No. 29, December, 1980 $1.75

Albert Collins' Ice Cold Blues
Surf Music, Rockabilly, John Prine

MICHAEL McDONALD CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

TWO WORLDS OF POP

World Radio History

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The Bolt Strikes

In the past few years, you've probably heard many amplifier manufacturers claiming that their solid state amplifier has that "tube amp sound." Granted, it was close, but still . . . no cigar. You've remained unconvinced, and so have we.

The fact is nothing can get a tube amplifier sound like a tube amplifier. But the problem is that generally you've had to give up a lot of the advantages of solid state technology in order to appreciate the sound of the tubes.

The Bolt strikes. The Bolt 60 is a 60 watt (R.M.S.) amplifier that features the standard vacuum tube configuration (one 12AT7 and two 6L6GC) to produce that inimitable warm sound rich with harmonic overtones. But unlike other tube amps, the Bolt 60 employs F.E.T. circuitry which, among other things, greatly reduces excess noise, especially when operating at high output levels.

The F.E.T. circuitry also gives the Bolt 60's bass, middle and treble controls, the kind of flexibility musicians demand for attaining their own personal sound.

The Bolt 60 has two separate channels for immediate switching between clean and distorted sounds. Channel one features two volume controls and a master volume control to produce the classic cranked-up sound even at low volumes.

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For more information on the Bolt or our other amplifiers, send $1 for our new Amplifier/PA catalog. RolandCorp US, 2401 Saybrook Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90040, (213) 685-5141.

We Design the Future

World Radio History

NO. 29, DEC.-JAN. 1981

Albert Collins is the Master of the Telecaster and owner of the iciest sound around. David Breskin converses on the road, the blues and the Ice Age.

Captain Beefheart is an absolute authentic chunk of taproot America on a Mark Twain scale with Paul Bunyan stature. Only Lester Bangs could say more.

Michael McDonald is a retiring superstar and possessor of The Voice, something you'll be hearing more of. Sam Sutherland interviews on his past, present and future.

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Cover Photo: McDonald by Norman Sief; Beefheart by Deborah Feingold. Coloring by Deborah Feingold.

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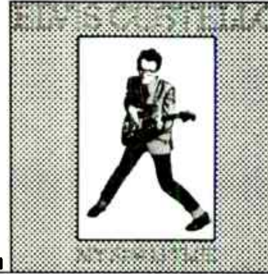

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Elvis Costello "Taking Liberties." Clearing the decks, on Columbia Records and Tapes.

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Give the gift of music.

World Radio History

LETTERS

WHAT KILLED HENDRIX

David Marsh's story on Jimi Hendrix in the October issue (#27) was very interesting. But I don't understand! In the same issue, you have Dave Marsh saying, on p. 48: "So to this day there are those who'll tell you Jimi Hendrix was a junkie, and that's what killed him. *It's a lie.*" — and Robert Fripp saying, on p. 62: "Jimi Hendrix is an example of how a major talent can be dissipated by drugs and abuse." Who's right?

Is Mr. Fripp saying that it was not heroin,(or only heroin?) but the use of other drugs (psychedelics) that killed Hendrix? I find it interesting, because Mr. Fripp is a follower of Gurdjieff, who was quoted as saying: "Instead of spending a whole day in exercises like the yogi, a week in prayer like the monk, or a month in self-torture like the fakir, he ("the sly man") simply prepares and *swallows a little pill* which contains all the substance he wants and, in this way, without loss of time, he obtains the required results." Did Gurdjieff raise his kundalini through psychedelics?

Now, everyone knows that Hendrix was into psychedelics and the psychedelic state of mind, but I don't think acid killed him. So, what did kill this beautiful human being and artistic and spiritually-minded musician of the consciousness-raising sixties? Does anyone really know?

George Koumantzelis
Lowell, MA

Ed. The medical testimony states it was suffocation on his own vomit that killed Hendrix, brought on by a combination of sleeping pills, alcohol and an incompetent ambulance attendant. He did not die of an overdose, but without the drugs it may not have happened.

MARSH'S BEST

I just finished David Henderson's biography of Jimi Hendrix, and Dave Marsh's article exhibited at least as much of a feel for the man and his music as Henderson's book. It ranks with his notorious review of Iggy and the Stooges' "Raw Power" as some of his best writing. In my case, even though Hendrix blew my mind with *Are You Experienced?*, it's taken me ten years to fully appreciate and understand what the man was laying before us. It seems to me you really have to approach his freedom and intensity of expression before you can fully tune in to him.

McLAUGHLIN DEFENDED

Your attack on John McLaughlin in the Hendrix article was uncalled for. There are many musicians whose work is highly derivative of Hendrix's; surely you could find a more appropriate scapegoat than McLaughlin, one of the true innovators of our time.

McLaughlin freely admits his influences, and they range from Miles and Trane to Tal Farlow to Bartok to East Indian music. However, McLaughlin says of his encounter with Jimi: "I was into a completely different thing than he, though there was no conflict between our styles whatsoever."

Both of them are models of vision and dedication, but there are only superficial similarities between their styles. Fortunately, their accomplishments will outlast the irresponsible journalism.

Paul Sawyer
Seattle, WA

DRUMMERS DEFENDED

Musicians are human beings. This means they have strong points and weak points in their chosen craft. A super-laudatory article such as you wrote about M. Roach therefore lacks credibility, and, in a way, ignores the many other fine creative drummers on the scene today.

Helmut Vles
Rockland, ME

FINALLY FRIPP

The six year wait to hear Robert Fripp perform within the context of a live band was endless. The truly innovative rock guitarist today, Fripp's perfectionism is what really makes him amazing. Catching The League of Gentlemen five times was not enough. It took three listenings to appreciate what the music's capabilities were. I finally realized the idea of active listening while dancing at the band's final appearance at Irving Plaza.

And Robert Fripp is having a good time, enabling his guitar playing to be that much better. Even somber reptiles can have fun.

Mark Liebenthal
Rego Park, NY

CRITICAL BACKLASH

To anyone involved with the craft of record reviewing: Please cut out Susan Black's letter in the October issue of *Musician* and glue it to your turntables.

Unfortunately, some of you have taken it upon yourselves to criticize not only the music, but the artists and the audience as well. You've tried to inflate your importance in the music business by declaring yourselves both judge & jury. However, the only other people who value your opinions as much as you do are other critics and possibly your editors. Meanwhile, we, the record buying public, continue to buy records we enjoy regardless of your verdict.

Alas — twisted villains like McCartney, Queen & Kiss will keep polluting the world with vast amounts of records, while the brave heroes in white — Brian Eno, Robert Fripp, & others will save only a modest few.

Seriously — music is music. We are all lucky to have such a wide variety of music to choose from. No one needs to be insulted for enjoying Todd Rundgren or 10cc, nor does anyone need to be congratulated for enjoying Eno. Do us all a favor and come down from your clouds — let us know if there are any new artists to listen to, and warn us if something like Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music might not be what we're used to. Let's build up our choices instead of limiting them. But most importantly remember that in the end the choice is *ours* — not yours.

Donn Deniston,
Sylvania, Ohio

WELL POLISHED PEOPLE

Thank you for your excellent interview in #25. I'm crazy over Daryl Hall and John Oates. I'm a Japanese girl. So I have to wait for arrival of the foreign magazines to Japan for a month. But #25 was worth waiting!

I like to go shopping to the foreign book store. I'm especially interested in *M,P&L*. It has a wide side of music (Rock, Jazz, etc.). I think Mr. Editors are well-polished people.

Katsue Fryita
Tokyo, Japan

BLESS YOU, MY SON

I read your magazine religiously and truly love it. Your stories, articles and reviews express so many of the views in emotion and spirit of music that had been supressed in myself for too long. Regardless, having your mag to read was equal to having a master to talk to.

You've helped me advance and mature as a musician by broadening my attitude towards different musics, teaching me to be honest and less prejudiced, opening doors of creativity that I may never have known, and giving me light to keep looking. For this I thank you and hope your publication is eternal.

P. Michael Cotter
Staten Island, NY

SOME SLY

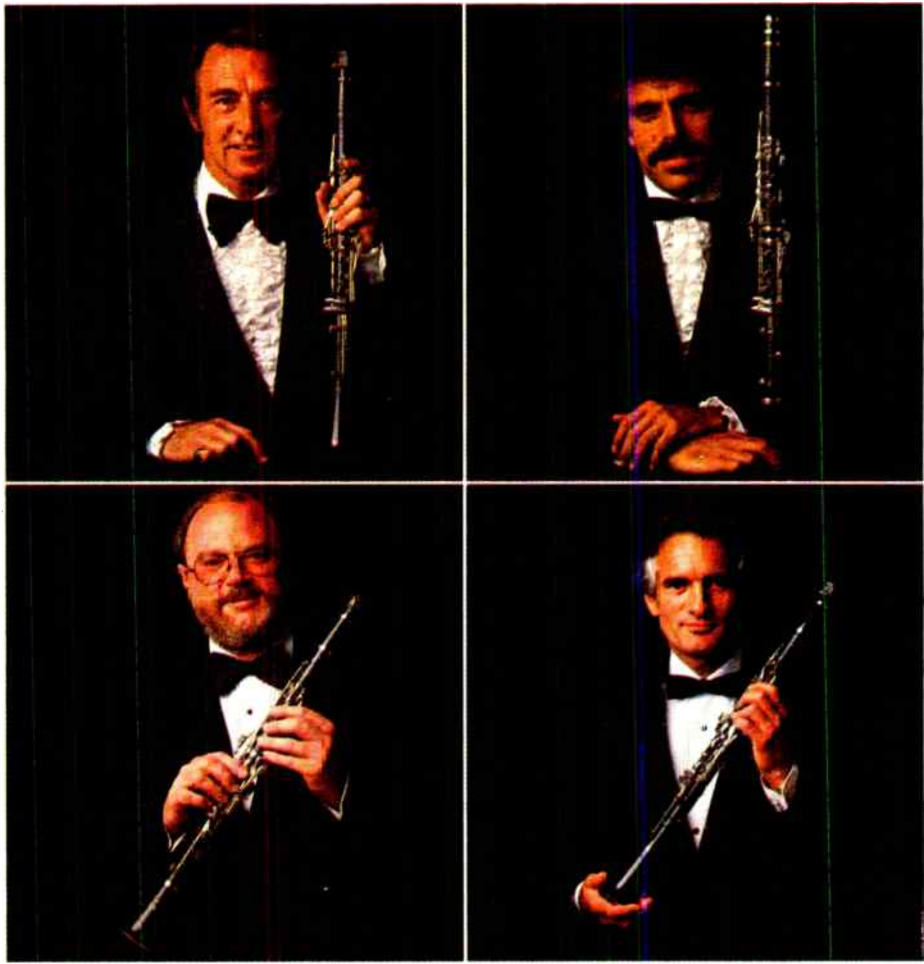
I don't have any complaints in regard to the musicians you've featured in the past (McCartney, Rollins, Zappa, Steely Dan, etc.), because many are my own favorites and all are fantastic musicians. But, What is it about Sly and the Family Stone that's so radical that they can't get any coverage? If *Musician* ever again does an article on a rock group that has been innovative and influential, using their past accomplishments and ongoing potential as a stepping stone, let it be on Sly and the Family Stone.

We Everyday People will thank you.

Dave Graham
New York, NY

World Radio History

Buddy DeFranco, Eddie Daniels, Gary Foster, and Ron Odrich. Making and breaking tradition.



Staying on top means staying ahead, not just keeping up. The musicians pictured know this. That's one reason they've picked up on the new line of Yamaha clarinets.

These top players recognize the edge Yamaha clarinets have to offer. And they're taking advantage of it. You might want to do the same.

For more information, write: Yamaha Musical Products, A Division of Yamaha International Corp., Box 7271, Grand Rapids, MI 49510.

World Radio History

music industry news

By Nelson George and Robert Ford

Record Biz Upswing

Arista record president Clive Davis recently waxed ebullient about his company's successful summer and of an overall upswing in record sales. He feels "the industry is rebounding with health and vigor. Let's also hope that the recovery and renewed health of music gets as much consumer newspaper space as did our stagnation. It sure deserves it."

Okay, we'll bite. Over the last year and a half the record business has had its problems, but things certainly seem to be getting better. In acknowledging this, one should recognize that much of the record industry's apparent recovery is due to more efficient business practices. While most of the country still resists conserving energy, the music business has cut its extravagances. *Not* because it wanted to, but because it had to.

The state of jazz at the majors is less encouraging. Mainstream jazz and re-issue series are usually the first cut, since they bring in little or no profit for a large label. We give the companies too much of our hard-earned cash for them to stop providing us with valuable keys to our musical past. Making classic jazz available is a moral obligation CBS, WEA, and the rest have to be constantly reminded of. Otherwise, maybe things are looking up.

Pop Pensions

England's EMI records is attempting to attract performers in a most ingenious manner. They have devised a pension plan for artists. At age 40 performers will receive a lump sum payment followed by monthly checks. The money comes from having 60% of a performer's earnings tax sheltered during their productive years. EMI hopes this will help counteract England's soak-the-rich tax structure, which has made most of the country's rock elite into tax exiles unwilling to deal with British based companies.

Dope Tax

The director of New York State's division on Substance Abuse is proposing a dope tax on musicians whose music promotes drug use. "I want to tax them $1 for each and every time a record is sold and aired on the radio" says director Julio Martinez. On his dope enemies list are a whole slew of rock heavies including the Stones, Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, Lou Reed, and (who else?) the Grateful Dead. Martinez's statement is likely to ploy to induce some of these artists to do benefit concerts against drug abuse. As ridiculous as this sounds initially, musicians have to acknowledge the effect (often negative) they can have on many young and not so young fans vis a vis drug use.

Bee Gees Sue Stigwood

The Bee Gees have fired Robert Stigwood as manager and are suing him for the incredible sum of $75 million. Barry, Robin, and Maurice make numerous claims in their suit. Among them: that Stigwood's RSO label owes them over $16 million in unpaid royalties; that as manager he kept them on his RSO label when they could have gotten a better contract from others; that he siphoned off their BMI advance money to finance other RSO projects; that he registered Bee Gees's song copyrights and recording masters in his own name, violating a provision of their contract.

In addition the suit claims that when Stigwood sold part of RSO to the European conglomerate Polygram, he made a huge profit, money that the Bee Gees's say Stigwood wouldn't have acquired without their presence on the label. Thus Polygram is also being sued for $75 million. If lawyer John Eastman (Linda's father) can make this point stick the Bee Gees's might be in position to pull RSO right from under Stigwood and take control. Certainly over the last ten years their talents are what kept the company afloat.

Stigwood is, of course, counter-suing to maintain the management contracts. In charging him with conflict of interest the Bee Gees expose their naiveté. If they thought that manager Stigwood was gonna let them record for anybody but his company they were crazy. The Bee Gee's current contract (signed in 1975) supposedly terminates at the end of five years or eight albums, whichever comes first. So far the Bee Gees have recorded six LPs. This has the makings of a lengthy legal struggle, reminiscent of the Alan Klein vs. the Beatles case. When the dust clears probably only the lawyers will have won.

College Radio Stiffed

In a move that has enraged several college radio stations, Arista is asking most of them to pay $150 a year to be serviced with their latest releases. As we noted a few issues back the music industry's need for and respect of college radio is at an all time low. This pay for play policy is yet another example. There is a boycott movement afoot against Arista with commercial stations such as WBCN in Boston joining in.

Label Talk

Steve Backer, the conscience behind Arista's commitment to jazz for several years, has left the company. As director of jazz A&R for Arista he was vital to that company's acquisition of the Savoy catalogue and the birth of the Novus and Freedom labels. With his departure Arista's interest in progressive jazz may disappear in the shadow of the bottom line.

Polygram has started a rock music department, the first such operation bearing that title in the industry. Under the supervision of Jerry Jaffe, a three man "rock specialty squad" will concentrate on development of rock performers.

Also specializing in rock will be the City Light label, a new venture for the

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MMO company that owns Inner City records and two other jazz lines.

Warner Brothers' Stan Cornyn has long been one of the record biz's more creative executives. So his recent promotion was no surprise, but the position he was given is. As senior vice-president of Warner Communications, Inc. Record Group (nice title, huh?) he will oversee all long-range planning for the conglomerate. Thoughtful preparation for the future is distinctly anti-record business and very needed.

For most of his 14 years at Motown Michael Roshkind ran the company for founder Berry Gordy. Now Roshkind has retired to count his money and speculation is that Berry, for the first time since the early 1970s, will take a very active role in day to day operations.

David Geffen's self-titled company has clearly been elected "the superstar label" by the WEA distribution network. In signing Donna Summer, Elton John, and John Lennon, huge sums of cash were needed, the kind of money that would leave most new companies swimming in red ink for years. But Geffen has been given a blank check by WEA in order to achieve two goals: build an instantly commercial label and weaken the opposition whenever possible. So far, so good.

A&M is dipping its toes in country with the release of "The Legend of Jessie James." This all-star item (Charlie Daniels, Johnny Cash, Emmylou Harris) tells the story of the infamous outlaw. More importantly, it gives A&M a chance to test its abilities in marketing country music.

Financially bereft TK Records has been absorbed by the legendary music mover Morris Levy. TK president Henry Stone will apparently stay on as head of the operation setting up a marriage of two of the most storied veterans of the record wars. Levy, who has Routlette and Sugar Hill Records as well as an extensive distribution and retail network, has long been respected for his outstanding ears but derided for his lack of business acumen. The Stone-Levy collaboration should be most interesting, though, like a solar eclipse, it should be viewed from a safe distance.

Chart Action

Supported by a nationwide concert tour and a surprisingly funky single Queen's *The Game* album is playing on and on. It was the number one pop album on trade charts and the single "Another One Bites the Dust" (a great steal from Chic and Kurtis Blow) was the number one pop single and near the top on both the soul and disco charts. Like the Stones last year Queen has dipped into the contemporary R&B sound for some fresh inspiration. Also doing well was the steamy Ms. Pat Benatar with her second Chrysalis album "Crimes of Passion," and the men that one reader thinks have "welded rawness into art" AC/DC's with *Back In Black*.

The B-52s *Wild Planet* album is doing extremely well surprising some who felt the band's novelty would soon wear thin. Live albums by Kenny Loggins and Supertramp (neither of which was recorded in Budokan) are filling space between studio albums for both acts in fine style.

Among 1980's more quietly successful albums were Boz Scaggs' *Middleman, The Empire Strikes Back* soundtrack, Genesis' *Duke*, the Manhattans' *After Midnight*, and Teddy Pendergrass's recently released *TP*. All have gone gold and most will probably settle in somewhere under platinum, though Teddy's album has enough singles on it to push it well over the 1,000,000 needed for platinum designation.

On the negative side of things we have deteched a few albums that have been, shall we say, less than successful. The Blue Oyster Cult's *Cultosaurus Erectus* and Whitesnake's *Ready An' Willing* have chart positions that suggest heavy metal is not as healthy as it sometimes seems, while Jermaine Jackson's album *Let's Get Serious* shows that having a hugely successful single doesn't guarantee sales for the 33rpm.

A final note on the pop album chart: with no tour and a musically very uneven album the Rolling Stones are experiencing a sales rebirth. At one point on the *Billboard* chart there were six Stones' albums on the chart. Atlantic records has done a good job of capitalizing on this.

The profoundly lame Barbra Streisand-Robin Gibb collaboration *Woman in Love* raced to the top of the singles chart. A similarly creative pairing, Olivia Newton-John and the Electric Light Orchestra, has brought us *Xanadu*, a record as gaudy and empty as the quickly departed movie it represents. Thankfully better music such as the Pointer Sisters send up *He's So Shy*, Eddie Rabbit's chugging *Drivin' My Life Away*, and Stevie Wonder's courageous *Master Blaster* all held high positions. The latter we say is courageous since its reggae rhythm and socially conscious lyrics wouldn't seem to be the best way to recapture an audience alienated by *Secret Life of Plants* but Wonder pulled it off.

On the soul album chart the street funk on trumpeter Tom Browne's *Love Approach* and the Bootsy Collins produced nastiness of Zapp's self-titled album are giving each their first major success. Browne is riding the appeal of "Funkin' for Jamaica (New York)" and Zapp "More Bounce to the Ounce" two excellent portable cassette player boogie tunes. Amazingly Queen's *The Game* album is scoring high on the soul charts, a tribute to their single's strength.

Significant soul singles include Earth, Wind & Fire's so-so "Let Me Talk," the forerunner of a new double album; "Where Did We Go Wrong" from the consistent LTD; the infectious Jackson's 45 "Lovely One"; and "Freedom" a rap record by Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five released by the folks who brought you the Sugarhill Gang.

News from Nashville is, as usual these days, good. There Willie Nelson has two top ten albums, the soundtrack from *Honeysuckle Rose* featuring him on a number of great country songs and *San Antonio Rose* a duet album with one time boss Ray Price. Dolly Parton's return to more traditional country arrangements continues on her duet album with Porter Wagoner *Porter and Dolly*, while Crystal Gayle's "uptown country" sells *These Days*. The most interesting top country single is Emmylou Harris' reworking of new Warners' stablemate Paul Simon's "The Boxer."

We are dazed and amazed to report that there are some actual jazz (with improvisations yet) recordings being reported in the trades. Arthur Blythe's *Illusions*, Joanne Brackeen's *Ancient Dynasty*, Art Pepper's *Landscape* are in there adding some much needed class to the jazz charts.

The Future of AM Radio

Three years ago WABC-FM in New York was the most successful station in the country. In the biggest market WABC had the highest rating and largest cumulative audience in the United States. The station was built on a classic top 40 format featuring rapid fire deejays, ringing bells, and a repetitious, supertight playlist. But radio has changed radically in this brief period. With the diversity of contemporary music available on FM, the AM wavelength can't compete musically.

So WABC has signed the Yankees for next year. Every game. A clear retreat from its former all music format and a reflection of where AM radio is going. ▣

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MUSIC INC

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE:

TO: Design Engineering

FROM: Marketing

SUBJECT: New Product Design

DISTRIBUTION:

This may be an impossible task, but we've dreamed up an instrument geared to today's musician. It has to have the best function-to-price ratio that you can design into a keyboard.

Here's what we're looking for...

A totally polyphonic synthesizer that can *very easily* produce STRINGS, ORGAN and BRASS and still be variable enough to be used as a LEAD SYNTH.

The STRING VOICE must pass through a three part filter with adjustable cut-off and emphasis. This voice must then go through the finest chorus circuit you can come up with. (By the way, the chorus should have variable depth, speed and delay!)

A realistic BRASS VOICE must be available at the touch of a button. There should also be a variable mode passing it through our patented filter. This should allow the player to program filter contour, cut-off, emphasis and contour amounts to create some powerful polyphonic synth effects.

The ORGAN must have 5 footages mixable from 16 feet to 1 foot with a tone control available. This ORGAN VOICE should be panned into either the chorus circuit or the VCF or both while still available as a direct signal.

LFO modulation must be fully controllable, have adjustable delay and be routed to either the VCF or used as FM for vibrato. *(let's include a pitch wheel for bending notes or chords)*

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Surf City revisited. Take three Chuck Berry riffs, add bleach and leave out in the sun to dry.

By Dave Marsh

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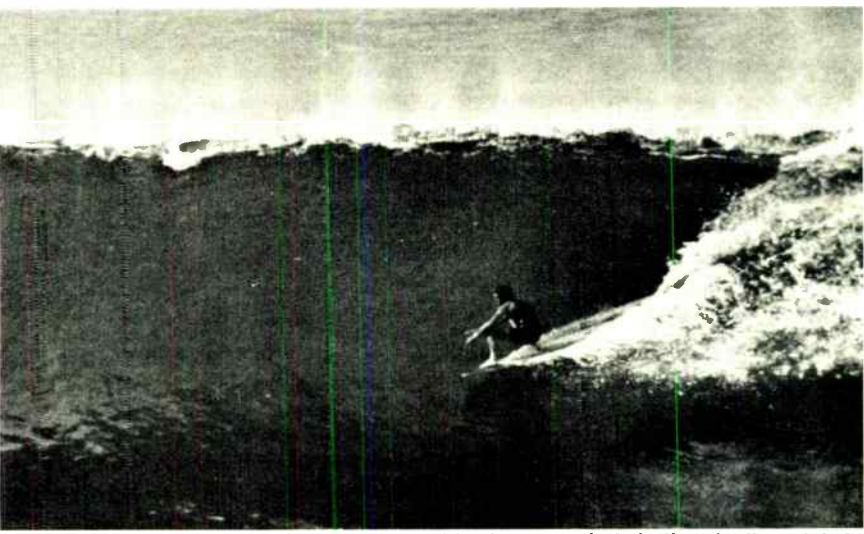

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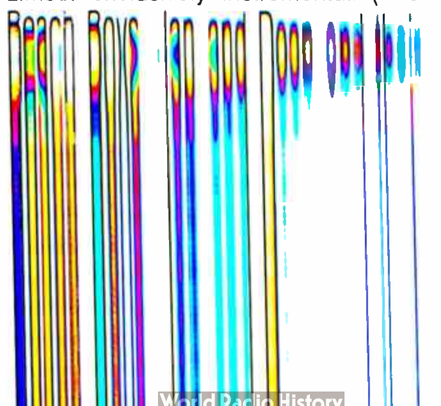

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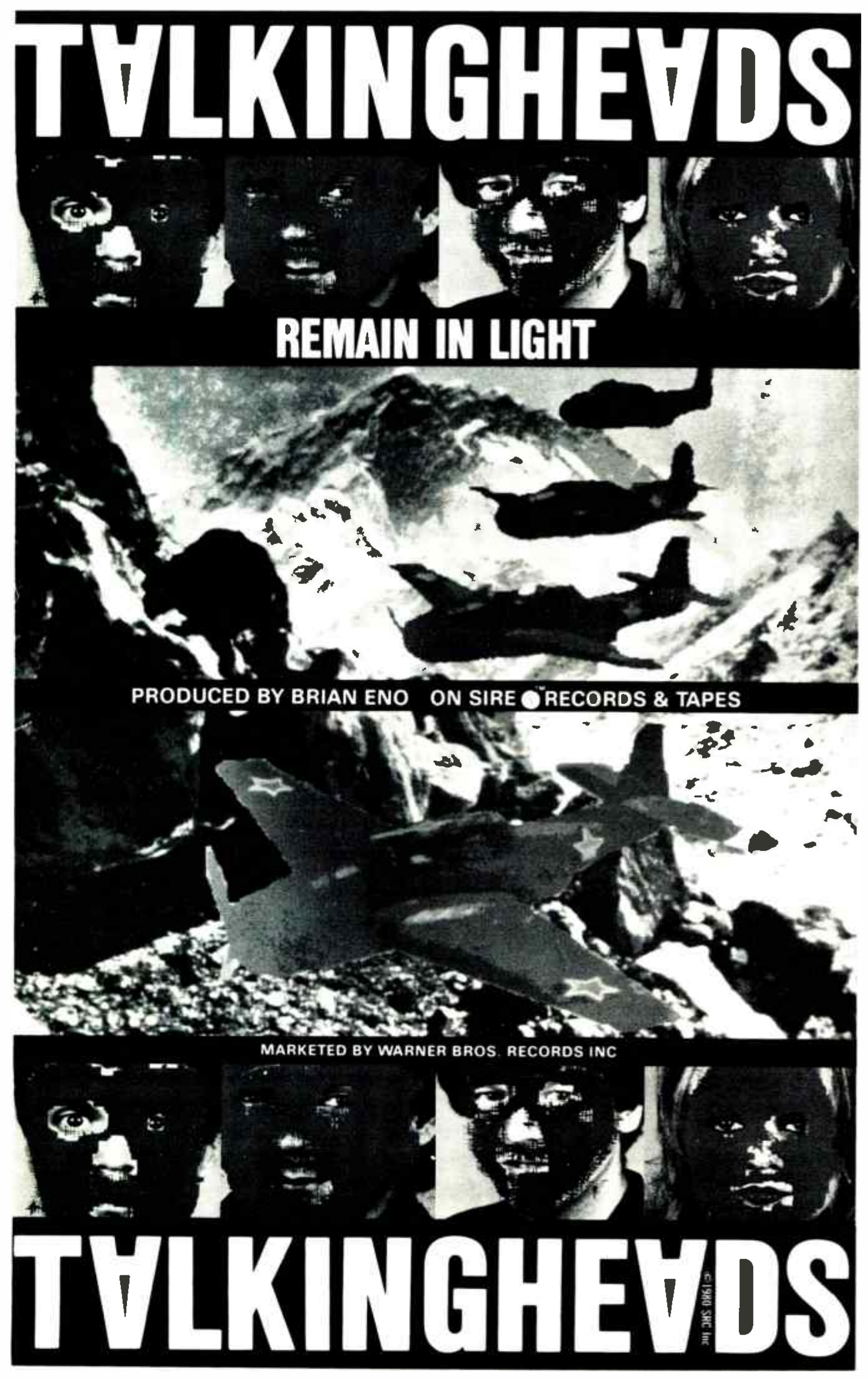

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continued next page

World Radio History

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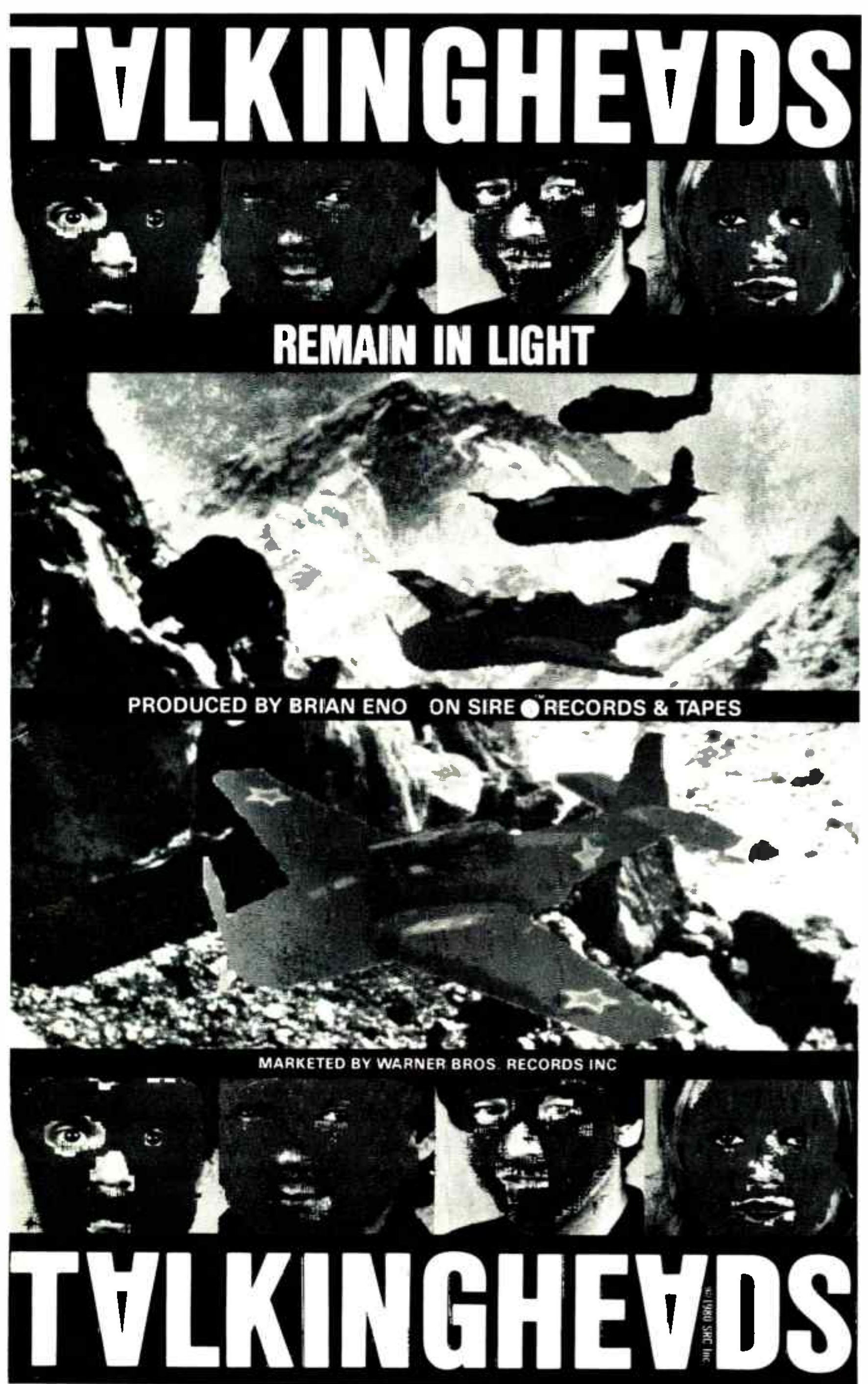

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World Radio History

LA BELLA'S

MUSICIAN of NOTE

Photo by Richard Laird

STEVE KHAN

Born: April 28, 1947

Home: Born in Los Angeles, resides in New York City.

Profession: Musician, and insane *General Hospital* fan.

Earliest Musical Experience: My father, Sammy Cahn, singing and playing his hit medley ... played piano at gunpoint from 5-12 yrs. of age; was a terrible rock drummer from 16-19; made a commitment to the guitar at 20.

Major Influences: Anyone who ever had a distinctive sound and a unique style.

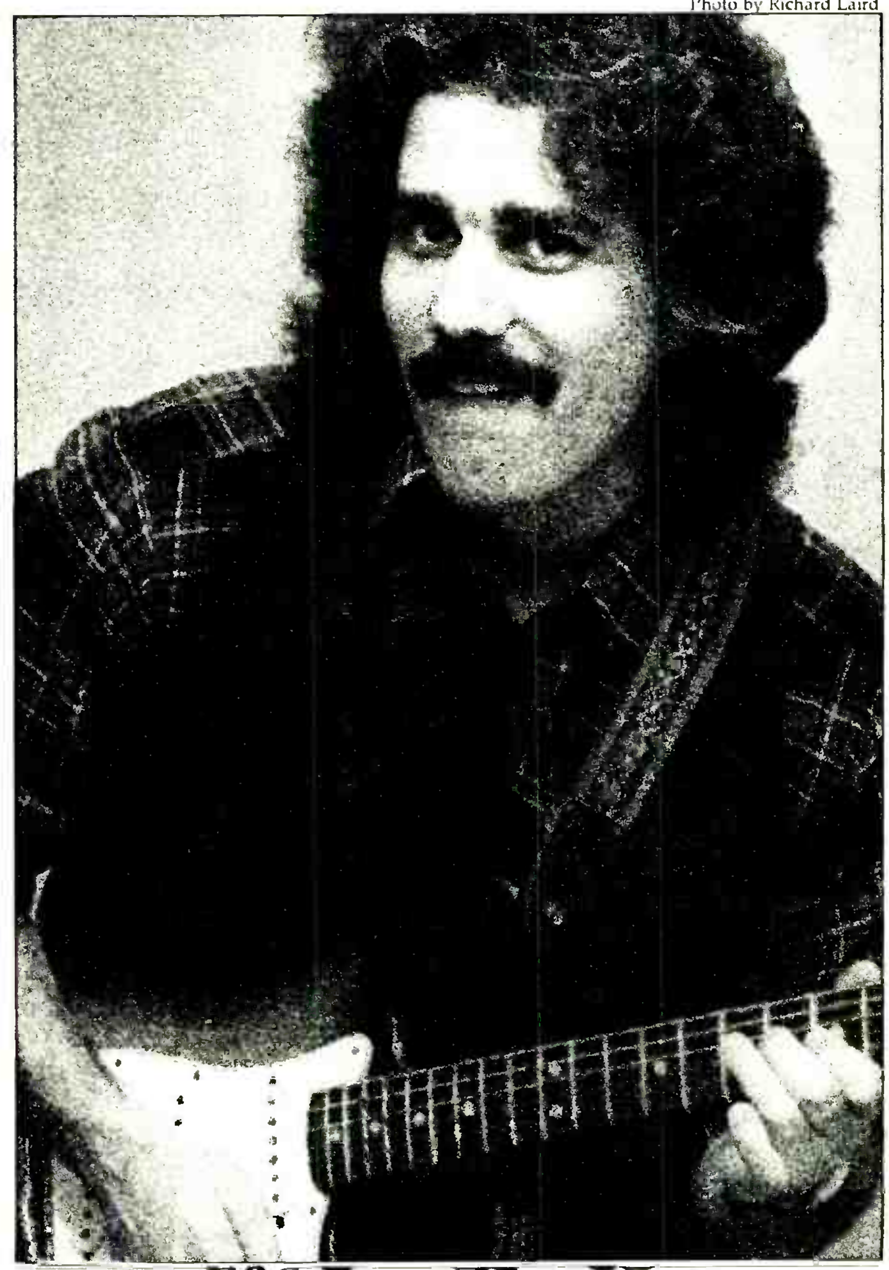
Latest Musical Accomplishment: Solo acoustic guitar album, *Evidence* (Arista/NOVUS); Steely Dan's latest, *Gaucho;* and soon, *Steve Khan Songbook* (Plymouth Music).

Keynotes: Four albums for Columbia: *Tightrope; The Blue Man; Arrows;* and, *The Best Of*. The *Wes Montgomery Guitar Folio* (Gopam Music) ... and, being part of Billy Joel's success with *The Stranger* and *52nd St.*

On Today's Music: With the exception of a few far-sighted musicians and composers, today's music stinks! For me, Allan Holdsworth is doing the most interesting things on the electric guitar, and Ralph Towner is the same to the acoustic guitar.

On Strings: On my electric guitars I've been using the LaBella 60P-T set; and for my acoustic, the 790P-M set. These strings are made for the musician who's too lazy to change strings ... that's me, and these strings really last.

Wish I'd Said: "I'm livin' in my own private Idaho."–The B-52's



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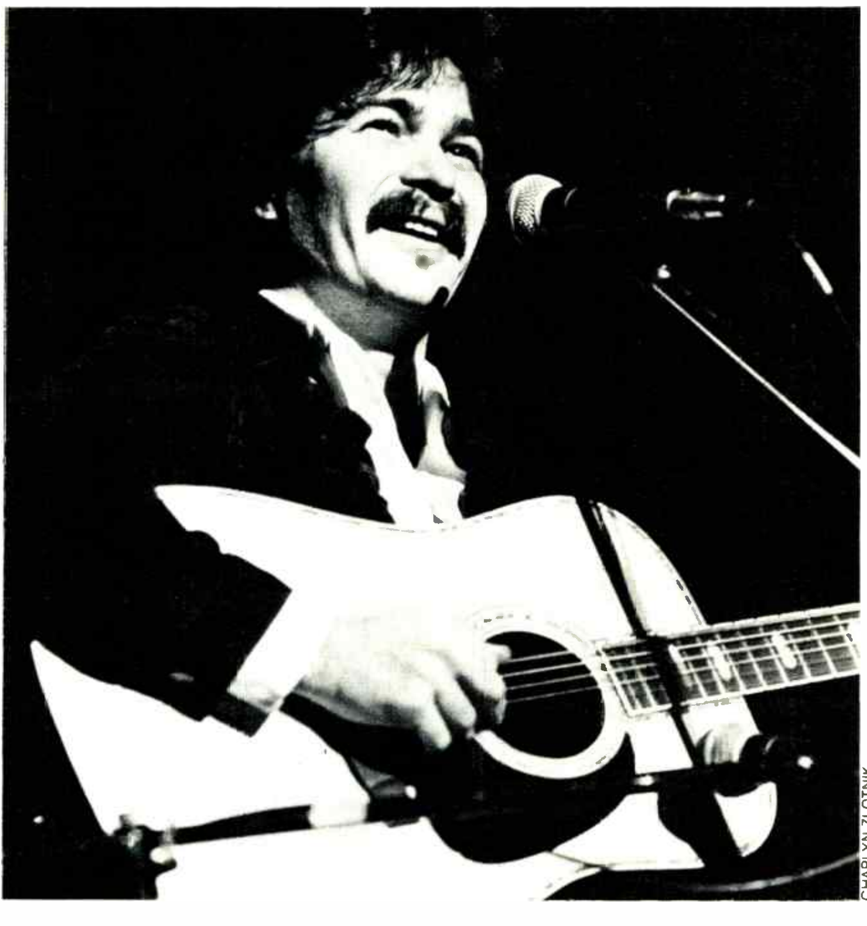
JOHN PRINE'S INSULATION

The number of dimensions in John Prine's world is three: Space, Time and Patience.

By Brian Cullman



CHARLYN ZLOTNIK

The number of dimensions in John Prine's world is three: space and time and patience. He is forever waiting and remembering, remembering and waiting: "waiting for a postcard in the south coast of Spain," waiting for the waitress to bring him his eggs and toast, waiting for the teller in the bank down the street to grow a moustache, waiting to fall in or out of love, and remembering when these things all happened or failed to happen before. He is not so much interested in change as in the possibility of change, the marvelous chance that something *might* happen.

This and his sense of gradation, his insistence on the difference between sadness and tragedy, rule out the operatics that inform most rock songs. His version of *We reached for the moon/We tried for the stars/But we fell* would be *We tried in take a walk/But it rained.*

His songs are disarmingly myopic, filled with painstakingly minute detail about small situations, small disappointments or satisfactions, and they are the songs of a man who might not remember your name or where you're from, but who remembers the year and make of your car.

Outside my window
A bird once flew
Now I don't even care
What kind of gum I chew.

Like Ray Davies' work in the late sixties, he writes most convincingly about ordinary lives, about the obvious, though in his hands the obvious never quite makes sense, and the odd jumble of things that fill an afternoon or an evening or a life will fill his songs. There is a loopiness about it all, as if the neurons carrying information from the left to the right side of his brain stopped off for a beer on the way.

On my very first job
I said thank you and please
They made me scrub the parking lot
Down on my knees
Then I got fired
For being scared of bees
And they only give me
Fifty cents an hour.

At his best, the results are revelatory, with connections conjured up in mid-air, in mid-sentence. At his worst, the results are charmingly incomprehensible:

He's got three waterskis
He put two on his wavelength
And gave one to his girl.

More often than not, his songs manage to be revelatory and incomprehensible at the same time, with beautiful lines that feel just right in a half-cocked somnabulant way but that don't quite mean anything at all, that just exist for the joy of the words:

The air is thin
And the sky is fat
I'm gonna buy me a brand new hat
Wear it out
And go insane
Christ, I hope it never rains.

Eight albums and nearly ten years into his recording career, John Prine remains more-or-less incomprehensible, a talented man who seems to have dodged success while staying at the edges of the spotlight, and a quirky writer who has never completely escaped from the early comparisons to Bob Dylan. The comparison is faulty, but it's still a good place to begin.

They share the same mid-Western monotone voice, the same almost-but-not-quite-out-of-tune rhythm guitar style, many of the same influences (Hank Williams, Elvis, Maynard G. Krebs), and the same manic dislike for the recording studio (on his first few albums his discomfort is almost as audible as the bass).

There the similarities end (well, not quite. Barry Beckett, who co-produced Dylan's *Saved* and *Slow Train Coming* albums with Jerry Wexler, produced Prine's newest record, *Storm Windows*, and guests on piano for both artists. But then Reggie Jackson and Harmon Killibrew eat at the same restaurants. Separately.)

Prine has no logical sense of phrasing whatsoever, but has the innate storyteller's gift of drawing you in and making you care about the characters in his

continued on page 82

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THE ROCKABILLY OF BILLY BURNETTE

The 50's meet the 80's as Billy puts the rock back in rockabilly.

By John Milward

Billy Burnette, the cousin, nephew, whomever of rock and roll, recently produced a videotape of his "Don't Say No" that masquerades as a black & white clip from the "here's one for the kids" glory days of the Ed Sullivan Show. The allusion was not just show biz — Billy Burnette is one pedigreed rocker, with genetic ties to two-thirds of the Rock 'n Roll Trio, a mid-50s rockabilly band that many consider to be one of the very first rock groups. Johnny Burnette, Billy's uncle, was the wild-and-woolly singer of the combo while his father Dorsey provided the upright bass slapping that is characteristic of the early rockabilly sides. Now, after ten years spent establishing himself as an oak-solid country songwriter and producing three solid-albeit-stiff albums, Billy Burnette has made a hard rocking record that reclaims his past. But don't talk to Billy about a rockabilly revival —after signing a deal with Columbia that would have made the perpetually-scraping Rock 'n Roll Trio feel like the combined Arab states, Billy's more apt to look at his latest move as a rockabilly resurrection.

The economic craftsmanship of Billy Burnette's best songs make him more than a revivalist, but his family history and the inclusion of three period tunes on the new record clearly link him with the Johnny-come-rockabillies. Burnette doesn't embalm his covers as much as reinvest their natural energy, and while his "Honey Hush" is one of the year's peppiest tracks, it's not even the best song on the album. A song like "In Just a Heartbeat" expects no quarter, and doesn't need any. The authoritative beat commands our attention, and shows that, as another song declares, we're "Rockin' With Somebody Now."

"When I write a song, I start with a hook, usually a title," notes Billy. Heartbeats, dance floors, and dropping the "G's" from the end of words, Billy Burnette's rock vocabulary touches upon all the pop verities, but they're voiced with an unassumed ease that is increasingly rare. "Don't Say No" isn't performed with the modern touch of Holly-philes like Lindsay Buckingham, but is cut from the traditional cloth and adorned by rattling guitars and expectant harmonies. The song's sense of language and romance is pure Buddy, but like Holly himself, Burnette has shuffled familiar elements into a new combination that stands up to repeated listenings, conjuring the restless emotions that gave Holly's songs such resonance. Billy delivers "Don't Say No" as if challenging his lover to withstand his romantic persistance — "Say not tonight and then I'll leave/Well say maybe later I don't know/Say maybe baby but don't say no."

Billy's songs aren't just throwbacks, they contain the true raw-edged roadhouse soul.

"I grew up thinking that everybody's father wrote songs," says Billy, who cut his first record at the age of seven and can't remember a thing about the session. It was a Christmas single, "Hey Daddy" b/w "Santa's Coffee," written and produced by Dorsey Burnette with Ricky Nelson's bassist Joe Osborne. This was 1960, three years after Dorsey had quit the Trio in frustration and followed the lead of Elvis, who had worked with the Burnettes at Crown Electronics in Memphis, and struck out for California. "The drive was a real 'Grapes of Wrath' scene, with everybody and everything crammed into the old Nash," recalls Billy without effort. "Our dog died in the desert." The Johnny Burnettes soon followed, and the two families shared a house until camping out on Ricky Nelson's front porch proved to be a persuasive sales strategy. Writing together and on their own, the Burnette brothers wrote the meat-and-potatoes of Nelson's string of late-'50s hits. In return, Ricky gave the Burnettes access to the hit parade that had eluded the Rock 'n Roll Trio, and led Dorsey to teach his son the valuable lesson that a good song is pop's basic currency.

Billy Burnette began writing his own songs in high school, a few years after he cut his second single, Dr. Seuss' "Just Because We're Kids," which was produced by Herb Alpert and lip-synched by kiddie-show hosts across the country. ("The main thing I remember about that session," recalls Billy, "is Herbie doing a one-armed handstand on the back of a chair.) With a Far-Eastern tour opening for Brenda Lee under his belt, and his father's successful songwriting career as a model, there was never any question about Billy's chosen profession. After squeezing through high school, Billy took off at the turn of the '70s to work with successful Memphis producer Chips Moman, first fetching coffee, and later contributing guitar to innumerable sessions.

"In Nashville, I could find a pack to run with all night," says Burnette, and the communal pursuit of the musical muse would be reflected in his numerous songwriting collaborations. "One day we'd write a country song and then we'd move onto a rocker. Working with a partner, the dynamics always came down to chipping in ideas until we get a combination that knocked us both out." Burnette's productivity paid off in a 1971 debut album and the comfortable living guaranteed when everybody from Charlie Rich to Irma Thomas began to cover his songs. In mid-September, 1980, Burnette still maintains a presence on the country charts with no less than six tunes in release.

The importance of Burnette refining his writing in the commercial marketplace cannot be underestimated, nor can the advantage of developing performing chops in a country field that remains alien to most mainstream rockers (he toured with both his father and Roger Miller). His rock debut reflects twenty years of experience, but

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JAZZ IN EUROPE

If it's Tuesday, this must be Jarrett. Our man Breskin reports on jazz in Europe.

By David Breskin

Okay, for my show-and-tell about what I did on my summer vacation I asked my editor if it was alright if I brought in slides that I took in Europe when I went there with my big brother and he said it was O.K. so I'm going to show them to you now. Scott, could you turn off the lights and then J.R. can put on the first slide.

Louis, will you help Morton focus it better. That's good, right there. Perfect. Thanks Louis. O.K., the first slide is of me sitting on the plane going to Bergen, Norway, our first stop. I'm smiling cause I'm reading all about Thad Jones in the S.A.S. in-flight magazine. It's all about how Jones left the Danish National Radio Orchestra to form his own band and what a big deal it is over there. Sorta like when he left "Thad and Mel" to go to Denmark so he could just be "Thad," except that wasn't covered in the American Air Lines magazines. They musta been short on space. Next.

Here is a shot of the first record store we saw in Bergen. The proprietor told me that Terje Rypdal was Soul Brother #1 in these parts, Jan Gabarek was #2, and bassist Arild Anderson #3. Then he sing-songed some Scandinavianized jive that apparently made it to Bergen via the Gulf Stream: "These three fellows are really the worstest we got here, I mean the baddest... is that how you talk it?" Next.

Let's see, oh yeah, this one is in Oslo, home of ECM's Talent Studio. That long line you see there is about 150 people lined up outside Club 7 before the doors opened. I asked the young Viking with the beard if this was where Dave Liebman was playing tonight and he said, "Yes, we all line up here to see David Liebman with John Scofield tonight." It was a Bottom Line type of crowd, only blonder. Next.

Here I am asking his girlfriend why all these folks are here to see Dave Liebman, with or without John Scofield. "We like the progressive jazz. And how many times come he to Oslo? But not all like progressive music: Miss Shirley Bassey sold out that concert hall across the street, and it was $100 U.S. a seat. And ABBA, have you heard of them? Some people can't be helped." Next.

These are a few shots inside Club 7: there's a T.V. lounge, an art gallery, a library and chess room, a bar and food counter, and a big room for music. You can be a member of the club and get in cheaper. Next. That's me eating spaghetti and drinking Hansa before the show. You get it yourself. None of the clubs we went to had waitresses. All those people around me seem to be getting drunk in a hurry. Swedes, Finns, and Norwegians don't hold their alcohol very well. At three bucks a beer, why should they? Next.

This is Europe. As you can see, they love jazz here. Next slide, please.

That's Dave Liebman introducing his band. Every city in Europe with more than three stop-lights — from Turku, Finland to Nice, France — has a summer jazzfest, and Liebman tells us they've just come from the biggest one of all, the NorthSea Festival in The Hague. One night in Oslo, then back to Holland to wax a new disc He complains about the weather. Next.

That's Liebman again: see how his neck bulges. He's playing very loudly. He wants to play softer, but the audience — especially round the outside of the room — is making too much noise. He's angry and he's taking it out on his horn. He asks them to quiet down a few times but they pretend they don't understand English and continue drinking, carrying on, kibbutzing, and shuffling 'tween tables. Next.

Those blurred people in the back of the room are dancing to the music my friends tell me can't be danced to. That girl in the peasant dress in the corner, dancing alone, is doing something like a cross between the freak and the fox trot. Next.

Here is Terumaso Hino blowing the chords off a Liebman tune. The tune's called "Atonement" cause it's based on the holiday of Yom Kippur and it sounds vaguely like some hymn I hummed in Sunday School. Up there by the front of the bandstand are two totally tanked Somalians who were egging on the Japanese trumpeter as he scorched his way through the Jewish saxophonist's jazz lament in Oslo, Norway. It sounded like home. The next night, I was told, a "Heavily Metal" group would take the stage at Club 7. Next.

Right, this is just a close-up of some graffiti on a stall door in the men's room of the train station in Narvik, Norway. If you look carefully, you'll see that some guy took a blade or knife and cut "BIRD STIL LIVES" into the door. I was warmed by the fact that someone (probably a non-American or Brit due to the spelling gaffe) paid tribute to Bird while freezing his ass off in this god-forbidden can way above the Arctic Circle. I'm writing Guinness to see if this is the World's Most Northerly Sighting of Charlie Parker Immortality Graffiti. Next.

Back down to Stockholm. This is The Golden Circle, the spot where Ornette recorded those live performances. To keep up with the economy and the times, it's become sort of a dance club. Ornette would feel right at home. Next.

This is a slide of a slide-show on Modern Architecture at Stockholm's Kultur Huset (Culture House). They used Keith Jarrett's *Koln Concert* as background music. So here was Keith, noodling along with LeCorbusier and

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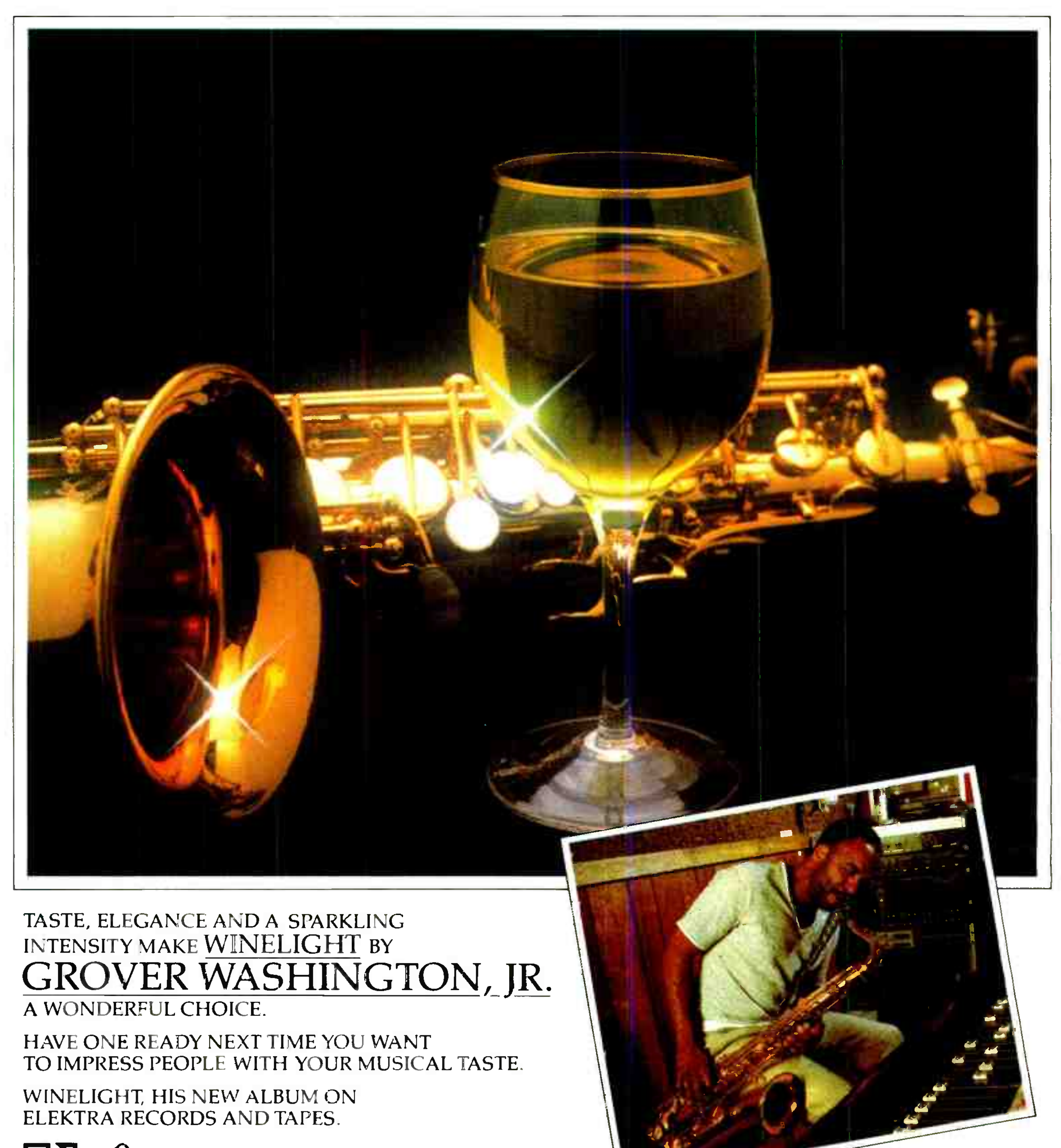

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'SEEN THE MOVIE?' 'NO, BUT I GOT THE RECORD'

Movie music, music movie, moving music, movie music; Stigwood decides to do neither and both.

By Clint Roswell

A maddening trivia question for students of cinema in the eighties: what came first, the movie or the soundtrack? In case you are confused, like the rest of us who try to understand the shifts of Hollywood to a cultural fault consider a scene from *Times Square*...the new movie...the hit soundtrack...the infamous street. Speakers are placed around the cordoned-off area which has been staged for film, and as soon as the actors take their places, the sounds of "Life During Wartime" blares across the set. The director instructs the cast to synch their movements to the beat of the Talking Heads tune which has been selected by the associate producer for this segment of film.

The latest in the Robert Stigwood line of glitzy pop music theme productions since *Saturday Night Fever* almost turned dancing into the Gross National Product, *Times Square* focuses on two teenage girls in search of the stars and their identities in New York City. Music is employed throughout the film to relay the emotions of the characters and bridge the scene settings of a thinly disguised plot. Their adolescent struggle evolves into a radio cause and the soundtrack is unveiled as if programmed by the DJ who tries to reach these two kids on the lam. A bit hokey, but quite an effective gimmick to drive home the point: music sells movies.

"I've never found a subject so compatible with a sound," said associate producer, Bill Oakes, a 31-year-old Englishman who climbed up the Stigwood Group ladder after he masterminded the music for *Saturday Night Fever, Grease, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *Fame*.

"I think the music is much more interesting than what was on 'Fever,' and it is just as faithful to the picture. It isn't supposed to be a new wave update on 'Fever.' The story comes first. In fact, we were pretty ruthless when it came to cutting the sound to meet the action on the film. We wanted to avoid the 'Hard Days Night' Syndrome, you know, building a set around the staging of just a song. Film existing just for sound, like *Xanadu* or, at times, *Urban Cowboy*, was not what we're after. In many cases, we took the music out."

Little is left for chance in the packaging of *Times Square*. The soundtrack hit the streets a full six weeks before the mid-October release of the movie. The two-record set is one of the best compilations of the new wave rock idiom and features new songs by The Pretenders, Joe Jackson, XTC, Gary Numan, along with established hits by the Ramones, Patti Smith, Lou Reed, Roxy Music, all part of a 20-song play-list that doesn't quit. It was the release of the soundtrack, and some of the new songs as singles for FM radio, that became the strongest advertisements for the movie.

Stigwood's latest, *Times Square*, features, you guessed it, new wave music.

"We weren't blind to that factor," admits Oakes. "We knew the soundtrack would give a lot of attention to the movie. We wanted to spread the notion through the soundtrack that this form of rock, I hate to use the term new wave, is accessible to people who like to dance. Disco may be dead, but dancing isn't, and we wanted to give it exposure."

The only performers in *Times Square* are the actual actors and those who go to the movie for the soundtrack are likely to be disappointed. It is abbreviated, in piece-meal form and fragmented. Very few of the 20 songs are played to completion and one has to wonder if the extraordinarily high music budget of the film was a tax shelter for the soundtrack. Oakes commissioned Joe Jackson and XTC to write three songs of which one would be selected for the album. The Pretenders were asked to do the same, but only had one song available, "Talk of The Town." Oakes wouldn't quote figures, but he said artists who composed original songs were given more money than the average 12% royalty figure. It would have cost more than the $400,000 budget if the Clash hadn't refused to supply a new song, saying they didn't want to be associated with a Hollywood production. The Knack, according to Oakes, declined a cut on the soundtrack because they said the Beatles never did songs for anybody else but their own movies. Roxy Music was included because Oakes felt the English group never attained its fair share of the American public.

The soundtrack hit the American charts with bullets and created enough fanfare that sneak-previews of the movie in 22 cities were mobbed with fans who responded to the advance publicity — music on their radios. The underlying fact is that moviemakers are turning more towards music to sell their product. Soundtracks can often sell a movie, like *Times Square* or another Stigwood production, *Fame*, where the record has made more than the movie. It can also save a movie from financial disaster, like *Xanadu* where the Electric Light Orchestra and Olivia Newton-John have combined for the No. 1 selling album and two Top Ten singles. Soundtrack albums currently dominate the charts which either indicate that the state of music is in unhealthy circumstances or that movies are in trouble. I sense both are true because the mixed-

continued on next page

World Radio History

medium format only feeds off itself and weakens both. They are, in essence, interdependent on each other for a unified artistic effort. It worked in "SNF" because it was a movie about music. The soundtrack grossed $20 million and spawned the disco craze. Stigwood tried it again with great success in *Grease*, teaming Travolta and Olivia Newton-John, and the formula looked invincible. Stigwood hit rock-bottom with *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, starring Peter Frampton, and a soundtrack more abysmal than the awful movie.

Originally, a movie was scored by hand-picked musicians to orchestrate the drama on screen. It was an underplayed part of movie-making, often low-budgeted, and rarely a featured aspect. Only the giants — Elvis, Sinatra, The Beatles — could draw at the box office and soundtracks were a throwaway item. But the idea that soundtracks could sell film was embraced by the troubled movie industry after the huge success of "SNF." And the slumping record industry was only too happy to cut back its loses due to expansion. The result was a happy marriage, as in *Urban Cowboy* or Midler's *The Rose*.

So what we now have is music selling the movie industry and films selling the music industry. It's enough to make one feel the arts are a huge commercial which depends on devices rather than creative forces to proliferate. The packaging of music has its hooks into advertising where sheer profundity has found a way to sell anything with a catchy jingle.

Undoubtedly some people will think movies like *Times Square* are an excuse for the soundtrack, the standard put-down on such one-dimensional productions. I'll admit that *Times Square* has me down. Someone waiting in line for the next showing asked my impressions. I told him the film had a good beat but I couldn't sit through it.

Burnette *cont. from pg. 20*

still bristles like a kid's first shot, and the toughest question for Burnette to answer is why the hell he didn't turn to rock sooner. Billy says he honestly doesn't know, but one suspects that the experience of his father, who after rocking out penniless in the '50s made a living in country music for the next two decades, influenced his son's career strategy. But Dorsey also taught Billy the trilling guitar riff of "Honey Hush." Such soulful rhythms aren't easily forgotten.

Last February, Burnette premiered his four piece band (guitarist Chris Brosius, Kimme Gardner on bass, and drummer Ian Wallace) at L.A.'s Hong Kong Cafe, and began sequencing his rock debut. "I'd bring maybe three new songs to each gig, see how the crowd reacted, and one of them would usually prove strong enough to make it to the next set. By the time we were ready to enter the studio in June, our live show was literally our first album." Given such preparation, Burnette wasted no time — the basic tracks were cut live in two days, with rarely more than three takes required. The final five days were spent on mixing and minimal overdubs. In essence, Burnette had followed the Rock 'n Roll Trio's dictum that the heat is either in the live performance or not at all.

Burnette's name makes his links to the past inescapable, but the rave-up instincts of his elders was integral to subsequent hard-rock bands from the Yardbirds to Aerosmith, who both covered the Trio's "Train Kept A-Rollin'." Burnette's disciplined guitar band, consequently, blurs the line between rockabilly and hard rock, and his acceptance into the realm of heartland rockers may well be the first real salvo of the so-called rockabilly revival. "My old man would have dug this flurry of interest because I don't think he really understood the huge impact of the Rock 'n Roll Trio," explains Billy, secure in the hope that "his best friend" is nonetheless digging on the scene from upstairs. The Burnette's are a family that rocks together, and after running down the musical proclivities of his six brothers and sisters, he continues on about how his Mom and Aunt, Rocky's mother, got together to watch their husbands win the Ted Mack Amateur Hour in 1956, and then high-tailed it to the local high school to catch Elvis Presley. Back in 1956, after a riotous crowd ripped off his shirt, Johnny Burnette was quoted as saying "I should have laid off that last 'Hound Dog'." This is one lesson we know Billy Burnette never learned.

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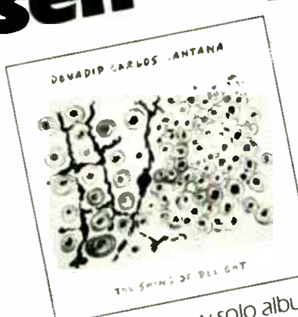

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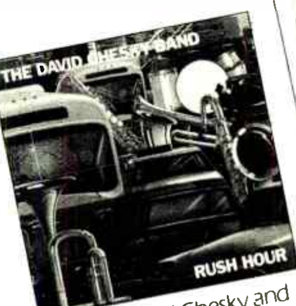

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The young keyboard wizard has done it again. Rodney follows his hit album, "You'll Never Know," featuring "The Groove," with another surefire winner. The new record, which includes the single "In The Center," is called "Rodney Franklin." A name, and a groove, to remember.

The guitar russles in with soothing elegance. The classy, sassy grooves, set up by producer/composer/pianist Allen Toussaint, are laid down with Arthur Blythe, Charles Earland and others. Try on Eric Gale's "Touch Of Silk" for a super-fine feeling.

Leon's first solo album synthesizes jazz, latin, r&b, funk and even classical into some very original contemporary creations. With Teddy Pendergrass, McFadden & Whitehead and more, Leon Huff is decidedly "Here To Create Music."

Think big Hammond organ. But don't stop there. Think super horns and vocals. Think hot tunes. Then you'll be thinking of Charles Earland's Columbia debut album, "Coming To You Live." Warning: his name isn't "Ear Land" for nothing.

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MARJORI

THE MUSICIAN IN POLITICS

The future unit of musical organization must be small, mobile and intelligent. If you want political change, go into music.

By Robert Fripp

There was a popular idea in the 1960s that rock music could change the world. This evaporated along with hippies, kaftans and beads during the 1970s as it became increasingly apparent that rock music could also underwrite the conventional wisdom of the music industry. It is my conviction in 1980 that rock can, in fact, change the world, but as part of an overall action and not in any way which we might expect. The "new world" may well be the "old world" but with a subtle difference involving not much more than a change in perception.

Is it reasonable to suggest that a qualitative shift in the world can be made possible by the quality of music? "Any communication process, once initiated and maintained, leads to the genesis of social structure — whether or not such structure is anticipated or deemed desirable" (Klaus Krippendorf). "The 'style of life' is today one of the most positive forms of revolutionary action" (Jacques Ellul, writing in 1948).

Jean Renoir grew to doubt whether the cinema could prevent war. My feeling is that through music an alternative structure can be built on the inside, regardless of outer forms of politicalization. Handel, Bach, Mozart, Verdi and many more lesser figures in music, quite apart from Shakespeare, became adept at working in (for us) very difficult political and economic conditions, quite apart from rigid conventions and musical taste. Surely the most surprising point is how much inspired work had prosaic origins. By creating an industry structure which facilitates the growth of musicians as human beings they become more productive in a real way and acquire a measure of independence, independence defined as the capacity to work with others. Larger changes in social and political organization inevitably follow from this: "The new technologies will be in the image of the system that brings them forth, and they will reinforce the system" (Schumacher).

The industry reflects values which have become concretized in its structure and which, when taken overall, restrict the possibilities for creative work (as defined in the preceding issue). For creative musicians to function within the music industry their actions must inevitably be political, since in order to work the creative musician will necessarily try to change the industry, simply so they'll be able to express themselves essentially. As T.S. Elliot wrote of the poet: "Being incapable of altering his wares to suit a prevailing taste...he naturally desires a state of society in which they may become popular, and in which his own talents will be put to the best use." And then: "He is accordingly vitally interested in the *use* of poetry." There are three aspects to this:

1. Changing the structure of the industry.
2. Changing the value system which gives rise to the structure.
3. Reciprocating with and influencing other forms of industry beside the musical, and in a wider context than the market place.

Taking these in more detail:

1. Changing the structure of the industry. Organization in large units brings about authoritarian control. The authoritarian personality is fixed and unresponsive to change. Therefore, the kind of personality drawn to a large organization will be exactly the kind of person who will kill it in a time of change by failing to adapt.

The replacement of large scale industry by an alternative is vital. Because of inertia in the system, traditional industry will not collapse immediately, and in the transitional period it should be persuaded by argument, example and co-operation to increasingly divert resources under its control to a second-level tier of industry while this is still possible. My personal sense of timetable is that this second level of operation should be established by the end of 1981, consolidated by the end of 1984 and fully functional by 1987, while the years 1987 to 1990 will be characterized by the honorable burial of dinosaurs with all rites pertinent to their station.

As I have written elsewhere (on a record label, actually) the future unit of organization is the small, mobile and intelligent unit, wherein intelligence is defined as the capacity to perceive rightness, mobility the capacity to act on that perception, and small the necessary condition for that action in a contracting world. The function of the small, mobile and intelligent unit in the 1980s is to drop in and form an intra-culture rather than, as in the 1960s, to drop out and create a sub-culture (although I doubt if it is possible to remain outside a social process in any real way).

Earlier this year I attended Zigzag magazine's party, having been invited to play "Sister Morphine" with Marianne Faithful, who couldn't make the show because she was busy at Shepperton, and "The Lord's Prayer" with Siouxsie and the Banshees, but Siouxsie had laryngitis. A solo singer accompanying himself on guitar was performing a piece reflecting his recent contretemps with the Special Patrol Group. His song made frequent reference to the words: "Kill! Kill! Kill! the S.P.G.!", declaimed with considerable enthusiasm. It seemed to me that he was trying to establish the principle that to kill whomsoever one sees as a non-congruent element of the larger social system is permissible. If this principle were to be accepted by the social organism no doubt the SPG would also embrace it: in which case the singer would be at a considerable disadvantage when settlement came between the two sub-systems. Several points were raised by this:

i) The elimination of either of the two parties would be, at the least, an inefficient use of resources;

ii) Force breeds an (at least) equal reaction and on a practical level is therefore

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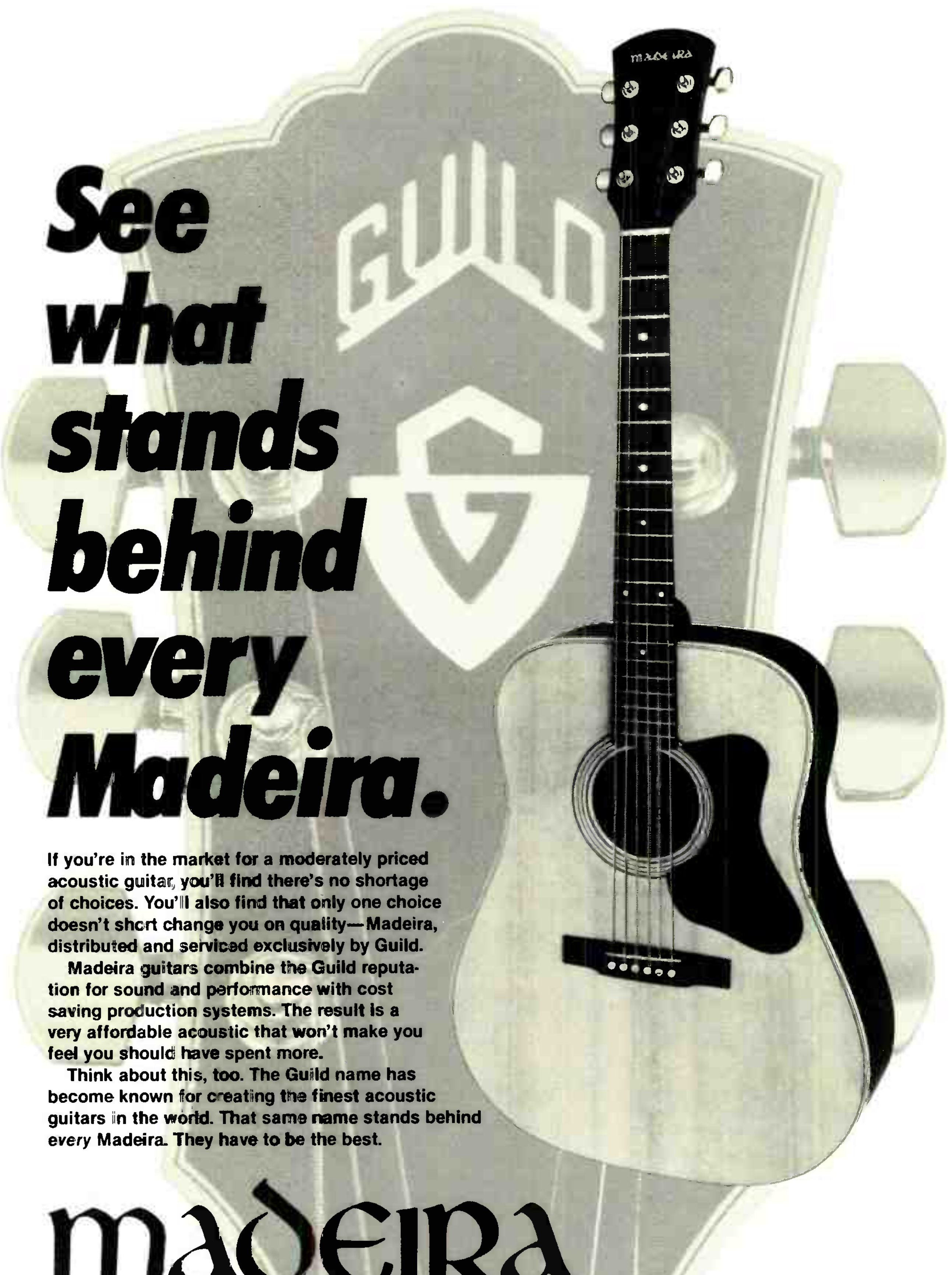

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ineffective, ethical considerations aside;

iii) Impartiality is a higher level of operation and therefore an inherently more stable state than prejudice. Can one work with people one personally dislikes, or whose values seem contradictory and offensive, in the service of a common aim? A subtle problem I found on the recent League of Gentlemen tour was that one rarely deals with big, nasty, horrible villains who are obviously the baddies (although I met some!) but often with pleasant people who are one's friends and with whom one has worked for several years, but who have different aims and aspirations.

2. Changing the value system which gives rise to the structure. An appropriately sized unit of organization may not have a "better" ethical system: one can be a small bread-head as well as a large bread-head. But greed, which is neither mobile nor intelligent, is becoming unrealistic and impracticable.

3. Reciprocating with and influencing other forms of industry beside the musical, and in a wider context than the market place.

An idea is a piece of quality information; it contains energy and can have a life of its own. This idea might be a musical idea. Music is a high-order language system; i.e. it is a meta-language. The function of a meta-language is to express solutions to problems posed in a lower-order language system.

If one accepts that music is a high-order language system, it follows that music can be negentropic and problem-solving. the function of the musician in this sense, then, is to convey high-quality information. This does not have to be complicated. John Heilpern, travelling with the Peter Brooks troupe in North Africa, came across some remarkable players: the Peulh. "The Peulh music showed us that a universal language might be as simple as one note repeated many, many times. But you must discover the right note first." To discover this note most musicians require a discipline to reduce "noise," or superfluous notes, and increase "signal," the essential music. To be open to ideas, i.e. to be able to use the energy of musical "information," in a playing situation is the aim of all improvisation: this is active performance. A mime in ancient Greece named Memphis was said by Athenaeus to convey in a brief dance faultlessly the whole essence of Pythagorean doctrine, although Memphis did not necessarily understand it.

If one were interested in political change one would not enter political life, one would go into music. Since the first aim of any system is to perpetuate itself, the professional politician would tend to perpetuate rather than solve political problems. the self-interest of the professional musician, on the other hand, lies in perpetuating music......*to be continued*

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Stevie Wonder

Hotter Than July

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ELTON JOHN

Some performers just don't know when to quit — and thank goodness for that. We followed tennis star Jimmy McEnroe into Central Park's Sheep Meadow to see Elton John, along with about 349,998 others on a perfect, end-of-summer day in September. Although the free show was sponsored by designer Calvin Klein to help the "greening of Central Park," Jimmy McEnroe was *not* wearing Calvin Klein jeans. Neither were Dudley Moore nor his towering "goldengirl" companion Susan Anton, cavorting backstage away from the crushing mob with a host of other celeb-types. None of whom, as far as we could see, were wearing Calvin Klein jeans. Hell, even Calvin Klein wasn't wearing Calvin Klein jeans.

Certainly, you didn't expect the sartorially eloquent Elton John to perform before the assembled multitudes in anything so prosaic as jeans, designer or no. Elton was splendiferous in a Bob Mackie original — all Western-styled pale green with little circular lights that flashed on-and-off like neon, turning him into a Lone Star version of an Xmas tree. And then, Mister John changed into an outfit that allowed the once-Reggie Dwight to achieve one of his innermost fantasies — he appeared on-stage as Donald Duck. After the subdued fashion of his streamlined two-man tour with longtime percussionist Nigel Olsson last year, Elton's glittering return was welcome indeed.

Although his most recent album, *21 at 33*, represents a comeback of sorts, with the hit single, "Little Jennie," Elton chose to rely on mostly old material for the massive gathering. The hits kept coming as if E.J. were some human jukebox programmed for three hours non-stop..."Your Song" drew collective sighing; "Bennie and the Jets" had the numbers shimmying; "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" brought back nostalgic memories; "Rocket Man" induced a respectful hush...The bitch was, indeed, back...

But the performance in the park was only the prelude to what turned out to be a series of Elton John appearances over the New York media. On the local FM radio station, which broadcast the concert live, Elton sat in as a guest DJ and read an on-air commercial for a sex boutique called the Pink Pussycat, urging listeners to "send for our catalogue, so you can sit home and masturbate at your own free will." He then praised opening act Judy Tzuke by claiming the singer had "the biggest tits in the world."

Following this brush with the FCC, Elton appeared on Tom Snyder's *Tomorrow Show*, where he wore an incredible two-piece costume festooned with large, psychedelic arows pointing in all directions, which made him look like, in his own words, "a crazed parking lot attendant." He also cited Jim "Gomer Pyle" Nabors as a seminal musical influence in response to Snyder's earnest query, causing the horse-mouthed talk-show host to guffaw uncontrollably up to a commercial break.

All in all, it was a welcome gift from the reigning King/Queen of pop-rock, who may not be a force on the current scene but, for one sunny September day, mesmerized what seemed to be an entire city with his music, which long ago became our songs. Let's hope that Elton's recently-linked record deal with David Geffen will help him turn those sweet memories into present realities once again. — *Roy Trakin*

ELTON JOHN

LAURA LEVINE

THE MOTELS

"One of my big dreams is to write music that communicates moods so concisely that each song would be like a movie — you could just sit and watch it." Fitting, sort of that a tinseltown denizen has that particular dream. Martha Davis is the lead singer/rhythm guitarist/songwriter of the Motels, one of the most high-profile modernist pop bands in Los Angeles' current rock and roll bumper crop. Out on tour for the next zillion weeks in support of their second Capitol LP, *Careful*, the Motels are learning about the difficulties of live cinema.

Even though the band's essential effect is far from it, their rudimentaries are classic rock. Tim McGovern brought his bright, high-abrasion, dissonant guitar sound from a long stint with L.A.'s other New Wave frontiersmen, the Pop. Britisher Brian Glascock plays busy drums, but the 4/4 is as solid as stone. Saxophonist/keyboardist/songwriter Marty Jourard keeps melodic structure moving with simple block chording. All this well-grounded tradition holds the fort down between detailed flights of '80s fancy via metric switcheroo, saxophone and synthesizer footnotes, and McGovern's imaginative runs and textures.

Martha's phrasing and tone quality frequently come close to textbook studies of 60s girl group crooning. That highly stylized approach is also a good place to start talking about the emotional remoteness of the Motels' live work. A recent Minneapolis audience caught a lot of the band's good musicianship and innovation, sure. But movies? No.

More than McGovern, Jourard, and bassist Michael Goodroe, Martha ballasts her songwriting with characters — intuitive, involved protagonists done in a sometimes unsuccessful shorthand. Her clipped and girlish sound tosses these characters too often into an indecipherable morse code of motivations. Live, this obtuseness is compounded by forehead clutching, circle-eyed body lingo that doesn't really do much to tell us what her voice and the lyrics aren't. Fragments float in and out, make brief contact, leave a silhouette without fleshing enough out.

Cultivated blasé sells like hotcakes to a wide swath of the cogniscenti; but even blasé has to be more than attitude dancing to ring true. Enough heart leaked through during the Motels' Minneapolis performance to render the ennui unbelievable right off the bat. Whether we're supposed to believe their super-cool or not, we don't.

For as much as Davis professes to love being on stage, she and her boys may have a hard time turning their performances into the intricate other-worlds their best moments hint at. They need to be carefully listened to, but they need the rowdy, non-listening interchange that rock and roll sets up just as much. It's clear that the Motels can't keep playing to their own perfectionism and must private screen more than the warm bodies in the front rows. — *Laura Fissinger*

JIM HALL

No fanfare, not even a "let's welcome." The lights go down, and the man many people consider the best living jazz guitarist walks to the stage, straps on his guitar and begins a blues. Understatement is the most famous aspect of Jim Hall's style, but as this blues builds, a quiet fire is burning in its heart, and burning hot. Lighting that fire is Hall's concentration, relaxed and attentive to every note.

The blues ends and he announces "Baubles, Bangles and Beads." As his solo spins out pointillistic single-note phrases that seamlessly evolve into abstract chordal passages, one realizes that this music could only be described as Jim Hall's jazz, that it is an expression unique to this individual.

It's a music that sums up twenty-five years of playing, beginning with his stint in Chico Hamilton's quintet, and covering gigs and records with Jimmy Guiffre, Bill Evans, Sonny Rollins, Art Farmer and many others. Since 1975 the trio has been Hall, Terry Clarke on drums and Don Thompson on bass and piano. That year they recorded in Toronto, where Clarke and Thompson live, and since then have continued to evolve a group improvisation in which all three instruments have an equal

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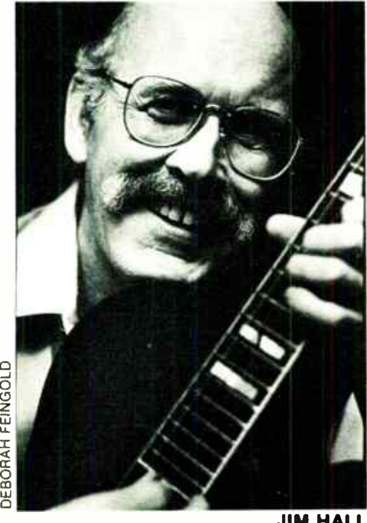
voice — solos alternate, but the level of listening and interaction is so high that the foreground and background often merge.

1975 was also the date of publication of an oft-quoted *New Yorker* profile of Hall in which Whitney Balliett said that his playing "puts him within touching distance of the two grand masters — Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt." Five years later I'd say that Hall has become a grand master himself — an original source of the music. Even on standards like "I Can't Get Started" his concept is more modern than many younger players' — the way he uses suspended chords, altered dominants and chromatic substitutions to build alternate structures on the original changes, his use of space, the alternation of jagged single note lines and lush chord voicings, compose a unique and fully formed approach to improvised music. Hall is in touch with the voice of his instrument in a way that few guitarists can equal. While he can and does play horn lines or piano harmonies on guitar, he prefers to exploit its own qualities, as he does on the calypso "Bermuda Bye Bye" or the folk strumming intro to "Fly Me to the Moon" that turns into a fast jazz waltz.


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

JIM HALL

I'd like to say more about Terry Clarke, who can whisper his way through a ballad and jump right into a burning meringue like the set-closer, "Suddenly My Heart Sings," and Don Thompson, whose singing melodic lines on bass and piano would steal the show from anyone less gifted than Jim Hall. I'd like to say much more about Hall himself, but I'd only be describing the surface of a music that reaches depths beyond words. Instead, I suggest that you go hear these three men if you get the chance. — *Chris Doering.*

CLIFTON CHENIER

Verbum Dei High School is better known for turning out basketball players like the Chicago Bulls' David Greenwood than staging musical events, but zydeco king Clifton Chenier's performances at the private Catholic school in the heart of Watts have become a legendary part of his frequent West Coast jaunts. The 55-year-old Chenier's September 13th performance lived up to advance billing as a pure, party-down celebration of American roots music and a sure-fire antidote for anyone jaded by the corporate music scene.

RETNA/ANDREW PUTLER

CLIFTON CHENIER

Held in a gym with rows of cafeteria tables framing a long central corridor reserved for dancing, the Verbum Dei event is fundamentally a Saturday night church social. You bring your own booze but cold beer and set-ups are on sale with hot links and some mean gumbo available from the kitchen. It's a slice of traditional American life that rarely surfaces in large metropolitan areas and the informal atmosphere drew a mixed crowd of 1,000 people.

Zydeco is derived from the musical marriage of Cajun folk music with the black blues and rhythm & blues traditions of Texas and Louisiana. Chenier's rollicking accordian lines and the Creole patois used in many song lyrics preserve the French flavor; brother Cleveland's metal rubboard (played by drawing half a dozen old-fashioned bottle openers across the ridges) combines with Robert Peter's traps to give zydeco its distinctive rhythmic thrust.

The acoustics may have conspired to render Clifton's vocals incomprehensible but it didn't matter a bit given his irrepressible stage personality and the music's infectious groove. Zydeco is dance music par excellence and it took less than half an hour for the dance floor to fill up with sweating couples stepping out.

Chenier's performances took in everything from slow waltzes (another legacy of the Cajun influence), blues sparked by several scorching alto solos from Clifton's son and a variety of standards (Ray Charles' "What I Say," Hank Williams' "Jambalaya," Herbie Mann's "Memphis Underground"). It's all great music to move to but I'll admit to being partial to the trio excursions where Clifton soared over Cleveland's clattering polyrhythms and Peter's syncopated snare shots brought the hammer down.

It was easily the most *fun* I've had at any show in months but disquieting reports have been circulating that it may have been Chenier's swansong at Verbum Dei. The effects of his recent serious illness — rumored to be either kidney trouble requiring dialysis or a severe stroke — forced him to take a 30-minute mid-set breather, a definite break in a tradition of non-stop 4-hour performances.

In the interim, Arhoolie Records (10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, Cal. 94530) recently released *Classic Clifton*, a compilation of a dozen songs culled from Chenier's 8 previous albums on the label. It's a fine introduction to his music but then I've never heard a Clifton Chenier album I didn't like. Also available is *Cajun Swamp Music Live*, a double album on Tomato that captures Chenier's triumphant appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival. — *Don Snowden*

ARTHUR BLYTHE

Over the steady blowing of noses on fall's first cool night, Arthur Blythe blew into the Vanguard in the manner that's sure to spoil us all if we're not careful: the bright tone uncolored by recording technology, the caressing intonation shaded with that almost vulnerable waver and wobble, the steel logic of his flights informing take-offs and landings of impeccable order. Bill Evans leapt out of photos on the walls, a few nights after his death, and Blythe took good care of the place, having been granted sole custody for the week. In The Tradition in the traditional spot.

With his rhythm section comprised mostly of Air — sometimes hot and heavy, sometimes crisp and cool — Blythe individualized standards ("'Round Midnight," "Caravan," and "Naima" could hardly be in better hands), expanded upon originals in the classic context of horn-with-rhythm quartet, and played an (I think) unrecorded tune — full of steam and alto exhaust and wet pavement at a slow tempo, like a theme from a grim '50s murder mystery — which filled the room with warmth where it wasn't with people.

Steve McCall and Fred Hopkins, the Swann and Stallworth of rhythm sections, loped and sprinted and cut and criss-crossed and came back to grab the soloist time and time again. Pianist John Hicks took Franco's roll; powerful, fast, slicing, he seemed ready to push the piano through the Vanguard's back wall. If you came late to see Betty Carter the last few years, you missed one of our most under-appreciated mainstream pianists improvising in the open field.

The attitude of In The Tradition is essentially conservative, in the best sense of that term. Evolutionary rather than revolutionary. "Accessible," as radio programmers like to say. On the whole, not a bad idea for the '80s. In the two sets I heard, the members' individual virtuosity was thankfully present, though needfully balanced with the sort of democratic tension and generosity of spirit that has typically marked the greatest ensembles. So we have McCall's anticipated echoes, Hicks' responsive chords, Hopkins' complements and criticisms, Blythe's sublime flight patterns: enough for any pair of ears, I would think. — *David Breskin*

ARTHUR BLYTHE

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

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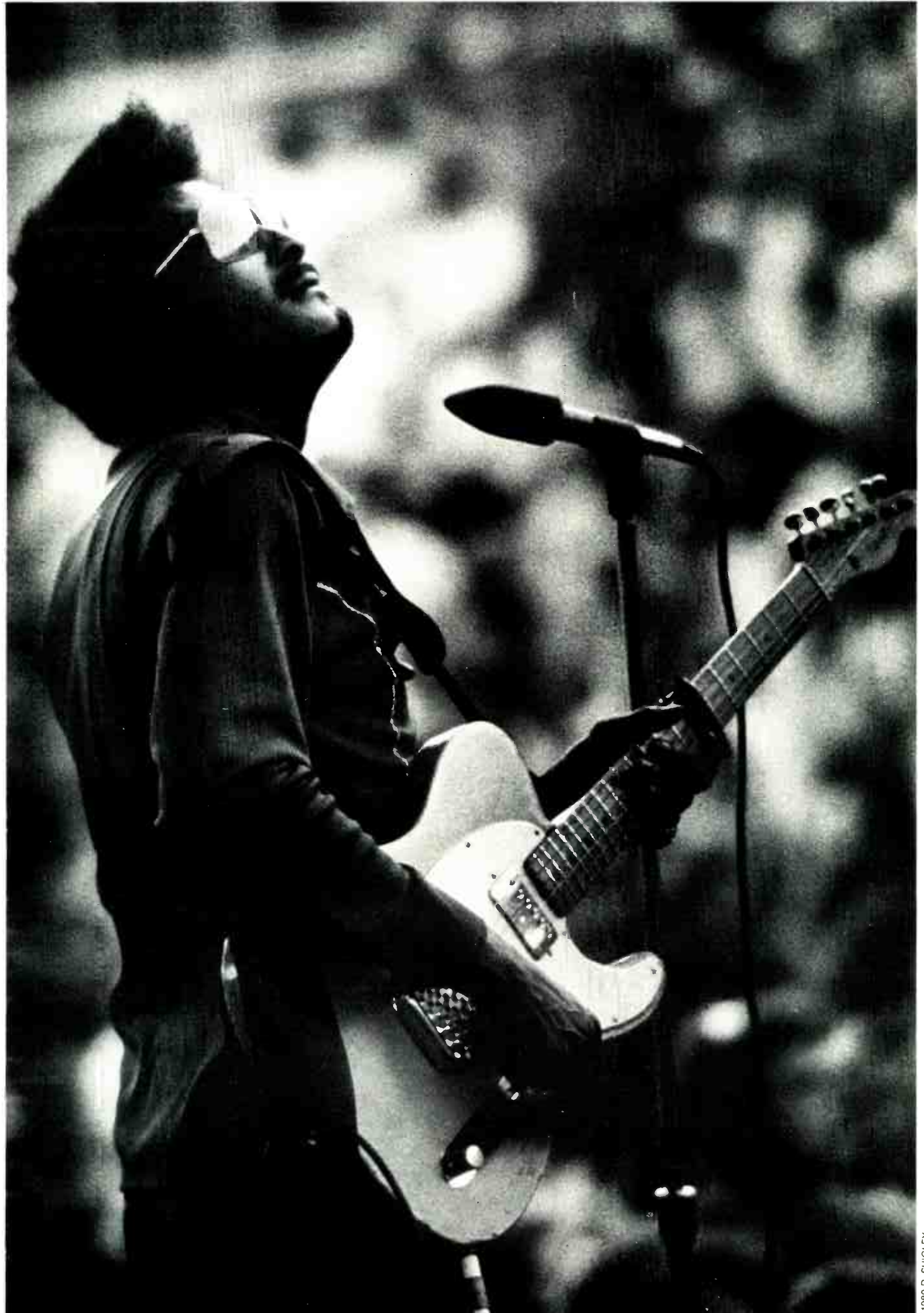
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THE ICE COLD BLUES OF ALBERT COLLINS

After 25 years of delivering the iciest blues around, the Master of the Telecaster has topped himself on his last few albums with the coldest, most electrifying sound around.

By David Breskin

Our last Ice Age lasted over 800,000 years and ended only recently, some 20,000 years ago. We all know about it because we have the stones and the bones and the Great Lakes. Our most recent, and indeed current Ice Age is a more humble affair. It dates back to 1958, when the first known relic — "The Freeze" — was cut into a small disc of solidified fossil fuel. The tool that engraved this rare black fossil was a Fender Telecaster owned and operated by a young Texas bluesman, Albert Collins.

Armed with The Cool Sound — a stinging, shiny, metallic attack birthed from an odd minor-key guitar tuning, arctic echo and sustain, a stone hard thumb and index finger to snap the strings in lieu of a pick, and who-knows-what tricks with pickup and amp — Collins went on to imprint "De-frost," "Sno Cone," "Icy Blue," "Don't Lose Your Cool," and the million-seller, "Frosty." But his rise to the top of the blues scene has been, fittingly, more glacial than meteoric. Only an audio-anthropologist or rabid blues hound would have those old singles or the albums Collins cut through the '60s and early '70s for labels such as Tumbleweed, Imperial, Blue Thumb and Red Lightning; until the past few years, the Iceman cometh as a featured act only to the South (primarily Texas) and the West Coast, where he settled in '68.

The release of *Ice Pickin'* on the Alligator label changed all that. The Montreaux Jazz Festival and *Melody Maker* named it Best Blues Album of 1979, Grammy considered it, and the Icebreakers penetrated Midwestern, Eastern, Scandinavian, and Mediterranean waters. Finally, twenty years after "The Freeze," Collins air conditioning was turned on all over. This year's *Frostbite,* a horn-splashed and prickly romp (in which Albert's stalled car/guitar challenges Charlie Haden's singing whale/bass for Best Special Effects By A String Instrument 1980,) dispels fears that Collins' increased exposure would

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lead to some sort of melt-down into the mainstream morass.

Collins may be the most powerful blues guitarist in the world. He is surely the most unpredictable. But it's only live that one can feel the full force of his six-string percussion, mercurial soloing; and theatrical — if at times a tad unctuous — stage presence. This much can be predicted: in each set he'll play some traditional blues, talk his way through one or two, give up the plain but simple funk, happily and viciously abuse his axe, croon and hush, drawl and shout, swing a shuffle even better than the now aging Ali, and finish it all at the end of his hundred-foot guitar cord on top of the bar or outside the club or at your table hoisting your beer with his right hand and massaging the frets with his left. It's still a show, you know.

Which must go on, and does today on a sweltering afternoon at Arlington Park Racetrack outside Chicago. It's "Blues Day At The Races," a rather cockeyed promotion that has Collins on a makeshift stage down by the rail at the home stretch. The Icebreakers, featuring Gene Ammons' suave disciple, A.C. Reed, on electric tenor, and Casey "Get Drunk and Be Somebody" Jones on drums, heat things up for The Master of the Telecaster. Enter Albert, who grinds out a few tunes in front of a small but spirited mob of fans and a large group of disinterested (perhaps irritated) racing fans, pencils and daily forms in hand, betting concentration mangled by the sharp-edged wedge of sheet-metal guitar perforating the park.

A track official approaches the bandstand and tells Albert that he's gone over the time limit and has to stop Now. Right NOW, because his version of "Avalanche" is seriously spooking the horses, who won't come out for the post parade until Collins pulls the plug. When the official turns his back, Collins grimaces, and with near perfect diction, pronounces the word "Motherfucker" . . . on the guitar, of course. This done, the beat-up axe is put in the Fridge until later that day when the band will play three sets at a northside Chicago tavern. In between frantic race calls by the track announcer and swipes at an overcooked big ole butt steak, Collins laid out some notes about his life and his music.

MUSICIAN: Is there anything you like to do more than make music? Remember, this is a family magazine.

COLLINS: The only thing I love more than playing is driving trucks. I used to drive a diesel. Interstate. This is '61, '62, drove a Kenwood to 41 cities. Drove for seven years — and I was playing at night. I'd go to towns 200 miles away or something, leave in the mornin' come back in the evenin'. Also love to fish and ride around on my chopper. I gotta '69 BSA 650 at home. Love to ride my bike.

MUSICIAN: Blues has always had a strong tie to the road, first the railroad and then the highway, and I take it you record something like "The Highway is Like a Woman" to continue it?

COLLINS: Yeah; right, cause that's still a part of our life you know. I stay on the road . . . that's it man. I drove a truck, I play music on the road, I drove a truck on the road and I'm used to the highway, used to traffic. Every month on the road, 'cept bout two weeks out of a year. I went home three times outa the last two years; I been home three times outa two years: four days once, three days once, and the last time, five days, last March. No kids. Nobody but me and my wife and my dog. And she bites.

MUSICIAN: The wife or the bitch?

COLLINS: And she bites. That take care of business, don't it. Hah.

MUSICIAN: Which musicians moved you most when you started to play?

COLLINS: Albert King and Gatemouth Brown — I was raised up with Gate — and John Lee Hooker was my first favorite. When I first started it was Lightnin' Hopkins (he's in my family) and I listened to him when I was just a kid. And then after I grew up: T-Bone Walker. And John Lee is still my very most favorite.

MUSICIAN: Did you start out with a church gig?

COLLINS: Uh-huh. See, my mother was in the Church of Garden Christ and I played in a church in Texas and began, cause of my parents, you know, to play for the Lord. I did that for maybe two or three weeks — and that was enough for me — I couldn't handle it. [Laughs.]

MUSICIAN: And where did you catch that nasty Cold [sound]?

COLLINS: The reason why I had the cold sound thing was because I had this bass player named Cooks and we was comin' from Corpus Christi, Texas one night. It was raining. Kinda foggy. And he says, "Man, why don't you turn your de-frost on." So I'm lookin' for it on the dash and I say, "Hmmm, de-frost? Maybe I should cut a tune called De-frost." So I cut "The Freeze" first and then "De-frost" and I went from there. I didn't even think of my sound as cold until he mentioned the De-froster that particular night. I give him a lot of credit.

MUSICIAN: Thinking of that hard, lean, rugged sound of all those great Texas saxophonists, I'm wondering about the connection between geography and style?

COLLINS: Look, I been playing 29 years and the first time I ever played Chicago was 1978. I never needed Chicago because I played the southern states: New Orleans, Mississippi. And I listened to Howlin' Wolf and Elmore James and Little Walter and I played with these Chicago people when they came down to Texas but I never really listened to Chicago blues, my area was Texas and Louisiana people.

MUSICIAN: Why does a particular regional sound develop?

COLLINS: Ya can't say for sure, but it's like this: I played Fulton, Alabama and I played Panama City, Florida. And I went those thirty miles 'tween 'em and nobody knew me. Just like that. People stay used to what they're used to.

MUSICIAN: And of course there's that almost impenetrable barrier some folks erect between Urban and Rural blues?

COLLINS: There's not *that much* difference but there is a difference. Folk blues will always be different because you can't do nothin' to it. It's just down-home blues, that's all. See, Blues was a mistake in the first place. When it was created it was just a guy playin' and he just make a few "mistakes" and after a while people got used to those kind of "mistakes" and then they weren't mistakes, they were blues. After a period it caught on, but among blacks only. Way before my time. But they called it a mistake: that's why white people would still turn their noses up at that kind of music. It was for blacks only, blacks only.

MUSICIAN: Why don't more young blacks support the contemporary blues scene?

COLLINS: Because this is a new generation today. Because the young blacks weren't raised around the blues. See, I'm 47 and it's different for a kid who was born in the '60s. The young blacks — they listen to it but they don't really listen. New artists came up. Let's say he's 20 years ole: he don't say what I say cause there's 27 years between where he was raised and where I was raised . . .

MUSICIAN: But what if kids were smothered with blues on the radio the same way they are with Sister Sledge and The Commodores? The young whites seem more attracted to the scene.

COLLINS: I know, I know . . . because what happened from years past is that a lot of whites didn't listen to no black music. As far as blues — that was something evil to them. I mean, now when it come to a black man playing the blues, the first thing the man says is: "Hmmm, he's got something on his mind. I wonder what's happening." We was raised up with the blues, but the new generation of white kids look at it and say: "Hey, I wanna know about this." It's exploring what is the feel from this kind of music. They didn't know about it twenty years ago. The young blacks . . . they got Rose Royce and the rest of those cats.

MUSICIAN: But you still feel that your music is just as vital, just as viable emotionally and culturally, as it was 25 years ago?

COLLINS: Right, right . . . but it's still a different feel from the

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"I'm used to the highway, used to traffic. I been home three times in the last two years. There's nobody but me, my wife and the dog, and she bites."

young black music. What makes me feel so good is that these young men right here [points to bassist Johnny B. Gayden and guitarist Marvin Jackson] don't *have* to accept the kind of music I'm playin', because they can play anything they want to. But they know where I came from, and I've been around a bit longer than they have. And anyway, I got a different feel from a lot of other blacks in my age bracket. Very much different. But the young kids that come and see me, they make me feel good cause they want to see what the blues is all about.

They're gonna check it out and see what it is — it's just like reading history. It's like the countries I been in I read about in school. I didn't want to . . . cause I figured I'd never go there. Why should I learn history? Teacher say: "You may go there one day." And I say. "No, no, I ain't goin' nowhere no place one day, what do I wanna study history for?" But damn, it came to be — see what I'm saying. So when I go over to Europe and people talk to me and I say, "Yeah, I heard about that before" cause I knew what they were talking about. Now if I had said, "Well, I'm goint to skip class . . ."

MUSICIAN: For Europeans especially, blues *is* like a history lesson on a foreign country . . ."

COLLINS: Exactly. The European people take on to blues a little different than Americans. 'Cause they study it. They ask me questions about people even I haven't heard of, and I'm black and raised with blues. I'm very serious about this, they're strictly into it. In other ways, too: like when we played Greece for ten days they had to call in the National Guard. Those people just went wild. We were the first blues there in a while.

MUSICIAN: Are you comfortable with that label, "Blues"?

COLLINS: Not really. I've been known as a blues player but I wanna be more like a "rock-blues." I wanna play a blues where if you feel like dancing you can dance. If you wanna sit, then sit. If you wanna get bored, get bored. A lot of blues bore me: 12 bar blues, 3/4 time blues — I play 'em but I won't play 'em all night. It all boils down to this: when you sit and listen to it, it all sounds the same. All the same. and this is the thing I con't want to do.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of expanding the framework of the blues, did you listen to much Hendrix?

COLLINS: Oh yes, I listened to a lot of Hendrix. See, I met him when he was 18 years old. I met him in Texas, in my home town. He was playing with Little Richard and when he quit, I took his place in the band. I know his whole family. I wanna bring his brother out with me one time. His little brother looks just like him — plays left-handed guitar — and I plan on bringing him on the road with me sometime, use him to bring back some little memories of Jimi, because he can play just like him . . . and Jimi could play the blues.

MUSICIAN: It seems your playing does a lot of things that straight-ahead blues guitar — however good — doesn't often do. Especially in performance. I'm thinking of the element of surprise in your solos, the wide interval leaps and rhythmic shifts, those unexpected prairies of silence . . . .

COLLINS: Well, I wanted to play jazz. I wanted to sound like Kenny Burrell. He just blew my mind the first time I heard him. Now I wouldn't say I play jazz, but I play *around* it. What

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CAPTAIN BEEFHEART'S IRIDESCENT LOGIC

The Captain's world is not like yours and mine. Broom handles and paint think and feel right along with the plants and animals; and, naturally, there is music . . . music like you've never seen. A world unfolds.

By Lester Bangs

Don Van Vliet is a 39-year-old man who lives with his wife Jan in a trailer in the Mojave Desert. They have very little money, so it must be pretty hard on them sometimes, but I've never heard them complain. Don Van Vliet is better known as Captain Beefheart, a legend worldwide whom the better part of a generation of New Wave rock 'n' roll bands have cited as one of their most important spiritual and musical forefathers: John Lydon/ Rotten, Joe Strummer of the Clash, Devo, Pere Ubu, and many others have attested to growing up on copies of Van Vliet's 1969 album *Trout Mask Replica*, playing its four sides of discordant yet juicy swampbrine jambalaya roogalator over and over again until they knew whole bits — routines out of his lyrics, which are a wild and totally original form of free-associational poetry.

There are some of us who think he is one of the giants of 20th century music, certainly of the postwar era. He has never been to music school, and taught himself to play about half a dozen instruments including soprano sax, bass clarinet, harmonica, guitar, piano, and most recently mellotron. He sings in seven and a half octaves, and his style has been compared to Howlin' Wolf and several species of primordial beasts. His music, which he composes for ensemble and then literally teaches his bands how to play, is often atonal but always swings in a way that very little rock ever has. His rhythmic concept is unique. I hear Delta blues, free jazz, field hollers, rock 'n' roll and lately something new that I can't put my finger on but relates somehow to what they call "serious" music. You'll probably hear several other things.

This is going to be a profile partially occasioned by the release of his 12th (and best since 1972's *Clear Spot*) album, *Doc at the Radar Station*. This is also going to be, and I hesitate mightily to say this because I hate those articles where the writer brays how buddybuddy he is with the rock stars, about someone I have long considered a friend and am still only beginning to feel I understand after 11 years. Which is perhaps not so long a time to take to be able to say that you have learned anything about anyone.

Meanwhile, back in the Mojave Desert, Don Van Vliet is enjoying a highly urbane, slyly witty (anecdotes and repartee litter the lunar sands like sequins 'n' confetti on the floor of a Halloween disco), and endlessly absorbing conversation with a gila monster. "GRAAUUWWWKKK!" says the big slumbrous reptile, peering out its laser-green lidless bulging eyes and missing nothing. "Brickbats fly my fireplace," answers Van Vliet. "Upside down I see them in the fire. They squeak and roast there. Wings leap across the floor." "KRAAEEAUUWWWKKK!" advises heat-resistant gila. Van Vliet the Captain nods and ponders the efficacy of such a course. They've both just washed down the last of the scalding chili fulla bigeyed-beans from Venus what glare atcha accusingly as ya poppem doomward inya mouf. The Captain, Van Vliet, call him which you choose, has chosen to live out here, squatflat wampum on this blazened barren ground for many a year. Don't see too much o' the hoomin side o' the varmint family out here, but that's fine with Cap Vliet, "Doc" as he's called by the crusty prospectors hung on lak chiggers from times before his emigration to this spot.

Have you ever had somebody you looked up to as an artist?

Drawings by Don Van Vliet alias Capt. Beefheart

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DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Can't think of anybody, other than the fact that I thought Van Gogh was excellent.

How about in music?

Never in music. I never have. A hero in music. No, fortunately.

So you didn't listen to like Delta blues and free jazz and stuff before you started to –

Not really . . . I met Eric Dolphy. He was a nice guy, but it was real limited to me, like *bliddle-fiddle-diddlenopdedit-bop*. "I came a long way from St. Louie," like Ornette, you know. It didn't move me.

Dolphy didn't MOVE you?

Well, he moved me, but he didn't move me as much as a goose, say. Now that could be a hero, a garder goose could definitely be a hero, the way they blow their heart out for nothing like that.

Is that because you think that people generally do it for purposes of ego?

Um, yeah, which I think is good because it gets your shoes tied. You know what I mean, it doesn't scare old ladies, you get dressed. So I think that's nice.

You don't think it's possible to create art that's egoless, that just flows through you?

That's possible. I'm tryin' to do that, on this last album definitely.

Well, one thing I find is that the more I know the less I know.

Me too. I don't know anything about music.

As reviews over the years have proved, it's always difficult to write anything that really says something about Don Van Vliet. Perhaps (though he may hate this comparison) this is because, like Brian Eno, he approaches music with the instincts of a painter, in Beefheart's case those of a sculptor as well. (When I was trying to pin him down about something on his new album over the phone the other day, he said: "Have you seen Franz Kline lately? You should go over to the Guggenheim and see his *Number Seven*, they have it in such a good place. He's probably closer to my music than any of the painters, because it's just totally speed and emotion that comes out of what he does.") When he's directing the musicians in his Magic Band he often draws the songs as diagrams and shapes. Before that he plays the compositions into a tape himself, "usually on a piano or a moog synthesizer. Then I can shape it to be exactly the way I want it, after I get it down there. It's almost like sculpture; that's actually what I'm doing, I think. 'Cause I sure as hell can't afford marble, as if there was any."

Much of what results, by any "normal" laws of music, cannot be done. As for lyrics, again like Eno, he often works them up from a sort of childlike delight at the very nature of the sounds themselves, of certain words, so if, to pull an example out of the air, "anthrax," or "love" for that matter, appears in a line, it doesn't necessarily mean what you'll find in the dictionary if you look it up. Then again, it might. Contrary to *Rolling Stone*, "Ashtray Heart" on the new album has nothing to do with Beefheart's reaction to punk rockers beyond one repeated aside that might as well be a red herring. ("Lut's open up another case of the punks" is the line reflecting his rather dim view of the New Wavers who are proud to admit to being influenced by him. "I don't ever listen to 'em, you see, which is not very nice of me but . . . then again, why should I look through my own vomit? I think they're overlooking the fact — they're putting it back into rock and roll: bomp, bomp, bomp, that's what I was tryin' to get away from, that mama heartbeat stuff. I guess they have to make a living, though.") He laughs about the misinterpretation, but since the song is pretty clearly about betrayal, I asked: "What was it about the person in the song that could make you care enough to be that hurt?"

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He says: "Humanity. The fact that people don't hear it the way you really mean it. Probably for a similar reason that Van Gogh gave that girl a piece of his flesh, because she was too stupid to comprehend what he was doing. I always thought that he gave her that as a physical thing to hold onto because she didn't accept the aesthetic value of what he was saying."

"We don't have to suffer, we're the best batch yet." Would you care to comment on what that might mean?
Yeah, what I was doing there was having these cardboard ball sculptures, fake pearls, real cheap cardboard constructed circles, you know what I mean, floating through that music. Actually, I was afraid to sing on that track, I liked the music so much, it was perfect without me on it. And so I put those words on there, you know, they're just cheap cardboard constructions of balls of simulated pearls floating through, and it's an overwhelming technique that makes them look like pearls. "We don't have to suffer, we're the best batch yet" were these pearls talking to themselves.
As opposed to the other ones. What does it mean when you say, "White flesh waves to black"?
God, I don't know what that means. It means, it's just a, uh, it's merely just a painting, you see, that's poetic license.
I thought you were talking about racism.
Oh, no. I don't know what to do about racial or political things. It was just a poem to me. A poem for poem's sake.
I was also thinking of when you walk around looking at people who have turned themselves into commodities.
Yeah, we're the best batch yet! We're the newest best that has been put out. Well, that has to do with that, too. You know, I'm uh, ahm, whaddaya call it, it isn't schizophrenic but it is, uh, what people in the West think of people in the East, you see, meaning that in some instances they think that people are crazy who think multifaceted, that there's many ways of interpreting something. I mean 'em all. I can't say I don't know what my lyrics mean, but I can say that, uh, yeah I know what they mean, but if you call it you stop the flow.

Van Morrison has said that he doesn't know what a lot of his own lyrics mean. And even if Beefheart does, or they mean something different for each of us, I think, as with Morrison, occasionally you feel that the voice of some Other just might be speaking through this singer at this particular time, as if he were an instrument picking up messages from . . . ? Doc at the Radar Station. (About the various voices he switches off between, often in the same song: "I'll tell you the truth, some of those guys really scare me, that come out at me when I do some things, like 'Sheriff of Hong Kong.' I never met him before. Or she. I dunno . . . it's like different, uh, uh . . . you see, I don't think I do music, I think I do spells.")

Wherever Don Van Vliet gets his rules and messages from, it's rarely the external, so-called rational, I think psychotic "civilized" society we've known and lived in. He chooses to live *out* of it, mentally and physically, and began trying to escape from it at a very early age: "I never went to school. I wet my pants and my mother came and got me as I was running and I told her that I couldn't go to school because I was sculpting at that time a hell of a lot. That was kindergarten, I think. I tried to jump into the La Brea Tar Pits when I was three, whatever that means. They caught me just in time. I was so intrigued by those bubbles going bmp bmp. I thought I would find a dinosaur down there. I told my mother when I was three years old — she showed it to me not too long ago, in this baby book in that horrible Palmer Penmanship method of writing that she used, you know that fantastic curlicues type stuff that had everything to do with everything other than what it said, on this old yellow piece of paper it's written out, that if she would stay on one side of the room and I would stay on the other, that we would be friends the rest of our life. I used to lock myself in a room and sculpt when I was like three, five, six."

"What sorts of things did you sculpt?"

"Oh God, things that I would try to have moved kinetically, try to move these things around. These were my friends, these little animals that I would make, like dinosaurs

"With the electric guitar, it's a battle of wills. It'll spit out atcha anything that's out there. It always comes out the way it wants to."

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

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and . . . I wasn't very much in reality, actually."

"Do you feel bad about that?"

"No, I feel good. I was right. The way people treat animals, I don't like it. One of my horrible memories is the great Auk, the fact that it was extinct before I was born. What a beautiful bird."

"What were your parents like."

"Pretty banal. They moved me to Mojave, that's where they kept the Japanese-Americans during World War II. They moved me up there to keep me out of a scholarship to Europe for sculpture. They wanted to get me away from all the 'queer' artists. Isn't that awful? Periscopes in the tub, right?"

In this sense, he's still not very much in "reality." His problems with record companies over the years are legendary. Yet he has, somehow, kept on making those amazing albums; just when you've almost given up hope, somebody else comes along and offers him a contract, and he does another one, and it doesn't sell. Jon Landau told me in 1970, when he was my record reviews editor at *Rolling Stone:* "Grand Funk will be more important to the history of rock 'n' roll than Captain Beefheart. And you can quote me on that." But there *are other occasions*, like the time I met a young woman in a bar who was not a scenemaker or into avant-rock, and when I asked her what kind of music she liked she said: "This guy I heard named Captain Beefheart. There was just something kind of real sensual and musky about it. I dunno . . . it was different, but I loved it."

Beefheart himself thinks women tend to understand his music better than men, so especially since he can be so elliptically, obscurantistly difficult to pin down in interview and describing his music in prose is kind of like trying to catch the prism of a dragonfly wing and hold it intact in the palm of your hand, I'll talk about his wife. Jan is a young woman of such radiance and wholehearted sincerity that it can be a little stunning at first meeting. Phrases like "earth mother" are too quaint, dreary, way off the mark. She is as active an artist as he and the complexities of her mind are fully up to his moodswings, which can give you jetlag. Which doesn't mean she's the archetypal Great Artist's Nursemaid either — she won't take his shit, and he can be a tyrannical baby at times. Like a lot of us.

Jan helps mightily at broaching some kind of rapprochement communications-wise between this man and the world at large. In other words, she translates. In both directions. You'd see the same thing at the U.N. And if Don is not exactly intoning "Klaatu baraada niktu," he does at times seem like a visitor from another planet, or more precisely, someone still stunned by his first sight of this one, as I suspect he always will be. Perhaps he just doesn't have those filtering mechanisms which enable most of us to cope with "reality" by blocking out at least 80 percent of it.

According to his set of filters, inanimate objects are alive, and plants and animals share with them the capacity to think as well as feel. Don sees perspicacity in a mesquite, an old broom-handle even. If his lyrics are about anything absolutely, they are about ecology.

You're a painter. In "Run Paint Run Run" are you saying that the paint itself is a conscious entity with a will of its own?

Yeah! Definitely! Hey, you got it. Yes, it does have a will of its own.

So it's alive.

I think so, I definitely feel that it is.

Do you generally feel that about the things around you, inanimate objects?

Um hm. Yeah, I really do. I think they're all alive. Don't you?

I don't know.

Come on, you do too . . . .

So how do you and the paint get along?

Pretty damn good, I'll tell ya. I'm just looking forward to getting enough money to be able to really paint big. I don't wanna paint any littler than five by five. But I'd like to paint twenty by twenty.

JOE STEVENS

"Eric Dolphy moves me, but not as much as a goose. A gander goose could definitely be a hero the way they blow their heart out for nothing like that."

Do you and the paints ever have fights?

Yeah, definitely.

Do you feel the same way about the electric guitar, that when you plug it into the wall it's this battle of wills sort of?

I think so. 'I'll spit out atcha anything that's out there.

Was that what you were talking about in "Electricity"?

Yeah, that had a hell of a lot to do with it . . . It always seems to come out the way *it wants* to, y'know.

I think that partially Don anthropomorphizes animals and objects as a defense against a human crew who empirical observation has told him are by and large incomprehensible to themselves as well as him, that's when they're not also out to getcha. He's like an Androcles that would chat a spell with Leo but see fangs and claws on a delivery boy. Lacking aforesaid filters, he has devised an elaborate system of checkpoint charlies to keep most of humankind's snoots at bay. This can sometimes be frustrating. His favorite device in the past was to always say some bigtime gonzo Dada non-sequitur ("All roads lead to Coca-Cola" was the first one I ever heard), then look you straight in the eye and insistently enquire: "Do you know what I mean?"

"Yeah, sure, Don, sure!" *everybody* (except Jan) would always huffnpuff. He is a very charismatic person: a guru, of sorts. He knows how to charm, and has a way of flattering you by asking you all kinds of questions suggesting real concern. He really means it, too, his basic philosophy has always been summed up in the open invitation to share his suddenly brighter sunshine in *Trout Mask Replica's* "Frownland." But see, that's just it: it was always *his sunshine*, on another level all these things were and are distancing devices (though he's not nearly as egocentrically defensive as he used to be) and it can be extremely frustrating because no matter how intimate you get with somebody if *all they ever say* practically is stuff that sounds like it came out of their lingo-tango lyrics (another technique is to ask you to elaborate when you ask a question

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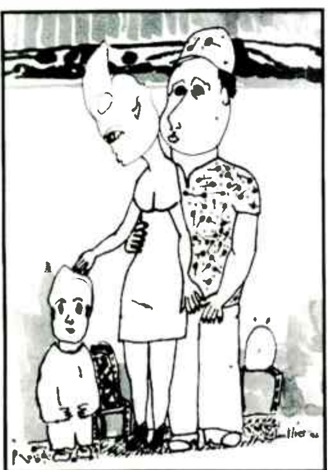
and then just agree with you) you go home with a tape recorder full of words that mean nothing in particular and the sad hunch that there was something a bit impersonal about this whole affair. I've been told that with Don the best countertactic is to try and pin him down: *"Just exactly what do you mean?"* But somehow I've never been able to draw that hard a line. The man is too magical. Literally. Once in Detroit I walked into a theatre through the back door while he was onstage performing. At the precise moment I stepped to the edge of the curtains on stage right where I could see him out there haranguing the audience, he said, very clearly, "Lester!" His back was to me at the time. Later he asked me if I had noticed it. I was a little shaken.

The years of what career-oriented folks would file as "failure" have ripened and mellowed Don; like most of us, he's grown up some, albeit perhaps against his will. Once I listened to him rant drunk and bitter all night; now I ask him: "Do you think the music business will ever find you 'commercial,' and do you care?"

"I don't think they ever will," he laughs, "and I don't care. I'm just thankful that an audience is listening to me."



He just lets it turn with the earth, though he was particularly angry in the past when a band he literally taught to play cut some sides on Mercury under his name without even telling him. There are also many of us who think Frank Zappa, with whom he grew up, wouldn't be hock in a spittoon, much less a "composer" (anybody says that certifies themselves a moron), if there had never been a Don Van Vliet on this earth. When Zappa established his Straight Records in 1968, he invited Don to join a carny sideshow which also included the GTO's, Alice Cooper and Wild Man Fischer, producing, or so he was credited, *Trout Mask Replica*. Hell, it's such a sleeper you can still order it from Warner Comm. That record was four sides, 28 songs cut in two days of the most unparalleled ruckus in the annals of recorded sound. In it, after relatively unfocused albums for Buddah (with whom he even scored a minor hit in '66, "Diddy Wah Diddy") and Blue Thumb, Beefheart and his unearthly looking cabal of spazmo henchmen seemed effortlessly to cook up the so-far still definitive statement on the possibilities for some common ground ("fusion," I believe they called some bathwater quickbuckaroos bearing scant relation a few years later) on which raunch rock, slide-slinging Delta blues and post-Coltrane/Shepp/Ayler free jazz might consecrate a shakedown together.

Like almost all of Beefheart's recorded work, it was not even "ahead" of its time in 1969. Then and now, it stands outside time, trends, fads, hypes, the rise and fall of whole genres eclectic as walking Christmas trees, constituting a genre unto itself: truly, a musical Monolith if ever there was one. On it, Beefheart, behind a truly scarifying gallery of separate voices, becomes at various times a sagebrush prospector, Jews screaming in the ovens at Auschwitz, greased-back East L.A. pachuco, a breakable pig, automobile, "Ant Man Bee" (title of one song), a little girl and her brinechawed seafarin' aged father (in the same song), a Pa Kettle-mischievous "Old Fart at Play," and several species of floral, piscatorial and amphibious life. The band, under his tutelage, thereon reinvented from the ground up rhythm, melody, harmonics, perhaps what our common narrow parameters have defined as "music" itself.

Since then he has released seven albums of varying quality. The immediate followup, *Lick My Decals Off, Baby,* was brilliant though a little abrasive even for my ears at the time it was released. 1971's *The Spotlight Kid* was more commercial, though hardly compromised, and many people regard 1972's *Clear Spot*, a minor masterpiece of sorts, as a dance album in disguise. Two later records on Mercury, *Unconditionally Guaranteed* and *Blue Jeans and Moon Beams*, were baldfaced attempts at sellout. *Shiny Beast*, a charming but relatively minor work, was released by Warner Brothers in 1978. None of these albums has sold more than 50 or 60 thousand, and that's over a long period of time; only *Trout Mask* and *Shiny Beast*, in fact, remain in the catalogues.

Perhaps it is the "success" ("triumph?") of New Wave that has emboldened Warner Brothers. In any case, *Doc at the Radar Station* is one of the most brilliant achievements by any artist in any year. And in 1980 it seems like a miracle. It certainly is not compromised, and I doubt that it will get any radio play in this country at least, but then I said the Clash didn't have a prayer. While some of his self-acknowledged acolytes have gone on to stardom, megabucks, pop-out lunchboxes, etc., the progenitor remains in his Mojave trailer, where he barely has room for an indoor easel. (So if any

Magic Band Instrumentation: — *Michael Shore*

The thin, metallic, biting twang of Fender guitars is a key element in the distinctive Beefheart sound, so it makes sense that the Captain insists on using Fenders exclusively (although there are photos *circa* 1970 or so showing Zoot Horn Rollo — alias Bill Harkleroad — holding a Gretsch Country Gentleman hollow body which, it turns out, had a Telecaster pickup installed). Guitarists Jeff Tepper and Gary Snyder use both Telecasters and Stratocasters. Snyder, the newest band member, replaces recently departed Drumbo (John French, who according to the Captain "just went off . . . you know how he is. He's always going off, but he'll be back."), and was a Beefheart fanatic at age 11 who had mastered *Trout Mask Replica* — all of it — by age 16. He's half Winnebago Sioux and half German Jew. Pre-CBS Fender amps are preferred, but if they can't be found the band will use Leo Fender Musicman amps. Strings are always heavy gauge Ernie Ball.

As for guitar tunings: some songs call for weird tunings, some are done in regular tunings. Gary Lucas (whose wife Ling currently manages Beefheart's business affairs), who plays the guitar solo "Flavor Bud Living" on the new LP, says the 56 second solo took him three months to learn, and that "the suspensions and inversions in it gave me severe muscle pains shooting through my left forearm for a couple of months. I also had to vitually cauterize my fingertips to get the right fingerstyle picking attack."

Bass guitar duties are split between Snyder and keyboardist Eric Feldman. Again, both Fender Precision and Jazz basses are used. Feldman plays Fender Rhodes piano, Mellotron, customized Mini-Moog synthesizer, and a keyboard bass the make of which I couldn't find out. He'll also play a grand piano if one can be found.

Robert Williams plays a maple-finish Ludwig drum kit with both single-headed and double-headed tom toms, and two bass drums. His cymbals were custom made by Paiste at their Switzerland factory.

The Captain himself plays Hohner harmonicas — Echo, chromatic, and regular models — and an old King soprano sax. I don't know what make of bass clarinet he plays, but he hardly ever takes that instrument on tour.

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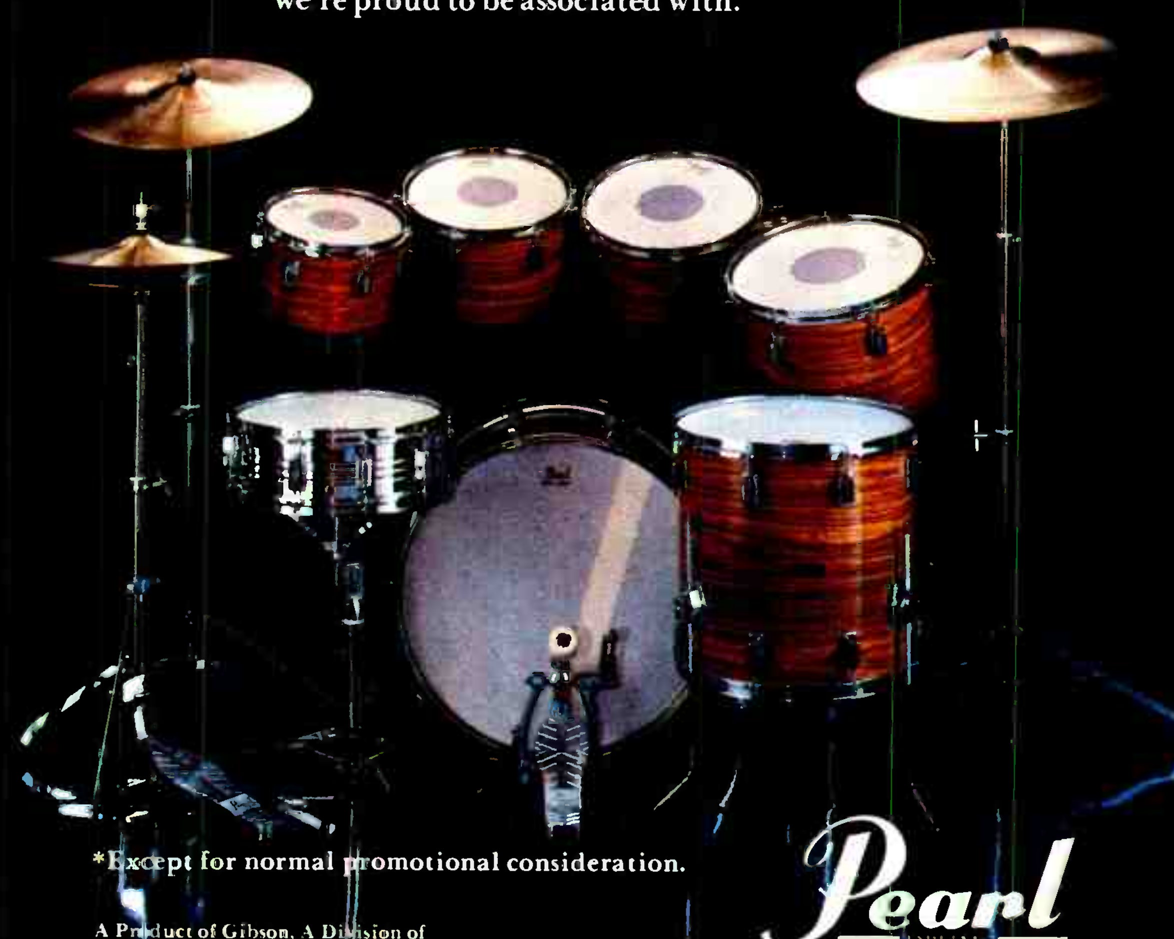

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neo-Florentine patron is reading this, I will make a plea that Don would never make or ask anyone else to for him: support a real artist.) I'm not sawing violins in half — Don certainly doesn't feel sorry for himself, and in late 1977 when he reappeared at the Bottom Line with a new band and *Shiny Beast* in the wings, he had the distinct air of a, well, I don't even feel "survivor" is the word. A patriarch, perhaps, a high priest, born again from Ancient Egypt smiling like the spuming headwaters of the Nile, long weathered body holding just that many mysteries, arcane secrets from half-apocryphal texts of hoodoo mojo Coptic canebreak healings of the kind Ishmael Reed likes to dream up.

Next to him, Dr. John looked like Gary Glitter: all soot, no zoot. He could go 15 rounds brainwave-to-brainwave with Screamin' Jay Hawkins and judges who know nothin' anyway call it a draw. Might be the white Leadbelly. Too much in love with living to be Robert Johnson. In the late '60's, some hotshit young hitpicker got famous by proclaiming that Don Van Vliet, if he wanted to, could be "the greatest white blues singer in the world." That would have been dumb as settling for a moosehead over the fireplace when you've lassoed the Loch Ness Monster and taken it to dinner, highballs and dancing. Like Van Gogh doing pasteup for Bloomingdale's. Make no mistake, Captain Beefheart is an absolutely authentic chunk of taproot Americana on a Mark Twain level with Paul Bunyan stature.

And there *is* something ingenuously natural about him. I don't think, for instance, that he necessarily "tries" to "create" these things, they just sort of . . . happen to (through?) him. In the course of this process, he has managed to practically reinvent both music and the English language. And if you think that's a thorny thicket of defenses to try and hack through so as to get at the actual *person* back there, you're right. He embarrasses you with his effusiveness; he feels misunderstood and craves desperately to talk with anyone who, he's satisfied, understands what he's trying to do. I don't know why he thinks I understand it. I only understand a little part of it. A lot of it is Sanskrit to me too. But you'll never miss the feeling however obtuse the structure, because this man is almost 100 per cent feeling, can be feverish with it, leads with every open nerve-end till sometimes you wonder if he has a mind at all, or just threw the one he had away one day because every pore in the body is a knowing little eye fiercely darting at experience.

Now, there is no reason on earth why such a creature should be articulate. Except that he is. But on his terms, most of the time. And this is what has always bothered me. What good is being an artist, creating all these beautiful things, if you can't just throw down your defenses *sometimes* and share things on the common level of other people? Without that, it's barren and ultimately pathetic. Ultimately, without some measure of that, it can never matter as art. 'Cause art's of the heart. And I'm talking about the heart that flies between two or more humans, not to the ghost of the great Auk, or a glob of paint, or any of his other little friends. All this week, one song off *Trout Mask Replica* kept playing in my head: "Orange Claw Hammer," an unaccompanied field holler-like poem about a man who's been away at sea for years and catches first sight of his daughter since she was in swaddling. He grasps her hand and offers to "Take you down to the foamin' brine 'n' water, and show you the wooden tits on the goddess with the pole out full-sail that tempted away your pegleg father. I was shanghaied by a highhat beaver-moustache man and his pirate friend. I woke up in vomit and beer in a banana bin, and a soft lass with brown skin bore me seven babies with snappin' black eyes and beautiful ebony skin, and here it is I'm with you my daughter. Thirty years away can make a seaman's eyes, a roundhouse man's eyes flow out with water, salt water."

Now if that isn't pure true American folklore then you can throw everything from Washington Irving to Carl Sandburg and beyond in the garbage. I'm saying Don Van Vliet, "Captain Beefheart," is on that level. But what I realized this morning, the reason why it was this song stuck out from 26 others: because it's not about the "Neon Meate Dream of a Octafish," but something that happened between people.

Why do you almost always talk elliptically?
Due to the fact that probably it's very difficult for me to explain myself except in music or paint.
But don't you think talking that way all the time is kind of impersonal, a distancing effect?
It probably comes out very personal in the music. That's where I'm truthful and honest. I don't know how it happens exactly, but my mind *becomes* the piano or guitar.
What about when you're alone with Jan?
We don't talk too much. Because we trust each other, and we don't have that much faith in the spoken word. I guess it's true that I do talk selfishly, as a conversationalist.
Well, don't you think you're missing something you might get from other people by being that way?
Sure, but they usually won't accept me anyway. I'm comfortable talking to you. Not many people seem to have things in common with me. I guess what intrigues me the most is something like seeing somebody wash my windows — that's like a symphony.
But if you and I are friends, and you trust me, we should be able to have a reciprocal conversation.
We're talking without talking. I mean that in a good sense. We're saying things that can't be put into the tongue. It's like good music.

In the end I'm not sure which of us is right. I am probably unfair in wanting everything so explicitly defined from *everybody*, demanding the rest of the human race (perhaps especially ironic in the case of artists and musicians) be as verbal or verbose as I am. I can't say that he's wrong in choosing to live out of society, because this society itself doesn't seem to have much of a future, and doesn't seem to care either. A goat and a corporation exec, or most rising young affluent career people around this town for that matter, come up about even conversation-wise, and the goat smells better and is fun to pet so there you are. As for art that deals with human situations, almost none of the art being produced from *within* the society these days does that, so why pick on Beefheart because he'd rather commune with paints and bats in the fireplace? Certainly he illuminates more about the human heart, and the human groin for that matter, than all these dry dead literati and "minimalist" artists and juiceless composers. As for Don Van Vliet the man, each passing year seems to bring him farther out of defensive obscurantism, measurably more open and trusting, which is really wild in itself because the world around is careening in exactly the opposite direction.

Besides which on another level it's none of my business anyway, except insofar as he chose to make it so. If he is somewhat in retreat, it can be justified on all the levels above and several more I'm sure, besides which who isn't in retreat these days? His kind takes a lot more courage than most, and as an artist he is so far removed from any kind of burnout that he can't even be called, like I said earlier and like all the Neil Youngs and Lou Reeds who made it from the late '60s to this point relatively intact, a survivor. More like a natural resource. The difference, finally, is that, to use an example by one of his favorite writers, he'll never give us his version of *Macbeth*. He would rather be the Grand Canyon. ———————

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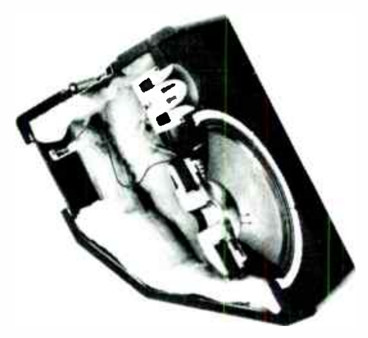

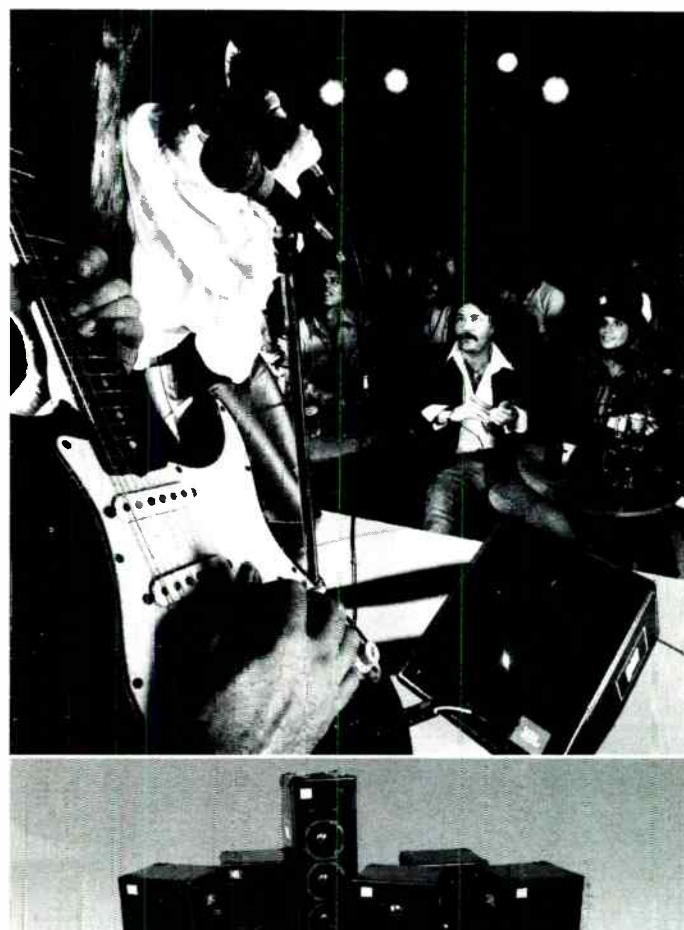

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World Radio History

MICHAEL McDONALD

Songwriter, keyboardist, arranger, member of the Doobies and owner of The Voice reveals himself as a somewhat reluctant superstar. Thrust into pop music's center stage by his Top 40/AOR masterpieces, McDonald traces his roots back to some surprising sources.

By Sam Sutherland

Michael McDonald has come to influence contemporary pop through a deceptively indirect path. For most listeners, that process began on record where he cast an aural shadow across other backing vocalists, his rich tenor infusing the sleeker voices around it with a blue wash of feeling. His first significant studio association, as a member of Steely Dan's last semi-formal working band, prefigured not only McDonald's own catalogue of pop, rock and soul-inflected songs written for and with the Doobie Brothers, but a virtual sub-genre of late '70s popular vocal records. Many have borne that stamp through his collaboration as singer, song-writer, arranger or producer; still others have evolved in the hands of musical friends, and, more recently, several have paid him the ultimate commercial compliment — outright imitation.

McDonald joined the Doobies in 1975 as keyboard player and vocalist, replacing an ailing Tom Johnson. Teamed with another former Steely Dan member, guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, McDonald accelerated the Doobies' swing away from guitar rock toward a seamless, urban pop synthesis. It was a stylistic shift he would often be given sole credit or blame for, despite the music's clear genesis in the work of Baxter and veteran Doobie Patrick Simmons as well. All three helped shepherd the band away from the classic rock superstructure of massed rhythm arrangements and extended, high-relief solo instrumental lines; their subsequent emphasis has been on refining a more elastic ensemble style at once cooler in its refined accents and subtler harmonic blueprint, and more dynamic in its use of rhythmic punctuation.

As the band's tacit co-leader, together with guitarist Simmons, McDonald has since become more comfortable in that role, if not exactly outspoken. Any traces of the narcissism common to his trade remain offset by grassroots attitudes. He retains a healthy distrust of praise, a candid grasp of his own limitations as a musician, and a determination to resist the fish-bowl pressures of his popularity by remaining approachable. Above all, he refuses to fully detach his work from the supportive context of the band he credits with nurturing it, and the various singers and songwriters McDonald has collaborated with.

That openness also attests to his origins. Growing up in a climate where music was neither mere background noise nor formal system, but rather an integral part of daily life, McDonald still remembers his scuffling days. If he now writes with peers and predecessors ranging from Carly Simon and Kenny Loggins to Burt Bacharach and Paul Anka, he still expresses affection for the forgotten bands that brought his first performing experience, outfits with names like Mike and the Majestics, Jerry and the Sheratons, the Del-Rays and Blue.

Norman, Oklahoma, the next-to-last stop on a late summer

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RICHARD AARON

leg of the Doobies' current tour, proves an unexpectedly appropriate rendezvous. Its plains are baking beneath 100-degree heat and 90 percent humidity even in late afternoon, as the band prepares to take the stage at the University's Owen Stadium, climaxing an afternoon rock triple-bill. By the time the stage is ready and the band begins heading up the ramps, the weather has induced a torpor that makes even breathing, let alone performing, seem folly indeed.

Before going onstage, McDonald will wonder aloud whether we've picked a good day to hear the current eight-man stage ensemble, but by the end of the set his question will have been answered in the affirmative. With Willie Weeks handling bassist Tiran Porter's duties onstage, and drummers Keith Knudsen and Chet McCracken augmented by frequent studio and stage percussionist Bobby LaKind, the rhythm section is both fluid and precise, summoning the thundercrack power of the early '70s band's trademarked twin-kit bottom, while capturing the broader dynamic range and sinuous percussive accents that have spiced its more recent style.

Simmons, long an exuberant front man, has found his first onstage foil since Johnston's departure in guitarist John McFee (Clover, Elvis Costello, Carlene Carter, Van Morrison). The two guitarists trade ebullient solos and playful, cross-stage sprints, and if McFee doesn't bring the same elliptical chromatic filigree that Baxter offered, he makes up for it with his own rich harmonics and a single-note soloing attack just as lusty.

Finally, McDonald himself, always relatively static behind his keyboards, has found his own music foil in Cornelius Bumpus. Bumpus' own band, Corny and The Corvettes, had led to a guest slot in a mid-decade reformation of Moby Grape (itself one of the original Doobies' main influences), and subsequently earned him an audition with McDonald and Simmons. His surging Hammond organ fills, ripe saxophone lines and gospel-edged vocals all complement McDonald's own roots and provide the band with the added depth their last few albums have achieved through outside players.

Overall, their set is a stylish, successful compromise between the pop gloss of their recent studio work and the high-energy concert drama generated by the earlier Brothers, but often lacking in recent tours. Vocally, the current lineup is easily the strongest to date, with four solo vocalists in Bumpus, Simmons, Knudsen and McDonald, and a lush choral blend.

After the show, McDonald worries only momentarily whether his pitch was off (it wasn't), and is visibly relaxed. So, in a dimly-lit steak house halfway to Oklahoma City, he drinks ice water from a Mason jar and begins reviewing the vocal and instrumental models that carried him here.

MUSICIAN: You started singing as a child, didn't you?

McDONALD: Yeah, I've been in bands since I was about 12, actually, and before that I sang with my father. I was four the first time he ever put me up on a piano, in a bar, to sing. It was something I've loved to do ever since then.

I always sang, because my father had, and my whole family loved singing — even if they couldn't sing, they sang. It was a real strong thing in my family. A lot of their reason for getting together was music, they just loved music. And I grew up raised by barflies. None of them really drank very much; my uncles drank, but my father didn't. He loved to sing with the piano players, and my mother and everybody used to love it. That was their evening out: Friday and Saturday night, they'd

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go down to a local bar in St. Louis, Eddie Baker's City Club, which is where I first sang. The kids were welcome, and it was a typical scene in those places, those corner bars, you know.
MUSICIAN: St. Louis itself has to figure in your music, in that it's had a long musical history of its own as a kind of hub city for other regional styles, especially black ones. What were you hearing as you grew up there?
McDONALD: Well, basically music from Chicago, music from Memphis, a lot of music from Nashville — a lot of country and western. St. Louis was caught right in the middle of those cities. It seems like in the '50s, the record companies were more local. A company like Chess Records or Stax/Volt or Motown would have that feel, and I think the real cult was in the Midwest. Like when San Francisco and acid rock, that whole thing, was going on, it was something that you saw in *Life* magazine. I mean, I loved the Beatles, but they weren't as strong a social influence as R&B and country music were.
MUSICIAN: What about instruments? Your main instrument today is piano, along with various electronic keyboards.
McDONALD: I used to play trombone. And I played banjo as a kid.
MUSICIAN: Apart from other players locally, or records you liked, what singers first really affected you?
McDONALD: I always loved Ray Charles. I always thought he was an incredible vocalist. And I grew up singing old songs. I'd sing a lot of old Irish songs, old World War I songs, and I got into music through that. I also had an affection for showtunes, for Oscar Hammerstein and people like that. Then, when I was old enough to know anything about rock 'n' roll, I was into that. About that time, what was really big in our area was R&B and the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.
MUSICIAN: But you were more into soul, given the proximity of the style.
McDONALD: I was always in more soul bands than anything else. You know, guys that wore tuxedos and had razor cuts. We all had our hair styled.
MUSICIAN: What about your keyboard training? When did you start playing?
McDONALD: All my life, really. I played by ear. But my only interest in it was to write songs: I never really strived to become a piano player. Then, when I joined the Doobies, I really felt I had to.

I had worked as a piano player/arranger, you know, for other people, but after a while I realized that to be in this band as its only keyboard player, I really owed it to them to try and develop myself a bit. I've gotten better with the Doobie Brothers, in a more condensed period of time, than I had in my whole life.
MUSICIAN: One common feature to your tracks has been the use of stacked keyboard textures, building up chorus effects with electric piano, acoustic piano and occasionally synthesizers or effects units. What attracted you to that approach?
McDONALD: I pretty much got into that through recording, through hearing it on tape and liking the sound of it. Being the keyboard player in a four-piece group, a lot of times it would take on the same feeling as a horn section — it wasn't just a keyboard, it was more orchestrated than that.

When people found more ways for more groups to have a bigger sound, it became more of an orchestrated thing. One of the first ways I think that came together was not so much through synthesizers but electric piano. I'll still sometimes use a Rhodes/piano combination before I'll use any kind of synthesizer.
MUSICIAN: Well, I noticed with your stage set-up, for example, that there were any number of times you could've tried for a given effect with a synthesizer, but instead you used pedal or tone effects on either the Rhodes or the Yamaha electronic grand.
McDONALD: Because of the harmonics caused by the two different keyboards. There are all these harmonics that I can't even account for that sound really big and resilient, that you can't get from a wave-form synthesizer. You just don't have enough oscillators to build all those harmonics and make that sound. Sometimes two keyboards will make the sound much fatter, and at the same time much richer, than you could ever get on a synthesizer.

You know, you can get to the point with that stuff where you forget you're only a rhythm section, and if you don't function basically as a rhythm section, you lose the bite. You can get off onto a lot of tangents.
MUSICIAN: That seems consistent with the current band's move toward a more self-contained format. Starting with *What Were Once Vices...*, the Doobies frequently used outside horn players like the Memphis Horns, but now you've opted to focus on your own effects, and on Cornelius' sax work. Is that consciously tied to making your stage renditions more complete?
McDONALD: Oh yeah. On this record [*One Step Closer*], for instance, there's not a tune on there — and we have strings on some of them — that we can't play live and self-contained. We may give up something here or there, but you wouldn't miss it.
MUSICIAN: Having a second full-time keyboard player and utility reed man must help. Has Bumpus' arrival helped you in particular?
McDONALD: Oh, it's been great. There's somebody there who is really bringing the band along in the sense that Corny's a great horn player, one of the best I've ever heard, and it creates a certain responsibility for us to bring the music along to the point where we can really utilize him the way he should be utilized. I think a lot of our chord progressions have become a little more sophisticated as a result.
MUSICIAN: He also fits the R&B penchant of the band. It's sort of like having King Curtis or Junior Walker along.
McDONALD: Not just sax-wise, but organ-wise, too. He plays great B-3. It really helped us build from the basic tracks on this record. We went in there saying, 'Well, we're not gonna use organ on everything,' and wound up literally using it on just about everything. And it really worked out.
MUSICIAN: I'm interested in your first solo set from years back. I remember reading a quote where you compared it to 'Englebert Humperdinck going through puberty' as far as your performing went.
McDONALD: [Laughing] Yeah, no offense to Englebert. I sounded very tense; I thought I sang much deeper than I did. I don't know, I think I tried so hard, I just tried *too* hard.
MUSICIAN: Were you cutting your own songs?
McDONALD: It was all original material, and it was rough. I was kind of out there by myself, I think, surrounded by a lot of people who had more faith in me than I deserved at the time. I don't regret the experience at all, and if it wasn't for those people, I wouldn't be here.
MUSICIAN: How long had you been on the West Coast?
McDONALD: Oh, I'd been in L.A. for awhile. I moved out when I was 18, and sort of left the Midwest behind, coming out to do that solo album with Rick Jarrard, who produced it for RCA. It never got released, and things just kind of fell through for us. We went through another label for awhile, but I never quite got anything together, through nobody's fault. Things just didn't pan out, and at the time I was pretty disillusioned with the performing artist thing. I realized that that wasn't what I wanted — I was trying to be something that I didn't even want to be.
MUSICIAN: You were more interested in just being a writer?
McDONALD: I think so, and just being in a good rock 'n' roll band. I enjoyed being in a good rhythm section. But it was hard for me to learn how to follow that basic instinct, and just accept the fact that just because it's not the normal thing to strive for, it's still worth doing. There's a way to gain any kind of success you'd gain as a solo artist without resorting to the Peter Principle.

I'm not a performer, and never will be. I don't enjoy it, and with my personal makeup, I don't have to get out there.
MUSICIAN: In other words, the ego need isn't there.
McDONALD: Yeah. Not that that's bad. There are people who do it well, and I just never did. So, after a couple of years of regrouping myself, and finding out what I wanted to do, I still felt the need for music to be my whole life.

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ETTY INMAN GOLDMARK/RETNA

MUSICIAN: But you're finally going to do that solo album.
McDONALD: Now I want to do a solo album because I feel, as a writer and vocalist, I can do one. Being a part of the Doobie Brothers will always satisfy any live commitments I might ever have, though. I could always do one of my tunes in their show, and I'm sure the guys wouldn't care. Patrick's doing the same thing, and we'll incorporate our own live tunes. At this point, it will just be more material for us to draw from as the Doobies.
MUSICIAN: How much recording have you done so far?
McDONALD: We've cut two or three things, but I'm not sure we'll keep all of it. There's really just one track in that respect.
MUSICIAN: Who have you used so far in terms of other musicians?
McDONALD: Jeff Porcaro, John Pierce and Michael Baird are the rhythm section. John and Michael had a group called Airborne, that was on Columbia I think, and that's the rhythm section we used on a lot of Amy Holland's sessions.
MUSICIAN: What about soloists?
McDONALD: I'll probably be depending on Pat Simmons, John McFee and Corny. But there'll be other outside people, 'cause I really want the record to be different. I want it to be things that I might not obviously get a chance to do given my function in the Doobies.

It's a rough one, I'll tell you that. It's a much bigger thing I'm biting off than I thought it was when I first went in to do it.
MUSICIAN: To focus on the writing, though, I'm interested in hearing a little more about the writers you've liked over the years.
McDONALD: See, a lot of my idols as a kid were the guys who sat around writing songs. I didn't idolize Elvis Presley. I *liked* Elvis Presley...
MUSICIAN: But you would've preferred *meeting* Lieber and Stoller?
McDONALD: Yeah. Well, I was more into Rodgers and Hammerstein, or Aaron Neville or Cole Porter. I was very into Allen Toussaint, and people like him who weren't really known for their performing, but for the music they made. They were the apple of my eye.
MUSICIAN: At this point in your career, some observers might expect you to write alone, yet you continue to collaborate, and to try new parterships, like those you're now exploring with Patrick Henderson and with Burt Bacharach.
McDONALD: Well, that's helped me tremendously. Working with other writers has been a real saving grace for me, because what happens to you is that you get very insulated, very introspective. And it's something that happens to somebody when they have, quote, success. I never had to try as hard as I do now; I always felt like someone on the outside looking in, listening to everything. It was easier to take it in. In the position I'm in now, and I don't mean to sound like an asshole, it's constantly insulating yourself against all the objects coming at you — objects meaning people, stupid conversations. You're trying to keep your head above it.

"Hollywood and New York give a distorted, surreal opinion of what they think emotion is. It's like white sugar, by the time it's processed, it's poison."

MUSICIAN: How do your collaborations vary? Do you tend to assume the same function with each partner, say splitting music and lyrics down the middle, or do you find yourself switching hats based on who you're writing with?
McDONALD: It's always been an awkward kind of situation, even with guys who've written for years where you'd think there would be some kind of formula to that. My formula is just that I don't ask anybody to write with me unless I feel I really need their effort. And I don't go in to somebody with a tune I know I can finish by myself.

Sometimes, somebody will come to me with something and say, "I really need your help to finish this," and they'll have a track already cut. That's very restricting, and a lot of times I won't even do it.
MUSICIAN: What about specific partnerships? As I recall, you wrote "You Belong To Me" with Carly Simon as a kind of transcontinental effort — you never worked directly together.
McDONALD: We literally never even spoke to each other in the whole time that we wrote that song. Teddy had said that Carly really wanted to write with me, when I went to work on one of her albums. It was typical studio rhetoric: "You call my service, I'll call your service," and a lot of times nothing ever comes of it.

But I gave a cassette of the track to Teddy, who sent it to her, and she sent back lyrics. We did the song, and it wasn't until she released the song herself a year later that I even spoke to

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her about it. I felt funny about that.
MUSICIAN: What did you think of her version?
McDONALD: I thought it was great. I wish we'd done it that way. I think we would've had the hit she did.
MUSICIAN: How do you and Kenny Loggins work as a team? Is that more of a standard collaboration?
McDONALD: When Kenny and I work, it's pretty much what you'd imagine: we sit at the piano and it's like the old Tin Pan Alley approach, line after line. From that point on, it's over the phone, over dinner — we'll write songs under the most obscure circumstances. But that's the nature of a song. There isn't a real tangible thing that makes it good or bad. It's the opposite of the way I wrote with Carly. Kenny and I will work together, note for note, and really write the song as a team.
MUSICIAN: Does that description apply to team efforts within the Doobies?
McDONALD: With Patrick and Keith, we're together a lot, so our writing together is kind of a natural exercise. We just wind up collaborating a lot on each other's songs, and we don't even always distribute the credit. With Patrick and me, we'll work on each other's tunes but we won't be listed. We all lean heavily on whatever we're working on collectively in a lot of ways that are more than just being a hired session player.

It's easy for us, whereas Kenny and me have that logistics problem in nailing down the time and really stopping our lives outside of that for awhile so we can do it.
MUSICIAN: What about your more recent work with Burt Bacharach, Paul Anka and Carole Bayer Sager. Those writers are associated more with softer mainstream pop. Does anyone around you have fears that these partnerships will carry you toward too soft a style?
McDONALD: Well it comes down to a few things. I'm a songwriter, and living in L.A., being used to the scene as far as working in the studios and in concerts, that whole syndrome of what is or isn't hip is something you can't really take too seriously. Because, for me, it's got to come down to the fact that Burt Bacharach has to be the best there ever was. He's as good as any contemporary songwriter ever was, since American pop music took on its own form and influence. He's not just another writer.
MUSICIAN: Given that view, do you approach him as a mentor?
McDONALD: Oh, yeah.
MUSICIAN: What do you think he derives from you? A certain feel for newer styles?
McDONALD: Yeah. When I first met Burt, we wound up in his apartment in New York and he was so eager to work with me. I think he saw me as one of the Doobies, and he likes the band, which is a huge compliment. Because, for one, he couldn't be a bigger influence on me. It's funny. You find a guy like Burt, who's had such a hold on Top 40 music and on pop ten years ago, and now he's viewed as sort of laid-back, out of the mainstream. Yet the effects of Burt Bacharach are still felt everytime you turn on the radio. The influence, the changes in pop song structure over the last ten years, they're still there. It's the same thing with the Beatles, in that the effect they had was so strong on their time that everything is affected by it now, even if you don't readily see it. Burt, to me, is one of those kind of forces.
MUSICIAN: You both have shared traits, as rhythm-oriented

RICHARD AARON

DOOBIE BROTHERS EQUIPMENT

To achieve what their road crew dubs as the "DooBros Sound," the eight-man touring lineup places special emphasis on its sound reinforcement system and a wholly-owned monitoring setup that takes several steps beyond the usual approach to stage monitors. For the Doobies' engineers, the goal is to provide comparatively low monitor levels while achieving a full-frequency accuracy and individual mix capability enabling the band to recreate the same clarity and depth achieved in the studio.

Hence, a separate mixing console from Jim Gamble and Associates is the heart of that system, offering 32 inputs and 16 output channels that enable 10 separate mixes to be tailored for the stage. To that rented component, the band adds its own BGW bi-amped power (using 750s for the low end, and 100s for the high frequencies), driving JBL speakers, including K130 bottoms, 2482 drivers with lenses, and 2402 tweeters.

Hall sound on the current tour is provided through a system from Innovative Audio, utilizing Cerwin-Vega amps, JBL and Cerwin-Vega speakers in the stacks, and two separate mixing consoles. The first, with 28 inputs, is devoted entirely to the three-man percussion unit of drummers Keith Knudsen and Chet McCracken and percussionist Bobby LaKind. The rest of the band's instruments and all vocals are channeled through a second board via 24 inputs. Both boards have 16 output channels each. Microphones include AKG, Shure and Sennheiser designs.

Onstage, Mike McDonald plays a Yamaha CP-80 electronic grand piano, a Rhodes 73 electric piano with modified power supplies, and a slightly modified Prophet 5 synthesizer from Sequential Circuits. On the other side of the stage, Cornelius Bumpus rounds out the keyboard arsenal with his own cut-off Hammond B-3 organ and Lesley 122 speaker, and an Arp String Ensemble. As the band's reed player, Bumpus plays Selmer Mark 7 and Concert tenors, both fitted with metal Autolink Eight-Star mouthpieces and medium-hard LaVaz reeds. His soprano sax is a Conservarte with stock mouthpiece, for which his chosen reed is a number 3½ Rico Royal.

Both of the band's guitarists generally have at least one spare guitar for every instrument they choose for onstage use. John McFee plays Dean Vee electrics. Dean's three-pickup electric guitar, Ovation UK 2 electrics. Ovation electric-acoustic guitars and an Emmons pedal steel. He also has two electric violins, both with Barcus-Berry pickups, and his array of effects include a Rat distortion box from Proco Sound, Roland's Boss Chorus Ensemble and a KORG synthesizer unit with pedal-operated selectable blend. He also uses a Roland Analog Chorus, and his amplifiers use Music Man RD-100 tops and Mitchell bottoms with two 10-inch Altec speakers. His back-up amp is identical, with the sole difference its two 10-inch JBL speakers.

Patrick Simmons meanwhile sticks with his favorite electric for years, Gibson's double-cutaway ES-335, of which Pat has six, including spares. Those are split between three basic tunings, including one capoed, one in basic G, and one tuned in D-open. He also plays Ovation electric-acoustic guitars: and an Ibanez AS-100 electric; and his effect setup includes Roland DC-30 chorus/echo/analog delay; and MXR digital delay unit; MXR's Distortion Plus; and a Roland Chorus Ensemble. His amp is a Fender Twin Top driving four 10-inch JBLs.

In the rhythm section, bassist Willie Weeks plays Fender Jazz and Custom Jazz electric bass guitars with LaBella strings through a Music Man RD-150 top. His two speaker bottoms both use two 12-inch speakers each. All of the Doobies' guitars transmit their signal to the amps through wireless systems, the Nasty from True Diversity.

The band's twin-kit bottom currently comes from kits tailored for Keith Knudsen and Chet McCracken by crew members Shep Lonsdale and Timmy McCormick. Both kits use Pearl drums, the only exceptions being their snares, which are older Slingerland Radio Kings. McCracken's kit has a 22-inch bass drum, three tom racks, one floor tom and a second Levy snare, while Knudsen's has a 20-inch bass drum, two rack and two floor toms, and two Syndrums. Both use Zildjian cymbals, and have custom drum thrones that double as kick drum monitors.

Percussionist Bobby LaKind plays three Gong Bops congas, and McCracken rounds out the ancillary percussion with LP Percussion timbales.

(M:P&L thanks the DooBros crew, including road manager Joe Crowley, stage manager Lowell Halsey, and crew members "J.D." Daniels, Shep Lonsdale, David Bowers, Mark Brown and the engineering team for their help in compiling this section.)

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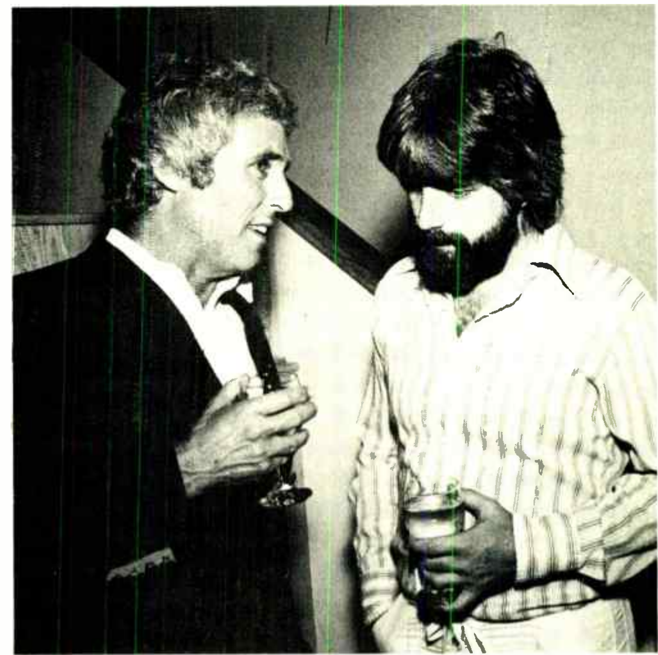
keyboardists, and as melodists. How do you balance each other?
McDONALD: It's funny with Burt, because our strong points are very similar, so whereas me and some other people might perform more opposite functions, like with Carly, me and Burt have the same problems. We're both slow lyricists. For me, it's a long endeavor, and I usually finish the lyrics around the time I do the vocal take, six months after we've cut the track.

We are locked into being piano players, but I kind of let Burt do all the playing, and with him, I take over more of a lyricist's role, although I have my hand in as a melodist.
MUSICIAN: Paul Anka shares a credit on the new album. How did that song come together?
McDONALD: Well, Paul writes his own music a lot. He's a real accomplished lyricist, unlike Burt and I, so for me to work with Paul in that sense, he's comfortable as a lyricist.
MUSICIAN: That's interesting, in that the track itself does sound more like one of your songs.
McDONALD: Yeah, he was basically just lyricist on that. We had the track cut already, and some dummy words.

With Paul, there's a certain flavor to the lyric, a kind of naivete, and to me, what that track was about was nothing fancy, just a heartfelt kind of groove. It actually inspired the main lyric, "I dedicate this heart," but that's all we had. The verses were all Paul's, and I think he really picked up on the spirit of the track, more than I'm used to with some people.
MUSICIAN: You mentioned that you felt outside. That seems consistent with your continued love of older pop forms, which were considered decidedly unhip in a rock generation. Yet with the Doobies, you've found rock-trained collaborators willing to explore these other areas. Do you feel they should receive more of an equal credit in your writing? I know in the past you've said that the entire band has a stake in the arrangements, not just the listed writer.
McDONALD: Oh, definitely. You know, Ted Templeman has a lot to do with the arrangement of our songs, too, from a very basic level.
MUSICIAN: You've said that much of your writing and the band's as well starts with a musical sketch, with lyrics generally added last. At what point does Templeman enter the circuit, and hear what you're working on?
McDONALD: Before we ever go in. Ted is a huge input factor in the writing of all our songs. In many instances he walks us through them to the finishing touches, just in his objective knowledge and his ability to perceive what you do and what he thinks you're trying to do.

The guy's got a great musical ear. He's not a virtuoso on any one instrument, but he plays drums and a little keyboard, and has the fundamental knowledge I think you've got to have to be so presumptuous as to think you can make records.
MUSICIAN: So he's not just deciding how much echo to put on the mix or where to pan a solo.
McDONALD: Right. There's all those different schools out there of producing, and that rare grass roots kind. And the guy is extremely bright, extremely organized. I mean, I thought he was from the Young Republicans when I first met him, and all of a sudden you're in the studio with the guy and he's just kind of wrassling around. It breaks down to total chaos at times, when we're going for ideas. And I've known Teddy long enough to know that the best thing to do is listen to what he's saying. He may seem like he's totally left the building, but he always lands on his feet with incredible ideas.
MUSICIAN: In your own writing, certain features do stand out. You're a very rhythm-oriented writer, not only from the standpoint of how you play, but also in how you handle the interplay of lyric and melody. You tend to avoid classic 4/4 patterns and lines that stay within the bar; instead, you'll often delay a line's entry, then stretch it over bar lines, making those rhythmic values work against each other instead of just riding on top of each other.
McDONALD: It's something I've always liked about songs I'd heard. That poly-rhythm thing, a rhythm pattern imposed on another rhythm pattern. It, to me, frees up a song. But it's hard



"Looking back on the music of this era, Burt Bacharach (left) will be mentioned. They're not going to be talking about the B-52's and maybe not the Doobies."

for me to really analyze too much, because it's something I fell into, to be quite honest with you. Just from "It Keeps You Runnin'" on, and from working with Steely Dan, it was something that was very obvious to me about their stuff. And I was very influenced by them, you know.
MUSICIAN: How much freedom did you have as a singer? Did they give you detailed vocal arrangements, or just harmonic sketches you and the other singers would build parts around?
McDONALD: Honestly, as a vocalist with Steely Dan I don't think I was allowed the freedom that some of the instrumentalists were because by the time you're putting background vocals on, it's a distinct color and a certain function you're doing. The backgrounds tend to be more of a subtle detail, and a lot more explicit: it's the icing on the cake, a person's name, and you've got to spell it right. So it's not as improvisational.
MUSICIAN: Still, you stood out vocally. Do you think they slanted those arrangements to you?
McDONALD: That's hard to say. I don't think they really planned for me, key-wise, because a lot of times the tracks were cut and I wouldn't even hear what was going on until I showed up at the studio. I think Donald [Fagen] had a basic knowledge of what my range was from working with me, but I think they wrote the songs more from the standpoint of what key they sounded best in.
MUSICIAN: What about the vocal tags you sang on songs like "Kid Charlemagne," where you really rose out of the mix?
McDONALD: Those are moments of freedom under the iron rule of Donald and Walter [Becker]. [Laughing] You know, it's a real pleasure working for them, though, because the music just goes without saying. Their approach is very creative, however regimented it might be compared to someone else's way of doing it

There were moments where they let me solo a bit, just to hear my voice. There's one of those on their new album — I think I worked on the album two years ago, and it's just now that they're getting ready to put it out.

Donald is real interesting because he is very detailed in his background parts, and I've learned a lot from him. The way he writes them, a lot of times there are very close harmonies, not big chords. Small chords, three notes with relationships one

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step apart in the chord. A chord they're kind of famous for is that C triad starting on the D, where it's D, E, G.

MUSICIAN: As opposed to standard thirds, fifths and octaves.

McDONALD: Or a full ninth chord spelled out. Burt Bacharach, again, that's something he's known for: spelling out an A chord the way you'd never really heard an A chord spelled out, behind the chord it just came out of.

MUSICIAN: Your Steely Dan connection shows in other ways, too. One compositional technique you share with them is a broader approach to harmony, and a subtler use of keys, than most rock bands would attempt.

McDONALD: Yeah, well, as a band we got kind of jazzed about relative keys. We just couldn't seem to write enough in that area. With "It Keeps You Runnin'," for example, the song starts off basically as a blues in G, then all of a sudden changes to E minor, which is a relative minor. So the mode changes, but you're really in the very same key.

I think it effects you emotionally — you feel like you've been lifted into a higher key, when it's all the same notes. On "What A Fool Believes," that was probably the biggest thing people picked up on, that kick into the chorus. Where the tune started off in C sharp, it somehow — and I don't really know how, because it just came by accident one night when Loggins and I were up late, writing — wound up in the key of E.

MUSICIAN: I'd like to look at the extent to which you've developed into really a fairly traditional, even old-fashioned, songwriter. I mean, few rockers would want to be caught listening to old show tunes or praising a Richard Rodgers or a Burt Bacharach.

McDONALD: You can get lost in that very easily. It doesn't mean a shit what's hip. Because, frankly, Burt Bacharach, for one, will go down many years after we're all gone. If they ever really look back on any of the music of this era, his will at least be mentioned. I mean, they're not going to be talking about the B-52s, and they may not be talking about the Doobie Brothers, for that matter. You're only going to hear somebody who's doin' it from the heart.

MUSICIAN: With the profile you've had in recent years not only through Doobies' hits, but as a singer or writing partner on other people's records, some people have raised questions about you risking overexposure. Is that a real threat to you?

McDONALD: It worries me if what I'm doing now is the most I'm ever going to grow with. Then it would be obvious to the public, probably long before it was ever obvious to the press or radio or the record company. Because I have a lot more faith in the public than most people give them.

If I stop growing, I could do all kinds of things and it would still be obvious. Hopefully, that won't happen. People two and three years ago were telling me, "You're already overexposed with the Steely Dan stuff alone." Then there was the Doobies, and the Tim Moore album, and I don't know how many others I worked on. I was overexposed then, but I've had the chance to work with some brilliant people on some really great music.

MUSICIAN: You've mentioned your faith in your public, and that the Doobies themselves try hard to keep that connection there. That fits with the basic themes of your material, which hit some topical spots over the years, as with "Takin' It To The Streets," in your own work, but has otherwise held to traditional themes, especially romance.

McDONALD: True. But a lot of our songs are really love letters. People could bust us very easily by saying, "Why don't you guys write about something that takes a little bit of intelligence instead?"

But for us, we've had other topical pieces. I don't believe most people go around with a chic attitude that it's not hip to care for anybody, and it's totally unhip to be disturbed by the idea that you feel your life needs a little something more than just being able to walk around a moron consumer, dressed in whatever everyone else is wearing and driving whatever anyone else is driving and eating whatever everybody else is eating. I don't think that's life for most people.

MUSICIAN: It may be on the coasts, though. Do you feel you're trying to consciously hold to those grass roots, middle American virtues, and to avoid what Hollywood and the Big Apple may be projecting? Do you think most artists hold to those coast attitudes?

McDONALD: Yeah, and from them we're getting a more distorted, surreal opinion of what they think emotion is. It's like white sugar: whatever value fructose or glucose or whatever it's called, by the time they've made white sugar out of it, it's poison. That seems to be the way either fortress of society, whether it's New York or L.A., does. By the time they spit it out, it's kind of warped.

MUSICIAN: So their view doesn't bother you.

McDONALD: I believe what comes up most honestly with me is dealing with just basic, across-the-table emotions with other people — a one-on-one conversation. I think I find ways of saying things that way that mean more to more people than I ever could by trying to be clever.

MUSICIAN: If you had to pick a single cover version of any of your songs, which would it be?

McDONALD: Well, right now, this minute that you ask me that, I might be a little prejudiced, because I just heard it this morning. I enjoy any cover, as any writer will tell you, but Aretha Franklin just did "What A Fool Believes" and we were listening to it in the car. And it just killed us. It's incredible. Arif Mardin produced it.

For a song to have such a distinct rhythm pattern, they changed it, and it's better. It's one of those typical tracks that Aretha is famous for, like "I Say A Little Prayer," if I may be so presumptuous. It was like you'd think, "Who could do that better than Dionne Warwick," and then Aretha does it and it comes out so different. Who'd ever dream that it could be that way? And it's like that with "What A Fool Believes."

MUSICIAN: Apart from the whole issue of staying hip, there's the undeniable pressure created by your very visibility. Has that become a fishbowl for you?

McDONALD: Yeah. You want to go ahead, but all of a sudden there's all these people, these geeks, trying to kiss your ass. And they're not a damn bit of good to you, you know. When they're through kissing your ass, and you're no longer important to them, they'll be kissing somebody else's.

I don't want to end my career as a rock 'n' roll comet. I want to go on. But I'll tell you, this business gets so... It's just a packaged thing, you might as well be making frozen peas after awhile. You can blame it on everybody else — look around and say, "I hate the geeks that are backstage, that I see every goddamn time I play here. Those same faces, with the same stupid questions, who've never paid for a ticket to anything in their lives."

But what you're forced into realizing is that a lot of people are worse off. And the Doobies affords me not only a situation I can thrive in, there's also a certain conscious striving to stay awake. To stay real people. We do things like our benefits at the Stanford Children's Hospital not to get credit, but because after you go there, it's a real slap of reality.

MUSICIAN: You're trying to get past that potential detachment that the other side of the experience can bring on.

McDONALD: Yeah, but you get that way. I was one of the last people I thought would get that way. It's not the visibility itself that disturbs you, because when you go out onstage, there's 20,000 people out there who are the people we make records for.

One thing I really suspect about this band is that I've seen Simmons and other guys who've been in it much longer than me, tell somebody in the locker room to get the fuck out, some jerk who's ranting and raving because he *should* be backstage. But I've seen those same guys, Simmons, etc., sitting in a lobby, in wet clothes, and stay there for two hours sometimes to sign autographs and talk to kids who bought tickets to that same show. So it's not a misguided, temperamental artist thing.

We're a very accessible band, and there's a price we pay for that. But the day I start locking myself in my room, the day I start hiring bodyguards — that's the day I'll quit. M

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TOM COPI

GOOD-BYE OREGON

Oregon's delicate improvisation will be heard no more. The individual members will pursue their own projects but hope to reunite by 1982. A look to the past and the future.

By Len Lyons

This was the third SRO crowd in as many nights at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, a fitting turnout for sending off old friends. The Hall's deep red decor, carpeted floor, and cabaret tables cast the perfect ambience for a band characterized by a delicate touch, subtle interplay of its instruments, and a presentation not unlike chamber music. At least a dozen instruments lay on stage, those used most often being guitar, tabla drums, oboe, and string bass. The musicians — except for occasional moments of wit — play their instruments deliberately, concentrating with the intensity of surgeons around an operating table. Their audience is attentive, patient through the sometimes slowly-evolving pieces, and faithful. Many of the quartet's fans have seen it grow musically and commercially for the past decade. Now, they have come to say goodbye at least for now.

Oregon, a group named for the home state of guitarist Ralph Towner and bassist Glen Moore, is taking a year's sabbatical, having carved out a unique niche for themselves in contemporary jazz. This band, which also includes Collin Walcott on tabla, sitar, and assorted percussion instruments, and Paul McCandless on oboe, bass clarinet, and wood flutes, became one of the important "collective" groups of the 1970s. Their style involves the weaving of composed and extemporaneous strands of melody into a close-knit fabric. Although each player functions as a soloist on occasion, the band in its peak moments improvises collectively; soloing takes a back seat to the group-creation of mood, texture, and melodic development.

Oregon has no leader as such. Towner has written about

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fifty percent of their music, but each piece is developed and executed cooperatively. In many respects, Oregon is like the Art Ensemble of Chicago, except that its roots are less entrenched in Africa and bebop and more deeply embedded in European concert music and Third World folk musics.

The band's leave-of-absence will surprise those who have witnessed their expanding performance schedule, recently about 70 concerts per year, and their move in 1978 from Vanguard to the more contemporary and aggressively-distributed Elektra/Asylum label. In fact their three E/A albums (*Out of the Woods, Roots in the Sky,* and *In Performance*) document their music at its most mature improvisational level. There are several factors contributing to Oregon's year-off, but they will make more sense in light of the group's history and the disparate backgrounds of its members.

The quartet first worked together in 1969 as members of the Paul Winter Consort, a mini-orchestra which played an eclectic variety of ethnic musics and some jazz. Their own training and interests were so diverse it would have been difficult to imagine them as part of a single group. Paul McCandless grew up in Pennsylvania and moved to New York in 1967, at the age of 19, to study oboe under Robert Bloom at the Manhattan School of Music. Before joining the Consort, he had also studied flute, written big band charts, and played in wind ensembles and symphony orchestras. Glen Moore, born in 1941 in Portland, studied flute, piano, and bass. Before joining the consort, he had played some jazz, worked with singer Tim Hardin, and developed an interest in Eastern European folk music and bluegrass. Walcott, a few years younger than Moore, had studied ethnomusicology at UCLA and completed his training on sitar and tabla while traveling as Ravi Shankar's road manager. Ralph Towner, who turned 40 this year, began on piano and trumpet in high school in Bend, Oregon. Later, while studying composition at the University of Oregon, Towner was persuaded to buy a classical guitar by a music store salesman. After graduation, he moved to Vienna, where he studied guitar intensely for a year with Karl Scheit, who turned him into a classical (finger-style) player. Towner had also worked as a trio pianist in the style of Bill Evans. If these four men had anything in common, it was the variety in their backgrounds.

The Winter Consort was not a satisfying milieu for any of the future members of Oregon. They did not like the smorgasbord style of repertoire (once described by Towner as "everything from Bach to Brazilian") nor the lack of improvising. However, aside from serving as their meeting ground, the Consort was crucial to the band's development for several reasons. As composers, they learned how to integrate uncommon combinations of instruments. They also became more familiar with Third World musics, learning to improvise in the pulsating feel of four sixteenth notes to a quarter-note, the meter that underlies most of their playing. Paul Winter urged Towner to take up the 12-string guitar, which became one of Oregon's principal sonorities. Towner's best early compositions were written for the Consort, and several of them — with the pre-Oregon band — can be heard on A&M Records' Consort reissue, *Earthdance*.

Oregon took root in the private jam sessions of Towner, Walcott, Moore, and McCandless. The idea of recording their own music first came up at a party, where Towner and Walcott were entertaining their friends as a guitar/sitar duo. They realized that their clear, clean, and intelligent sound was a new ray in the spectrum of jazz-influenced, improvised music. Their opportunity came during the summer of 1970, shortly after recording *Road* with the Consort. Through friends of Walcott's from his UCLA days, the group was offered the use of an 8-track studio in the Hollywood Hills, known as "The Farm." A short-lived independent label, Increase Records, backed them for the six weeks of taping and mixing; but the company did not succeed in selling the results to a major label. The tape went into storage for a full ten years before its release on disc.

In 1971, the band made its debut in New York, calling themselves Thyme — Music of Another Present Era, a phrase designed to answer the question, "What kind of music do you play?" They had intended to call themselves Music, but another band beat them to the name. McCandless finally hit upon the name Oregon as an allusion to Ralph's and Glen's nostalgic reminiscing about their home state, a favorite pastime while traveling with the Consort.

The next year Vanguard Records signed the group, taping a new set of originals which became the band's debut LP, *Music of Another Present Era*. In the years from 1972-1978, Oregon yielded an album per year of minimal sales, varying from 10,000 to 25,000 units. These were not impressive figures, but Vanguard persevered due to Oregon's originality, integrity, and consistency. All the band's albums are characterized by a light, clear, acoustic sound, a pulsating (as opposed to a swinging) rhythmic flow, and an intermingling of composed and improvised passages. While some compositions used frequent and difficult chord changes, others were "modal," or based on scale-patterns, involving almost no harmonic movement.

Oregon's sound is a true merging of individual voices, but the contributions of the players to it must be examined separately. In the cases of Towner and Walcott, this can best be done in their own words. Towner's clarity and tone control give his melodies their translucent, singing quality; these attributes are a product of his classical training. Towner explains: "It's a method," he says, "not a style. There's a very important difference between plectrum (pick) playing and the finger-style and the whole classical approach, which involves controlling the volume and the identity of each voice. The classical guitar is really just like a piano keyboard, and I approach it with a keyboard sensibility. This means a lot more control of the individual notes you are striking simultaneously. This is usually lost on plectrum players who switch from a pick to the classical technique . . .. I'm controlling the sound I produce as I would on the piano, with careful control of the volume of each note. It's as if one note appeared in the foreground and the rest were stacked in the background in a three-dimensional way. This way, I can bring cut the separate elements that I want. There's a shuffling of attention that gives the music an illusion of constant activity."

The Oregon members met in 1969 when playing for the Paul Winter Consort where they played a great variety of ethnic musics and some jazz . . . from Bach to Brazilian.

Towner's lack of interest in the electric instrument is due to his concern for tone: "You give identity to each voice by where you pluck it on the string. There's a brighter area, and a more mellow part away from the bridge . . .. You can do this with an electric too, but I think with classical (technique) you can do it to a subtler degree."

Collin Walcott holds the rhythmic flow of Oregon in his hands. Although the beat does not depend on the three-against-four cross-rhythm common to jazz, Walcott has been influenced by the jazz trap drummer. He explains: "I rely heavily on the traditional techniques for playing the tabla drums, but I've departed from the accepted method in thinking of my hands separately — just like the jazz drummer thinks of his hands and feet as independent entities. In Indian drumming, the hands are linked conceptually, because each drum pattern is thought of as a single unit. I play tabla as if my right hand were the ride cymbal — the 'pusher' — while the left hand is more like the bass drum — the 'accenter.'" Walcott occasionally switches to a sitar whose fretboard he has altered to a chromatic tuning. In Indian music, the sitar's fretboard skips steps of the (diatonic) scale in accordance with the mode of the raga to be played. Walcott's fretboard allows

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DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Paul McCandless has already recorded a solo album and plans more in the future.

him to play in chord changes in any key.

McCandless is heard most often on the oboe which contributes, no matter how hard he blows it, to the group's refined, semi-sweet, "chamber" sound. The instrument's stiff double-reed cannot produce the guttural, speech-inflected intonation of jazz reeds like the saxophone. In fact Oregon sounds most jazz-like when McCandless takes a rousing, split-toned solo on the difficult bass clarinet, which he does more frequently in concert than on record.

Glen Moore, like most free bassists, is more "conversational" in style, interacting with other melody instruments, than pulse-oriented. While the typical jazz "lope" seldom surfaces in his playing, he has a rich, muscular style which helps to bring the rarified Oregon timbres down to earth. Moore has extended the range of his bass by tuning his bottom string lower and top string higher than the norm.

Ralph Towner plans to continue his close musical relationship with guitarist John Abercrombie.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Despite the fact that there is indeed an "Oregon sound," the seven Vanguard LPs, just like Oregon's live sets, are conspicuously different from each other. The band is less role-bound than most groups; no one plays in a strictly supportive capacity. Three albums, in this writer's opinion, stand above the others in documenting the band's achievements. *In Concert* (1975), taped before an invitation-only studio audience, is the best all-around Vanguard LP, displaying the spectrum of Oregon's hybrid forms. *Together* (1976), due to the presence of drummer Elvin Jones, possesses a vitality and rhythmic aggressiveness (in pieces like "Charango" and "Three Step Dance") which the fan of straight-ahead jazz often misses in their repertoire. Lastly, *Violin* (1978), a collaboration with Polish violinist Zbigniew Seifert, enhances the band's use of minor modes and its occasional Eastern European flavor. Ironically, as news of Oregon's sabbatical spread, Vanguard acquired and released that early California tape from the summer of 1970, with the apt title *Our First Record*. Oregon was remarkably itself even then; yet this album is no longer satisfying artistically, for it lacks the sustained, developed collective improvisation the group achieved later on.

In 1978, Oregon signed with Elektra/Asylum in hopes of wider distribution. E/A had recently developed a funk-oriented fusion catalogue, leaving Oregon an anomaly in their roster. There was somewhat of a mismatch in progress, and it became a contributing cause to the group's temporary disbanding. Musically, however, the three E/A albums are among Oregon's best. *Out of the Woods*, for example, reveals a new level of instrumental proficiency and intuitive interaction. There are a good variety of chord-change pieces ("Yellow Bell," "Cane Fields," and "Dance to the Morning Star") set off by modal, or "drone," songs ("Waterwheel" and "Fall 77"). The band's use of their secondary instruments is greatly improved, especially Towner's piano playing. Although Towner worked for years as a trio pianist in New York, his playing on the Vanguard LPs does not really justify itself, except as another tonal color. Yet, on *Woods*, he has clearly developed a more personal style, now more like Keith Jarrett than Bill Evans (a comparison Towner accepts). His solos on "Reprise" and "Witchi-Tai-To" are high points in his keyboard improvising.

The group and its new record company were pleased with each other artistically, but their ideas of acceptable sales figures separated them. According to Collin Walcott, E/A was looking for 100,000 units per album, while Oregon was delivering at most 50,000 and thinking that quite respectable. Towner's reaction: "It's obvious we can't provide pop-level income for them, although our records would probably reach their goals over the years. I don't have any hard feelings towards the company, but I wish they had had a bit more patience." E/A terminated Oregon's contract in 1980, providing an ideal time for an extended break.

Of course, the band could have continued to work, and to record for some other label, but they chose not to for personal reasons. The clearest of these was that Walcott became a father in November and did not want to spend the 150 nights on the road which their 70-concerts per year required. Walcott's decision was honored by the group, for as Moore commented, "We've always tried to keep things as human as possible in this band."

Another apparent reason — one the group does not make explicit — is the need to refresh themselves by pursuing their individual identities further. While this is not a hard fact, verifiable by direct quotation, it is a reasonable conclusion to draw from the available evidence. The band members have always recorded and performed independently of Oregon. McCandless and Moore each have solo LPs on the E/A label and have recorded with David Friesen, Dave Holland, and others. Wal-

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cott has collaborated on several impressive ECM albums with trumpeter Don Cherry. Towner has been building a major personal discography on ECM and has been actively cultivating a guitar duo with John Abercrombie. Towner did say that his writing for Oregon "hasn't given me the time I'd like to write guitar music, which is what I can do with Abercrombie." Walcott, when asked if there was artistic dissent within Oregon, replied that, of course, there were individual preferences but no disputes sufficient to cause a parting of ways. He added, however, that after a decade, getting away for a while did not seem like a bad idea. As Moore might have put it, the band is only human.

Towner and Walcott have the most momentum in their solo careers. Towner's plans include pursuing his work with Abercrombie, of which there is one excellent LP thus far, ECM's *Sargasso Sea*. Towner accounts for his rapport with Abercrombie, who is also a close personal friend, this way: "Our commonality in music goes through Jim Hall and Bill Evans and a lot of modern (classical) music like Anton Webern's. I think his association with me has made him more accurate, more precise, which are requirements for classical guitar. Of course, you have to be accurate on electric (Abercrombie's major instrument) too, but not to the same extent. What I get from him is his fertile musical imagination." In January they will be recording an overdubbed, multi-guitar album for ECM.

Towner is also excited about what he called "a breakthrough" in his solo playing, the result of a solo concert tour in Europe last fall. He sees the advance as due to an improved technique, which he illustrates with the following analogy: "Suppose a housefly was buzzing around the room. I felt previously that I had enough control to snatch it out of mid-air. Now, I feel I can catch the housefly but by moving slowly. I feel less rushed and hysterical as the music's passing by. When you have more control, you have more time, even though things are going at the same rate." A recently released solo LP (not available at the time of this writing), ECM's *Solo Concert*, documents Towner's performance at the fall concerts in Zurich and Munich. It will be interesting to compare this LP to his solo album of the mid-seventies, ECM's *Diary*.

While Walcott has not yet achieved Towner's status as an individual artist, his collaboration with Cherry is an auspicious and intriguing one. Cherry was a charter member of two major free jazz bands of the 1960s, one led by alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman and the other, The New York Contemporary Five, co-led by Cherry and tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp. Unlike Oregon, these groups were primarily Afro-American in heritage. Thus, Walcott's association with Cherry exemplifies the cross-fertilization of ideas which contemporary improvised music thrives on.

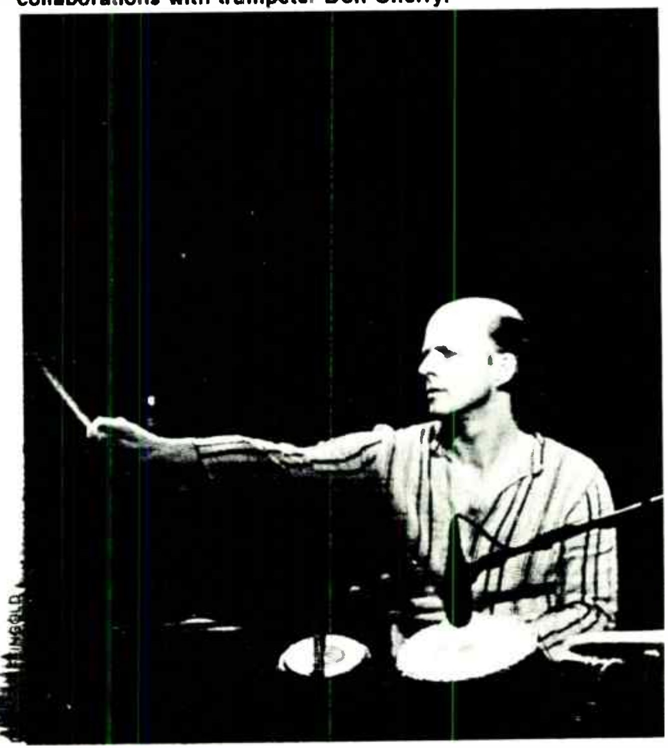
Walcott explains their mutual appeal this way: "It has to do with loving the simplicity of ethnic music and loving the outrageousness — the freedom, 'craziness,' notes-per-second, and atonality — of free jazz. Not many folk musicians understand the urgency of jazz improvisation, while most jazz musicians are not patient enough to appreciate the simplicity of folk music. Neither of us play on chord changes. We're not that kind of musician. Mostly our music is melodic, like Ornette's was. Not much of it is notated. The rhythmic pattern is discovered as I rehearse with Nana Vasconcelos (the percussionist on the group's second LP). We have a basic tempo in mind for each tune, but no pattern or meter."

Their two ECM albums, *Grazing Dreams* and *Cadona*, were approached as Collin Walcott dates and, perhaps for this reason, favor the ethnic music side of their shared interests. But a new album to be released in February is a more cooperative effort. Walcott outlines its differences from their earlier work: "The new album has a more dense sound and even some overdubbing. It's less ethnic sounding. On *Cadona* there were fairly overt references to India, Japan, and Africa, but there's less of that now. We don't want to be branded as 'ethnic' like the Winter Consort was." Interestingly, Walcott made a rather whimsical statement of his personal goals which is decidedly ethnic, and based on his admiration for the originality of Thelonious Monk: "I like the way Monk took the elements of music, jumbled them up, and came up with something unique. If I could be something in music, I'd like to be the Monk of the Third World — India, Africa, Eastern Europe, and South America." With goals like this, Walcott's career bears watching.

Oregon believes the probability of their reuniting in 1982 is high, although given the vagaries of the music business, one can never be sure. We can certainly await their return with eagerness, wondering what new qualities their separation will bring to the group's unified sound. M

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Bassist Glen Moore will also pursue solo work as well as various acoustic collaborations.



Collin Walcott will continue folk and ethnic-based collaborations with trumpeter Don Cherry.

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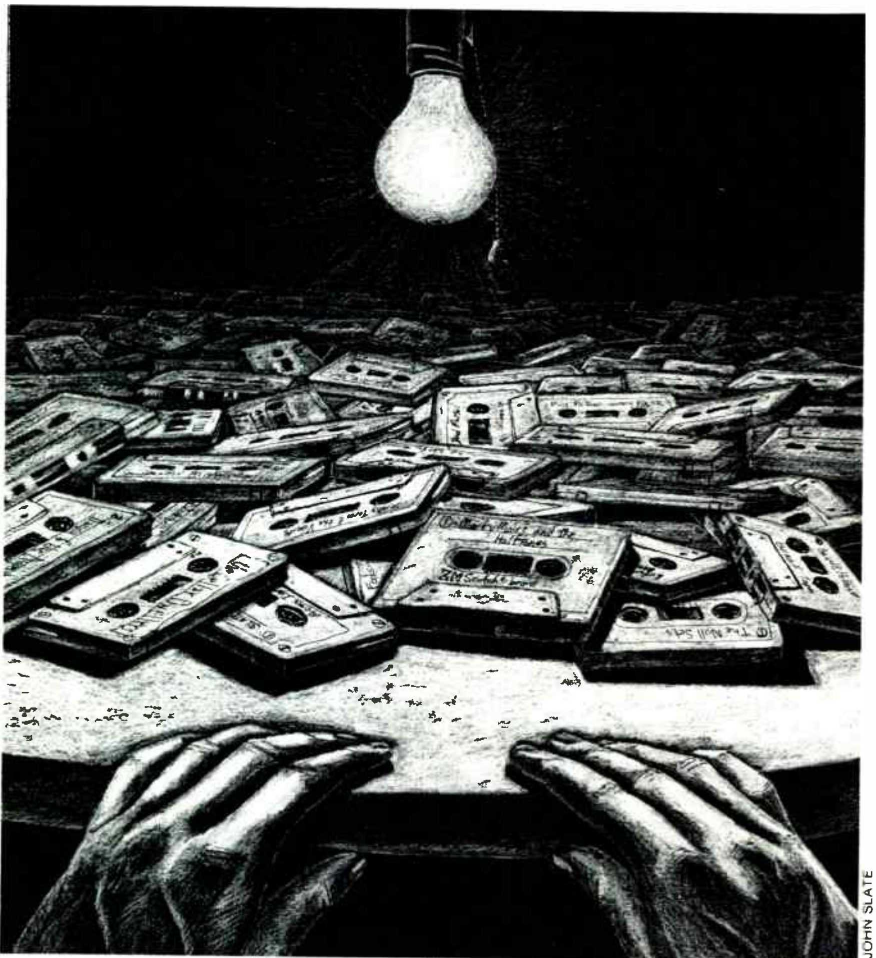
JOHN SLATE

A Day at the Races

A Story: Willie and the tape meet the A & R man and the carpet.

By Richard Feldman

It seemed that with each step he took, the clouds thickened and grew darker. Every time he turned a corner, the thunder came nearer. Willie quickened his pace, trying to get there before it started to rain. Rain... He had heard that in other parts of the world, it makes the flowers grow, makes the trees blossom and fills the rivers. He'd heard that rain makes the world itself go round and that without it there wouldn't be any life on earth. Maybe so, but not today. Not here, not now as he walked on Sixth Avenue through midtown Manhattan on his way to the MEETING.

Willie had gotten plenty of sleep last night, wanting to lood good today. The clothes he was wearing had been put aside last week when he did his laundry, and he had washed his hair yesterday, knowing that it curls better on the second day.

No, he certainly wasn't going to let a whimsical and arbitrary act of nature ruin things now. He broke into a slow trot and made it into the building before the rain. Catching his reflection in the revolving glass door he gave a silent sigh of relief; his image was intact.

He looked at the clock in the lobby of the building and noticed that he was fifteen minutes early. That was fine, he was only too happy to hang out for a while. After all, here he was in Music Industry Corporate Headquarters and he had business to conduct. He was legitimate. His name was penciled into a time slot on the calendar sitting upstairs on some A&R man's desk. He had a bona fide appointment and he hung out in the lobby, being bona fide and digging it. When the time was right, Willie got into the elevator and pressed the floor on which the record company was located. Riding up, he imagined that the other people in the elevator were wondering who he was. He looked like a musician and he imagined them thinking that he was some big star (they couldn't quite recognize him now but it would come to them later) on his way for a private little chat with his record company, possibly to work out some small detail of an upcoming publicity campaign. The elevator reached the sixteenth floor and he got off, leaving them to wonder.

He walked up to the receptionist's desk and told her his name. She gave him a look that he couldn't quite figure, made a telephone call and showed him a seat. He sat down and waited.

Willie was a songwriter and a singer. That was his life, his talent and his dream. He had first started playing music when he was seven years old, had written his first song at thirteen and had played his first real gig at fourteen. He had taught his hands to play and his ears to listen, his mind to wander and his soul to dance. His eyes were at a distance so that he could see life and write about it. He was a musician. He could take a note and sing it so that it sounded like sixteen Mack trucks rolling down Interstate 95. He could build a chord that snuck behind the back of your head, deceiving you into thinking that you were sitting in a Chinese opium den. He knew how to crawl in and out of little spaces looking for songs. Willie was a musician and he was waiting. There at the reception desk of the record company; image intact, tape in hand, he sat there waiting.

After about twenty-five minutes the A&R man came out to meet Willie. They shook hands and he led the way to his office through a hallway covered with album covers and gold records. Inside his office, the A&R man, Artie, sat down behind his desk glancing at the time slot in his desk calendar to see who he was talking to. Willie sat down in a chair opposite him. They chatted a bit; small talk. After a while Willie gave his tape to Artie who put it on his tape machine and pressed the play button. He sat back in his chair as Willie's voice came out over the speakers. Both men sat listening.

Willie needed to sell, either the song or himself. He needed it for his landlord and the supermarket. He needed it for his self-image and he needed it if he was going to be able to continue making music. He needed to sell and that was a hard cold fact. Willie had to sell because music is an illusion, a fantasy; a dream. Selling one's dreams is the only way that they can be used to put food on the table. Sharing one's illusion is the only means through which one can completely pursue that illusion and still remain self-sufficient and sane. Selling

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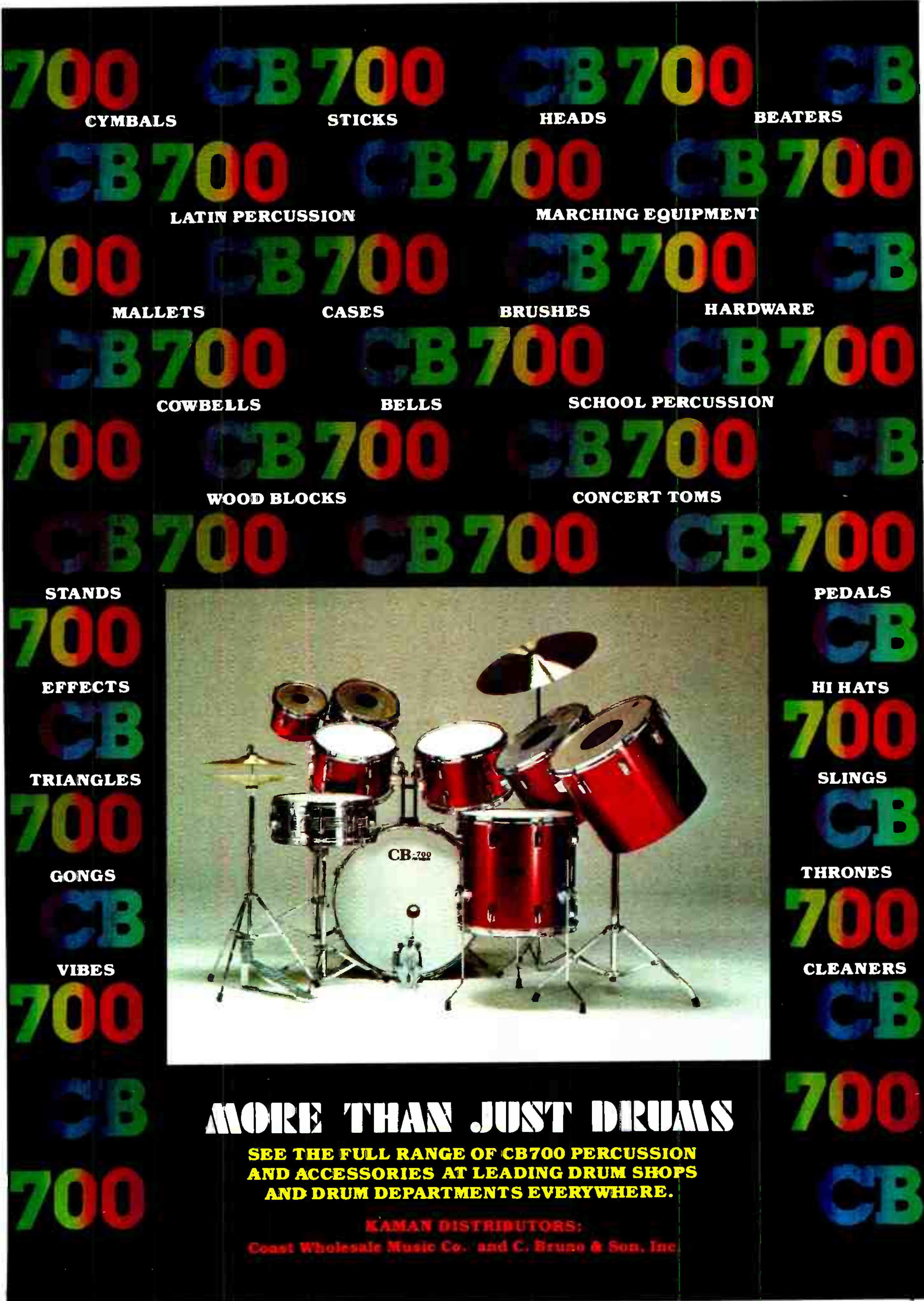

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one's fantasies is the only way to legitimize them to the outside world, keeping that world from attacking and trying to erode those fantasies. Willie had to sell because he was a musician and that was the energy that he used to connect himself together. He had created himself through his dreams and his songs. The man who lives in his songs, the man who speaks through his songs is the man that Willie loves and wants to remain.

Artie adjusted the volume on the tape recorder, lit up a cigarette, turned his chair to face out the window and sat tapping his feet. He was thinking about keeping his job. He worked hard; telephones, meetings, clubs, telephones, studios, parties, irate managers, deadlines, hungry musicians, tapes, politics, telephones, and the Top Ten. He was working on an album for an act that had been on the label for several years. They already had eight songs and were looking for two more to complete the package. Artie had a pretty good idea what he was looking for. He had heard about thirty tapes already today and expected to hear at least thirty more before the day was through. He was thinking about keeping his job.

Willie's eyes looked about the room. The walls were covered with gold records and pictures of the popular musicians of the day. He had seen their faces before, in record stores, magazines and on television. He had seen their stellar, larger than life images countless times, but now here they were, just plain folk looking out from simple snapshots. Some were smiling, their arm around a happy record company executive. Some were sitting, caught unaware at a table at some industry banquet dinner. Here they were, the ones who had "made it." Willie studied their faces, comforted by the fact that they appeared to belong to the same species as he did. They were no more or less human. It made him feel good to think that maybe it was all possible, that maybe here, in this room was where the artist stood a chance of making peace with the world of credit cards and landlords, gas tanks, grocers, mental institutions and the city fathers.

Artie took a long pull on his cigarette as he sat there looking out of his window into the offices of the building across the street. He knew what kind of material he was looking for and what he was hearing wasn't it. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't what he needed. He sat there thinking about the work he had to do and the calls he had to make, he was busy, but for the moment he was content to just sit there staring out the window, half listening, half daydreaming. He needed the rest.

Willie looked down at his feet. They felt comfortable resting on the thick carpet. A little to the right of his feet, under the desk sat Artie's waste-paper basket. Casually, for no specific reason he looked inside of it. What he saw caused him to take notice. Tapes! Cassettes! There must have been a hundred of them sitting among the crumpled papers and the dead apple cores. Maybe to Artie they were just garbage, but to Willie they were tapes, four bucks apiece...Without even thinking about what he was doing he reached down, pulled out a handful and stuck them in his jacket pocket. Artie didn't seem to notice and sat there contentedly staring out the window. Willie reached down again, and again until both his pockets were completely filled. The song ended. Willie's heart was racing as Artie got up to turn the tape player off.

The two men faced each other across the desk and talked a bit. Willie didn't quite catch all of what Artie was saying to him. All he understood was that he wasn't about to be handed a record contract or his ticket inside but that he should keep in touch and would be kept in mind. Artie didn't seem to notice as Willie, coughing to cover the noise, bent down as if to tie his shoe and reached in for more tapes. He stuffed them into his underwear.

Willie was laughing to himself as he walked quickly through the hallway, past the gold records and album jackets. He smiled when he thought of the great traditions that stood behind his actions. He was a writer and an artist and everyone knew that writers and artists were all thieves. Bach stole from Vivaldi, Brahms stole from Schumann and Beethoven stole from Bob Dylan. That was the tradition, it was allowed and he loved it.

Willie danced a little jig as the elevator doors closed, causing one of the tapes to slip out of his underwear and travel down his pant leg. Just as he was reaching down to retrieve it, the elevator stopped on the fifteenth floor. In walked the receptionist whom he had met earlier. He quickly pulled his hands from his pants and stood there smiling, his knee bent, pressing the tape between his leg and his pants keeping it from falling. When the elevator opened on the ground floor he knew that if he were to walk out the tape would slip down his leg and reveal his little adventure to the receptionist, so, pretending to have forgotten something upstairs he stayed in the elevator while she walked out into the lobby. The doors closed and he reached back down into his pants. For no apparent reason, the elevator was going downstairs and when the doors opened again he was in the basement.

Willie walked through the institutional grey basement looking for a hidden corner in which he could straighten out and look over his booty. He walked past the elevator motor room, hearing it stop and go, moving the cars through the great glass towered building above him. He snuck silently past the door to the maintenance locker room, unnoticed by the janitors who sat inside conversing over lunch.

Finally, after walking through a very long stretch of dark hallway that looked as if it hadn't been travelled for years, he came upon a tiny room, dimly lit by a bare bulb hanging from the ceiling. In the corner was a small table and chair. Willie sat down emptying all the tapes out onto the table. He sat there silently shuffling through them.

They were demo tapes. Singers, songwriters, saxophone players...all of them demos. He counted them, there were twenty-two in all. He stacked them up, they made an impressive pile. He wondered how many more there were where these came from. He imagined that for every one of these there must be a hundred more sent each week, and for every one of these there must be a thousand more over the course of a year. Multiply that by the amount of record companies and producers, and managers that receive tapes...he stopped trying to count, the numbers were staggering. It was these numbers, the magnitude of the people knocking at the door that had created the rule that no one gets into the record business.

Each tape represented someone's dream. A dream that was more real than anything else in their lives. Each one came from musicians who had spent time, money and love perfecting their craft. Each tape was backed by years of finger exercises and voice lessons, by hauling equipment from local club to club, by silent nights looking for just the right word to rhyme with blue. Behind each tape was the story of a love affair that died because it was forced to take second place to art and the struggle to make it. Each one had been encouraged by friends who knew that the hottest guitar player in town was sure to make it in the big time. Each tape thought that it had a price out of a world of hauling freight for the man, out of a world of mirrors that reflect only what you are going to be tomorrow and have no regard for what you are today.

Willie sat in the dimly lit room...he just sat there. The room was silent except for the sound of his light rhythmic tapping of one of the tapes against the table.

The rain was really coming down as Willie stepped outside onto the street. Not wanting to take the bus, he decided to walk home. The tapes were tied up in his jacket in a neat bundle that he held under his arm. It was rush hour and the streets were crowded with people trying to get in from the rain. Crossing a street, Willie had to jump over a big puddle, the bundle opened and a few of the tapes fell out into the water. He started to pick them up but realized that they were ruined. "No matter," he thought to himself, he could write another song and go see Artie again.

By the time he got home he was completely soaked. ■

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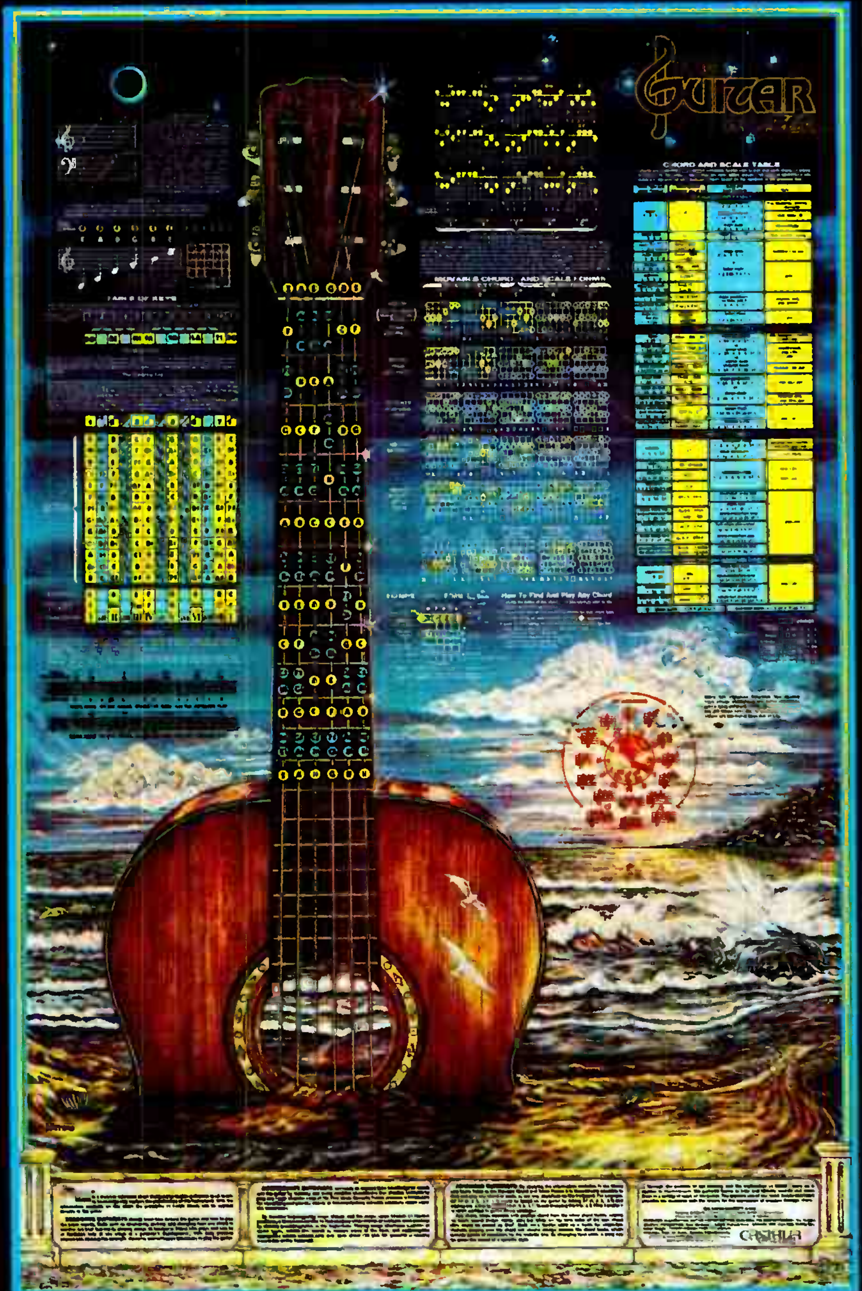

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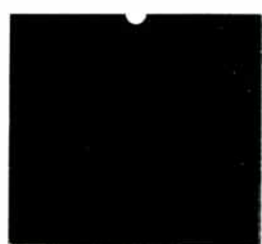
RECORD REVIEWS

Dire Straits
Making Movies. Warners BSK 3480.



Dire Straits recorded two albums in 1978 and spent 1979 touring the world as those two albums became enormously popular. After a year and a half of success, Mark Knopfler, Pick Withers, and John Illsley returned to the studio to produce *Making Movies*, an album so remarkable that it makes their earlier successes sound like warm-ups.

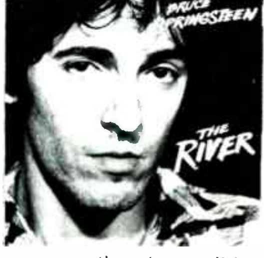
E Street Band pianist Roy Bittan plays keyboards throughout, and the record was produced by Knopfler and Jimmy Iovine. Each of these three has a distinctive signature style, and the album's opening (a piano flourish that is pure Bittan into an explosion of sound that is pure Iovine into the unmistakable Knopfler/Straits guitar groove) declares that this combination of talents will push each other to create a whole that extends our perception of each.

Singer/songwriter/guitarist Knopfler has never sounded so enthusiastic on record, and it seems to inspire everyone else. Withers' remarkable drumming, though always held back to serve the song, is finally given a taste of prominance it deserves. Even when Iovine has boosted the toms and bass drum, adding echo to achieve his famous rifle-shot drum sound, one can hear, way back in the mix, Withers working the hi-hat or cymbals to add subtle extra touches.

The second side extends Dire Straits' territory to hard rock and even German cabaret, but it's the three songs on side one ("Tunnel of Love," "Romeo and Juliet," "Skateaway") that establish Dire Straits as a band that has proved its place in rock's first rank.

Mark Knopfler has moved closer and closer to the heart of his vision. The mysterious women we glimpsed in his early songs have faces now and, like a lost love, they seem even more mystical in familiarity. *Making Movies* is the extension of the two earlier Dire Straits albums, but it is more than that. *Making Movies* is the album that Bruce Springsteen might have made after *E Street Shuffle* had he not moved toward the hard rock of *Born to Run*. Like early Springsteen, Knopfler has placed his star-crossed lovers in a nocturnal world of amusement parks, night trains, and urban balconies. Love is fleeting, but the memory of its triumphs gets him past the heartbreak of its loss. For all his worldliness, Knopfler's heart is still opened. His Juliet may say he's just another old boyfriend, but his Romeo can't accept that. He believes that a true love really must be eternal. Mark Knopfler's characters have never developed the intellectual defense mechanisms that block our emotional pain, and the beautiful purity of their vision is overwhelming. — *Bill Flanagan*

Bruce Springsteen
The River (Columbia 36855).



If *Born To Run* was escaping from the pain and *Darkness At The End Of Town* was acknowledging it, then *The River* is living with the pain — accepting the terrible yet magnificent realization that the only way out involves plunging all the way in. Shedding the protective coating of stale dreams and illusions, Springsteen confronts his demons by striding headlong into the teeth of reality — unsure of the eventual outcome, but somehow aware that facing the Medusa is both inevitable and necessary. The first time around, the album seems opaque and disappointing. If you're expecting to be swept off your feet by a *Born To Run* or socked in the jaw by a *Darkness*, forget it. There's no wall of sound heralding the exaltation and power of innocence, no banks of overdubbed guitars or stirring orchestrations. There are no glockenspiels in Purgatory. The sound is open and loose, suggesting, say, an updated *Exile on Mainstreet* or *Highway 61*, with Bruce and Steve's jangling guitars and Danny Federici's soulful Hammond dominating the mix. The relatively thin, skeletal textures don't come out and grab you. Instead, they lure you even futher onwards until, like Alice through the looking glass, you tumble in. By force of habit we tend to seek out the hard stuff first, and there are plenty of raucous rockers like "Crush on You," "Cadillac Ranch" and "Ramrod" to satisfy those cravings, but don't try to use them as your port of entry. The ballads are the key here, particularly the four that end each side of the record. The last track, "Wreck On The Highway," is the Alpha and the Omega — both the overture and capstone of the album. While recollecting a road accident our protagonist confronts his own mortality, and an age of innocence is shattered in the realization that Thunder Road and the Fast Lane are one and the same. Once this Pandora's box has been opened and this first, ultimate limitation acknowledged, all other myths and dreams become fair game. Marriage, romance, friendship, identity — all must stand trial, with the bottom line expressed best by a line from Robert Fripp's *Exposure*, "It is impossible to achieve the aim without suffering." "The Price You Pay," as the title implies, is the clearest and most stoic espousal of this philosophy, with its deliberate musical and lyrical references to "The Promised Land" and its simple yet courageous message: gravity exists. For those who still haven't caught on to what all the car and highway symbolism is all about there's "Stolen Car," a haunting ballad, framed by Federici's spectral organ, that reveals all. Road machines = dreams = vision = transcendence. Voila. Okay, so why is it a *stolen* car? Why does he *want* to get caught? Why indeed? Don't get me wrong, *The River* is by no means a cry of despair or admission of defeat. It's a work of uncommon courage — an open confrontation with the fears, failures, and insecurities that we all try to shove under the carpet of our waking consciousness. Whatever muse infuses Springsteen with his extraordinary creativity has also shown him that coming to grips with his limitations is not just the best way to deal with reality, it's the *only* way. "I would rather feel the pain inside-/than know the emptiness your heart must hide." Though the loss of innocence also means a loss of youthful

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vitality (for the moment, anyway), there's the ineffable faith that on the other side of this dark but necessary passage there waits a victory that's worth the struggle. And a new beginning. "Someday these childish dreams must end/to become a man and grow up to dream again/Now I believe in the end." It's the only road for an artist of his stature. Or for any of us. — *Vic Garbarini*

Pat Metheny
80/81, ECM 2-1180

This double album set is an example of the classic Orphic journey from light through darkness to light, as composed by Pat Metheny and performed by the guitarist with Charlie Haden and Jack DeJohnette on bass and drums, and tenor saxophonists Dewey Redman and Michael Brecker. The "light" sides (1 & 4) show that these avant-garde players can bring life and color to Metheny's folky pastorales. On the "dark" sides though, Metheny ventures into more demanding musical territory, and gets in way over his head.

The problem seems to be one of listening. Jack DeJohnette is the dominant force in the band, playing with a constant inventiveness, combining subtlety and propulsive force in a truly astounding way. With Haden and Redman he establishes classic drummer-soloist dialogues, but Metheny sounds too rapped up in his own world for this kind of creative interplay. In the free group improvisation "Open" you can hear the moment when he finally realizes that the scattered bop licks and Bach quotes he's been playing aren't relating to what the drums are saying. He responds with a tough spasm of notes on the bass strings, swells some mysterious chords, then stops.

"80/81" and "Pretty Scattered" are nice post-bop lines that show Metheny's melodic imagination is up to the demands of jazz in the '80s, at least as a composer. Soloing, he relies almost exclusively on the patterns and riffs he's been cranking out nightly to adoring audiences with his own band. Placed over the Haden-DeJohnette rhythm section, they're out of context and facile sounding.

Redman and Haden are their usual excellent selves, although they sound occasionally bewildered by some of the sounds coming out of Metheny's amp. The big surprise on this record is Michael Brecker, who solos with authority on "Pretty Scattered," and with lyrical abandon on "Every Day," supported by Metheny's beautiful textures on acoustic and electric guitar. Brecker's list of trademark phrases is smaller than the guitarist's, and he's been playing them longer, but he makes use of the studio musician's discipline of creating a band feeling on very short notice to listen and relate to the other players.

"80/81" is certainly more ambitious than anything Pat Metheny has done recently, and that's good news. These records contain abundant evidence of his technical brilliance, and isolated moments that hint at his potential contribution to modern improvised music. I hope he tries this kind of thing again, after he gets some of the American garbage out of his system. — *Chris Doering*

Joni Mitchell
Shadows And Light, Elektra Asylum.

Soon to be a major television special, Joni Mitchell's '79 summer tour hits the bins as *Shadows and Light* It's a pleasant double LP in that summery put-it-on-while-you're-doing-something-else sort of way. The performance I heard at Forest Hills was far more striking than this September recording from Santa Barbara, and I can't help but wonder if they weren't a little tired, if not bored, with their material by then.

They, by the way, are Jaco Pastorius, his good friend Pat Metheny, *his* good friend Lyle Mays, Joni's buddy Don Alias on percussion, and Michael Brecker, everybody's favorite malleable tenor east of Tom Scott. The repertoire is a smorgasbord of mid-to-late '70s Mitchell: five from *Hejira*, one from *Don Juan*, three from *Mingus*, and the rest from more innocent days.

"Shadows and Light," elevated if you like it, pretentious if you don't, introduces the record with a gawky stab at intertextural profundity: Mitchell has spliced in from "Rebel Without a Cause" some histrionic "adults" squabbling about a car crash, idealism, and sermonizing (how appropos!) and then an old recording of Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers singing "No No No etc." As far as the rest of the record, here's what's wrong, wrong and right.

Wrong: Most of the originals are better than the duplicates. Brecker's hornwork is way too pat, too facile and slick, on everything save "Dry Cleaner." Alias is fine on congas but anemic on traps. Lyle Mays is underutilized and undermixed. Mitchell's cool professionalism and cool tone flatten the energy of the concert context. And she should never, *never* try to imitate old bluesmen like Furry Lewis or sing "Why Do Fools Fall In Love": in the first case, she don't have the funk; in the second, the spunk. Last, though the Persuasions (the tour's opening act) make "Why Do Fools" tolerable and redeem a second treatment of "Shadows and Light" (with Mays) by gospelizing it, the recording emasculates their sound.

Right: Mitchell picks the three best tunes on *Mingus* — "Dry Cleaner," "Pork Pie Hat," "God Must Be A Boogie Man" — and does them up with a looseness and spirit lacking on the rest of the record, perhaps because they're they freshest, most challenging tunes in her songbook. "Coyote" also works quite well. Jaco Pastorius acts as the group's second voice, carrying things along on his own with some of the most rhythmically insistent (almost to the point of distraction) and melodically singing work of his career. Metheny contributes one nice pastoral sketch. Best of all, one line from the title track, harmless when written in '75 and sung in '79, has deep meaning due to the workings of history: "Hostage smiles on presidents." Prescient. — *David Breskin*

Art Pepper
Landscape, Galaxy 5128.

To my mind, this is the best of all the recent Art Pepper albums. It won't bear out Pepper's claim to being the greatest altoist in the world but it does prove him an engrossing and lyrical stylist who comes from the shadows of himself and knows how to make all his notes, phrases and hesitations sound significant and lived. You end up listening attentively to every turn of phrase — who knows what portion of Pepper's life might be hanging in the balance? — but Pepper's is, after all, a rather delicate and pleasant style, and the man you encounter in it is not the egomaniacal drug-monster of the autobiography but the smaller, truer, more gentle self that immolated itself in drugs, savagery and crime as if total loss were final refuge. If Pepper is tormented by anything, it is by the beauty he is ashamed to admit to and which he cannot escape. He is not the first to adopt the bizarre strategy of trying to protect his essential self by doing everything in his power to destroy it, and he will probably not be the last. In any case, he sounds terrific on this album, fluent, melodic, and subtly impassioned.

The rhythm section has everything to do with how good he sounds, from the lovingly nuanced cymbal beat of Billy Higgins to Tony Dumas' bass to George Cables' apposite if somewhat oversupplied chords. They swing marvelously together, and Pepper couldn't

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have asked for, or gotten, better support. Recorded live in Japan, the album's sonics compare favorably with American product, and although Pepper sounds more than a little hesitant on his one clarinet cut and even he can't carry a lame duck like "Avalon," *Landscape* is still a winner, front to back. - *Rafi Zabor*

David Bowie
Scary Monsters, RCA AQL1-3647.

David Bowie is a hall of mirrors. By constantly refracting his mythology into double images and illusions, he'll occasionally serve as a reflecting pool for our (?) aspirations and fantasies. But take a look around. Who do you see? Which one is the real David Bowie? I wonder, after all the transformations, if even he knows. Or cares.

"I am banned from the event/I really don't understand the situation/so what's the moral," sings Bowie on "It's No Game" (first in Japanese, then in English), a stark prologue and epilogue to what may be his last pop album; a concession to all the eternal adolescents in his audience experiencing teenage mid-life, yearning for the operatic cosmology of Ziggy Stardust. And though *Scary Monsters* teases the pop audience with a slight return to the *Hunky Dory/Diamond Dogs/Young Americans* days (filtered through the jagged prism of the Eno-Bowie trilogy *Heroes/Low/Lodger*), Bowie withholds the reassurance that there is some sort of Starman waiting to relieve us of our burden. As Barbara Graustark pointed out, *Scary Monsters* is the first Bowie album in which he acknowledges a sense of his own mortality. The resulting pastiche of music and imagery is uneven, though not unpleasing.

Bowie's strongest suit has always been as an arranger, and *Scary Monsters* finds him moving away from the wide-open, pan-ethnic stylings of *Lodger* (his finest achievement) towards a dense wall of sound, painstakingly embellished with studio effects (such as the repetitive keyboard drones on "Because You're Young" and the shimmering, otherworldly synthesizers on "Ashes To Ashes"); for added interest there's the polytonal power of Robert Fripp, turning in some of his most unselfconscious, electrifying guitar solos in years. It's a good thing the music is so strong, because the songs are often the childlike homilies of "Up The Hill Backwards," the vague danger of the title tune, the operatic pomp of "Teenage Wildlife;" and on his one cover tune ("Kingdom Come") Bowie completely misses the point of Tom Verlaine's majestic Americana, parodying the song like a drag queen. The standout songs, in addition to the epilogue of "It's No Game," are the spatial "Ashes To Ashes" (an almost oriental reggae groove with Bowie's Major Tom reflecting sadly on the plight of those locked into *someone else's* mission), and the new wavish dance tune "Fashion" (an R&B cousin of "Fame" which calls disco to account for its bland trendiness and overtones of fascism).

In short, I listen to *Scary Monsters* a lot, but when you go beyond the music and analyze Bowie's concerns it gets kind of thin. "Draw the blinds on yesterday/And it's all so much scarier," Bowie cautions, but as the body of work he's produced since *Young Americans* shows, he's much more than just a teenage icon — and he knows it, too. — *Chip Stern*

Elvis Costello
Taking Liberties, Columbia Records.

This is the kind of record a label will exhume from its vaults after an artist has been around for a dozen albums or years: an accumulation of outtakes, B-sides, import singles and alternate versions designed to cover a period of no activity. Instead, *Taking Liberties* appears only six months after the prodigious *Get Happy!* and becomes Elvis Costello's fifth American album, made up entirely of material that didn't make it to the first four LPs. Obviously, this potpourri lacks the cohesion which marked those discs, but *Taking Liberties* still offers a revealing peek into the working process of a remarkable songwriter.

The very first entry, a previously-unreleased cut, "Clean Money," contains the refrain, "Won't take my love for tender," which eventually became the title of the song on *Get Happy!* Slowed-down, dramatic versions of "Black and White World" and "Clowntime is Over," both included here as Costello-produced takes, show how much Nick Loew was really responsible for the great fake-Motown sound on *Get Happy!* On "Sunday's Best," originally on the English edition of *Armed Forces* and included here, Costello sings, "Put them all in boots and car keys/Blame it all on the darkies." Considering Elvis' track record on racist comments, it is no wonder the cut never made it onto the domestic *Armed Forces*.

In fact, most of *Taking Liberties* probably went unreleased for very good reason, mostly the weak production — the majority of the tracks sound too raw and

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trebly for American Quality Control. Nevertheless, in its own off-handed way, *Taking Liberties* could well be Elvis Costello's *Basement Tapes*. — *Roy Trakin*

Talking Heads
Remain In Light, Warner Bros.

I don't know about you, but I've been holding my breath through all of 1980, waiting for *something* to happen. So far there's been a series of blockbuster affirmations of the old verities, gobs of guitar feasting and tuney in-the-cause-of-nothing poppist revels (the Big Three: *London Calling, Pretenders* and *E. Rescue*) and a small bare choir of postpunk Romantic statements in pain and rhythm.

Now along comes David Byrne and his Engels, Eno, to provide food for funking and for thought with an LP unlike absolutely anything anywhere hitherto. It sounds as if an extremely tight white-pop International Brigade (the Robert Johnson Battalion?) was recruited and trained in the subtleties, crosstalk inflections, and collective nonhierarchical group relations (no strict foreground /background splits as in rock 'n' roll) of tribally based electric Africano funk a la Fela and Johnny Mensa. Said unit works up eight meaty embellished rhythm feasts and then patterns of speechifying incantation, long crossbar melodic drones with sudden great thrilling choral washes layered on top. This would be arty, turgid, pretentious and *boring* indeed if Byrne et all were your typical intellectual freebooting petit mal bourgeois despoilers of other people's traditions. As we all know, that is not the case. The collective intelligence of Talking Heads is the most rigorous around, and given their concern with the texture of recorded sound and the utmost sanguine rhythmic precision of parts, it is not too surprising that they would be the ones to break out from being just a brilliant odd rock band into an internationalist pop formation, a vanguard cadre for all three worlds.

What does this black bendable Bolshevism evoke, then? It's in no way gloomy, but there is far too much rattling percussive fierceness; too much keening loss in the massed open fifth harmonies, and martial intensity to call this "entertaining" or "partytime." Raucous and passionately danceable as it is, *Remain In Light* has nothing at all to do with leisure — its joy is that of hard work and hard lives.

Even five years ago as a raw trio, the irregular partisans that would grow into this great host were It, the tops, the best thing going anywhere for pure smart soulful music. Their new record is a confirmation of their pre-eminent role and is a monumental step forward, a storming of the Winter Palace moment. Whether their path is taken or not (I wouldn't bet on it, you know how reactionary and narrow-minded most rockers are) it throws a long, hard shadow over mere mortal pop for the many days to come. — *Van Gosse*

Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band
Doc at the Radar Station, Virgin.

Getting rude noise out of trained musicians isn't easy. If you ask for atonal improvisation, you'll get a cliched cacophony that turns regular sooner or later; real jagged sound requires planning. Pursuant to a wildly singular vision that encompasses the most original ensemble sound in rock —and perhaps in all contemporary music — Don Van Vliet, alias Captain Beefheart, takes no chances: every note, every drum lick is prearranged. In a sense, Van Vliet composes chamber music —he uses a fixed ensemble (basically a five-man rock band) rather than studio collaging, and he only allows him-

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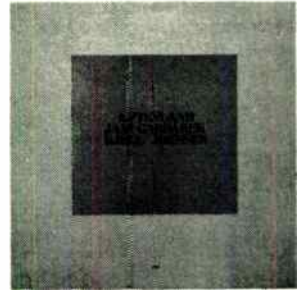

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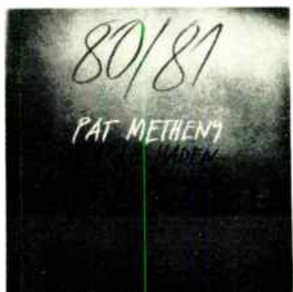

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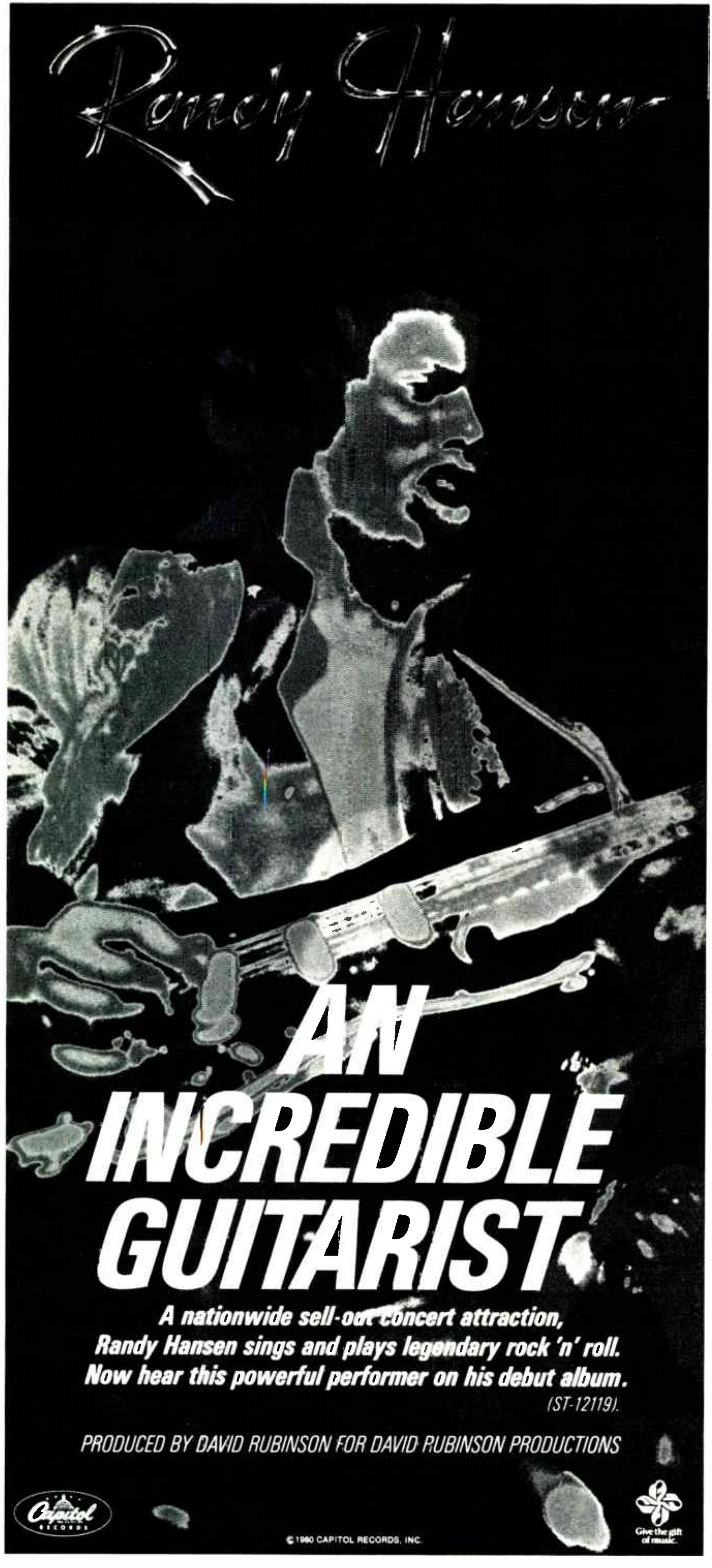

self to improvise on vocals — but without chamber music's polite connotations. Beefheart jangles.

Nothing in his music stays regular for long. Riffs (which, individually, could almost be blues licks) chase each other through his songs like wild dogs in a deserted city — worrying each others' heels, scattering, regrouping, rejoicing in havoc. The pulse sputters and revs and starts and stops; it's only steady long enough to jolt you when it shifts. Beefheart's precise orchestrations are blueprints for entropy. Even the instrumentation sounds a little strange; the Magic Band's guitars play unidiomatic lines (composed on keyboard) using clunky heavy-gauge strings. Harmony? Melody? Well, you can hum every riff and some of the Captain's vocal lines, but forget chord changes and harmonic motion. Like Stravinsky, Van Vliet juggles little musical cells that sound tonal but go nowhere; even if a Beefheart song generally hangs around one chord, it'll manage to end up elsewhere. Beefheart is a lot more complex and polyrhythmic than Stravinsky — Igor liked to make the beat jump, but the Captain kicks it four ways at once. And Beefheart's music has more funk — in every definition — than Stravinsky ever dreamed of.

At least, that's what happens in grade-A premium Beefheart, which in order of (my) preference includes *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*; *Trout Mask Replica*; *Clear Spot*; and *Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller)*. *Doc at the Radar Station* belongs next to *Trout Mask Replica*. It's not as dense, funny, or sexy as *Decals*, not as rangy and vociferous as *Trout Mask*, and its lyrics aren't as cosmological as *Clear Spot*'s or *Shiny Beast*'s, but it's as brilliant an album as anyone has released this year. There's a new undertone of anger, urgency, even paranoia; most of the voices Beefheart uses on the album are crabbed, enraged, terrified. Although the music seems stripped-down at first, there's far more polyrhythm and outright oddity (like the intro to "Dirty Blue Gene," which takes off at a fearsome clip with rhythm-guitar chords, only to stop dead just before the vocal) than on 1978's genial *Shiny Beast*. And Beefheart's expanded his sonic vocabulary to include string synthesizer (a mixed blessing, but it's the only quasi-lyrical instrument on the album), Chinese gongs, and more chording (with no more tonality). Beefheart may feel like "a man on a porcupine fence," as he declaims in "Ashtray Heart," but with any luck he'll continue to keep entropy at bay. — *Jon Pareles*

Ron Carter — *New York Slick* Milestone 9096. This is a lot better than the usual sort of Ron Carter album. The bassist doesn't try to take all the solos and he's got the likes of Art Farmer, J.J. Johnson, Hubert Laws and Kenny Bar-

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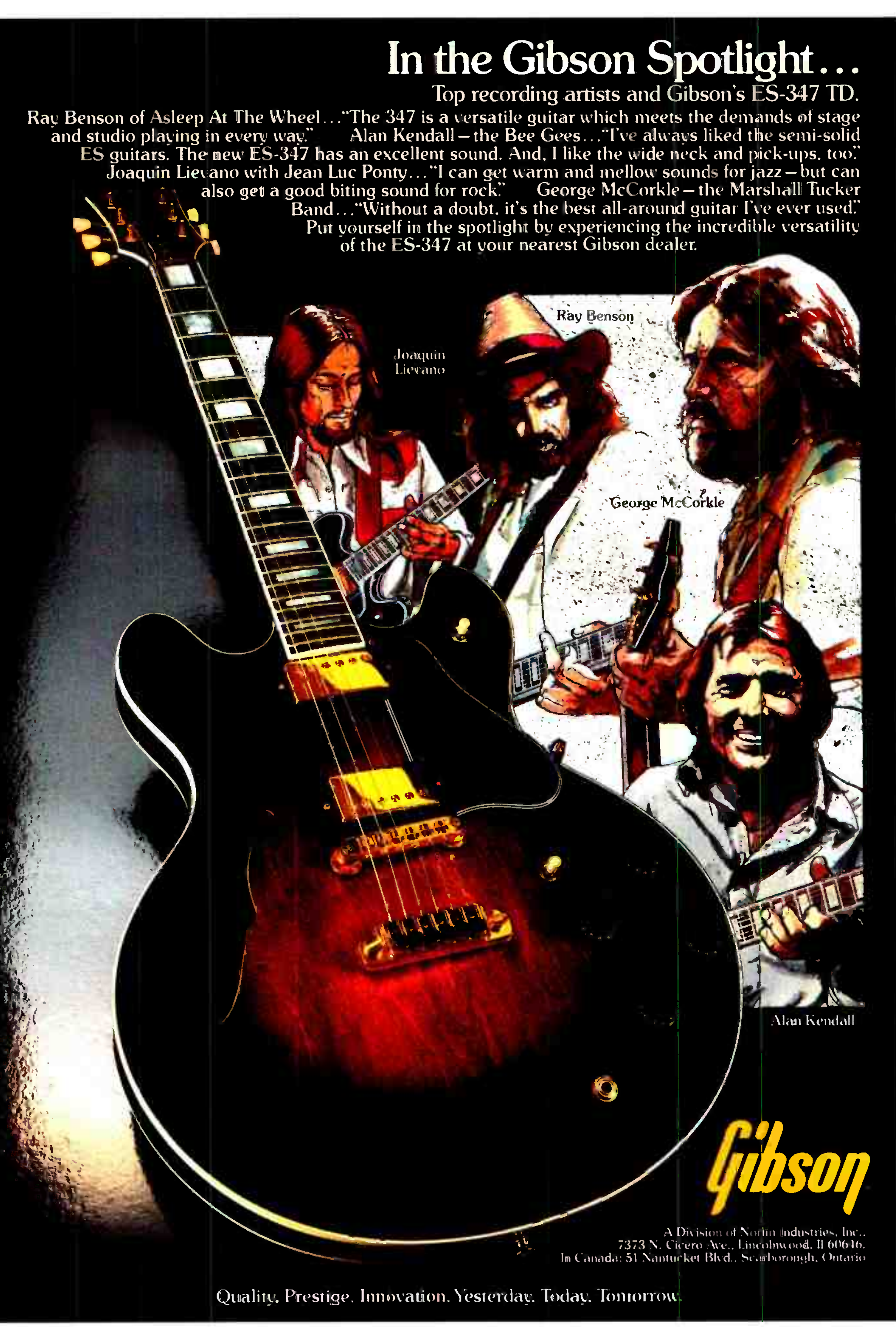

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ron to share the load. The band sounds efficient and clean, Barron and Farmer sound terrific, Johnson gets off a great solo on "Alternate Route," and Billy Cobham keeps the rhythm section popping (though why does he have to hit that damn crash cymbal every four bars like clockwork?). On the minus side, there's a long flamenco-scale exercise called "Tierra Espanol" that never gets past the usual routines. In sum, nothing earthshaking but a tasty album all the same. — *Rafi Zabor*

Johnny Dyani Quartet — *Song For Biko*, SteepleChase 1109

Keshavan Maslak — *Humanplexity*, Leo Records LR101. Vivid testimonials to the powerful jazz being shaped outside of American shores, Dyani's quartet is a product of the burgeoning jazz tradition of South Africa (with the exception of American trumpeter Don Cherry), while Maslak's trio reflects the European branch of improvisational music — another tradition establishing firm roots of its own. But both ensembles have adopted, and ultimately extended, stylistic perspectives primarily dictated by the American avant-garde of the 60s.

Dyani has put together the best literal adaptation of Ornette Coleman's music I have heard anywhere — it should turn more than a few American heads. But utilizing Coleman's concepts of freeing improvisation from the harmonic constraints of regular chord changes and static rhythmic structures, Dudo Pukwana, Makaya Ntshoko, Cherry and Dyani exchange melodic and rhythmic impulses with striking sensitivity. Their music has enough strength of personality to make it more than just a tasty piece of Coleman pie — it is an excellent album by any standards.

Utilizing some of the same '60s recipes, Maslak flavors his music with the distinctive European brand of improvisation as well as with American extracts. Pianist Misha Mengelberg (very Taylorish), drummer Han Bennink and reedman Maslak function as a hard-driving (though a little too relentless at times) unit. But it is Maslak's commanding unaccompanied alto solo, which reminds me of Dolphy's outgoing lines, that moved me the most. — *Cliff Tinder*

Lovers and Rockers, Various Artists, EMI import. This U.K. compilation of recent reggae pop is an excellent sampler of the saving wit, pretty grace and unselfconscious sophistication of arrangement that uptown Jamaican music provides. Peter Tosh's duet with Mick Jagger on "(You Gotta Walk) Don't Look Back," a minor U.S. hit, is a good clue to the product herein, but by no means the premier track (I pick the Tamlins doing Randy Newman's "Baltimore").

These 13 tunes are one strain of reggae: short, melodious pop songs, moderately slick and/or Europeanized, but not diluted. The artists include such durables as Dennis Brown and Burning Spear, and new lights like Matumbi. This is 24-hour-a-day music, not simple at all, but easy to love simply and inordinately. To ignore it, as only America can, is to remain parochial — and even primitive. — *Van Gosse*

Stars of the Streets, Various Artists, EGG. It took an English producer and a French record company to recognize and preserve what most New Yorkers too often take for granted — its remarkable street musician scene. From Washington Square Park to Harlem, from 42nd Street to the Lower East Side, Eric Dufaure has captured both the vitality and variety of these sounds, recorded live where they took place. Some of the artists, like Sugar Blue, the harp-player "discovered" by the Stones for "Miss You;" the recently-signed Eve Moon; or Gene Palma, the little old man with hair slicked back by shoe polish who plays drums on top of *New York Times* vending machines and was first featured in Martin Scorcese's *Mean Streets*, have already made names for themselves. You will especially want to hear Palma's cover of "Strangers In The Night," complete with the explanation of his natural rhythm and bolero technique. Others, like steel-pianist Victor Brade, with his

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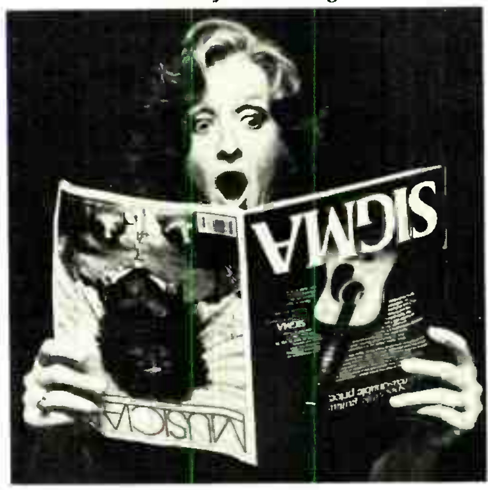

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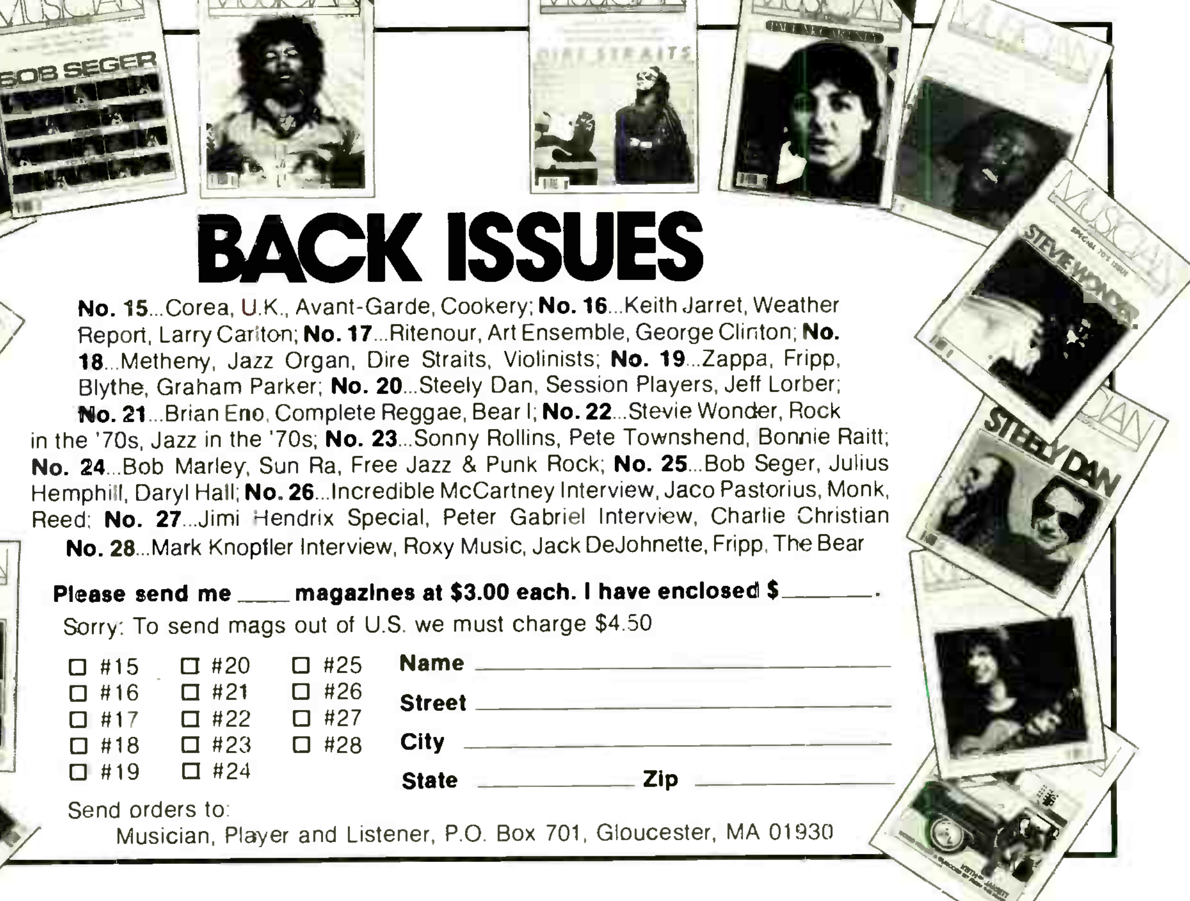

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touching version of Beethoven's "Fur Elise," and french-horn player Rod Hytonen on "Send In The Clowns," will be happy revelations. — *Roy Trakin*

Polyrock RCA LP
The Dance, *Dance for Your Dinner*, (Dist. by Rough Trade)
The Escalators, *Escalators*, (Dist. by CBS Canada)

These three records all connect to what is perceived as the Talking Heads/New York Art Rock axis. Which is to say they draw on "funk" rhythms (meaning the emphasis is on the upbeat, one two *three* four), and concentrate on instrumental texture as opposed to more traditional pop concerns, using melodies, lyrics and voices ornamentally. Talking Heads themselves transcend these definitions, but they exemplify publicly all the tense-sounding, soul-influenced white pop experimenters.

A big noise has been made about *Polyrock*, the only U.S. major label release here, because "serious" avant-garde composer Philip Glass is the producer. It's a very clean, well made, smart record but other than that could only be deemed interesting as a series of exercises in guitar interplay at mildly amphetamine tempos, like background music to a down film about robot life in the shiny grey future. For devotees of structure, yes, perhaps; for anyone else, no.

The Dance boasts the talents of Fred Maher, New York's most insistently danceable polyrhythmic new drummer. The auteurs involved are Eugenie Diserio and Steve Alexander, of the late Model Citizens. The former's voice is oddly appealing and this band knows how to string together squeals and jabs of dissonance from guitars, saxes, and keys into hooks, though it's not all AM jellosound for sure. The key bits are always the lunging bass and ever-shifting jungle-beat drums. Catchy.

The Escalators are last year's Rhythm Method, of "Alligators Have Fun" indie 45 fame, plus Talking Head Jerry Harrison. Leader Busta Jones is an eminent funk bassman (the real thing) and presently a semi-official Head, one of the group of luminaries who may be touring with Byrne at al. History aside, the Escalators seem to be a good-time diversion for all involved, a party record. It contains a fine wacko sax and synth-spiced version of "Wooly Bully." Imagine the Ohio Players making a tough New Wave DOR disc — that sort of stomping ebullience applied to neat little rock riffs. Nobody's straining, but jump back jack anyway — hot stuff. — *Van Gosse*

Phillip Glass *Dance #1 & 3*, Tomato TOM-8029. Philip Glass' music reminds me of those puzzle balls I used to get when I was a kid. A simple surface, revealing a complex interior when you take it apart. Repeated two or three chord progressions and melodic frag-

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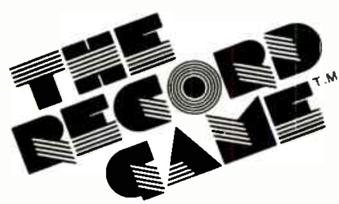

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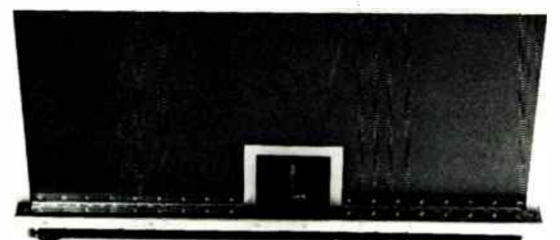

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ments provide the simple surface, minor variations and superimposed meters, the complex interior. If this is trance music, it is a trance of the industrial age, in which mechanical rhythms and background noise stimulate such a ceaseless flow of internal chatter that you can't tell whether you're thinking fast or slow. I can't help but admire the tremendous effort of counting and concentration involved in the composition and performance of this music (how this ensemble manages to play this stuff without speeding up or slowing down I'll never know). Somehow applause doesn't seem appropriate, though. Perhaps if everyone in the front row clapped his hands once in sequence from left to right, while in the second row every other person clapped from right to left, and then from left to right.... —*c.d.*

Steve Tibbetts, *Yr*, Frammis 1522-25. This is a homemade record, written, recorded, performed, and financed by a guitarist from Minneapolis named Steve Tibbetts, and a few of his friends on bass and percussion. The modal melodies, acoustic rhythm and electric lead guitars, the tabla drum percussion and mellotron accompaniment remind me of Mike Oldfield or the Moody Blues. I kept asking myself why I enjoy this record so much more than the music would indicate, and finally decided that it's due to the complete absence of the bitter taste of a narcotic which is being shoved

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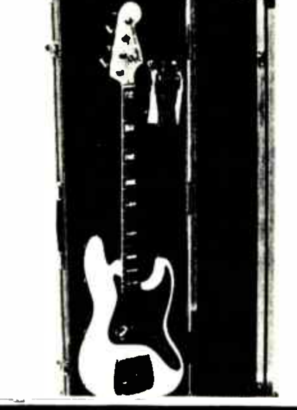

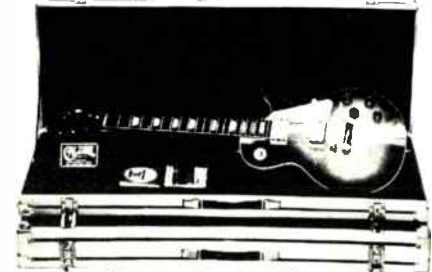

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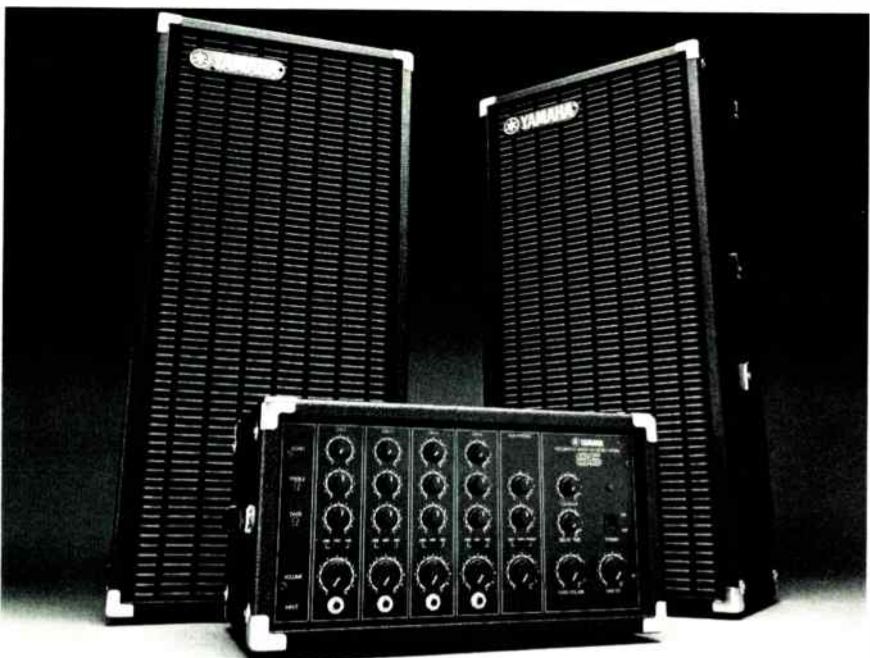

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down my throat by someone in hopes of getting me to part with my hard-earned money. Tibbetts obviously made this record to satisfy no audience but himself. That he has done a great job of turning musical and technical limitations (he recorded on 8-track, without a lot of signal processors) to his advantage only enhances the refreshing innocence of his approach to music. The album is available from Frammis Enterprises, Box 6164, Minneapolis, MN 55406, for $7.98. — *c.d.*

Albert Collins *cont. from pg. 39*
changed me from a straight blues player was when I was around Jimmy McGriff and Jimmy Smith in the Midwest, in Kansas City. I met them in '65 there and did a show with them. No bass player; hell, a bass player couldn't get no work in K.C. in '65. It was all organ trio, just drums and guitar. They kicked those organs hard. I was serious, and stayed there two and a half years, sitting in all the time. I learned a lot from them. Those were hard musicians, man, and I tried to keep my style while learning new phrasing ...but I really wanted to go into jazz, very seriously.

MUSICIAN: And if you had?

COLLINS: Well, I like Grant Green. Wes Montgomery. I never wanted too much speed. I always wanted a groove. If I got to play jazz, if I went more into it, I want it as a groove and not like, let's say, John Coltrane. I used to go see his shows, and man, I couldn't understand it. It was weird, it was ahead of its time. I couldn't comprehend. See, but a groove type of thing ...that's what I go for. I always played lead, but I care 'bout the rhythm; I state it to keep the beat that I want on the bottom when there's not enough on the bandstand, 'cause we don't have a keyboard. So sometimes I play organ riffs which I picked up from Smith and McGriff. Things like that.

MUSICIAN: What direction do you hear yourself moving in?

COLLINS: Hey, I'm just trying to get polished. I'm never satisfied with my music. There's a peak I have to get to and it's hard to get to that peak.

MUSICIAN: And you'll play until you get there?

COLLINS: Until I die, until I'm dead. I've played music for a long time ...and all of a sudden, well, you can catch a hold of something. You get a trip, something you can handle. I can handle what I'm doing now. You play mechanically for so long and you do something 'cause you hear somebody else do it ...but now I feel like I'm at the point where I can handle what I'm doing, and do whatever I want to do with it. If you compare my old records to my new ones you'll hear what I'm saying. I'm still workin' on it. And man, wait till you hear my live album coming up.

MUSICIAN: Will it bite?

COLLINS: You might say that. M

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Prine *cont. from pg. 18*

songs, making you believe them implicitly as much from the warmth and the kindness and sincerity in his voice as from his words. What stands out most is his timing — always just ahead of the beat, but with one foot dragging — and the curious intelligence in his voice; it's these qualities which make his own recordings of his songs so much more memorable and so much richer than the more formal and "arranged" versions by Bette Midler, Bonnie Raitt, et al.

The best way to produce Prine seems to be to leave him alone as much as possible, which Arif Mardin tried to do on his first three albums, and which Steve Goodman did on *Bruised Orange*, his first album for Asylum, released in 1978, and arguably his finest record. Goodman coaxed the warmest vocals imaginable out of Prine, let him define his own rhythms, and surrounded him with sensitive and supportive musicians.

Last year's *Pink Cadillac* was the other side of the coin. In an attempt to be part of a band, Prine's greatest assets —his timing, his rhythms, his lyrics — were lost and covered over, and the energy of the band, the rockabilly, first-take feel of the old Sun records he was emulating, couldn't conceal the half-finished quality of many of the songs, Prine's weakness as an interpreter of other people's material (half the album songs were covers), and the muddiness of the mix. It was a mess.

Storm Windows, his newest album, is something of a cross between *Bruised Orange* and *Pink Cadillac*. Originally announced as the follow up to *Bruised Orange* (Prine apparently received so many crates of mangled or beaten-up oranges from over-zealous promo men that he decided to name his next record after some more useful household item, especially since he had recently purchased a new home. Unaware of recent changes in the economy and equally unaware of the limits of promo men's seemingly boundless generosity, he changed his mind and changed the title of the album to *Pink Cadillac*, obviously hoping to fill his driveway. When scores of pink Cadillacs failed to arrive, he returned to his more realistic and earlier greed and titled the new record *Storm Windows* — just in time for winter), *Storm Windows* is much closer in feel to *Bruised Orange*, and two of its best songs are of that vintage.

If the album lacks the spark that made *Bruised Orange* such a surprise and a pleasure, it almost makes up for it with a warmth and geniality rare in most records today, and with a few first-rate and improbably catchy songs. "I Had A Dream Last Night" (no relation to Randy Newman's "Last Night I Had A Dream," Ed McCurdy's "Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream," or Martin Luther King's "I Had A Dream.") is stunning, a

continued on page 88

World Radio History

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World Radio History

ROCK SHORT TAKES

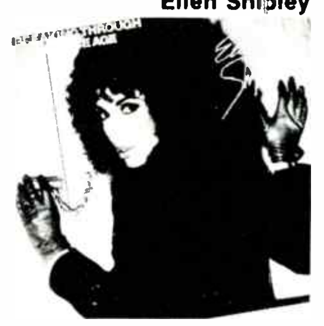
Emmylou lights up our lives while Shipley loses her cool. The Beatles establish Utopia while the Doobies take it to the bank.

By Vic Garbarini

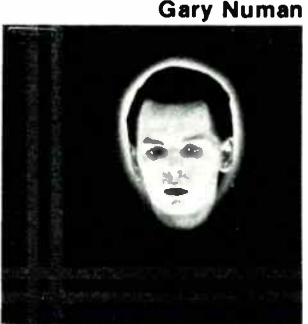
Emmylou Harris

Tom Waits

Ellen Shipley



Gary Numan



Love — *The Best of Love*, (Rhino Records) Led by Arthur Lee, folk rock's answer to Jimi Hendrix, Love were a seminal L.A. band of the late 60s that combined Byrdsian folk rock, pop, jazz, R&B and Brit rock into an eclectic blend of experimental pop that was, wel-l...*magic*. They were a relatively pure and unfettered creative unit, evocative of all that was best about both California and psychedelia. These cuts represent the cream of their first four albums, all of which are out of print with the exception of their acknowledged masterpiece *Forever Change*. (Get it while you still can.) Maybe you had to have been there, but to me this music captured the spirit of the time and place so thoroughly that I feel almost drawn into another world every time I hear it. (Available from Rhino Records, 11609 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064).

Emmylou Harris — *Light of The Stable*, (Warners) You're not going to believe this, but this charming and sometimes moving collection of traditional and country Christmas songs may be Harris' most powerful statement yet. She takes this stuff seriously, as well she should. The hauntingly pure vocals and crystalline instrumentation enhance the prevailing mood of simple joy, reverence and dignity. The perfect gift for your Uncle Scrooge.

Supertramp — *Paris* (A&M) Supertramps' elegantly crafted progressive pop comes across with a warmth and immediacy that's generally lacking among practitioners of what used to be called Art Rock — particularly the English variety. *Paris* is that rarest of musical entities, a live album that really works, and a double one at that. All their hits are here, including "Dreamer," "The Logical Song," and "Fool's Overture" among others, but it's the group's obvious rapport with their live audience that makes it all connect.

The Psychedelic Furs (Columbia) How about The Punkadelic Slurs? A few modal melodies, punk rhythms and droning guitars filtered through a phase shifter is not my idea of the Summer of Love, though they could pass for the Chambers Bros. on ludes in a pinch. They're probably not very furry, either. Whatever happened to the Chocolate Watch Band?

Tom Waits — *Heartattack and Vine* (Elektra) More of the usual bloozy musings on the seamy side of urban life. As usual there's a charming ballad (the Springsteenesque "Jersey Girl"), to break the routine. Hey, maybe if he gets *really* disillusioned with the human race we'll get an album entitled *Tom Waits for No One*. I'll wait for the "Best Of" compilation, thank you.

Utopia — *Deface The Music* (Bearsville) Why is this Beatles parody different from all other Beatles parodies? Well, first of all it's not really parody at all, more like emulation. And there's none of that look-how-clever-we-are self consciousness that spoils much of today's 60s style nouveau pop. Instead, Rundgren and friends sound like they're having the time of their lives exploring the textures and ambience of early Beatle recordings, successfully evoking the spirit as well as the style of their heroes. You'll probably still want to hear "I Just Want To Touch You" (in the style of "I'm Happy Just To Dance With You") and "Take It Home" (definitely "Day Tripper") a year from now, which is the real bottom line.

Jethro Tull — *A* (Chrysalis) False alarm. With the exception of guitarist Michael Barre, Ian Anderson has scraped his entire band for this project, bringing in U.K.'s Eddie Jobson on keyboards and ex-Fairport Convention Dave Pegg on bass. A potentially interesting lineup, but the tunes just aren't strong enough. I don't mind the middle-brow current events lessons, but how about a bit more rock 'n' roll next time?

Ellen Shipley — *Breaking Through the Ice Age* (RCA) When someone like Dusty Springfield or Ronnie Spector used to churn out street wise romantic ballads like these they were called classics. Times have sure changed. Nowadays, anybody cursed with the talent for writing well structured songs with real live melodies is dismissed as a Springsteen cop, or just plain squaresville. Such is life in the Ice Age. O.K., there are no real classics here, but tunes like "Heart To Heart" and "Fotogenic" are good clean fun, and that's got to count for something.

The Kings — *Are Here* (Elektra) No doubt you've heard "This Beat Goes On" and "Switch Into Glide" by now on your local FM station. With its pumping "96 Tears" farfisa riffs framed by slabs of power chords it's perfect AOR fare — a felicitous blend of 60s and 80s pop. So, if corn fed, angst-free version of the Cars is your meat, dig in. Me, I can bear to wait unti it comes around on the radio again.

Gary Numan — *Telekon* (ATCO). In England, Numan is Mr. Technorock, his singles and albums inevitably settling in the top of the British charts. His synthesizer dominated hook, hook-laden excursions into pop existentialism suggests an avante-garde edition of ELP — or, if you prefer, a commercialized Brian Eno. His massive popularity is partly due to his avoidance of atonality and dissi-

continued on page 88

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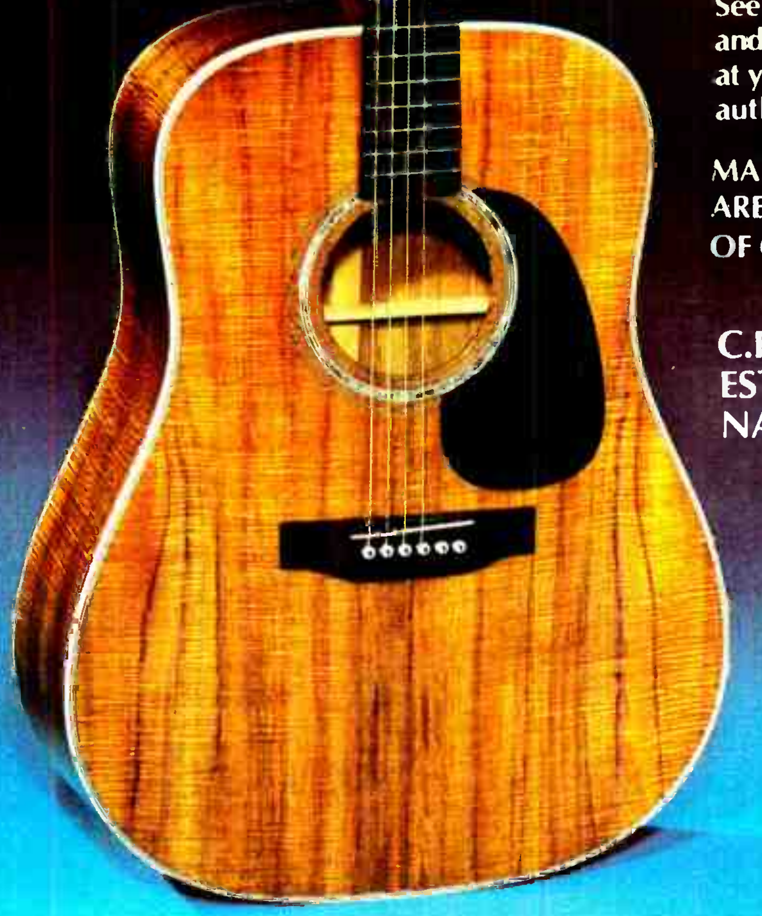

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World Radio History

JAZZ SHORT TAKES

It's the small labels that keep jazz alive. A taste of some swing, mainstream and blues.

By Chip Stern

Norman Granz was already numbered among jazz's best friends for his work with Jazz at the Philharmonic and Verve Records, when he sold off his collection of Picassos to get up the capital to form Pablo. Swing is spoken here, animated by the bop sensibility of the '40s (Basie, to Prez, to Tatum, to Bird); Granz loves to throw together the music's leading gladiators with his in-house fast draws (usually Ray Brown, Joe Pass and Oscar Peterson). A recent "Best of..." series includes the work of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, Milt Jackson, Zoot Sims, Ray Bryant, Tommy Flannagan, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Bellson, while four Pablo Today releases (a sampler, the Milt Jackson/Mickey Roker/Pass/Brown "Quadrant," Sarah Vaughn, Zoot Sims and Clark Terry) celebrate Duke Ellington. **Clark Terry**'s *Memories of Duke* (Pablo Today 2312-118) works best because his timbral dexterity with open horn and mute allows him to suggest the entire Ellington trumpet section, and his sly, concise approach to improvisation lets the melodies breathe. On *The Trumpet Summit meets The Oscar Peterson Big 4* (Pablo Today 2312-114) he plays Hemmingway to the Joyceian joustings of **Dizzy Gillespie** and **Freddie Hubbard.** Hubbard ends up sounding like the sum of his two elders, combining Terry's angularity and Gillispie's rhythmic/harmonic dynamism — in short, committed. On **Joe Farrell**'s *Sonic Text* (Contemporary 14002) Hubbard brings the same directness and intelligence to a contemporary rhythm section (Peter Erskine, George Cables, Tony Dumas), rekindling hope in the possibilities of the jazz-latin-funk synthesis he developed on *Red Clay* (as Farrell did on *Upon This Rock*), especially on his own "The Jazz Crunch."

Carl Jefferson's Concord label is every bit as dedicated to the jazz mainstream as Pablo, with production quality to match. Without over-generalizing it can be said that Concord artists have an affection for swing, with a particular feeling for song forms. Lately Jefferson has been stretching out to include experimental sets with a chamber music character. The **Carmen McRae/George Shearing** album *Two For The Road* (Concord CJ-128) is a sublime, intimate pairing; Shearing's urbane, impressionistic chording is the perfect foil for McRae's theatrical, almost subliminal bluesiness on this lovely set of ballads. *Taste* (Concord CJ-122) teams **Ray Brown** and pianist **Jimmy Rowles**. Brown, as always, is a perfect balance of strong rhythmic underpinning and deft lyrical touches, while Rowles finds no difficulty in making his way from the cocktail lounge to the barrelhouse, with a visit to the church for good measure, as on Ellington's "Come Sunday" and Chaplin's "Smile." Rowles' touch is delicate and considered, with an elegant sense of humor lest you forget this is jazz — technique in the service of music here, never the other way around.

Dave McKenna — *Left Handed Complement* (Concord CJ-123) This solo piano record seems almost rowdy compared to the work of Shearing and Rowles, probably because McKenna grabs you by the throat with a two-handed style that hearkens back to the days of stride; crunching left-handed chords and muscular walking lines pressure cook his broken field runs on tunes like "Splendid Splinter," while "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams" recalls the magisterial orchestrations of Teddy Wilson and Fats Waller; his ballad style ("When Day Is Done") is also full-bodied, eschewing easy sentiment. *Crystal Comments* (Concord CJ-126) also achieves big group swing without a rhythm section as Bud Shank's lively, boppish flute stylings cut through the ringing commentary of Bill Mays' Steinway and Alan Broadbent's Fender/Rhodes electric piano. Finally, **Monty Alexander** has always played a convincing brand of soul jazz piano, but on *Ivory & Steel* (Concord Picante CJP-124) he's added Othello Molineaux on steel drums, bringing out more of his Caribbean and Latin roots. He successfully navigates the waters between fusion and double-crossover.

Space is short this issue so here are some capsules. **Henry Townsend** — *Mule* (Nighthawk 201, P.O. Box 15856, St. Louis, Missouri 63114) An honest to goodness bluesman of enormous stature with deep rural roots that go back to Robert Johnson. Brilliant on piano, quite tough on mandolin and guitar, he introduces all sorts of erratic tempo shifts and melodic contrasts into simple structures. Primo. **Son Seals** — *Chicago Fire* (Alligator 4720) Another excellent release from the Windy City blues label. Taut, aggressive guitar work from Seals, and just enough contemporary funk for those of you who've never had a taste for real blues. **Groove Holmes** — *Good Vibrations* (Muse 5167) One of the last real masters of the Hammond, on the last label really doing this sort of greasy groove, with Idris Muhammad and Houston Pearson adding hot sauce. **Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis** — *Tough Tenors Again 'N Again* (Pausa 7063) "Lockjaw's" earthy swagger versus Griffin's aerial comets. Rich tones, great house-rocking blues and Kenny Clarke swinging away buoyantly. **Kenny Drew** — *Ruby My Dear* (Steeple Chase SCS 1129) Post-bop interplay from pianist Drew and cohorts David Friessen, marked by rolling yet delicate harmonies, swirling counterpoint and transparent recorded sound — the best this side of Manfred Eicher. **Barry Harris** — *Tokyo: 1970* (Xanadu 177) Don Schlitten is probably the most sincere, sympatico bebop producer, and pianist Harris in an expansive mood with fellow Bird watchers Jimmy Raney, Charles McPherson, Leroy Williams and Sam Jones. **George Adams/Don Pullen** — *Don't Lose Control* (Soul Note SN 1004) In which the free spirited tenorist and pianist frame their notable intensity with tender ballads, good time funky blues and high-stepping ethnic excursions. Dannie Richmond and Cameron Brown never let up on the steam. **Mike Mantler** — *More Movies* (Watt/10) The trumpeter arranger refuses to let punk jazz (Fusion if you must) die by fashioning stark Germanic arrangements, ebullient structural transistions and rhythmic structures that never stifle the screaming soloing of Phillip Catherine or Steve Swallow's finely etched bass lines.

John Scofield — *Bar Talk* (Arista/Novus) One of the best guitar trios since Metheny's *Bright Size Life*, Scofield's elongated lines and pungent chord voicings have the breadth of a

continued on page 88

World Radio History

THE COLLECTOR

By Jason Janulis

"The music they told us we would outgrow will be with us the rest of our lives." This statement flashes across my T.V. screen in Boston. It is the 1980 logo for radio station WBCN-FM and, to me, it capsulizes the idea that the music of the past is still very much a part of the musical present and future. What happened to all those Rock and R&B artists we listened to in high school and college? Many are still around, many are not, but one thing is clear: their records have become valuable collector's items. It is almost impossible for a rock record to decrease in value from the time of purchase. In fact, this is true of most Jazz, Classical and Soundtrack albums, and 45s.

As time passes, records gain value just like rare books, coins and fine wines. There are many ways to collect records. Maybe you want all the picture sleeve 45s that Little Richard recorded; or everything Elvis put on vinyl, including those rare Sun 45s and 78s; and how about the original Capitol and Apple pressings by the Beatles? The subject is endless, interesting and fun.

I began collecting records — mainly Rock, R&B and Jazz — at age thirteen, some eighteen years ago. In 1975, I moved from a ten year career in broadcasting as an announcer and program director to operator and owner of two new, used and rare record shops in Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass. I have bought, sold and traded over a million and a half records. I still have not seen all the various releases on some records. I like the music and the people. My stores are called "Beggars Banquet."

I'll start off with a list of items you might have in your own collection. Maybe you didn't know these records had value and are almost all out of print. I'll list the artist, label and title. I am not going to give price values as the number one rule among collectors is: "A record is worth what a person is willing to pay." No two collectors agree on prices when it comes to rare records. The following items have values starting at $10.00 and up. We will continue the scan through your collection and will discuss other information on collecting in the next issue.

Alice Cooper, Straight STS1051, *Pretties For You;* **Woody Allen**, Colpix SPC488, *Woody Allen;* **The Allman Brothers**, Atco SD33-342, *Idlewild South;* **The Amboy Dukes**, Mainstream 6112, *Journey To The Center Of The Mind;* **The Angels**, Smash SRS67039, *My Boyfriend's Back;* **The Animals**, most albums on MGM; **Ann-Margaret**, RCA LSP2399, *And There She Is;* **Jane Asher**, London OSA1206, *Alice In Wonderland;* **The Association**, Valiant VIM 5002, *And Then Along Comes;* **The Astronauts**, any albums on RCA; **Frankie Avalon**, albums on Chancellor label; **The Blues Magoos**, Mercury MG 21104, *Electric Comic Book;* **Badfinger**, albums on Apple Records; **La Vern Baker**, on Atlantic; **The Barbarians**, Laurie LLP 2033, *Are You A Boy Or A Girl;* **The Beach Boys**, most original Capitol pressings (black label); **The Beatles**, Capitol 2553, *Yesterday And Today (butcher cover);* **The Beatles**, original Capitol and Apple recordings (Capitol black label); **The Beau Brummels**, anything on Warner Bros.; **The Bee Gees**, most Atco Records; **Chuck Berry**, everything on Chess (black and blue label); **Bloodrock**, Capitol St435, *Bloodrock;* **Blue Cheer**, Philips label; **Bonzo Dog Band**, Imperial label; **David Bowie**, SR 61325, *Man Who Sold The World;* **Arthur Brown**, Atlantic SD8198, *The Crazy World Of;* **Charles Brown**, anything on any label; **James Brown**, anything on the original King label; **Johnny Burnette**, Liberty and Sunset labels; **The Byrds**, Columbia mono pressings; **The Cadillacs**, Jubilee Records; **Cannibal and the Head Hunters**, Date3001/Rampart 3302, *Land of 1,000 Dances;* **Freddy Cannon**, everything; **Captain Beefheart**, everything; **The Dave Clark 5**, all Epic-Crown-Custom records; **Johnny Cash**, original Sun label; **The Chantays**, Dot DLP-25516, *Pipeline;* **Ray Charles**, on Atlantic Records; **Eddie Cochran**, Liberty-UA-Sunset labels; **Petula Clark**, Imperial LP9281, *Uptown With Petula Clark;* **Sam Cook**, on the Keen label; *to be continued in the next issue...*

Jazz Takes *cont. from pg. 87*
good pianist; he has humor and technique to burn, and Steve Swallow has to be the best kept secret on electric bass (and as a composer). **Vassar Clements** — *Vassar* (Flying Fish FF-232) The king of country fiddlers shows that western swing, jazz-rock and good taste don't have to be mutually exclusive. A jumping good rave-up, Vassar's definite song.

Rock Shorts *cont. from pg. 84*
dence, and while the hooks are fewer and subtler here, there are enough to lure in the punters. Tunes like "I Die: You Die" and "Remind Me to Smile" are surprisingly emotion-laden for technorock. **The Police** — *Zenyatta Mondatta*, (A&M). The lyrics are more topical this time around, seems their world tour really widened their perspective. On the debit side, there's an odd feeling of disengagement in *Zenyatta*'s reggae/pop, especially the spacier dub-like tracks. At least they've cut down on the cavernous reverb that spoiled much of last year's *Regatta De Blanc*, though there's nothing here that approaches the dramatic power of "Message in a Bottle" — or anything from their excellent debut. Frankly in comparison to "Born in the Fifties" and "Roxanne" Zenyatta's tunes are dull, their arrangements cramped and introverted, their execution uninspired. Such are the perils of middleage.

Prine *cont. from pg. 82*
gem of a song that could be a nursery rhyme by a mad king.

Everything makes sense in and of itself, but it's the sort of sense made in dreams or on just waking up, a logic of the heart more than a logic of the head. From "One Red Rose":

One red rose
In the Bible
Pressed between
The Holy alphabet
Probably wouldn't believe you
If you told me
But what I never knew
I never will forget.

On the title song, the wistfulness Prine often falls into is undercut by an urgency that slices through his words and his games and his childhood mysteries until he approaches a passion above and beyond the scope of the song at hand: *Don't let your baby down/Don't let your baby down/Don't let your baby down* he sings with the voice of a man who has already let her down, again and again, and can't believe what he has done, who knows he will let her down again and still can't admit it to himself, until it becomes a song about his life — both the life he has lived and the life ahead of him, looming large and unprotected, no insulation and no storm windows; and a moment of terror and passion, a moment of true feeling blows through an otherwise well-intentioned, well-written, well-recorded, and slightly distant album.

World Radio History

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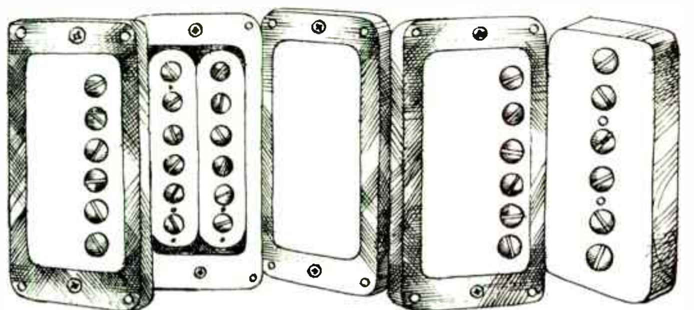

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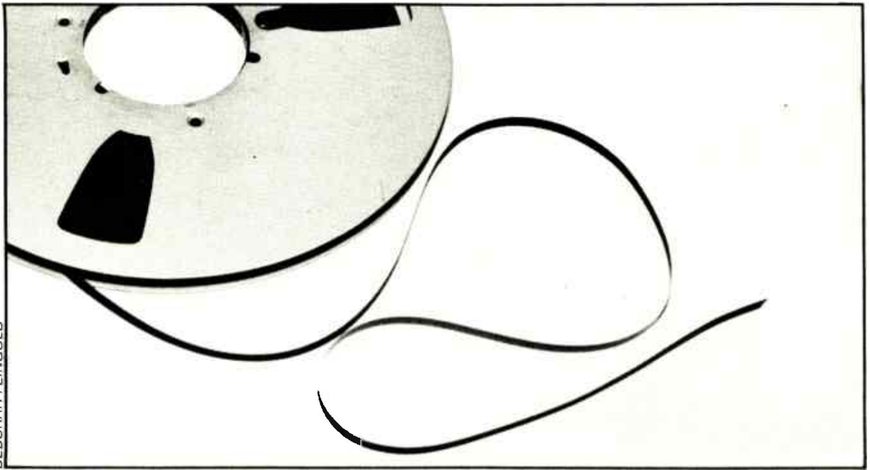
World Radio History

Choosing A Studio

MAKING A DEMO

Choosing the proper studio is one of the most important steps in making a good demo. Do's and don't's and how to choose are herein described.

By Jonathan Baird



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Shopping for studio time for the making of a demo is something like buying a car; there are too many ways to go for any one "right" solution. Some people just have to have all that chrome, late model Fleetwood style, with wire wheel hub caps and a console that would intimidate a 747 captain: definitely low mileage, high payment, no-substitute-for-quality machine. Others have that knack for coaxing a '65 Volks hundreds of thousands of miles, wrenches in the trunk, grease on the hands, a dent or two in the side panel and only a few bucks in the gas tank. Both cars can make the trip from Biloxi to Hollywood, but who is to say which owner made the "smart buy"?

Money, Time, Talent

While mathematicians shrink from the three body problems, you must solve it, and solve it before you buy. A change in one will change the other two. We can safely start with money, because you need to work from a budget and if yours is low, you have already made some decisions. The rule of thumb is that the better the equipment and services, the greater the price per hour. You can have more time in a lesser studio, or less time in a better studio.

How much time will you need? In budgeting time to a demo project, figure conservatively: an hour to set up for the session; an hour per song if you know it, up to three hours if you really don't; that's just the rhythm section; another hour each for vocals and any "sweetening" (horns, strings, etc.); another hour to mix. Got the idea? It always takes longer than you think unless you are prepared to realistically plan. Don't forget the cost of the tape, which in the eight and sixteen track formats can be a big factor. This is to help you understand that fewer songs which can be honed and polished will give you a better end product. Sure the bass player wants his song done, but if you go in with seven songs to do on a budget for four, you are missing the point of a demo. One good tune is all it takes to get into anyone's office (one is usually all they have time to hear anyway.) Go for one or two barnburners and make them sparkle; and, contrary to popular wisdom, a good demo has *no mistakes.*

Time in the studio is not the only factor. How well rehearsed is the group going in? The degree of tightness can be a big factor in choosing four-track, eight-track, or beyond. A rhythm section that is really tight may sound better in a simpler format; if one instrument doesn't know the part, you may have to go to eight or sixteen so you can take him out in the mixdown, something you can't do with four-track. On the other hand, if you really know the stuff, you can cut time off your session in a more expensive studio.

Talent is the first factor in evaluating the purpose of the demo: is this really for Columbia, or after you get your rejection, will it mainly be used to get gigs? No matter how much you believe in yourself, you are committing in some cases many thousands of dollars. Are you really ready or should you scale down your immediate goals and wait until next year to go into hock? How about your players? When they get in the studio, will they work quickly and efficiently? Will they have the maturity to recognize what is possible in a short time and not change arrangements in midstream? Furthermore, if there are weaknesses, shouldn't you try to get all the technological help you can get to improve their sound or mix them out? Don't wait until you are set up and the clock is running to discover all the potential for disaster.

One final word of well-paid-for advice: once these decisions are made, once you have decided to spend the money, don't be anxious about the time. Counting minutes and nagging people to hurry is virtually never helpful and usually devastating to everyone's energy. Savor the time you are there as you might an expensive meal in a swank restaurant.

Formats: The Lean, Mean Four Track

Multi-track recording is the use of a given number of separately recorded and playbackable modules; these can be done either simultaneously or at a later time. In four track, there are only four of these modules (eight track has eight, etc.); since anything larger than a power trio has more than four separate elements, using four track means one of two strategies must be used: either instruments must double up and share tracks (drums and bass on track one, guitar and keyboard on track two, horns on three, vocals overdubbed on track four in a typical example) or the first four instruments must be separately recorded, carefully mixed down onto a second two track deck (two tracks needed for stereo) and then transferred back onto two of the original deck's four tracks, leaving two more to finish. If more than six are needed, you go through the process again. This latter solution is called "bouncing tracks" and can be quite successful. Naturally it requires more time and tinkering, like the '65 Volks. Like the Volks, four track time is relatively inexpensive and errors and slowdowns are easily forgiven, pressure is at a minimum. Don't forget also that a simpler arrangement of a song or group of players can display the "product" more directly than a turgid mix of strings, horns, and the Raylettes. The buyer is buying you, not the Caddy's wire rim hubcaps you may feel will enhance your status.

As to "bouncing tracks," a word of caution: good noise reduction facilities are indispensable. Every time a recorded track is copied, tape hiss in the background grows. By the time the mixed-down first tracks return to the deck, they have been "dubbed" twice; by the time it goes onto your demo, it

continued on page 94

World Radio History

The DeltaLab Acousticomputer® Earns A "Character" Reference From CHEROKEE RECORDING STUDIOS

CHEROKEE
RECORDING STUDIOS

SEPTEMBER 15, 1980

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could be three or four times. The noise level by this time would be unacceptable for most uses. Standard noise reduction technique, called "Dolby" or DBX, involves amplifying the signal when it gets so quiet that the "noise" of the tape competes. This amplified signal gets above the level of hiss and then, when it is played back, the Dolby lowers not only the signal back to where it originally was, but the noise background as well, leaving the track quiet. If you were to play the track back without the Dolby to "decode" it, it would have all its dynamics screwed up, so if you do your recording in one studio and mix in another, that second studio has got to have Dolby as well. You *must* have noise reduction if you intend to "bounce" tracks.

With these inherent limitations, tightness can become an all important factor. Four track recording in the proper hands can give very adequate results for a small investment, especially if the demo is for more local use. A new wave act might really not need the layers of technological help when the directness and spontaneity of the act is its message. Most of the great bands of the sixties recorded in four track, including the epic *Sgt. Pepper's*. Before rock got fat and lazy, these limitations were an accepted part of recording and anyone that's hungry can say all they need on four tracks.

Eight-track: Freedom and Safety for Medium Bucks

Sgt. Pepper's notwithstanding, the jump to eight tracks opens a new world of flexibility and sound modification. By isolating each element, you can equalize, reverberate, swell, or get rid of it howsoever the mixdown requires. A good drum sound (see below) really requires two separate tracks (five are used in 16-track recording). After everyone leaves you can call back the bass player to redo his part, or get the reedman who was out of town last week. The sound in eight track is also cleaner, since there is more tape surface to handle the same amount of music. Eight track tape is not only wider, but it usually runs twice as fast. The electronic "image" of a musical statement is thus cleaner, sharper, less distorted, and fuller. This tape also costs more (getting the idea?) and becomes a factor in number of takes you "keep" and how many songs you can fit on the reels.

Spending in an eight track studio can be especially worth it if it is stocked with equipment that is standard in most major league 16 and 24 track houses. This equipment can make a demo done in eight sound like a more expensive one; more importantly, if the right events occur and someone wants to release it as a single or album cut, the following features will make that possible; without them, it will have to be remixed or more likely rerecorded.

1. Compression — This pushes the sound closer together so that the disparate ends of the sound, its highs and lows, are smoothed out. This means it can be recorded at a higher, more compact and cracklingly impacted level because it won't knock the VU meters over so far at the same volume. It also removes those "honks" or "burps" in a part.
2. Quality noise reduction (see above)
3. A really fine echo or reverb unit — Echo is a subtle repeat that our ear hears as putting depth and "wetness" on an instrument. Reverb has no such repeat, but processes the signal to give a similar shimmering quality. A cold, springy, ringing reverb can make a good vocal sound cheap. The *best* reverbs (which sound better to me than the best echoes) are breathtaking in their richness and warmth and make life in the studio a joy.
4. Full equalization capacity — Most boards have "EQ" in a very limited form; there may be three sets of controls which pick one frequency out of a choice of three or four that can be enhanced or attenuated. This is ok for a lot of EQ requirements, but external to the board there should be at least two equalizers of a minimum of 12 to 15 bands each. There is no substitute for the ability to fully describe the contour of an instrument's sound.

There are other features available that may be important to certain types of music: a good acoustic piano, a vocorder, synthesizer programming aids, but these first four can make the biggest difference in a demo. More and more demos getting to the major labels have these features and to be competitive you should try to include them.

Sixteen and Twenty-Four Track

This is really the jump to light speed you've been trying to make the whole movie, Han. People used to working in smaller formats may never get used to the flexibility. Background singers mixed in individually, guitar recorded both direct through the board and live through a microphone to get the best of both recording techniques. Five to seven drum tracks to perfectly mix a set of traps. There is a danger in all this freedom, of course; the time it takes to choose between all the possibilities, including overdubs, will always expand to fit the time you've purchased. Studio time in this format is often well over $200 per hour for a fully equipped facility.

Choosing the Studio

It is in this dazzling array of electronic choices that you need help, and the engineer is crucial to streamlining your project. Even the format you choose is less important than the choice of engineer. You *must* listen to what work he and his studio have done before booking time. Don't worry, you are perfectly entitled. Forget bargains from people

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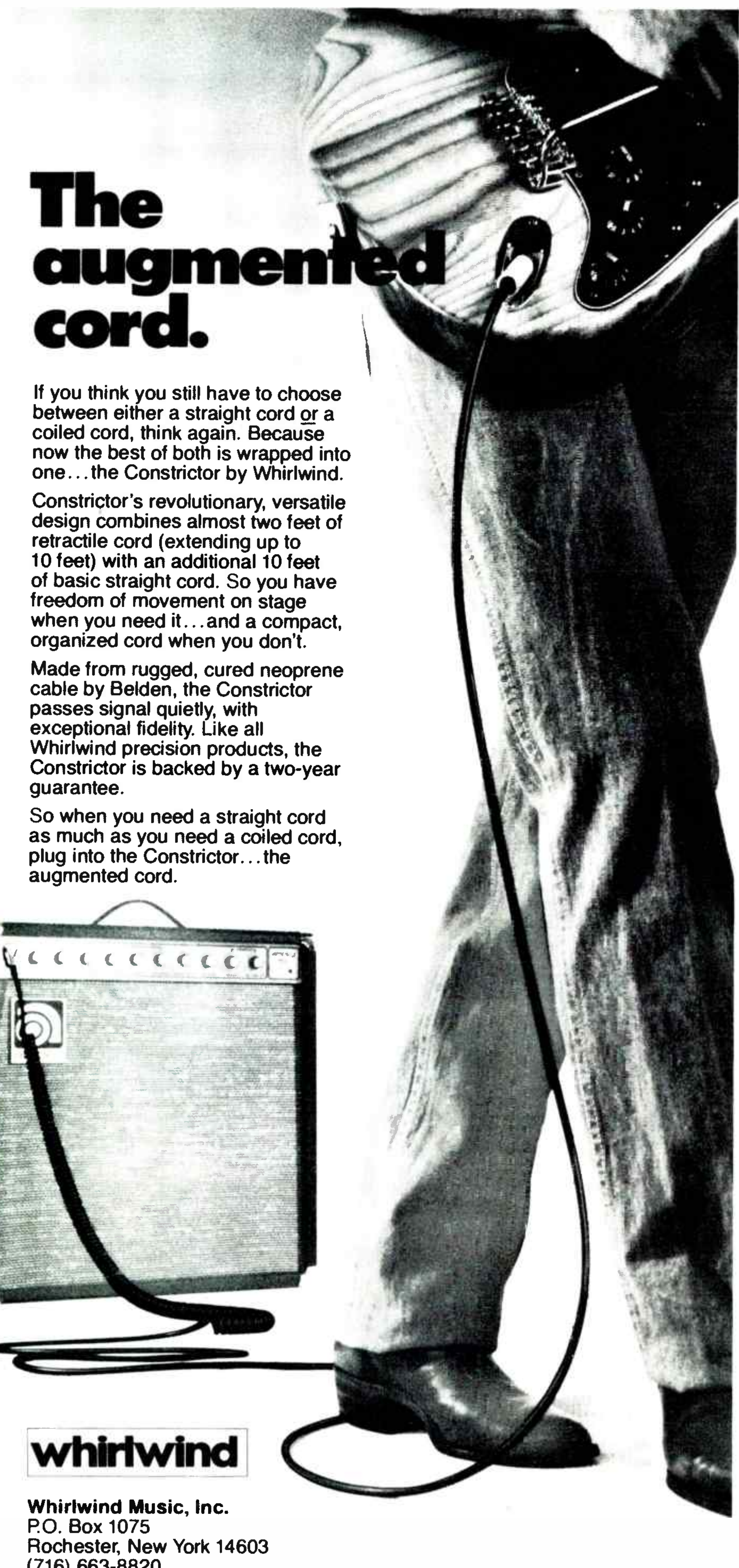

who are still learning, unless you're just experimenting yourself.

When you listen to the samples of his work, first listen to his drum sound. This is extremely important. There are many ways to mike drums and his personal competence will be best expressed in this detail. Snare crisp, toms thuddingly musical, high hat clean and hot without distortion. If you don't know what a good sound is, bring your drummer along. Setting up a set of traps is the single most time consuming job in the studio and if he doesn't know exactly what he's doing, not only will you pay more, but after waiting over two hours (it can easily happen) to play you will be overripe and edgy. Other instruments are also important: good guitar sound, fullness of the lead vocal or horn; whatever you need to record, you should hear a sample. If you have any doubts about these, discuss them with him in advance. If he's in a bargaining mood, he might not charge you for time he spends fixing up problems, or he might have another tape that has exactly what you want. Avoid describing what you want in vague terms; say, "Make it sound like the bass on the Grunts' tape you played me." Try also to judge how he mixes: is the sound cluttered, unclean? Is there a special quality you want like the dramatic echo of Phil Spector that he can do?

The engineer's personal maturity can make an intangible but major difference to a session. One engineer we worked with told us at the end of the five hours, "Boy, when you guys came in here, I thought this stuff was strictly left field, but it really came out great!" We had no idea he hadn't liked it, a tribute to that all-important professional attribute of keeping your mouth shut at key times. It would certainly have hurt our session. I have honestly seen engineers whine about how nowhere it all was and "the energy's just not there, let's call it." Avoid these types at all costs. Beware also of the "shine on." "Hey fellas, that take was great, let's do another song," when you know you can improve it.

One factor in choosing can be the studio's main room. Is it dingy and cluttered? Funny, the demo may sound that way. Can everyone see everyone else, even when acoustically isolated? If you're using a room sound, is there a ring or a frequency cancellation? Many studios measure carefully the loss in sound and put up baffles and reflectors to make their rooms perfectly "true." Another factor is maintenance. Great equipment that is not regularly cleaned, demagnetized and recalibrated is not great equipment.

The All-Important Cue System

The engineer also manages the single most important thing to the players and singers recording: the cue system. The cue system controls not those breathtaking studio monitors in the con-

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trol room, but the headphones which pipe what is being played back to the musicians. That sound is the only thing that brings people who are physically and acoustically isolated from each other back together. A poor cue system means that instead of everyone in the pocket together, they are wandering about in their own space with half a bass, no snare and a 5&10¢ guitar sound. Be it punks in isolation, or a symphony in 50 closets, all they are doing is trusting everyone else will arrive at the same bar together but never really knowing until they go into the monitor room to hear the take. This isolation, coupled with an inevitable playing conservatism in the studio, can produce a "studio lag", or lack of punch and crispness which no overdubbing can salvage.

A good cue system should include the ability to give each musician their own mix if they want it, and adequate power to make them feel no distance between each other. Good headphones are a must. The importance of this cannot be overrated because without it in a really expensive studio you can come out worse than if you had done a live tape in a four track room.

A studio should also show you their stable of microphones. The engineer makes crucial choices as to which mike works best for which situation and someone who's experimenting is not getting the best out of the equipment. The studio should have at least one really excellent mike for lead vocals.

Mixing may seem like a relatively simple process once everything is recorded, but in fact can be the most complicated. Just make sure you budget enough time for it in your overall package. Insist on a rough mix, maybe even a trial mix, that you can take home and absorb so you know where your problems and high points are. Try also to not mix by democracy, but get a "producer" to make some choices about the overall impact of the demo; everyone wants their own instrument loudest.

Far be it for *Musician* to urge you to spend your money, but you should not shrink from committing yourself to a big expenditure. A good demo can sell your act for years. It's your "shingle," your calling card. It matters more to your success than any other mobilization of capital and while you should not waste it, don't be afraid to use it if you really have something to say. It can transport you from the backwaters to the mainstream, like the proverbial Caddy or Volkswagen. No matter which you may purchase, it beats walking.

European Jazz *cont. from pg. 22*

melodizing with Mies and groping over Gropius. Terrific. Next. Here is a 400-year-old antique shop on Gamla Stan, the city's oldest island. Its background music: *Porgy and Bess*. Next. This is the subway, or Tunnel-Bana. The background music is provided by that young Swede with the leather jacket and the not-yet-gargantuan box blasting James Brown's culturally appropos "Sex Machine." Next. This is a Swedish restaurant on Gamla Stan. The background music: Ahmad Jamal's "Tranquility." So much for folk music. Next.

Here you see one of the posters that were up everywhere in the city announcing a club engagement of "Michael Urbaniak — The Great Violinist From New York." In the States, Urbaniak is still from Poland; go to Sweden and all of a sudden he's from New York. This is supposed to give credence and stature to his work. Next.

Ah yes, look at the beautiful, young Great Dane in the "Copenhagen: Jazz Center of Europe" T-shirt. What a sight. She's drinking coffee at the intermission of "American Pictures" — a slide show polemic on slavery, crime, pathology, and injustice in Black America which has been running in Copenhagen for a number of years — and listening to, you guessed it, *The Koln Concert*. We also heard it playing for the workers at a famed Danish porcelain factory. Better than white noise, no? Next.

That's me sitting in the park the next day thumbing through The International Herald Tribune which tells me that the Shah is a goner and that Kenny Drew's United M.F.s are playing at Club Monmartre. I'm smiling for both reasons. Next. Here I am bluffing my way into the club with an old press pass on the dubious grounds that I'm going to write about it. Fat chance. On the walls you

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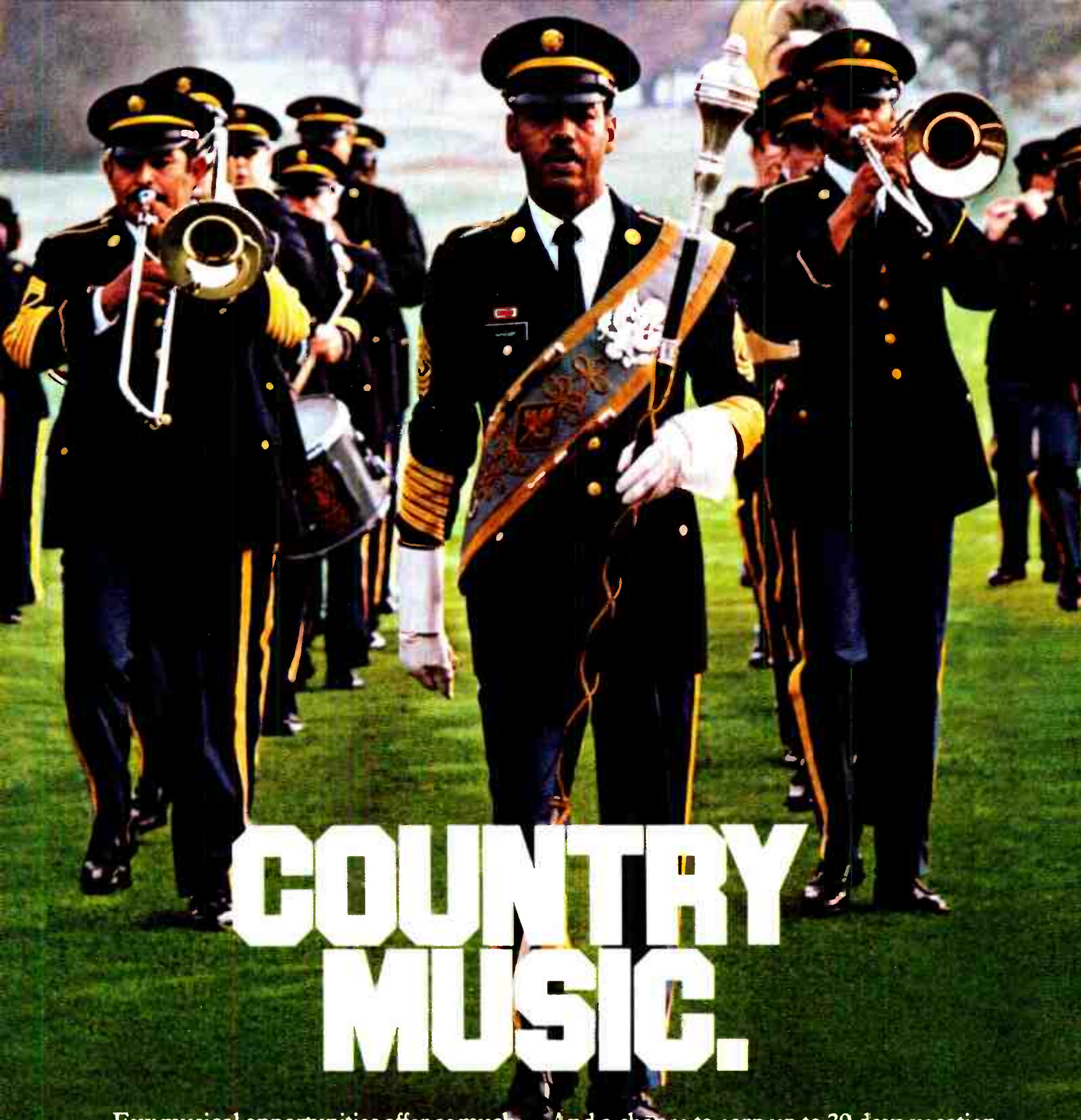

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"I designed this trumpet to offer the player an instrument that's exactly the same as my MF Horn except for the bore. The MF's is large — .468. This one's just a tad smaller — .465. I like this for the softer jazz things because it isn't quite as demanding as far as air power goes.

"Also, not everyone uses my size mouthpiece. A player might prefer a *huge* one. With this trumpet, we're giving him a bore that'll offset his mouthpiece better. Plus all the features that've made the MF so popular.

"Fast valves. I want to press a valve and see it come up fast. I've used hundreds of trumpets, and these are the valves that work the best.

"Toughness. I'm very rough on an instrument. So it has to be designed and constructed so it'll withstand me. And the airlines.

"A live bell. Holton and I experimented with smaller bells, bigger bells, less flare, more flare. And we hit on the one that has a live sound. It *rings!*"

Maynard Ferguson's Little Big Horn. The Holton MF4. It's included in a full-color 32-page catalogue of Holton brass and woodwinds. For a copy, just send two dollars to Leblanc, 7019 Thirtieth Avenue, Kenosha, Wisconsin 53141.

can see photos of Elvin, Dexter, Metheny, Manglesdorff, Zawinul, Cathrine Drew and national resource, Niels Henning Orsted-Pederson. Next.

This is Odense, Denmark's third largest city, in the midst of Hans Christian Anderson countryside. After a dinner comprised mainly of Carlsberg Elephant beer, we stumbled by accident into the town's only Jazzhaus of any note. The calendar outside the club listed a lot of unrecognizable many-voweled names, except for that night, when, something being ripe in the state of Denmark, Niels Henning himself would be in town, assisted by leading countrymen Ole Koch Hansen on piano and Alex Riel on drums. Next.

Here you see what a tiny club it is. Seats about eighty, stands maybe forty more. No tourists, cramped tables, much beer. NHOP was there in front, playing Bird tunes, originals, and Danish folk songs. The people of Odense were in high spirits at the sight and sound of Denmark's gift to the jazz world: they laughed at his jokes, clapped as if at a football match, and ostracized a gabbing young man for competing with a NHOP ballad. That brawny couple on the bench by the bandstand were so moved by the music that they regularly deposited a loose hand or two under the apparel of the other. I stayed three sets. Next.

Well we've made it to Amsterdam, and here's one of the vast halls of the Rijks Museum, home of heavy-duty hangings by Vermeer, Van Dyck, Hals, Steen, and Rembrandt. What hath they to do with jazz? In the museum's film on the development of the 17th Century Dutch painting, Miles Davis' *Workin' and Steamin'* and *Kind of Blue* provided the musical accompaniment. Each language group got different headsets for the narration, but the musical complement to the Dutch Masters was Miles in every language. I was stunned. I'll never look at Rembrandt with the same ears again. Next.

Here we are that night at Melkweg (The Milky Way), a big club with a restaurant, a shopping bazaar, a movie theatre (sub-titled Hitchcock and Marx Brothers this night), a tea room for improvisational music and a disco for music that isn't. In the tea room (next) it's hard to see cause of all the smoke from hash pipes and cigarettes, but there on a little raised stage is bassist Wilbur Little and an unknown flutist tossing the riffs back and forth on "Summertime." Next.

I took this with a wide angle lens so you see the whole scene: a mix of the 50s, 60s, and 70s — what with the jazz musicians, one with a beret and one with an echoplex, the alienated and grungy youth, the smoke and smell, the tea, the organic foods, the emphasis on plants and pillows, and the constant chatter which in the States takes place at establishment piano bars and businessmen's Dixieland jazz rooms but not above avant-garde bass/flute duets. Next.

Here the punked out girl with the razor-cut hair and the "FUCK ART: LET'S DANCE" T-shirt is taking her own advice downstairs at the Melkweg disco. By the time the Ska band comes on, the only people left in the tea room are the ones too stoned or too interested to make it downstairs. Next.

Well it's obviously nighttime and pouring rain in this one, which is of a little square in the best preserved Medieval city in northern Europe, Brugge, Belgium. Beneath the carrion bells, beside the canals, amidst the tourists, a "traditional" jazz band holds forth under the awning of that chi-chi cafe. It's the second night of the music fest, and the nighthawks are up drinking Geuze or Trappist beer and listening. The band is terrible, the clarinetist a step below Woody Allen. The crowd loves them. They're drunk, on vacation or both. Next.

Now if those aren't the tightest white pants you'll ever see. Possibly sprayed on, they belong to the hack singer who (inevitably) has come on for the last few numbers and sends the audience home for the night with six of the most endearingly bad, cartooned choruses of "Mack The Knife" (pronounced: Mick Da Nuff) I have ever heard. It is a classic moment in the history of international songdom. Next.

You probably recognize this one; it's the Pompidou Center in Paris, where we're grooving our way through an exhibit on geography and cartography on the top floor. Here you see my sister pointing to the Comment Book at the end of the exhibit where visitors are encouraged to leave their remarks. She found one guy from Belgium who wrote, in English, "Miles Davis would have liked this exhibit. He is a true explorer of frontiers." Next.

This is a picture of the Pompidou's vast plaza from above. You can see nine clustered groups on the terrace, each one huddled around some kind of Third World music making: Indian, African, Jamaican, Brazilian, Afro-American. The smallest crowd is down there to the left, surrounding a single saxophonist — a North African — who is playing nothing but variations on Sonny Rollins' theme, "Don't Stop The Carnival." I contributed a few francs to his cause, approached him and whispered, "Newk Lives Too" in his ear. Between breaths he smiled, maybe understood. Next.

The last slide, I promise. Here I am trying to go to sleep on the plane home. I'm listening to a Blondie Special on my TWA headset. After "The Hardest Part," the hipper-than-thou interviewer asks Debbie Harry what she's heading toward in the future. "Well you know," purrs Deborah, "what I'd really like to do is sing jazz." ■

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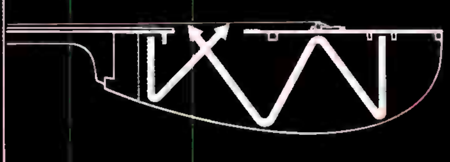

The science of acoustics says that a smooth, non-porous surface is the best reflector. To check this principle, we tested the best flat-backed guitars on the market. Science was right. Their wooden backs absorbed the tops' energy. Braces and squared-off corners trapped the sound inside. Roundback prototypes, on the other hand, showed outstanding projection throughout the entire guitar range. The smooth, rounded back pushed-out the sound more efficiently. Each note was clear and strong.

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STUDIO

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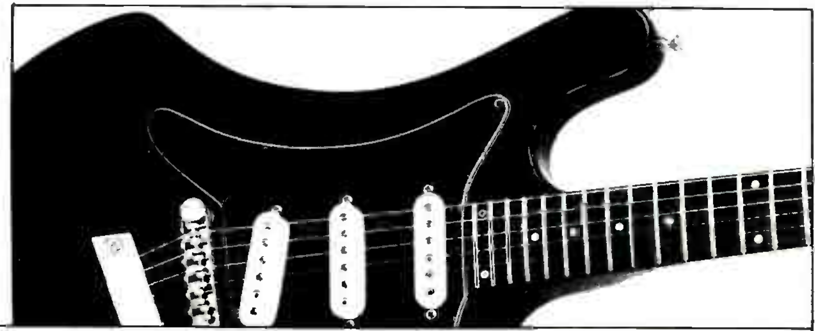
FINGERPICKING GUITAR PART II



Last month I outlined the right hand possibilities for fingerpicking on the guitar which can be applied to all styles. This month we'll focus on the characteristics which distinguish the particular styles called "Fingerpicking" and "Ragtime", which have their roots in the early popular and black music of this century.

Left Hand Technique
1. Use open strings where possible.
2. Fingerpicking tunes generally stay close to first position.
3. Ragtime tunes often employ bar chords.
4. Let notes ring as long as possible.
5. Fingerpicking tunes are based on chord forms; Ragtime is usually more contrapuntal.

Time Feels
1. Fingerpicking tunes are often played with a jazz eighth note feel which is sometimes erroneously notated in 12/8 time.
2. Ragtime guitar, which imitates Ragtime piano, is generally played with a straight eighth, "legit" feel.
3. Try playing different pieces both ways.

Harmony
1. Fingerpicking tunes generally have simple diatonic or modal harmonic structures using few chords and repetitive bass lines.
2. Ragtime tunes often employ chromatic harmony, cyclic dominant seventh chords, and independent bass lines.

The two examples this month should provide you with a good introduction to these two styles which you can eventually apply to others. An extensive introduction to the Fingerpicking repertoire can be found in my book *Guitar Ragtime and Fingerpicking Styles* (Freelance Press).

The Fingerpicking and Ragtime styles are particularly rewarding because they make use of the guitar as a complete instrument, with melody, bass, and occasional harmony. They have been used for years as vocal accompaniment. Often the guitar plays the same thing with the voice as when alone; that is, it plays the melody all the time. The playing of Doc Watson shows some clear examples of this (see below).

Chet Atkins, who devoted a fingerpicking style around the playing of Merle Travis, has taken fingerstyle guitar a long way into pop music, utilizing pop and traditional tunes wherever he found them and presenting them in a way that is appealing to mainstream America. Check out "The Best of Chet Atkins." Guy Van Duser has followed in Chet Atkins' footsteps, although he is known for his fingerstyle arrangements of John Philips Souza marches and old standards, my favorites in his music are the Irish tunes that he does with pennywhistler Billy Novick. I like his playing very much! He's versatile, fun to listen to and sports a virtuosic technique. Look for his recording "Guy Van Duser" on Rounder records. Guy's influence is spreading fast. Chet Atkins is playing Souza marches, and it seems that each semester at Berklee College, at least one student in my fingerpicking class knows some of Guy's arrangements.

Doc Watson is another master of Fingerpicking and Ragtime guitar, who leans toward traditional country, blues and folk music. He picks with his thumb and forefinger so flawlessly that you'd swear he was using more fingers. Look for "Doc Watson on Stage" and "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. Stefan Grossman has done a lot to advance the popularity of fingerstyle guitar through his concerts, lectures, magazine columns, books (Oak Publications), and his record company, Kicking Mule. Lately he has teamed with John Renbourn for a series of very entertaining concerts and recordings. Send for a Kicking Mule catalog (P.O. Box 3233, Berkeley, CA 94703).

Jerry Reed is a fine Nashville fingerpicker. He has many records on RCA which highlight guitar and his often humorous vocals. He seems to have been influenced by Ray Charles, and plays a lot of 'pianistic' vamps. Check out "The Unbelievable Guitar and Voice of Jerry Reed." Lenny Breau also has roots in country music, but is becoming a major influence in fingerstyle jazz guitar. He has an advanced harmonic sense along the style of Bill Evans. Several of his legendary records are out of print collector's items (*Live at Shelley's Manne Hole* and *Lenny Breau —RCA*), so look for *Lenny Breau Now* on Soundhole Records.

Well, that 's all for now. Have a good time learning to fingerpick. If you have particular suggestions for this column, you can write to me in care of *Musician, Player & Listener*.

Next Month: BLUES

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Finally...

DLX-1
After three years of development, DiMarzio is proud to announce the DLX-1, our first replacement pickup for small "mini" humbuckers, as well as for "soapbar" single coil pickups. The DLX-1 offers greater output and increased sensitivity for a more powerful attack. Features include 12 adjustable pole pieces, a creme cover, and 4-conductor wiring for all tonal options.

VS-1
As guitarists have become more knowledgeable and demanding about sound, DiMarzio has received many requests for an authentic "old" Strat sound. The VS-1 captures this sound, as well as the construction and appearance of the 1950's style pickup, including flat-white cover and 2-conductor wire.

TDS-1
The TDS-1 is DiMarzio's most advanced single coil pickup. It features adjustable pole pieces with reduced magnet "pull" similar to our own SDS-1, a new cover format for improved shielding, and two distinct sounds, obtained by means of a coaxial coil. One sound produces the TDS-1's full output; the second is cleaner and brighter.

Our new Bridge and Pickguard can also be seen in the photo at left. Write for more information.

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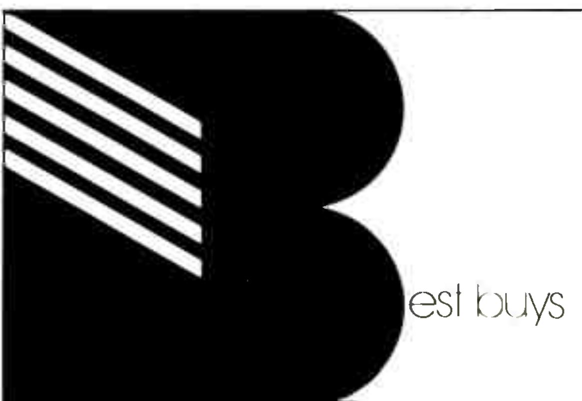


Whirlwind Music has introduced the Constrictor, an innovative instrument cord combining ten feet of straight cord with a 20-inch coiled, expandable body. Its unique design provides musicians with the neatness of retractile cords and the freedom of movement offered by straight connecting cords. Fully extended, the Constrictor provides an overall length exceeding 20 feet. The Constrictor is built to meet the highest professional standards and is backed by a full two-year guarantee. Whirlwind Music, Box 1075, Rochester, NY 14612.

Korg announces the newest member of its keyboard family: the new BX-3 Dual Manual Combo Organ. Offering classic "Tone Wheel" voicings, the BX-3 is packaged in its 44-lb. wood cabinet with two separately voiced 5-octave manuals, each with full 9-drawbar complement, electronically switched presets, and full Percussion. Additionally, the BX-3 includes a most remarkable recreation of the Rotary Speaker effect, which electronically "speeds up" and "slows down" simulated upper and lower baffles at different rates, for true realism. Unicord, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590.

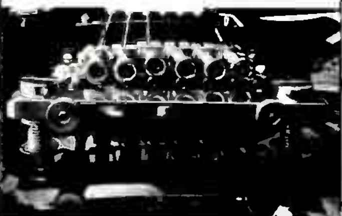
With **MXR**'s new Model 137 Power Converter, musicians now have the choice of running their MXR pedal products by battery or from any AC outlet. The MXR Power Converter is capable of powering any device that requires a 9-volt supply and does not draw more than 65 mA of current. It can convert simultaneously all the MXR battery-operated power products. The Power Converter is housed in a rugged, diecast box and comes equipped with one MXR Model 138 Back Plate Adapter. MXR Innovations, 740 Driving Park Ave., Rochester, NY 14613.

DOD announces a new practice amp/pre-amp, the Mini-Amp 650, measuring only 7¼ by 5¼ by 1¾ inches. The 650 employs a true complimentary symmetry output amplifier for very high efficiency from its 6 "AA" batteries. Even though it produces ½-watt RMS, standby current is only 2 mA. The 650 has two special 2½-inch ceramic magnet speakers for unusually high volume and clear sound. Suggested list price is $89.95. DOD, 242 West 2950 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84115

Dragon Drum launches their new line of acrylic tom-toms into the drum world. Dragon Drums are six seamless acrylic drums, all with a six inch head diameter. The drums feature a unique projection design, which allows for easier microphone placement and better sound projection towards an audience. The lengths of the drums are varied, thus allowing the drummer unlimited tuning possibilities. Because Dragon Drums are a set of six, they can be tuned to one-half a chromatic scale. A versatile mounting system holds all six drums on one heavy-duty stand and permits the drummer to reposition the drums. Dragon Drum, 6804 E. 48th, Denver, CO 80216.

On tour throughout the world, the U.S. Bass is being used as a promotional instrument for the new **Black Diamond** bass strings. Every Black Diamond distributor will have the opportunity to use and demonstrate this bass with the new B-500L Black Diamond strings. International Music Corporation, 1316 E. Lancaster, Ft. Worth, TX 76101.

Tripp Suspension Bridges are a powerful, patent-pending innovation in musical stringing technique. They truly terminate the string by replacing the conventional saddle with what is in effect a wall. The result is that the restoring forces on the strings are balanced, more energy is kept in the speaking portion of the string, and the friction between the string and saddle is eliminated. The musical effects are: more output, clearer sound (in both single note passages and dense chord forms), increased sustain free from step-wise drop-offs, and last but not least, easier string bending. No modification of the instrument required. Perfect Fretworks Co., 79 Newton St., Somerville, MA 02143.



Washburn proudly introduces the "Festival Series" Electric-Acoustic, utilizing a revolutionary high output tone generator which minimizes feedback and string noise, while eliminating the need for a pre-amp and battery. Deep body and shallow body models offer varying degrees of volume, bass and projection depending on the musician's needs. Volume and EQ controls are mounted in a rosewood ring on the upper bout for fast, easy access. The cutaway body style permits easy access to highest frets while offering added visual appeal. Fretted Industries, 1515 Waukegan Road, Northbrook, Ill. 60062.

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We first set musicians free with the Pignose 7-100, the battery-powered amp that gives the electric guitar the same mobility as the acoustic. With the 7-100, anywhere you practice—hotel room, garage, limo, kitchen, dressing room or a place in the park—becomes your rehearsal hall.

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But what if you want all of these Pignose features on two complete channels? Plug into the Pignose 150R CROSSMIX.

Set channel one and channel two for different sounds. You can pre-set different volumes and tones on each channel. Or use different effects. Or use different instruments on each channel. A footswitch allows you to switch between channels quietly, instantly. Or crossmix both channels at the same time. For more sounds try splitting your effects between channels.

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BILL EVANS
1929—1980

ALLAN TANNENBAUM

By Chuck Israels

Chuck Israels, bassist, composer, arranger and director of the National Jazz Ensemble, was a member of the Bill Evans Trio from 1961-66 and remained a friend until Evans' death.

Bill Evans is dead and no one will ever draw such a sound from the piano again. His touch was remarkable for a perfect control that came from great strength. His fingers, poised a scant hair's breadth over the piano, drove the keys like pistons propelled by steel springs, or caressed them with the sensitivity of a cat's whisker. The nuances were exquisite — every line a different voice with its own intensity and color, and every voice a song. He was committed to profound expressivity and intellectual rigor, romantic embellishment and ascetic avoidance of excess. In the moments that he was inspired to talk about music, he could do it with the same intense poetry and insight that he brought to his performances.

If you cared to learn, he could teach you that chords were subservient to linear priorities, that rhythmic variety was reconcilable with precision and swing, or that one simple, controlled statement was worth a thousand meandering ideas. He showed that all musical experience (and he had encyclopedic knowledge from which to draw) was applicable to jazz improvisation if it was steeped in deep feeling and honestly brought to bear on the task at hand. He synthesized everything through himself, integrating eclecticism and bringing each reference wholly into the new musical moment.

By following his convictions to their logical conclusions, he opened vast areas to investigation by other jazz musicians. In this, and many other respects, he was a pathfinder, even for those who don't yet know enough to begin the search.

In jazz, only Ellington had a comparable breadth of musical interest, and while his pursuits carried him further in some directions, no one probed deeper into what could be done with a conventional song than Bill. In concentrating on the piano and on song form, Bill left some of his possibilities unrealized. Efforts towards larger musical enterprises that involved him were often hindered by his limited participation in the overall planning. He left those matters to others whose artistic sensibilities were less developed than his, resulting in occasional big projects that produced less gratifying results than the small group efforts which Bill controlled himself. He was a superb arranger of music — imbuing each piece with details that captured so much spontaneous feeling that they seemed improvised even on the hundredth performance. He had the Beethovenian knack for making a total surprise seem inevitable in retrospect.

Within the area that he worked best, he was an uncompromising artist, representing the highest level of American achievement. We owe it to his memory to maintain the cultural space for this kind of music to live. If we participate actively or passively in acceptance of the onslaught of less than honest music with which we are bombarded on the radio and television, and to which we are sometimes subjected in the concert halls, we risk a polluted environment in which no Bill Evanses will grow or thrive.

Among those who can produce music in Bill's memory, there are some who will. Among those who can't, there is at least the possibility of turning off the mechanical drone to leave room for music.

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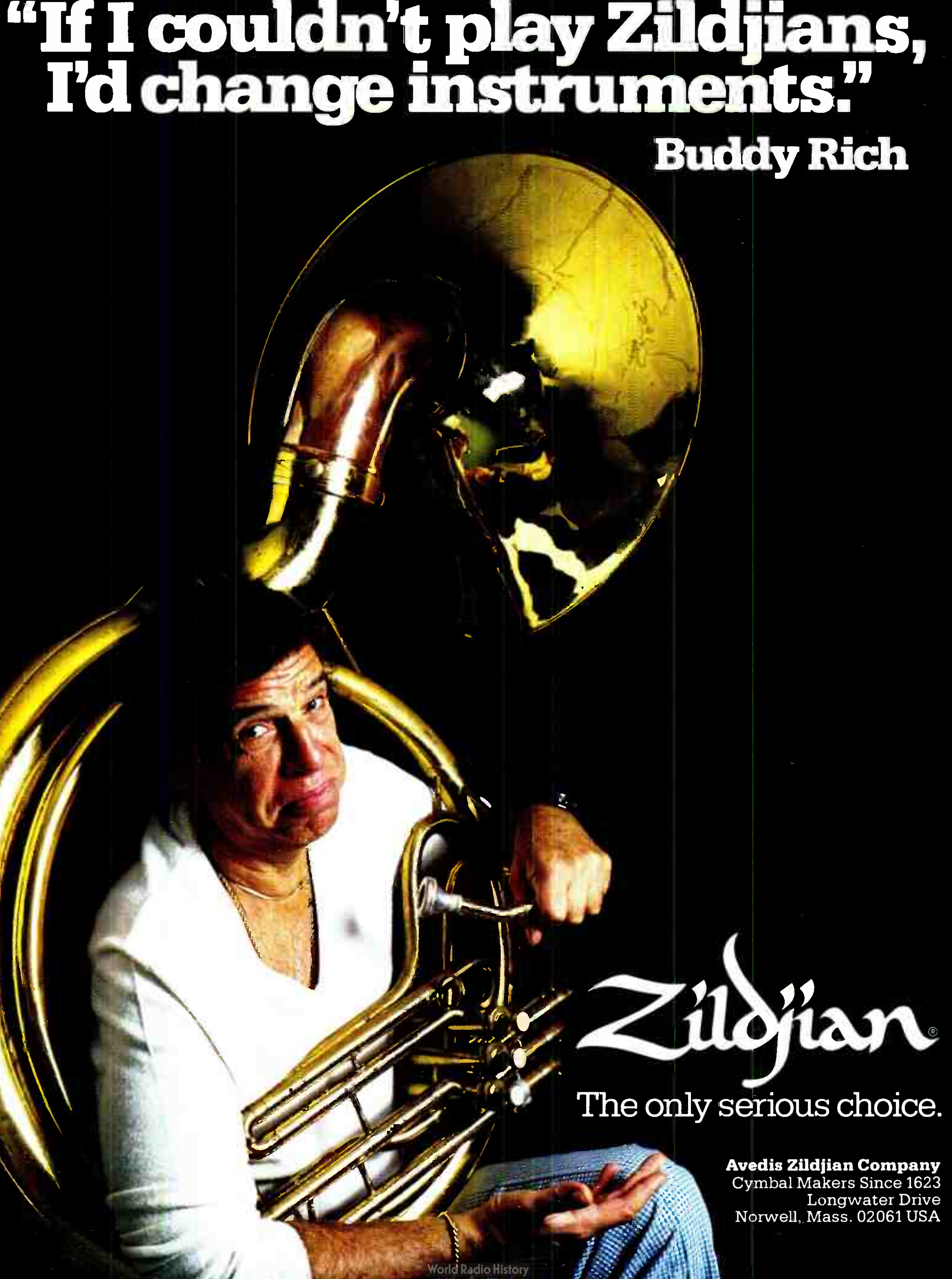

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