up to the note played. Those of you familiar with Tomita's work



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will be well aware of this effect.

The VCF (voltage controlled filter) is again fairly standard: 24dB/octave; low-pass variety with cut-off frequency range of 10Hz to 20kHz; Resonance control enabling self-oscillation; variable keyboard control voltage track; modulation amount; and finally, and perhaps most interestingly, the envelope controls. There is, unfortunately, no separate filter envelope – however, Roland have obviously made the most of the existing one enabling a positive and inverted sweep of the filter to be achieved. In addition, though, there is an envelope follower facility which is particularly useful if using the SH-2 in conjunction with another instrument. On the rear of the synthesiser is a jack socket marked Ext Signal Input: any signal inserted here is automatically fed into the input of the voltage controlled filter and additionally sampled to generate an extra control voltage dependent on its amplitude. This voltage can subsequently be used to sweep the filter – a nice touch. I think that Roland filters are beginning to sound better. I'm always going on about 'nasally Japanese filters' giving a weak quality to the overall sound – well, this one isn't quite so bad.

The VCA (voltage controlled amplifier) can be either controlled by the envelope generator, can be put on hold whence the signal is allowed to pass unaffected, or it can be modulated by the gate pulse from the keyboard. In this latter case, the resulting effect will be that the amplifier will only let the note/sound through while a key is held. There's no sustain – much like the response of an organ. The envelope generator has the following specifications: attack time up to 2.5 secs; decay time up to 10 secs; sustain level 0-100%; release time up to 10 secs. The envelope can conveniently be triggered by Gate + Trig whence it will be fired every time a different key is pressed, Gate which will only retrigger if the previous key is released before the new note is played, so if the synth is played legato, the envelope won't retrigger (a feature that can be put to good use and increases the degree of expression the player has over the instrument). Finally, the envelope can be fired by the LFO, for those seldom if ever used mandolin-type effects.

The performance controls revolve around a 'left/right' centre-sprung lever which can be used for pitchbend (variable sensitivity up to 1½ octave full scale deflection: that means when the lever is moved from the centre position to its maximum point), and for bending the filter (over four octaves fsd). Also on this performance control panel, situated to the left of the keyboard, is the portamento control (variable up to 4secs/octave) and a master volume knob. Strangely, Roland have also put the mains on/off switch on

this panel. God knows why.

Finally let's look at the rear panels, where we find a wealth of interface sockets. There's the output jack (-10dBm), the headphone socket (8Ω stereo), CV in (1 volt/octave), gate in (a +7½ volt pulse or greater is required), CV out, Gate out (off = 0v, on = 14v), and Ext Audio In (0.5v pp max). Obviously, interfability (if I've spelt it right) is the word. (*If it's a word - Ed.*)

Summing up then, the SH-2 is a pretty good synthesiser. I don't like the keyboard at all, and it would have been nice to have seen another envelope, be it only an AR type. However, as with all Roland equipment it is extremely well built and neatly designed with sensible controls. It is a bit pricey, and if I weren't looking for an instrument that would interface into a system, I would be more inclined to consider a Moog Prodigy, which is considerably cheaper. The quality of sound and the capabilities of the SH-2 (especially in terms of interfacing, and hence expandability) make the instrument a very useful synth, though, and one well considering. As usual the owner's manual is extremely informative.

Roland CR 78 rhythm unit

It wasn't so long ago (*SI* July '80) that I undertook an awesome look at the state of the rhythm unit market and all the products available. To be perfectly honest we dealt quite explicitly with the CR78 in that survey. Since then, however, you lucky *Beat Instrumental* readers have joined us. So, as I've not got much space, just a quick review-ette is in order.

The CR78 is the best rhythm unit currently available (and the most expensive). It has been around for a year or so now, and has come to find its way into many top musicians' inventories. The

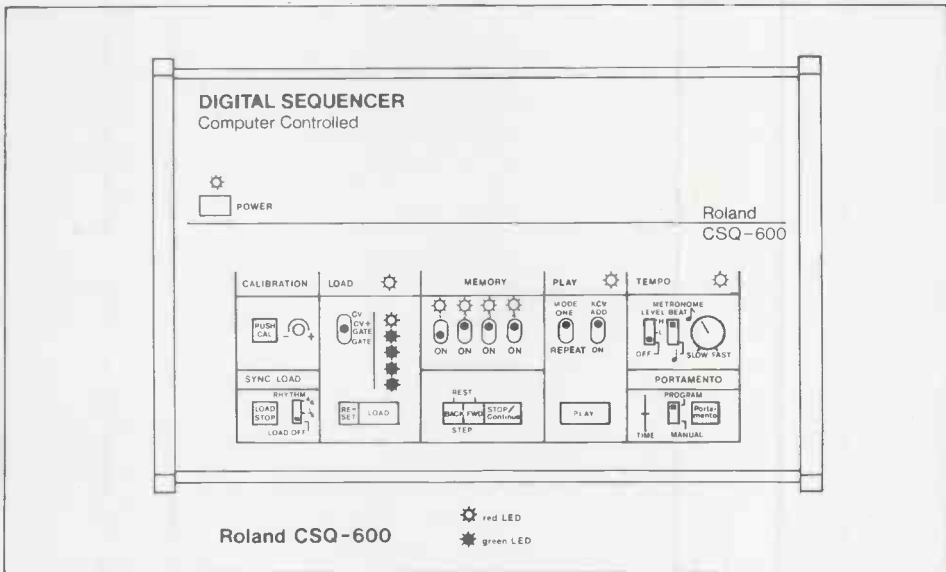
features that the CR78 offers include: 34 preset rhythm patterns (all the usual ones here, plus Latins, marches, as well as eight rock rhythms and four discos); 11 variations for introduction of fills; four programmable patterns which each consist of four tracks chosen from 11 instrument voices, and programmed with the aid of a drum pad on which the desired rhythm is tapped out with a standard drum stick, auto fade, in and out; Voice Cancels. And all housed in a smart wooden box.

The main aspect that concerns me here with this unit is the interfacing to the digital sequencer and the SH-2 synth, so on the back panel we have: high and low level audio outputs; Variation and Start/Stop pedal switch sockets; Trigger Out (+15 volt pulse) which comes on 16, 8 or a combination (which in fact is equivalent to the bass drum) beat outputs; write controller input for programming; and External Clock socket.

OK, this is an expensive unit, but the quality of the percussive voices, the versatility of the rhythm tracks, especially the programmability facility, and the general professional approach the unit adopts, make the CR78 excellent value for money, and definitely (if you like *dichés*) the Rolls Royce of rhythm units. (*So is the Doctor Rhythm DR55 the Metro? - Ed.*)

Roland CSQ600 digital sequencer

This is the most recent addition to the Roland catalogue, and is an up-market version of the successful CSQ100 with greater memory capacity and several other exciting features to which we shall come presently. I'm sure that you all know





in essence what a digital sequencer does. Right! It records control voltages and gate pulses as produced by the keyboard and stores them in its memory banks for later recall, whence the series of notes (or sequence, as it is known) is used to drive the synthesiser. The sequence can subsequently be sped up or slowed down and transposed into other keys. The most common use for digital sequencers is to create bass patterns against which a melody line can be played. Remember, though, that a digital sequencer on its own is useless: it has to be programmed by a synthesiser keyboard, and needs the synthesiser's voice circuitry (VCOs, VCFs and VCAs, etc) to produce the sound - it's basically just another controller.

To make it compatible with most other synth systems, the CSQ600 uses the 1 volt/octave system and positive going gate pulses. Don't worry if you are confused; if you're worried whether the CSQ600 will work with your existing instrument, give your local music store a ring, or send me an SAE c/o SI/BI: it's all part of the service and I'll try to put you straight. But needless to say, this sequencer is compatible with all Roland synthesisers.

The memory of the CSQ600 is divided into four sections each with a maximum storage capacity of 150 notes. This memory is so arranged that either four different sequences can be programmed, or else memories can be doubled up giving a maximum possible sequence length of 600 notes (4 x 150).

A nice feature of this unit is that you can re-record the gate pulses of the sequence after having programmed the control voltage simply by tapping out the desired rhythm. Other handy facilities include: a metronome to aid programming; easy to use tune control, so that the sequencer exactly tunes up to your synthesiser; 'Adds keyboard control voltage' which enables you to transpose the sequence during playback from the keyboard (pressing middle C will normally, depending on the synthesiser used, play back the sequence as programmed; playing G, say, will move

the sequence up a fifth); programmable portamento can be added as desired to the sequence; and finally there is a feature known as Sync Load which is most important for synchronising complex patterns with the CR78's rhythms.

On the rear panel of the CSQ600 are a veritable host of jack sockets: CV in; Gate in; VC out; Gate out; CSQ sync in and out, for paralleling two or more sequencers; Ext Control Inputs, Step, Start, and Stop; Control outs, Start and Stop; and three rhythm sync sockets, Clock and Start/Stop (jacks), and Sync Out (DIN). I won't go into full details here, but we shall deal more with these interface sockets in *The Set-up*.

The CSQ600 (as can be seen from the drawing) is intelligently laid out, and housed in the same materials as the SH-2 (plastic and metal). The controls are very pleasing to use, especially the buttons, and overall the styling and construction have a definite hallmark of quality. My only real criticism of the sequencer is the clock speed range which seems to be terribly limited, making it very difficult to play back sequences at a high speed. Otherwise an excellent sequencer, if a little pricey.

The Set-up

The time has now come to hook up the three units. Bet you can't wait, eh? Well, let's start by wiring things up as in figure 1. As you should be able to see, more or less everything is emanating from the CSQ600 - it's the sequencer's clock that is being used as the master. I think, to get an idea of how the system works, it would be a good idea to go through the procedure. This will also serve to show the system's capabilities. So: **1.** Select a rhythm. **2.** Set a basic sound on the synthesiser and record sequence thus: a. Adjust the tempo to suit. b. Press Reset. c. Press Load/Stop. d. The sequencer takes two bars to synchronise with the rhythm track after which the sequence is played on the keyboard. e. Press Load/Stop to indicate end of sequence. **3.** The sequence can now be replayed.

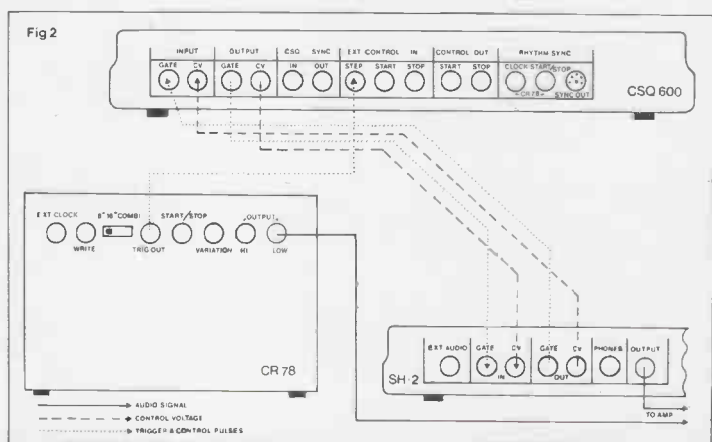
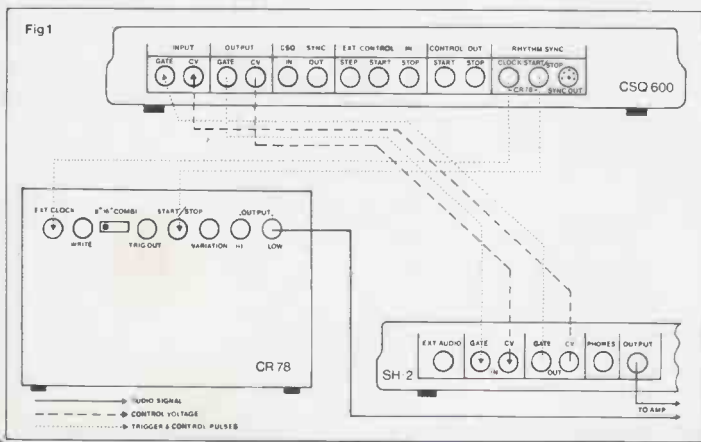
It's as simple (well almost) as that. So

what are we left with? Well, now that the sequencer is playing the programmed sequence in exact time with the rhythm track, the pattern's tempos and timbres can be modified to produce the desired effect. Fills and breaks can be introduced to the rhythm and further sequences can be loaded into the other memory locations. What it boils down to is that there is a lot of scope! Remember, though, that what this set-up is providing is a simple yet effective way of putting down a rhythm and either monophonic melody line or bass line. It is not possible to play along with this sequence as you have used up all the synthesiser's voice production circuitry with the sequence, so either another instrument is required, or else a tape recorder is needed to free the synthesiser for putting down another line.

There are many other possible configurations for using this set-up. The drum unit can be used to drive the sequencer, or even feed directly into the synthesiser's gate input. Figure 2 shows the system being driven by the CR78's clock. In this case a sequence only of control voltages is programmed into the CSQ600. These voltages are stepped through, in playback mode, by the clock (trigger) of the rhythm unit. The '8" 16" Combi' selector switch determines how the sequence is synchronised to the rhythm pattern. I'm afraid that lack of space prevents me from delving further into the various aspects of the master clock system.

Summary

If you are into synthesisers in a big way and have a little cash to spare, do consider this arrangement, and especially so if you are into making demo tapes on your own. I'm just hoping that Roland forget to take these systems back because I haven't got so involved with a system for a long time. If you are interested in the master clock system, try and put in a visit to one of the larger music stores and see all the possibilities for yourselves. I think that you'll be impressed. So finally it's full marks to Roland for listening to what musicians say and producing a package accordingly. □





Four Tape Echo Boxes

Roger Phillips

I've always found it best to look on the dark side, a bit of healthy pessimism always seemed by far the safest bet. After all, why expect the best to happen only to spend the whole of your life being continually disappointed. Optimists always strike me as the most foolhardy of people and I never miss the opportunity of telling them so. 'No good will come of it,' I say, 'you mark my words.' But do they? Mackie's like that: a glint in the eye, a cherubic grin and a belief that even if everything in the garden isn't exactly lovely, well it doesn't matter too much, does it? I've tried to tell him, but he's just like all the rest.

While we were driving up to the British Music Fair at Olympia I told him how I had turned pessimism into an art and could actually predict the misery to come with amazing accuracy. I even predicted that the gates of a certain level crossing would begin to descend as soon as they came into view, and did they? What do you think? Yeah, well I can see that you're a depressing little bugger too, but Mackie? No, he said it was just coincidence. Even when every traffic light turned red at our approach. Even when we got stuck in a diabolical jam just a mile away from Olympia. Even when we arrived so late we had to skip lunch - he still scoffed. When as a lad I was given my copy of *The Power Of Positive Thinking*, I threw it away. I think Mackie's still reading his.

Having decided to attempt another echo box extravaganza, it was with my usual cheery pessimism that I asked as many manufacturers and distributors as I could find to send me their products for review purposes. After all, half of them probably wouldn't bother to send me anything, would they? Eh? Yeah, you guessed it, you miserable little sod, I was wrong. I admit it. Not surprised really, things never go the way I expect them to, and as for all those manufacturers and distributors, well I never doubted you lads for a minute, honest! So here I am surrounded by numerous tape echo boxes, analogue delay units, footpedals, and assorted mixed effect machines, and I think the whole thing's got slightly out of hand.

In an attempt to relieve my panic, and to inject some sanity into the situation I'm going to cover each of the above-mentioned categories in four separate issues, starting this month with tape echoes. In my last multi-echo box review (*SI* July/

August '79) I looked at three tape echo chambers, namely the Wem *Copicat*, the Korg Stage Echo *SE-500*, and the Roland Space Echo *RE-201*, so if you're thinking of purchasing a tape echo box it could be a good idea to check those issues out, as well as the four items in this feature.

As in the '79 review, I shall try to make sense of the various terms to describe controls by referring to Delay Times for the range of delay between direct and

echo signal, and Repeat Period for the number of times the echo effect is heard. I shall refer to controls that blend direct and effect signals together, to the point of excluding one or other at each end of the scale, as Mix controls, while those that vary the level of the echo effect in relation to a constant direct signal, I shall refer to as Echo Volume controls.

Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.



All pix Roger Phillips

Melos Echo Chamber

Price: £60.83 ex VAT. **Size:** 10½ x 6¼ x 5in. **Weight:** 5½lb. **Controls:** Volume, Echo Balance, Echo Repeat, Echo Time. **Construction:** Black grained 'vynide' covered wooden cabinet. **Distributors:** Fletcher Coppock & Newman Ltd, Kent. **Country of Origin:** Japan.

I think I'm fairly safe in saying that this is the cheapest repeat-echo device currently on the market. In the Chorus/ADT review in the October '80 issue I looked at the Electro-Harmonix *Full Double Tracking Effect* which offers ADT and a 100mS slap-back echo effect for just £45.65 ex VAT, but without the repeat facility it doesn't really qualify as a fully-fledged echo box. Paying a low price, however, does mean making a few sacrifices, and like the Electro-Harmonix unit, the Melos was just a little noisy in operation. Part of the problem turned out to be a buzz caused by an earth loop, and was quickly remedied by the **NOT RECOMMENDED** expedient of disconnecting the earth wire at the plug. The tape hiss, however, remained.

There are two input sockets on the left of the front panel, one marked Low and the other High, though they didn't actually display any different characteristics when assorted mics and instruments were connected to them. There's only one input

Volume control, however, so if you wanted to mix vocal and guitar sounds through this box, you'd have to balance the sound with your instrument volume control. Next comes the Echo Balance which is a conventional Mix control giving direct signal only (and no hiss) at zero on the dial, right through to echo signal only (and a fair amount of hiss) at 10. All the controls on the Melos have numbered dials, by the way, which is a definite advantage for remembering settings.

The Repeat control gives single echoes at zero, progressing up to 'runaway' spaceship-type sounds between 4 and 6 on the dial, depending on the delay time in use. No details of delay times are offered in the leaflet accompanying this product but I estimated them to be around 150mS at zero on the Echo Time dial to 300mS at 10, which is definitely not the widest range around and is further proof that you only get what you pay for. The shortest delay times are not short enough for ADT, nor are they really suitable for slap-back effects, but the general repeat echo and reverb sounds on offer are fine. On sustained guitar chords, however, the echo signal tended to deviate slightly in pitch, and though not intended as an effect, the result is a rather pleasant phasing sound which seems to be directly

Roger Phillips writes, plays keyboards and sax, takes great pics, you name it.



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related to the delay time in use. Other front panel facilities include an on/off mains switch and indicator light, and low and high output sockets.

A flap on the back of the box opens to reveal a fuse holder (0.5A fuse), an effect bypass switch socket (footswitch not supplied), space into which the three core mains lead can be packed (though there's not enough room for a 13A plug), and the recess into which the special tape cassette is fitted. These tape cassettes are like mini 8-Track cassettes and contain compact cassette tape. They are available at £5.04 ex VAT from the distributors, but I shouldn't think they are readily available

elsewhere. One is supplied with the unit, however, along with a couple of tape head cleaning swabs.

Varying delay times are achieved via an electric servo motor that controls the speed of the tape travel over the stationary record/play heads. When the box was left on with no other sounds passing through it, it made a noise every few minutes which I imagine was the splice in the tape loop passing over the heads. But it wasn't too drastic.

The Melos Echo Chamber is definitely cheap but not too nasty, and if you shop around you can pick up a new one for just £59 inc VAT.

On the whole, the Pearl appeared to be a much more stable unit than the Melos, but of course at a price. The EP-402 doesn't suffer from pitch deviation or tape click, and for my money it's definitely worth the extra 30 odd quid. This is the best buy in tape echoes that I've come across for under £100.

Echoplex EP-3 and EP-4 Echo Chambers

Price: £326 (each) ex VAT. **Size:** 14½ x 9 8½in. **Weight:** Over 17lb. **Controls EP-3:** Sound-on-Sound, Sustain, Volume, Delay. **Controls EP-4:** Repeats, Volume, Recording Volume, Treble, Bass, Delay. **Construction:** Black grained vynide covered wooden cabinet. **Distributors:** Rosetti (EMI) Ltd. **Country of Origin:** USA.



Pearl Echo Pack EP-402

Price: £89.22 ex VAT. **Size:** 10½ x 8 x 4½in. **Weight:** 6½lb. **Controls:** Speed, Repeat, Echo, and three input Volume controls. **Construction:** Black vynide covered wooden cabinet. **Distributors:** Pearl Music Ltd, London. **Country of Origin:** Japan.

The major difference between the EP-402 and the Melos, apart from the price, is that the Pearl is based around the use of an ordinary 8-track cartridge which, although less plentiful than they used to be, must be more readily available than the Melos' mini cartridge. (An 8-track cartridge and a jack lead are supplied with the Pearl.) The EP-402's price also reflects the superior standard of construction, wider delay range and more versatile input facility. In fact it has three inputs to the right of the front panel, each with its own separate Volume control. Mic 1 and Mic 2 are for low impedance mics, and the Instrument socket is for your high impedance mic, or guitar etc. Only one output socket is supplied, and this is in the centre of the panel along with the effect bypass footswitch socket (footswitch not supplied). To the left of these is the mains on/off switch which, like the Melos, is 'on' when switched 'up', and an enormous red mains indicator light.

Above that are the three Echo controls labelled Speed, Repeat and Echo. The Speed control regulates the delay times which I estimate to be around 350mS at 7 o'clock, down to 100mS at 5 o'clock. When set to the longer delay times the tape transport sounds like a quiet fan heater, but when it's turned up mid-way, the motor begins to whine, a sound that increases in pitch the further you turn the control. None of this noise passes through the audio system however, but a certain amount of tape hiss does and increases in the same way as the motor noise. The Repeat control gives single repeats at 7 o'clock and goes into a runaway condition around 3 o'clock, providing along the way a good, quality selection of slap-back, reverb and repeat echo effects.

The curious little owners' manual reads like a Japanese document translated into English by a German, and assures us that the 'length of the echo is regulated by the Echo control, if the knob is turned to the right, there is a lengthening of the echo'. In fact the Echo control is a straightforward Echo Volume control and offers direct signal only at 7 o'clock and equal direct and echo signal when turned full up.

As on the Melos, the tape cartridge plugs into the rear of the Pearl, and there's a bracket there for winding the mains lead when the box is not in use.

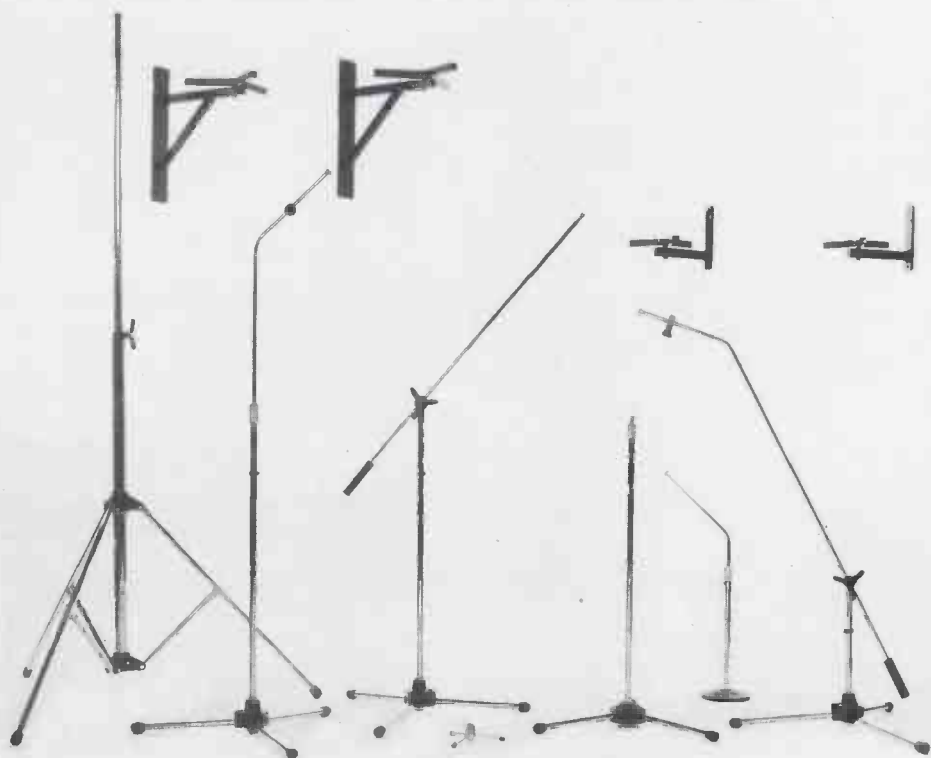
Echoplex is a familiar name to most people connected with the music business, even if they've never got around to using one. Like the British WEM Copicat (SI July '79), the Echoplex has been around for quite a while, a factor that is reflected in its somewhat dated appearance and the rather eccentric tape transport layout. For all that, the Echoplex exudes a certain rough-and-ready charm that will certainly not be lost on those with more grey hair than they care to admit to. The EP-3 is as evocative of the early days of rock as is a Les Paul 78 playing on my old HMV portable gramophone, and though the EP-4 is something of an update it's still going to feel like a nostalgia trip for anyone raised on a diet of silicon and chips.

Both models are housed in similar wooden cabinets with detachable lids, each fitted with a sturdy carrying handle. Both have an angled control panel, a recess to the left for mains lead, footswitch, and jack lead (all supplied), and a motor and tape transport assembly to the right, again with a detachable lid for head cleaning and tape replacement. A spare tape cartridge is also supplied (the makers recommend changing the tape at least once every three months) along with a set of instructions that make the task of replacing the cartridge sound about as easy as repairing a crack in a fast breeder reactor. Nowhere near as convenient as the 8-track cartridge used in the Pearl Echo Pack, but I dare say it's no more difficult to fit than the tape loops on the Korg Stage Echo and the Roland Space Echo (SI August '79), though I must admit I didn't actually have the nerve to try it.

Talking about complex technology, I found the following invaluable advice in the owners' manual that accompanied the Echoplex EP-4: 'If motor fails to start,



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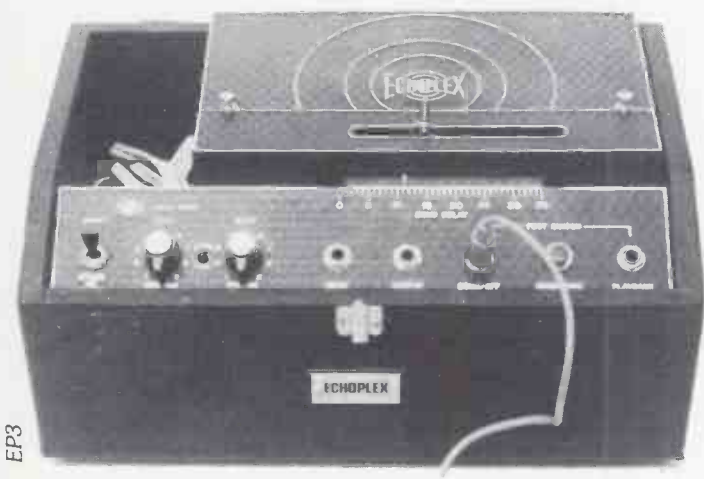
which is possible if unit has been roughly handled in shipment, we suggest that you slap sides of cabinet vigorously while power is on. This slapping will re-align bearings.' Very technical. I think even I can cope with that.

While the cabinets, motors and tape cartridges are identical on both models, there are differences in the layout and function of the controls, and the facilities that each machine offers. The *EP-3* is the standard Echoplex, and gives a sound-on-sound facility that allows for a full 2½ minutes worth of material to be recorded,

control as high as possible without distortion, you can achieve an almost completely hiss-free sound, as the Echo Volume control (which is next in line and the cause of said tape hiss) can be kept down to a minimum. This latter control provides direct signal only at 1 and a louder delayed signal when turned up full. The input and output sockets are in the centre of the control panel and I'm afraid there's no fancy stereo stuff here, just one of each. To the right of the panel are two more jack sockets with a large red light between them. Both are footswitch

table range, allowing as it does for all the slap-back and repeat echo effects, and reverb simulation, if not for ADT. The *EP-3* sports a delay scale of 0 to 35 that bears no numerical relation to the delay times whatsoever, whereas the *EP-4* just makes do with the words Short at one end and Long at the other.

The *EP-4* is an improvement in many ways over the 3, but at the cost of the s-o-s facility. That switch is replaced on the left of the *EP-4* control panel by two input sockets, one for low impedance mics, and



EP3



EP4

played back and simultaneously layered with even more material – very impressive. The *EP-4* is an update on the 3 and while it has dropped the s-o-s layering facility, it retains the ability to play back 2½ minutes' worth of material so you can duet with yourself. In place of s-o-s, the *EP-4* offers improvements in inputs, outputs, recording level controls and echo EQ. In view of the differences I shall look at the two models separately for a while.

The first control you come to on the left of the *EP-3* control panel is that Echo/s-o-s switch which allows for normal echo effects in the up position, and s-o-s when switched down. As long as the switch is in the latter position nothing is removed from the tape and, if the Recording light is on, more sounds can be added on top. As the motor speed is not varied to alter delay times, the tape always takes a constant 2½ minutes to pass through. To remove the layers of sound you simply switch back to Echo mode and make sure the Record light is on. The Echo Sustain control doubles as a mains on/off switch and a straightforward Repeat Period control offering single echo at 1 on the dial (yes, they are numbered), through to a runaway condition between 5 and 7. As usual for a good quality tape echo, the effect signal quality is far superior to that offered by any analogue delay device.

Next is the Record Level adjuster which, unfortunately, is a recessed screw for which a screwdriver is absolutely essential, making it very difficult to adjust during a performance. By setting this

sockets, the left one being for an effect bypass footswitch and the right for switching between record and playback modes. In record mode, with the red light on and the Echoplex switched to Echo, the device gives straightforward echo effects. If, however, the machine is switched to play back any recorded material on the tape, it will literally play back but no further sounds can be added. When the Echoplex is switched to s-o-s the playback mode gives direct and/or previously recorded material only. The effect of s-o-s in recording mode has already been described.

The method of altering the delay times on these two machines is absolutely unique to Echoplex and at first glance appears to be more than just a bit Heath Robinson. Most tape echo chambers have a number of heads to allow for different delay times or, like the Pearl and the Melos, a variable speed motor for continuously variable delays. Some of the more expensive units, like the Roland *Space Echo* and the Korg *Stage Echo*, have both. The Echoplexes achieve their varied delay times by attaching one of the tape heads to a slider mechanism so that the delay time can be changed just by sliding the head along the tape path. Simple, eh? Effective too, but I do think they could improve the feel of the slider mechanism a bit, and a detachable plastic knob for the spiky-looking slider control wouldn't go amiss either. I estimate the delay times on both units to be around 100mS to 700mS, which is a very respect-

the other for high impedance mics and instruments. The *EP-3*'s Sustain control is replaced by the much more sensibly named Repeats control but otherwise its function is identical – pity the *EP-4* lost the numbered dials along the way though. Echo Volume is the same on both units, but the Recording Volume becomes a fully fledged rotary control on the *EP-4* and is far more useful than the screw adjuster, and it also doubles as the mains on/off switch. The Recording Level lights are also jolly useful and show yellow for 'on', two greens for normal level and red for distortion. Two additions on this unit are the Treble and Bass Echo Tone controls – not essential items really, but they do have their uses. To the right of the control panel are the effect bypass and playback footswitch sockets which operate in much the same way as those on the *EP-3*. However, the Output sockets are banished to the recess behind the control panel, and though I did say outputs in the plural, I'm afraid the *EP-4* doesn't offer stereo effects either: the two sockets give high and low outputs.

So, there you have it. Basically crude, unsophisticated, old-fashioned and heavy, and maybe not as versatile in some respects as some of the more expensive opposition, but the Echoplex has been around a long time and will probably be with us for a good few years yet. They do the job too, and the quality of sound they produce is as good as any tape box I've tested, but at £375 I don't think you can call either unit a bargain □



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Constructing A Drum Riser

David Sinclair

A drum riser is the rostrum or platform used to elevate the drums on stage. It was after reading a review of our group in which everyone was praised lavishly, except the drummer (myself) who wasn't even mentioned, that it occurred to me that what our band really needed was a drum riser (or perhaps a different drummer, but that's another story). Paul Henderson (at one time our sound engineer) designed and agreed to help me build one, and an account of how we did it is included later.

Actually, it's not such a drummer's ego trip as it sounds. The look of a group's overall stage set-up is very important in conveying an impression of that group, and to have the drums raised gives the band a more professional image. In fact, beyond a certain status of group it's very unlikely that the drums will not be raised. But there are a lot of pub/club gigs where there is a big enough stage to raise the drums, but not many bands who play them have drum risers. So how and where do you go about getting them? We spoke to four companies who make drum risers.

Rock Constructions, Spalding, Lincolnshire. Tel: 0945 74739.

Trevor Stevens of Rock Constructions, as well as making drum stands, stools, rototom stands and percussion racks, reckons to turn out one or two drum risers a week. He doesn't keep a stock as such, but tends to work on a commission basis doing one-offs. Often, therefore, they will be designed according to the customer's particular requirements. Generally though he uses one of two designs: either the old theatrical stage design, concertina-type, with the ends pushed in and the sides folded into the middle and a separate top board; or alternatively, there's a design where the frame and the boards are all in one and the legs fold down, and are held with centre clips. It depends on exactly what the customer needs. The frames are all welded steel tube of square cross-section with $\frac{3}{4}$ in or $\frac{1}{2}$ in ply tops.

Originally, Rock Constructions was situated in Leathermarket, London SE1. Because of the cut in rent overheads at Spalding, Trevor can keep the price of his risers the same as when he was in London, and include delivery (often to

London) at no extra charge. Cost for a standard riser (8ft x 8ft x 18in) would be £200 plus VAT. Initially, the first month or so after the move to Spalding, things were quiet, but now people have tracked him down and he's as busy as ever. Two months ago he did a set of five risers for Rick Wakeman, within one week. The bigger jobs he does are actual stage sets, which might include anything from three or four to 13 or 14 risers all on one set. Another recently completed job was for Barclay James Harvest. Sometimes people want perspex tops of special logos which he will also do.

Rock Construction drum risers are hired out by Glen Smith of CA Tour Productions, Leathermarket, London SE1. Tel: (01) 403 1300. Their charges are £10/day or £40/wk plus VAT. If the risers are required longer (eg for a tour) reduced rates are negotiable.

CP Cases, 979 Great West Road, Brentford, Middx, Tel: (01) 568 1881.

Makers of the world-famous flightcases, CP also do a nifty line in drum risers. As with Rock Constructions they tend to work on a commission basis, but they have a standard 8ft square riser that they sell for £240. Chris Sherwin showed us one. Made of birch plywood there are two sections, each 4ft x 8ft and about 15in high. The two ends and a centre crosspiece are all hinged to the sides and each section folds flat into a length of 12ft. In order to reduce the overall weight, large areas are cut out of the panels, so reducing the mass without affecting the

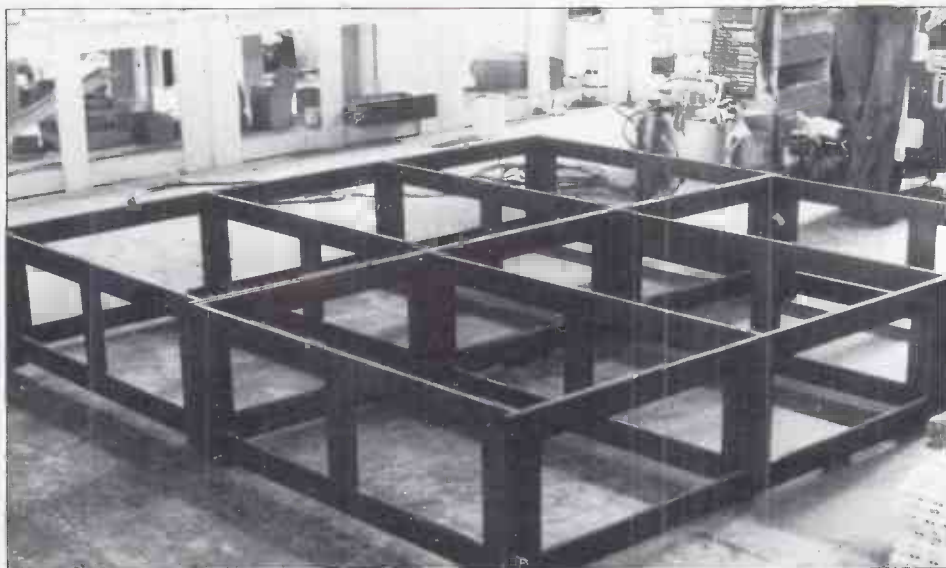
strength of the construction (see photograph). The top is two boards, each 8ft x 4ft, which maintain their position by means of locating blocks on the underside. The bottom of the panels are all cut away slightly so that only the four corners and a point halfway along each panel are resting on the floor. CP can do tubular steel risers if requested.

Jobs that they've done have included risers for Yes and Deep Purple's Ian Paice. They made an extraordinary riser for Gillan out of two cases on wheels, and a perspex riser for the Moody Blues with a case which allowed for the whole kit to be packed while remaining fully set up.

John Henry Enterprises, 1a Market Road, London N7, Tel: (01) 607 7315.

When we visited JH Enterprises, Tommy Guthrie was busy constructing a special 10ft x 10ft riser for Gillan (he certainly keeps these firms busy!).

The design of their standard riser is much the same as the Henderson Mark 1 (see p59). It is made of 16-gauge steel square tubing which is light and strong. An 8ft x 4ft section is constructed with the two ends hinged at the centre to fold inwards. A single bracing bar is fixed to the underside of the top panel which rests on two supports which in turn take part of the load and prevent 'bouncing' in the centre. Simply push the two sections together for an 8ft x 8ft riser. JH do many different sizes and types but the bog-standard model costs £250, or £10/day to hire. If requested they do a great line in thick matt



CP's drum riser frame features weight-reducing cut-outs in the side panels.

David Sinclair is drummer with London-based group London Zoo. Apparently, they 'do gigs'.

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S2 Ltd (at TFA Electrosound), 11 Marshalsea Road, London SE1, Tel: (01) 407 6781.

At the top end of the market, Simon Woodroffe of S2 Limited masterminds the most extravagant and sometimes complex stage sets. Part of his work naturally consists of building risers, but as far as he's concerned, 'The sky's the limit.' S2 specialise in Argon-welded aluminium risers, and two of their most regular customers are Rod Stewart and Queen.

Despite this, Simon says that they can knock up a standard 8ft x 8ft riser for as little as £150. If there are 'special' requirements, as is more often the case, it can cost anything up to £3000. Some groups buy the sets and risers from them, but a lot just hire them for the period required. To hire an 8ft x 8ft wooden riser would cost between £10-£20/week (cheap!).

However - for the benefit of all you would-be Barry Bucknells of rock, we now proudly present for the first time ever the do-it-yourself guide to building your own drum riser!

The Henderson Mark 1 Drum Riser

After exhaustive research in a Covent Garden drinking house one lunch-time, we emerged with three or four basic design ideas, only one of which stood up to further scrutiny in the cold light of sobriety later in the afternoon. The two paramount considerations were (1) economy and (2) the need for an artifact that was easily collapsible and would fit comfortably with the rest of the group's equipment in the back of the van (at that time a 15cwt Bedford). Beyond that, the construction had to be strong, durable and stable. We were anxious to avoid the possible spectacle of a rickety platform that, creaking and groaning, might demonstrate its ease of collapsibility during a performance.

The total cost was about £50, and the largest piece (for packing purposes) was 7ft x 18in. It has been in active service for over a year now and has proved to be both stable and durable, although in hindsight there are some improvements we could have made. The only specialised tools we used were a circular saw and a rivet gun. Other equipment and materials we used included: a large T square; piano hinging; two large bolts and wing nuts with large washers; two clamps; 12in ruler and a tape measure; approx 50 x 1in screws; a hack saw; a drill; a wood file.

We only offer this blueprint as an example of how the job can be done. Obviously you may have your own ideas, but there are certain guiding principles that probably apply to most designs.

Wood is cheaper to use than steel unless you have access to all the welding

gear. Planning how to make the most of your wood is very important and must be done carefully. Most of the professionally built risers are 8ft x 8ft, partly because sheets of ply come in 8ft x 4ft sections, thus two sheets form a top board area 8ft x 8ft. However, if you set up your kit you may well find that it will fit quite comfortably into a much smaller area (though don't make it too tight). Our construction was 7ft x 5½ft and this proved adequate for a standard 5-drum Premier kit, cymbal stands, microphone stands, and a wedge monitor. We made it out of ¾in plywood and managed to use only three 8ft x 4ft sheets plus some wood that we picked up from a shop being stripped down for renovation. Look around for the best prices from builders' merchants or timber wholesalers in your area.

The planning stage really is vitally important - one wrong cut and you may have to buy another sheet of 8 x 4 just to get one small panel. Once you've got all the wood and your master plan, draw on each piece of wood the bits you want to

get out of it. Don't forget to take into account the width of the saw blade, which can be as much as ¼in.

Cut out all the side panels - six in all. Then hinge the panels together to form the four sides of the riser as in Fig 3. We purchased some piano hinging from CP Cases which they use in the construction of their flight cases, and it really is excellent. Strong and durable, but very light and easy to use, the hinges can be rivetted on using a simple hand rivet gun. It is very important to use a T-square to put the hinges on at exact right-angles. A slight inaccuracy in positioning the hinge will be magnified when the whole construction is folded together. Each panel must lie flush on its companion when they are hinged together, otherwise the whole thing will not close up properly.

The hinges at A, C, D and F are on the inside, but at E and B on the outside. Thus for packing up the four sides, fold inwards from front and back to form one piece 7ft long and 18in high (or whatever you decide) and four times the thickness of the wood (about 3in) thick. This will easily fit in along the side of practically any van. To hold the section securely together in transit, when it is folded up drill two large bolt holes straight through the four thicknesses and insert two bolts which can be done up with wing nuts. Make sure to get large washers so that the pressure of the bolts doesn't damage the areas of wood directly around the holes.

A word here about height. We built our riser 21in high. This seemed quite modest at the time, but in fact any higher would have been too much. Unless you have aspirations on the scale of UFO who appeared on the *Whistle Test* with a riser that looked about 6ft tall (perhaps it was just the camera angle) it's as well to keep the height around the 18in mark. CP Cases' standard riser is actually 15in high.

Next, cut the two crosspieces GH and JK in Fig 1 to size. Cut into each a slot half the height deep and exactly the same width as that of the wood used for the panels, so that they slot together to form the crosspiece shown in Fig 2. It is a slightly tricky operation, and it's best to cut it under-size and trim it to fit with a wood file. You then insert the crosspiece (Fig 2) into the hinged frame (Fig 3) to make Fig 4 (next page). >>

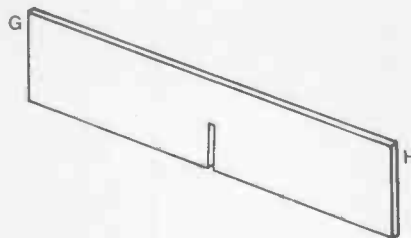


Fig 1

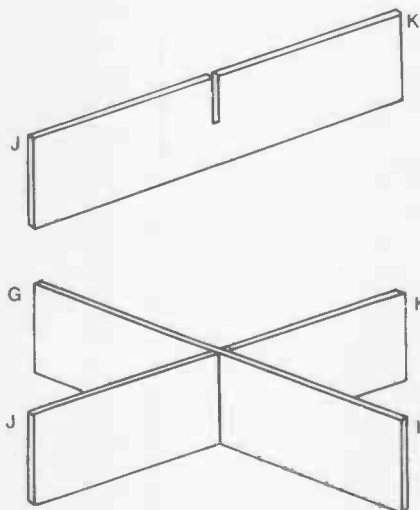


Fig 2

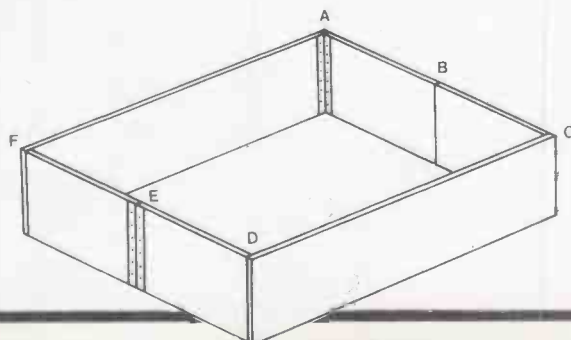
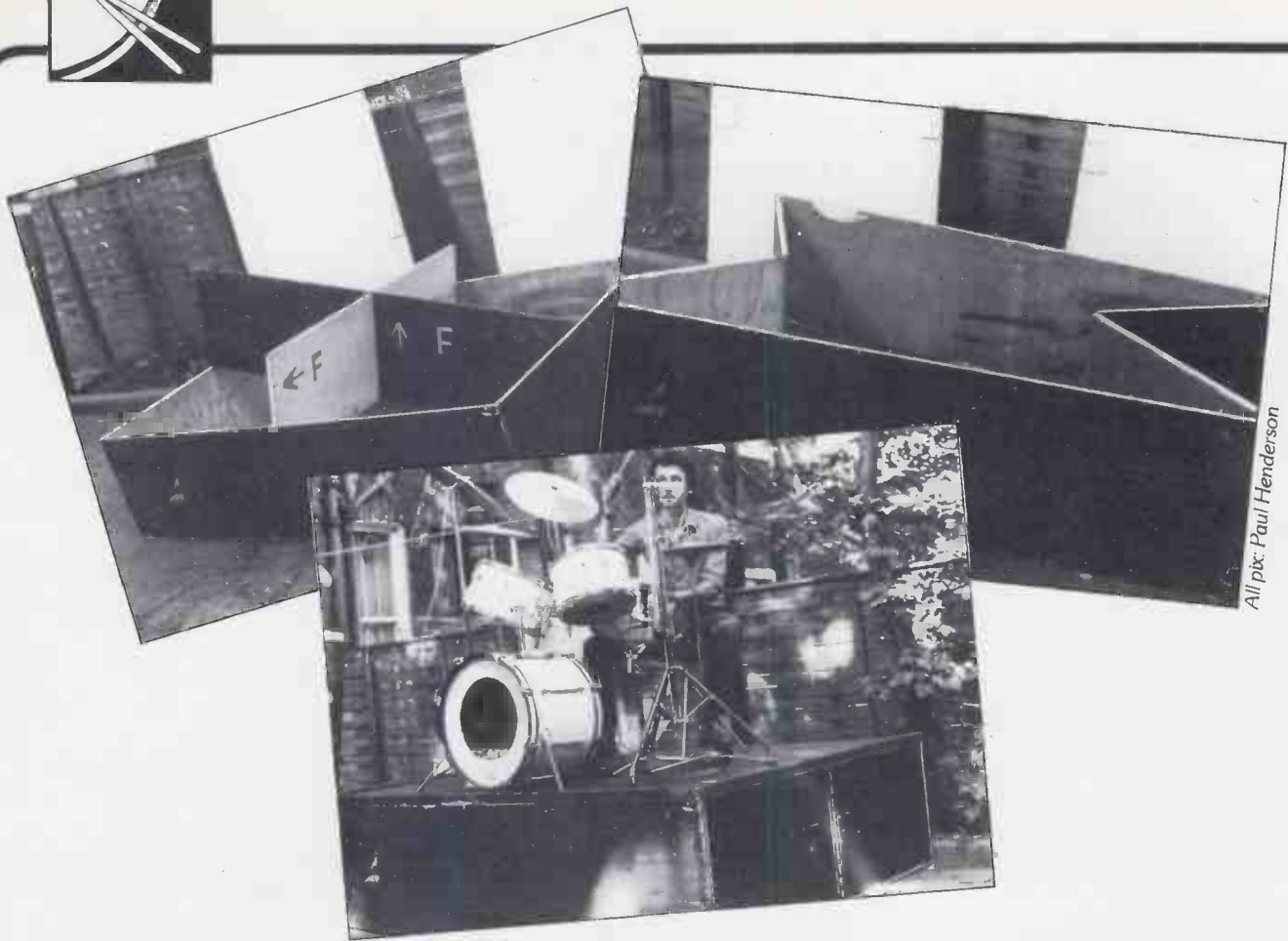


Fig 3



All pix: Paul Henderson

Finally we come to the top boards in Fig 5. Do not if possible cut these until the rest of the riser is up to the Fig 4 stage. Although according to your plans the measurements might be quite straightforward, in reality slight inaccuracies may have crept in. The boards have got to be big enough to fit on the frame you've actually got. The best way to mark it out is to place the whole of Fig 4 upside down on top of the wood. Draw the lines for cutting and positioning the locating blocks (the little squares of wood which will finally hold the whole thing in position). The blocks themselves can be made out of bits

of scrap, but obviously it's very important to get them fixed accurately, especially the four in the centre (Fig 6). Screw on the blocks, and the whole construction fitted together should look from a worm's eye view like Fig 6.

A few final refinements: screw on some lengths of wood (waste) along the front and sides of the top boards to prevent things falling off and to provide a stop for the bass drum spurs. It is a good idea to get some bits of linoleum or something similar to protect the wood where the bass pedal and hi-hat pedal spikes may dig into it (either that or continue using your drum

mat if you have one). It will give the riser a more professional look if you paint it. A couple of coats of matt black should do the trick, or else you can always have fun designing a logo, painting the band's name on, pictures of naked women/men etc.

So there you have it - your own low-cost, easy to move, 'custom' drum riser. In the true tradition of DIY features, however, we feel bound to end with a word of warning: remember when you're messing about with the circular saw that it's difficult to do a roll round the top kit with your feet. □

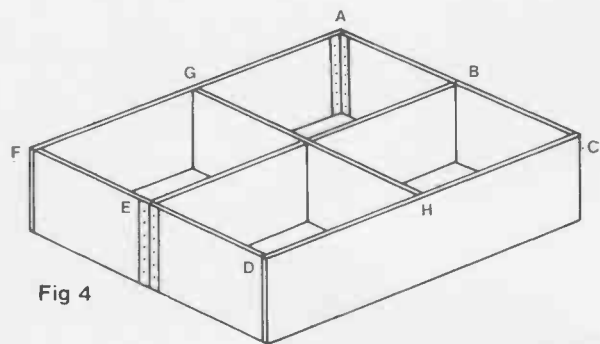


Fig 4

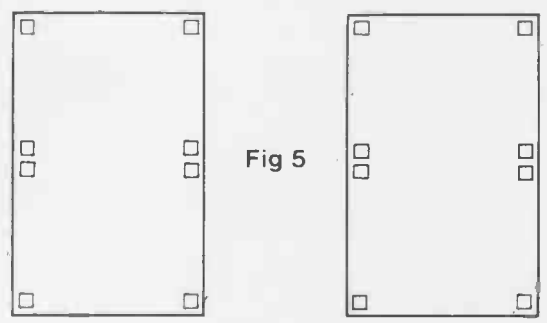


Fig 5

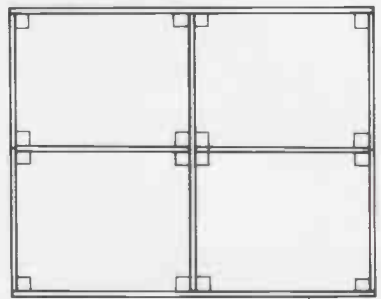


Fig 6



Frunt 200B Bass Top

Gary Cooper



Largely through the endorsement of Percy Jones (arguably one of the best bass players to have come out of Britain in recent years), Frunt amplification has managed to secure itself a fair amount of prestige, if perhaps having failed to become very widely available.

This problem of the availability of British equipment (at least, that British equipment made by smaller companies) is one which I have touched on several times before in *SI* and is one which has taxed Frunt's manufacturers, Soundout Laboratories, who are currently planning a major tour around the country in an attempt to try to persuade more retailers to handle their equipment. What is wrong with these people, I wonder? Do they all have Japanese passports hidden away for when this country finally sinks?

Anyway, putting politics aside, it is only fair to try to assess this amp on the same basis I use for everything – i.e. is it any good and is it worth the money?

To start with, the Frunt looks a bit odd. It's a slim, fairly lightweight head offering 200 watts RMS into 4Ω and 130 watts RMS into 8Ω. I say it looks odd because the front is not festooned with the usual array of tone controls, inputs, built-in effects and all the other (perhaps unnecessary?) gubbins which one finds on the typical modern bass amp.

It's odd-looking too because the carrying handles are actually extensions of the extruded metal end frames. These are finned, the right hand one acting as a heat sink for the four output transistors which

actually protrude through the casing of the ends where the fins afford them some impact protection. Whether this is actually good practice from a heat dispersal principle is one thing, but doesn't it make them a little more vulnerable to the roadie's boot?

The back panel of the amp features the standard modern plug-in mains connector and a sensible plug-in system of voltage changeover which allows you to select 240, 220, 110 or 120 volts operation but which does not allow you to make a tragic mistake unless you are very stupid indeed. In addition to that you have twin speaker jack out sockets, a slave out socket, and echo send and return sockets which could, of course, be used for other effects if desired.

Also on the back is a stick-on label warning you that the failure of internal devices could result in a surge of up to 50v DC to pour into your speakers – that'd cost you a few bob in melted JBLs, believe me! Don't assume that this is a particular problem to Frunt, however. It just happens to be one of the frequently glossed-over disadvantages of power transistors (of course, valves are *horrible, nasty things* – aren't they?) and Soundout are just being honest enough to warn you that you should, ideally, fuse your speaker cabinets to prevent this happening in the unlikely event of anything going fizz inside. This honesty may be a distinctly nice thing in some ways but, to the uninitiated, may make them feel that it only applies to Frunt amps – not, I have to warn you, *at all* the case!

Front panel on the Frunt features just one input and then a red control for distortion, presence (black as are all the others except distortion and volume),

treble, middle, bass and finally volume. Apart from that all you have is a large plastic on/off switch of the internally illuminated kind.

My first attempts to get the Frunt operating were marred by blowing three or four mains fuses in my plug. A quick call to Soundout's Todd Wells taught me that the Frunt's transformer draws a very large initial current surge and that plugs should be fused up to 13 amps – not my customary 5 amps. This is strange but not particularly worrying. It would help if they could add another sticky label to the back telling future owners this piece of news, however, as it would save wasting time.

In use, the Frunt is extremely simple (how else with such a sparse front panel?). The sound is basically on the dry side and this may well lend itself to players who like that Acoustic-orientated sound which seems particularly popular in the jazz/rock fields and over the other side of the Atlantic. It's almost the complete antithesis of a Marshall or Hiwatt 100 bass and that is not, for me, a particularly endearing quality. However, it would seem that among my fellow bass players, transistorised amps, along with active instruments, are far more acceptable than they are to guitarists. To that end I would feel that the relative dryness, not to say coolness, of sound which the 200B gives out are actually positive qualities.

One thing that I did notice with the Frunt was that it seems particularly happy when used with an active bass. I've sometimes had just the slightest feeling that some bass heads don't seem to like odd outputs and strange tonal requirements, but the Frunt (with some very impressive technical specifications, by the

Gary Cooper is a regular writer on equipment for UK and European magazines, and is an ex-editor of *Beat Instrumental*.

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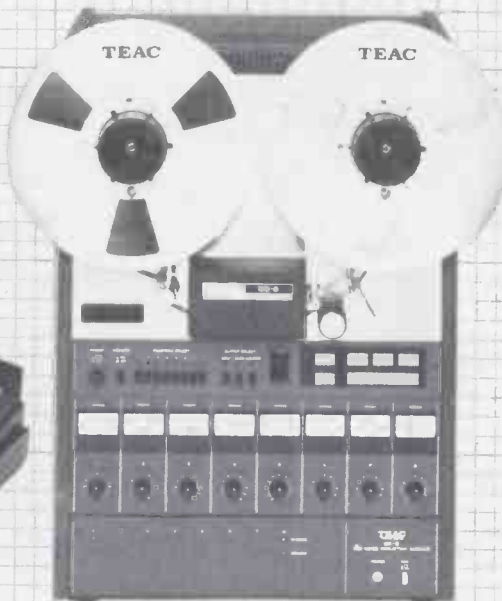
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way) seemed as happy with an active as it did with a couple of passive basses which I also tried with this amp.

Tonal variation is also excellent, plenty of good bass response with considerable depth to it – quite enough to win you a gig in any reggae band, I promise you.

The distortion control, however, is a complete mess in my opinion. It's one of those dry, rough, nasty affairs which makes you wonder why people bother. Frankly, if I were buying one of these amps I'd just switch the distortion off (permanently) and buy a ten-quid fuzz box – it couldn't sound any worse! In fact distortion – or rather the lack of it – is the absolute weakness of the Frunt. The amp is so clean as to be positively antiseptic and there is no provision whatsoever for channel overload. In fact the amp has been designed to eliminate this feature altogether. For bass players who appreciate grit in their sound, then, this isn't the one to go for, although I would personally have hoped for a better distortion circuit which might at least have given one the option. As it is, you've either got to learn to live without the warmth of a decent bit of dirt, put up with the in-built sound (more sodding great boulders than grit, I'm afraid) or use a fuzz box.

Another oddity of the Frunt (and one which is not a serious complaint – just a

piece of weirdness) is that the right-hand carrying handle (being part of the massive heat-sink, of course) warms up considerably after a couple of hours use – great for open-air freezing gigs, mind you!

Overall, I can see that this amp could well win friends among those players who a) like things kept fairly simple and b) like an amp which reproduces their sound exactly as it comes out of the axe. The tone circuits are really very fine indeed and one gets the feeling that the amp is well designed for a specific type of operation.

Apart from not particularly liking the cleanliness of the sound (and that is a purely personal and hence fairly inconsequential factor), I would wonder whether those transistors are very safe, even if they do get the protection of the end fins on the heat sink which protect them from more obvious damage. It never fails to surprise me just what can happen to amps on the road and I feel that this may be leaving things a bit too much to chance.

Another worry is the price. This is a very nicely designed amp which expresses perhaps the ultimate in the 'keep it clean' approach. One assumes that it is intended for a professional buyer, and yet surely a pro bass player these days is beginning to look for features like parametrics and/or graphics, bi-amping, channel switching;

the newer ideas which are beginning to appear. This seems to represent, from an electronic point of view, an advanced design. But does a pro in this day and age not look for a little more? Maybe not. I suppose that some will and some won't. At a price of £215.85 inc VAT, however, one might have expected a little more than the quite sparse facilities offered. 'Keep it simple' is very similar to 'keep it clean' as a philosophy, of course, so maybe it's the way in which Soundout feel about amp design in general?

So. I do have a few mixed feelings about this amp but, if you are that type of bass player who likes the old Acoustic sound but doesn't actually like Acoustics any more and fancies trying something which has a better sound in that general direction, then this must be one to put on your list of amps worth looking at. It is to be hoped that Soundout will be successful in their forthcoming attempts to find a degree of sales distribution in this country and will go on to design and develop more bass amps. Might I suggest, as food for their thought, a more convincing distortion, and maybe more comprehensive facilities? There's not too much wrong with this one but alternatives (even if at a higher price) would be appreciated □

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Issue
no 2

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This is our first second-hand index. Every month we'll gather together prices of various instruments offered for sale in private ads (mostly from *Melody Maker* and *Exchange & Mart*), sort them out, add them up, divide them, take away the number you first thought of, and eventually come up with what will ideally be a useful price listing. We've started this month with electric guitars – the key should explain how the actual listing works.

You shouldn't take this list as a fixed price list, of course: that's not what it's intended to be. It's a *guide* to the sort of prices that are being asked in second-hand land (in this month's case, prices of about 230 guitars offered for sale in the three weeks preceding press day). Obviously some guitars offered by shops or dealers will creep in – but it is hoped that the second-hand index will be a guide to private sale prices.

What do you think? Are we doing it the right way? Is it useful? Could it be improved or expanded? Are grown-ups getting you down? Let us know – next month, keyboards.

Second-hand Index No 1 Electric Guitars

ANTORIA 175 with case £160
 ANTORIA *Les Paul* copy Avg £104
 with case £99-£100
 l/h £125
 ANTORIA *Les Paul Custom* copy
 Avg £115
 ARBITER *Les Paul Junior* copy £65
 ARBITER twin neck 12/6 'mint'
 £150
 ARP *Avatar* £350
 AVON *Les Paul* copy £45
 BURNS *Flyte* £200
 CIMAR *Telecaster* copy mp £75
 CIMAR *Flying V* copy with case
 £130
 CMI *Flying V* copy with case £130
 CMI *Les Paul* copy £75
 COLUMBUS *Les Paul* copy Avg £92
 l/h with case 'new' £130
 with case £65-£75
 +DMz with case £100
 COLUMBUS *SG* copy £40
 CSL *Les Paul* copy Avg £80
 with case £70-£120
 l/h with case £130
 CSL *Stratocaster* copy Avg £75
 CSL twin neck 12/6 with case £180
 DAN ARMSTRONG/AMPEG
 'Plexiglass' with case £265
 EPIPHONE *Casino* Avg £241
 1963 £245
 1958 £230-£250
 EPIPHONE *Century* £150
 EPIPHONE *Wilshire* Avg £171
 1962 with case £175
 with case £150-£190
 FENDER *Jazzmaster* Avg £327
 1963 £295
 1959 original case £360
 FENDER *Musicmaster* extra *Strat*
 pu £140
 FENDER *Mustang* Avg £170
 1967 £159
 1965 £185
 FENDER *Stratocaster* Avg £257
 1978 mp, trem £195-£270
 1978 mp £240
 1976 rw, trem £180
 1975 nat £185
 1973 rw £175; mp £185
 1970 mods, mp £270
 1967 mp, trem, 'mint' £275
 1966 mods £385
 1965 trem £350
 1963 rw £275
 1962 rw, trem, original case £450

1960 l/h £475
 1957 with '61 neck, rw £450
 undated models Avg £223
 FENDER *Telecaster* Avg £204
 1969 mp £200
 1967 mp, original case £199
 1966 £200-£240
 undated models Avg £200
 GIBSON *Barney Kessel* 1960 £500
 GIBSON *Byrdland* £750-£850
 GIBSON *ES175D* Avg £449
 1966 with case £425
 1958 £500
 GIBSON *ES175CC* £495
 GIBSON *ES325* mods £325
 GIBSON *ES330* Avg £250
 1964 +Schallers £240
 1963 +DMz £245
 GIBSON *ES330TDN* 1957 £330
 GIBSON *ES335* Avg £511
 1972 mods £360



Epiphone Century

1959 £900
 undated models Avg £430
 GIBSON *ES335TDC* 1959 with
 PAFs £750
 GIBSON *ES345TD* 1970 £480
 GIBSON *ES345TDC* 1963 £475
 GIBSON *Explorer* 1976 £395
 GIBSON *Firebird* Avg £418
 1966 £300-£395
 1963 reverse body £530
 GIBSON *Flying V* 1976 £375-£400



Yamaha SG2000

GIBSON *Les Paul Custom* Avg
 £365
 1977 +DMzs £335
 1967 £350
 1959 3 PAFs, 'original' £800
 undated models Avg £369
 GIBSON *Les Paul Deluxe* Avg £311
 1979 £300
 undated models Avg £313
 GIBSON *Les Paul Junior* Avg £381
 1960 double cutaway, 'original'
 £385
 1957 £395
 GIBSON *Les Paul Recording* £250-
 £300
 GIBSON *Les Paul Standard*
 1967 gold top £600
 1957 humbuckers £1600
 1955 nat £1950
 1952 gold top £1200
 undated models Avg £350
 GIBSON *Marauder* 1977 mp £185
 GIBSON *Melody Maker* Avg £204
 1963 £200
 1962 £200-£210
 1959 £195
 1956 j-scale £215
 GIBSON *SI* £145
 GIBSON *SG Custom* Avg £319
 1967 £340
 undated models Avg £313
 GIBSON *SG Les Paul* 1961 original
 case £490

GIBSON *SG Special* Avg £220
 1968 £215-£235
 undated models Avg £219
 GIBSON *SG Standard* Avg £242
 1979 £250
 1972 £220
 GIBSON *Les Paul* £240
 GIBSON twin neck 6/4 £650
 GRETSCH *Chet Atkins* Nashville
 £300
 GRETSCH *Country Gentleman*
 £350
 GRETSCH *Tennessean* £295
 GUILD *Artist Award* £850
 GUILD *Duane Eddy* 1963 £250
 GUILD *S100* +DMzs, +Grovers £245
 GUILD *S300* £150-£230
 GUILD *Starfire* 1966 £160
 HAGSTROM *Suede* £125
 HAMER *Sunburst* 'mint' £295
 HARMONY *Meteor* 1961 +Bigsby
 £150
 HARMONY *Sovereign* £100
 HAYMAN 30/30 £95-£100
 HOFNER *Verithin* £115-£135
 IBANEZ *Artist 2619* £210
 IBANEZ *Bob Weir Pro* £210
 IBANEZ *CN100* £120
 IBANEZ *George Benson* 'new' £335
 IBANEZ twin neck 6/4 £175
 JEDSON *Les Paul* copy £75
 KIMBARA *Stratocaster* copy £85-
 £125
 KRAMER 350 £155
 MUSIC MAN *Stingray* £250-£275
 OVATION *Breadwinner* £250
 RICKENBACKER 330 'tatty' £225
 RICKENBACKER 360 stereo 1964
 £250
 RICKENBACKER 420 £150
 ROLAND GR300 guitar synth 'as
 new' £500
 SCHECTER *Telecaster* koa body,
 brass mods £525
 SHERGOLD *Masquerader* Avg
 £130
 SHERGOLD twin neck 6/4 +DMz
 PAFs £275
 SHERGOLD twin neck 12/6 £240-
 £250
 TRAVIS BEAN *Artist* £350
 VANTAGE *ghost* £180
 VOX *Les Paul* copy £65
 WASHBURN *Falcon* Avg £232
 YAMAHA SG175 £325
 YAMAHA SG1500 £390
 YAMAHA SG2000 Avg £360

KEY

Brand and model are given in heavier type. This is followed by: one price only if just one instrument has been offered for sale; a range of prices (eg £250-£300) if two or three instruments have been offered; an average price (Avg £xx) if many instruments have been offered. Underneath an average price will be listed priced, dated instruments, and often below them will appear an average price for undated instruments (which should generally be assumed to be of recent manufacture). Abbreviations used: Avg = Average; DMz = DiMarzio pickup(s); l/h = left-handed model; mods = numerous modifications; mp = maple fingerboard/neck; nat = natural finish; PAFs = Gibson Patent Applied For pickups; pu = pickup; rw = rosewood fingerboard; trem = tremolo arm; Twin neck 6/4 = six-string and bass; twin neck 12/6 = 12-string and six-string; +Schallers, +Bigsby etc = with added Schallers, Bigsby etc. Any words in 'quotes' are seller's description.



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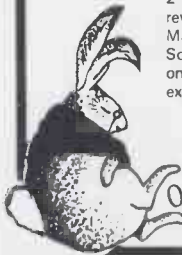
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Sound REVIEWS

Tapping Natural Resources

Chic's hit single *My Feet Keep On Dancing* would have been an appropriate signature tune for a recent double bill at the Riverside Studios: shared by George T Nierenberg's documentary film, *No Maps On My Taps*, and a live performance by three of the film's dancing stars. Towards the end of the Chic song, the vocal line is taken over by three tap dancers in a clever device by Edwards and Rodgers to unite early black vernacular dance with disco and to slot disco firmly in the long tradition of dance-oriented music.

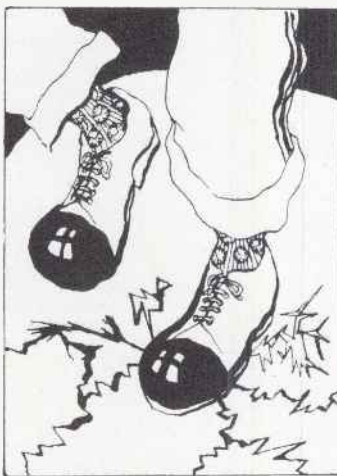
Dance is never far from popular black music: John Lee Hooker accompanied his guitar playing with foot-stomping rhythms and Lightnin' Hopkins stuck bottle tops on his boots for a similar effect; simple choreographed dance routines became a trademark of the 60s Tamla groups, while James Brown's dance steps and routines are as central to his act as his singing. Brown's *Live At The Apollo* records were made in the same New York theatre which was one of the focal tap dancing venues – just a few blocks from the Hoofers Club, HQ of the Harlem dancers.

No Maps vividly and appreciatively revives the long-gone heyday of tap dancing through interviews, reminiscences and old film clips. In a classic scene, Shirley Temple is taught to tap dance upstairs by her rich family's black butler – played by the legendary Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson. This acts as a fine example of the fate of many of the black originators whose steps and choreography were made famous and popular by white imitators. Fred Astaire and Shirley Temple became the household names while many black dancers never left the background, in spite of supplying the ideas. My mother, who never missed a single Fred Astaire film, doesn't remember seeing any black tappers!

The three stars of *No Maps*, Charles 'Chuck' Green, Howard 'Sandman' Sims and James 'Buster' Brown, were reverently introduced by the director as 'National Treasures' and 'Folk Heroes', as they danced on stage to light jazz from the Danny Holgate trio (piano, drums and stand-up bass). It was a shock to see these men transported from the film's bright colours and the loud noisiness of New York to the spartan lecture-theatre setting of the Riverside Studios. The contrast with the film's final scenes was particularly noticeable. In a crowded Harlem nightclub, the dancers

challenged each other's new steps in front of a largely black audience who showed its appreciation and enthusiasm for the dancers and the Lionel Hampton band in a way which was neither possible nor likely in the Hammersmith house of formalised culture.

In the Small's Paradise club of the film, an apron stage brought the dancing feet down to the level of the audience's eyes – a reminder of the old days when the performer had to dance the gauntlet through rows of critical eyes scrutinising every step. The most heinous crime was imitating someone else's steps, and if that was spotted, the dancer was loudly denounced. An amazingly wide repertoire of dance steps developed out of this intense competition and the constant pressure to invent. Dance challenges were as important as the performances. There was also a strong feedback between the developments of both dancers and musicians – jazz drummers in the 20s and 30s had to learn new techniques to keep up with the dance rhythms and new beat breakdowns of the tappers, while the new rhythmic complexities of be-bop



David Toop

drummers put them firmly in control of the dance rhythms. Chuck Green, now acknowledged King Of Tap, rode all these changes and still manages to invent new steps.

The original tappers at the turn of the century, called 'jiggers', danced from the waist down, more or less on one spot. This style was developed from the Irish jigs which newly freed black slaves saw in the ghettos they shared with the poor white immigrants. The use of the upper part of the body possibly owes much to African influenced dance traditions – so tap dancing seems to have begun as a hybrid of black and white traditions, much as rock 'n' roll derived from the blues and white hillbilly music.

Sandman Sims' style is nearer to the early jiggers; he limits himself to the small area of the box so feet movements are the focal point. He developed this style when, as a trainee boxer, he used to dance in the rosin box before a fight. The audience evidently liked his dancing better than his fighting so he swapped tracks. Dancing on sand creates a very particular sound; sensual, breathy swishes and very delicate – incredibly, the Hammersmith audience clapped over a lot of his dancing. Sand dancing

was very popular in the English music halls – Wilson, Kepple and Betty became famous through an imitation Arab dance performed on sand.

In contrast to the focused activity of the sand dance, Buster Brown laces his steps with comedy routines, songs and mimed sketches. At times his observations were as hilarious as Richard Pryor's, especially his danced impersonations of Manhattan walking styles – the casual browsing shopper on Fifth Avenue, the 'normal' person threading a path through the dope dealers on 42nd Street, and the hasty paranoia of a Central Park stroller. These came to life through intricate dancing steps and body slapping sounds which said just as much as Pryor's words.

Chuck Green is the purist of the group. A big awkward man when still, his body is transformed as he begins to dance and his face takes on a distant, relaxed expression. He seems as unsuited to stillness as a seal does to the land. His undisputed genius brought three encores with the audience still demanding more, while the poor man stood gasping. It was left to the others to enmesh their steps with his and relieve the pressure – an embarrassing display of greed.

When all three dancers performed together, at first with boaters and canes – and voices ('Singers we ain't, chuckled Green as they stopped, and he was right!) the initial effect was of a badly rehearsed troupe who couldn't keep up with each other. But when you realise that this kind of dancing isn't meant to be done in formation, that we were witnessing three people improvising to the same piece of music, then the impossibility of expecting slick uniformity became apparent. How can you direct dances which have developed out of closely guarded individualism and competition, and which have to be different every time?

During another group dance, Chuck Green gave us the bass line, while the other two reached higher pitches and sounded sometimes like wooden rattle instruments, others like horses on cobblestones. Chuck Green's dancing, more than the others, was often like an animated walk with the fluidity of a skater – maybe roller-skating-and-disco is today's version of tap-and-jazz.

Sue Steward

Still Springs

Run Shallow

Bruce Springsteen
The River
CBS 88510

Better late than never, I suppose. But if a week is a long time in politics, two years is almost a lifetime in rock 'n' roll, and that's how long it's been since Springsteen last made an album. Funny thing is, he doesn't seem to have grown any wiser, only older and a bit boring.

I've been dismayed to find that *The River* sounded very good for the first few plays, only for the impact to evaporate drastically after a few more.

Lucky for Bruce that he's still got the trusty E Street Band to lean on. These chaps know a Fender from a phone booth and no mistake.

True enough, there are some great moments on *The River*. The opener, *The Ties That Bind*, is a tough, simple rocker with Bruce twanging some nice chiming 12-string guitar in true Searchers/McGuinn fashion. *Independence Day* is a haunting little number, and I'll give a resounding thumbs up to the raucous *Cadillac Ranch*, too.

My favourite song here sums up my dilemma about the album as a whole. It's *Point Blank*, which kicks off side three. I don't know if Bruce has been watching the brilliant John Boorman movie of the same name. If not, he should have been, because fine as the song is it still needs the cold steel cutting edge which *The River* as a whole is lacking.

But anyway, *Point Blank* swings cautiously into action over a simple beat from drummer Max Weinberg, with Roy Bittan stroking melancholy notes from his piano. The instrumen-



tal performance is a real stunner. Danny Federici wrenches lonely wails from an organ while Bruce emotes quietly on top, as well as punching home the choruses with ragged guitar chords. But Springsteen's infatuation with narrative gets the better of him, which it seems to far too much on this album. *Point Blank* is about a girl Bruce used to know who's now turned cold on him. This is sad, but why does it have to be turned into a tragedy of epic proportions? 'You didn't answer when I called out your name/You just turned and then you looked away/Like just another stranger waitin'/To get blown away.'

The imagery is seductive, especially the film noir ambience of the choruses: 'Point blank they must have shot you in the head/Cause point blank/Bang bang baby you're dead.' Sock it to 'em, Bruce. It's some sort of tribute to Springsteen's aura that he can make all this sound so meaningful, but strip it down and the sentiments aren't tough or romantic at all.

What Bruce is really saying is that there must be something wrong with this girl who's turned her back on him. He recalls how they first met: 'You just stood there and held me, then you



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Sound REVIEWS

started dancin' slow/And as I pulled you tighter I swore I'd never let you go.' After all, 'I was gonna be your Romeo you were gonna be my Juliet.' All this, and she threw it away! Who can blame her? Take courage, Bruce – just remember, only women bleed. And after all this, it's still the one song on *The River* I keep going back to, overblown bundle of macho clichés that it is.

But Springsteen blows it entirely with *I Wanna Marry You*. To a nasty sentimental tune and backed up by a crooning all-male chorus. Bruce lets us into his heart, 'Now, honey, I don't wanna clip your wings/But a time comes when two people should think of these things/Having a home and a family/Facing up to their responsibilities.' Or more accurately, you face up to your responsibilities while I make albums and go on tour with my band.

I Wanna Marry You contains clues to Bruce's other obsession too, which is his father. 'My daddy said right before he died/That true, true love was just a lie/He went to his grave a broken heart/An unfulfilled life, makes a man hard.' So what? Marry me darling, it would make my daddy happy? Or alternatively, marry me to save me from my tragic destiny? Either way it stinks.

Independence Day is another look at Bruce's relationship with his father, and it seems likely that it was inspired by Dylan's *Tears Of Rage*, another song about parents and Independence Day. Luckily this is one of the winners on *The River*, an emotional but dignified look back. And *Fade Away*, another lost love anthem, works because of its unassuming marriage of a strong melody with lyrics which suggest that Springsteen is a more sympathetic figure than the one who wrote *I Wanna Marry You*.

The River is the product of a man who's been told too many times how great he is. He's beginning to believe his own publicity, which is ironic when you consider that he actually went around pulling down posters touting him as 'The future of rock 'n' roll' when he came to London in 1975. The outcome is that Bruce can't see the difference between indulgent introspection and the common emotions which make a performer matter to a wide audience. There's nothing here to approach, for example, the climactic moment of *Backstreets*, from *Born To Run*. There, Bruce was living on his nerve ends when he sang: 'When the breakdown hit at midnight/ There was nothing left to say/But I hated him/And I hated you when you went away.' That was straight from the heart. Nowadays, he has too much time to sit around and think about it.

Adam Sweeting

Be-Bop-A-Cooder

Ry Cooder
London, Apollo Victoria

As might be expected, Ry Cooder's set on this tour was based around the *Bop Till You Drop* and the more recent *Borderline* album. It was only a year ago that he was able to slip into Britain for an acoustic guitar/vocal

spot at the Cambridge Folk Festival, seen only by guitar aficionados and his dedicated following. *Bop* and the single *Little Sister* changed all that towards the end of last year. The album widened Cooder's audience taking him into the record charts at last. For the tour with his band the Radio Silents, the set was devoted entirely to electric music. He demonstrated that he can produce a variety of classic guitar sounds with perfect taste and control while delivering convincing vocals in a throwaway manner.

For most of the night, he played a Fender *Jaguar*, visually distinctive with its bar fret markings and slide switches. A second guitar looked similar to the *Jaguar* but was heavily customised. He played bottleneck on a small, white solid which looked more like a Gibson but was unidentifiable from the balcony, and of course from that position, the sound was less than ideal in the vacuous theatre. But the control displayed by Cooder and his musicians did not disintegrate into a sea of standing waves.

Cooder's music has elements of ethnic American musical form distilled into a style which acknowledges the musician's past yet is fresh and contemporary. He has succeeded in taking his music forward, leaving behind contemporaries like John Fahey and Roy Buchanan. When The Band quit, I thought rock had run its course in terms of adapting America's rich musical past. Cooder has at the very least taken over where The Band left off.

His vocals are unique on covers of rock standards in that he tends to dispense completely with original melodies, using only the original lyrics and chord sequences.

Cooder was at first expected to use session players from *Borderline* for the tour. Guitarist/vocalist John Hiatt was on the album and the story goes that when Cooder went to hear the musician with his own band, he was sufficiently impressed by what he heard to ask them to become the Radio Silents. So we didn't see Jim Keltner this time around.

A word has to be said for the two black male singers who lifted the concerts with their talents and humour. Casually dressed, they did an informal type of Motown number, while Bobby King demonstrated a tremendous falsetto voice (as on *Bop* and *Borderline*) and the other singer, who looked like a sedated Sly Stone in street clothes, has the best bass voice I've heard live in a long time.

Ralph Denyer

Records Received

The Beach Boys *Sunflower* Caribou CRB 31773. If you haven't heard anything to stretch the cavities of the ears lately or if the pockets aren't weighing you down, you might consider stepping back 10 years in the old time machine for a mere £2.99 and warming the headphones to pick up on the album which, if memory serves, slotted in between the lazy *Friends* and the intriguing *Surf's Up*. It ain't their best, with Bruce Johnston's MORish tendencies peeping through at times, but if you don't have *Add Some Music To Your Day*,

Forever and *Cool, Cool Water* and had to sit through a muzak version of *Good Vibrations* over your pint, feel free to consider returning these old chaps to your turntable. Bob Dylan *Saved* CBS86113 Part two of Bob's new covenant with the house of Israel is for the most part a dispiriting experience. Religion seems to have steamrolled the wit, humour and insight that used to be what Dylan was about and left just another clichéd holy roller with one simple solution to everything. The revivalist setting hardly suits Bob's strangled vocals; Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett's reverential production can do little with dull Biblical musings, and a line from some old song springs to mind: 'Her profession was her religion, her sin was her lifelessness'. Joe 'King' Carrasco & The Crowns *Stiff SEEZ 28* Rinky-dink organ, cheesy 60s lyrics, anaemic singing and a smattering of Tex-Mex – this lot end up sounding somewhere between Buddy Holly imitators and the Sir Douglas Quintet. It's a pretty nice combination, but not as much fun as it should be. Maybe if ? and the Mysterians had made a whole album it wouldn't have been so hot either. The Son Of Stiff *Tour 1980* Stiff SON 1 Carrasco is also featured on a 12in five-track album at £1.25, which makes an eminently sensible purchase as all featured are on form. Particularly liked Tenpole Tudor's *Bo Diddleyish* *There Are Boys* and Any Trouble's *Turning Up The Heat* – all derivative stuff, mind. Van Morrison *Common One* Mercury 63021 Van's tuning more than a bit religiouswards as well (do these rock stars know something we don't?) but it's only slowed him down a bit. We suspect *Common One* will be an acquired taste but Morrison is still worth listening to for phrasing and power. Long instrumental passages give the likes of Pee Wee Ellis and Mark Isham their heads to blow you away and when it's working they achieve some sublime moments. One black mark is the singer's old recurring tendency to namedrop *à la Hard Nose The Highway* – as if singing about Eliot shows he's well read. Talking Heads *Remain In Light* Sire SRK6095 The most striking move away from the last album, *Fear Of Music*, is marked by the Heads' greater emphasis on rhythmic structures and their reliance on longer, almost modal pieces, each based more or less on one musical feel. But their musical direction has also widened, moving from the deeply funky *Listening Wind* to the largely fragmented *Born Under Punches* or the cold ambience of *Once In A Lifetime*, while their songs range from *reportage* (*Seen And Not Seen*) to a development of the group's clever use of vocal counterpoint, as in the interweaving lines of *The Great Curve*. Certainly the record is not as immediate or melodic as its predecessor, but its overall production (full marks once again to our Mr Eno) and experimental basis can only be applauded. *Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark* *Organisation* Dindisc DID6 OK, so you've always classed OMITD as 'one of those clever synth bands'. Well, on the evidence here, yes and no. The band is concerned – and indeed mostly successful – in its use of synths: listen to the incisive sound on the intro

to *2nd Thought*, for example. But as the next track, *VCL XI*, shows OMITD's synthesisation can lead to a rather pedestrian approach to tempo and rhythm, induced by the machines themselves. Where bass guitar survives, it's effective; the vocals, however, leave much to be desired, and the songs often appear a little hollow. The introduction of more humour/humanity would be welcome. Monty Python's *Contractual Obligation Album* Charisma CAS1152 Sounds like it too... A reviewer writes: I remember when a chap could rely on pissing oneself to an MPLP – what are things coming to? Still, John Denver obviously found it amusing: that explains it... The Teardrop Explodes *Kilimanjaro* Mercury 6359 035 At last, Mercury gets its very own new wave band – and they've hit on a winner. Early ties with Echo And The Bunnymen (ie Liverpool) may give you some idea of the band's feel: classy pop music with powerful and energetic rhythm section (a particularly solid bass guitar sound from songwriter/singer/mainman Julian Cope does wonders for the record's dynamism, captured at Rockfield in Wales). *Poppies In The Field*, it must be pointed out, is magnificent, with its 'backwards' guitar filling out the rhythm, a percussive guitar line tugging gently at the corners of the verse, and Cope majestically claiming: 'I wait around...' on the chorus. Keyboards, acoustic and electric, are used sparingly but effectively throughout *Poppies*, and while the other tracks cannot hope to reach the song's heights, The Teardrop Explodes should provide more good things – a 1980 debut to note. Boz Scaggs & Band CBS 31848 Rough-edged and righteous Scaggs with immaculate stuttering horn charts produced by Glyn Johns from 1972 as you should already know. If you don't, Messrs C, B and S are willing to flog you their copy for £2.99. Have they nothing new up their sleeves except Barbra S? Tom Waits *Heartattack And Vine* Asylum K52252 Still the only singer who spits bits of old hash browns on you from your turntable. Waits has assembled some tried and trusted old geezers for this one, notably ex-Mayall etc bassman Larry Taylor and Hammond wiz Ronnie Barron (whose finest time was probably in Dr John's early 70s band). In fact the best tracks here are quite similar to the 4am-in-the-most-dangerous-nightclub-in-town feeling of Mac's peak, but the real tough skullsplitting tracks like the title track and *Downtown* are mixed in with some full orchestral arrangements which seem to have brought the lachrymosity out in Mr Waits. Would have preferred a rough side an' a soft side. Would have played the rough side well away from the best carpet.

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