

# MUSICIAN

\$1.95 NQ #3 JANUARY 1984

## AUSTRALIA CALLING!

A Report from Down Under

BY DAVID FRICKE

### MIDNIGHT OIL

*They're not punk...*  
*They're not pop...*  
*They're not kidding.*

UB40

RONNIE LANE

OLU DARA

JIMMY PAGE



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World Radio History

Unicord 1983

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# MUSICIAN

C O N T E N T S

## AUSTRALIAN ROCK

*A search for the musical heart of a hot continent which is now producing some of the best new rock 'n' roll around. David Fricke fearlessly forays into aboriginal outback and steamy beer-barns to capture Australia's finest: Midnight Oil, Mental As Anything, Hunters & Collectors, the Celibate Rifles, the Saints and many more up and comers from down under.*

By David Fricke ..... 44



## JIMMY PAGE

*A rare conversation with the guitarist who reconstructed rock, the creator and leader of sophistopower kings Led Zeppelin. Page talks about his secret studio life, the Yardbirds, the birth and death of Zep and comments on the best albums and tracks of a seminal 70s band.*

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# PAINT THE TOWN REGGAE.

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# Letters

## HALF-COCKED JARRETT

Thank you, *Musician*, for giving Keith Jarrett yet another opportunity to demonstrate what a pompous jerk he is. And thank you, David Breskin, for not allowing yourself to be bamboozled by Mr. Jarrett's bullshit.

All the best,  
Elmer Edwards  
New York City, NY

If Keith Jarrett had applied his philosophy on record making to his marriage, his handsome son Gabriel would never have been born. Of course, then Jarrett's business manager would never have screwed him. Imagine that!

William Minnick  
Harrisburg, PA

## ELVIS ON THE ARTS

Thank God and Timothy White for the fine Elvis Costello interview. It's about time Elvis received some good press. The only low point was Elvis' statement against music video. Granted, some bands use video as only a fashion statement, but the overall impact of MTV has been to force programmers of AOR mediocrity to take chances, chances like playing Elvis' music.

So Elvis, the next time you tune in MTV and have to sit through an idiotic Journey video, remember that eternal question, "What's so funny about peace, love and understanding?"

K.W. Zoeller  
San Antonio, TX

So Elvis Costello thinks "writing about music is like dancing about architecture"? I am a young writer, often occupied with musical subjects, and, yes, I've been known to do an occasional two-step to Frank Lloyd Wright, and I've slam-danced to Buckminster Fuller. And I'm damn proud of it.

Matthew Karas  
Bethlehem, PA

## BAD CREDIT

*Musician* has performed an important service by spotlighting some of the significant session men at Motown. Not enough has been written about this neglected area of Motown's great success, and I hope this article will spark other writers to tell more.

It's a crying shame James Jamerson didn't live long enough to see his story told fully.

Gary Kimber  
Downsview, Ontario, Canada

## CLUB CLUBBED

I'm writing to thank you and Geoffrey Himes for the nice article and darling pictures of Boy George and Culture Club. I really feel bad when I read the insults about him some magazines print; they should provide responsible reporting, not insulting opinions. Don't hesitate to cover Culture Club again.

Sylvia Nagle  
Mesa, AZ

Where did Baby Boy George get the idea that music is a competitive sport? Why can't he and his band just make their music and shut up? Why did you print that article and make me read it? Oh never mind, never mind.

I hope Baby Boy swallows his lipstick, the whiney bastard. He's worse than J.D. Considine.

Bob Larsen  
East Haven, CT

## UGLY IS AS UGLY DOES

I am stunned that your magazine would print a vile letter such as the one in your November issue on Joan Jett. To quote: "The bitch is ugly." This sounds like the tripe other rock magazines like to print with relish. Constructive criticism is one thing, but sophomoric vulgarity belongs in the gutter. Joan, who is one of the hardest-working people in the music business, deserves better. By the way, Charles M. Young's article on Joan was witty and touching in its obvious reverence. May Joan and Mr. Young reign in their respective worlds for a long time.

We should all be so ugly.  
Denise Chamberlain  
Lewiston, ME

## REVIEW RANTS 'N' RAVES

On the subject of Doug Simmons' review of *Rant 'N' Rave With The Stray Cats*: so Brian Setzer brags about his dumbness, huh? Not as Mr. Simmons does, writing a review like that; and don't tell me that Mr. Simmons wouldn't like to afford a '57 Cadillac. Dougie is right about one thing, though: Setzer's not a bad guitarist, and he's not a bad singer. But as the chorus of "How Long You Wanna Live, Anyway?" goes...if you-know-who keeps writing reviews such as the one presented, Mr. Simmons must want to die pretty fast.

S.C. Manville  
Cleveland, OH

I wish I were merely critical of Chip Stern's review of Jon Hassell's *Aka/Darbari/Java*; instead, the review makes my blood boil. Mr. Stern almost camouflages the half-baked nature of his thoughts on Hassell's "Fourth World" music by stooping to irrelevant and indeed racist quasi-Japanese phraseology, but he still appears ignorant of his subject. I don't think Mr. Stern has any right to work for a magazine which calls itself *Musician* if he cannot detect any African or Indonesian elements or thematic development on *Aka/Darbari/Java*: exotica goes a long way beyond call-and-response. Furthermore, it is a grievous error to associate Jon Hassell with people who "make up like kabuki from *Rocky Horror Picture Show*."

The point is, Hassell's music deserves the critical attention of someone who is more knowledgeable about both Third World music and Jon Hassell. This person's work demands a longer attention span and a better grasp of abstraction than the AC/DC or Def Leppard albums which Mr. Stern was perhaps playing before he decided to listen to *Aka/Darbari/Java*.

Michael Azerrad  
New York City, NY

Mr. Stern, whose listening habits are better represented by his *Olu Dara* article on page 24, replies: "Zzzzzzz...."

Vic Garbarino's [sic] review of X's *More Fun In The New World* was perceptive and laudatory enough, but nothing is more annoying than to see a line from one of their songs misquoted. For the record (and for Mr. Garbarino's information), the line from "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts" is "will the last American band to get played on the radio please bring the flag," not "we're the last American band to get played on the radio; please break the (Black) flag."

Michael Kaminer  
Baltimore, MD

## HARDCORE THREAT

This is the first time I have ever had the want, need or guts to respond to an article in a magazine, but after reading R.J. Smith's article on Minor Threat I had to congratulate him for a well-written story. Hardcore punk is a widely underestimated form of music, and although the music itself is not the type of thing Mozart would prefer, the philosophy and energy is enough to make anyone stand up and notice.

Perry Lowe  
Apopka, FL

The photograph of Mick Jagger on page 53 of the December issue was taken by Rocky Widner/Retna.



# DRUMS HAVE BEEN ROUND FOR AGES



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World Radio History



# MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

By Mark Rowland

For years AOR radio has been wiping out its competitors with a lowest common denominator formula of music by white rock superstars and heavy metal dinosaurs. But now, with top forty radio resurgence and an influential MTV cutting away at its power base, AOR has been forced to revise and re-examine the pat strategies of its past.

Few AOR heavies carry more weight than **Lee Abrams**, whose consulting firm, Burkhart/Abrams, influences and occasionally determines format for eighty "superstar stations" across the country. For years Abrams resisted inclusion on AOR of modern black pop or new wave because it wasn't inherently commercial enough; once the success of MTV-backed bands like the Police, Prince, Men At Work and the Stray Cats proved Abrams wrong, he quickly reversed field and embraced the rock of the 80s. Now the top is eroding AOR market shares, however, Abrams is hedging his bets by codifying new music into categories which he calls "horizontal" and "vertical." Horizontal should cut across several formats to reach a mass audience; vertical sounds are more in keeping with the identity of a particular artist. A balance of the two, in Abrams view, would give AOR programming both "familiarity" and "depth."

Sounds reasonable. But a memo recently circulated to AOR stations by Abrams consultant **Dwight Douglas** suggests a strategy that is less of a program than a pogrom. Douglas applauds "precise positioning image management," with singles like Toto's "Africa," Irene Cara's "Flashdance" and Eddy Grant's "Electric Avenue." He also urges the avoidance of

vertical songs, and claims that AOR courts "ratings suicide" by playing Elvis Costello, Graham Parker, the Plimsouls, Joan Armatrading, Juluka and Robert Palmer, among others. "The record industry has been extremely successful," Douglas warns darkly, "in getting records played... that have no business being on the radio."

Some of Abrams own clients refused to buy this one. Alan Sneed, who programs WKLF in Atlanta, la-beled Douglas' contentions "ridiculous." Soon Abrams himself was calling the Douglas memo "over zealous, a bit harsh. It certainly doesn't represent the company line." We'll see.

Boston's first album, released in 1977, sold over eight and one-half million copies, the biggest selling LP in the history of Columbia Records. A follow-up in 1978 sold over three million, and when another year rolled by, fans and observers waited expectantly for the group's third effort. And waited. And waited. Last month Michael Jackson's *Thriller* finally unseated Boston as Columbia/Epic's all-time bestseller, and as if to commemorate the event, the barristers of Black Rock have filed suit against Boston in federal district court, charging breach of contract and demanding twenty million dollars in damages.

Columbia's speculative arithmetic goes like this: ten million dollars in lost sales deriving from Boston's failure to deliver albums three, four and five; five million dollars in lost catalog sales of Boston's first two records, due to failure to deliver albums three, four and five; and finally, five million dollars in lost revenues from five *additional* Boston albums, had CBS chosen to exercise its contract option following the delivery and predicted success of albums three, four and five. In other words, Boston is being sued for depriving CBS of the opportunity to make gobs of money on ten different albums, eight of which do not, so far, exist.

Note that nowhere in the suit does Columbia charge Boston with actually owing them any real money. Indeed, Jeff Dorenfeld, who along with Boston auteur Tom Scholz co-manages The Slowest Working Band In Show Business, claims that Scholz is still toiling away on the band's next record (tentatively titled *Third Stage*), and funding the project "completely out of his own pocket." Meanwhile, CBS has frozen the band's royalties. Our Christmas prediction: Boston will deliver a counter-suit; that way, Columbia will at least get something.

March 1973: Spiro Agnew is Vice-President. Bill Bradley is a forward on the best team in basketball. Elton John rules rock. And *Dark Side Of The Moon*, the fifth LP by art-rock prototypes Pink Floyd, makes its first appearance on the *Billboard* charts.

November 1983. Bill Bradley is a senator, Elton and the Knicks are trying out comebacks and someone, no doubt, has replaced Agnew as Vice-President. And *Dark Side Of The Moon*, nearing its five-hundredth week on the charts, has become the longest running LP since *Billboard* began keeping tally thirty—eight years ago.

Pink Floyd's perseverance puts them in some interesting and unexpected company. The previous chart record of 490 weeks was held not by Elvis, the Beatles or even Bing, but by Johnny Mathis, whose *Johnny's Greatest Hits* reigned from 1958 to 1968. In third place is the original cast soundtrack from *My Fair Lady*. None of Pink Floyd's earlier albums have ever cracked the top forty, but *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which unlike its subject abounds with atmosphere, went straight to #1 and stayed in the top ten for twenty-seven weeks. Incidentally, however, after ten years on the charts, the album has yet to go platinum. At the moment, it's coasting along at #162, with no plans to retire in the near future. We'll give you an update in 1993.

Why didn't **Rod Stewart** participate in the ARMS benefit for **Ronnie Lane**? **Eric Clapton** was said to be so angry at Stewart's lack of support for Lane, he vowed to walk out should Rod take the stage and attempt to steal the show.

## Chart Action

The Police still walk their beat on top of the *Billboard* charts, but Michael Jackson's *Thriller* is no longer a buffer at #2; it slipped a notch to make way for Quiet Riot, who just might ride the re-make of Slade's "Cum On Feel The Noize" all the way. Bonnie Tyler and Billy Joel have switched positions at #4 and #5, respectively, and Kenny Rogers has inched to #6. ZZ Top's *Eliminator* and Linda Ronstadt's homage to fifties standards *What's New* round out the top ten, which may surprise a few fans. Ronstadt's last LP, *Get Closer*, did not even crack the top twenty.

Elsewhere, AC/DC and the Stray Cats fizzed out early, while Genesis and Culture Club are moving up fast. Jump of the week belongs to John Cougar and/or Mellencamp, whose *Uh Huh* bounced from #78 to #25, better than flubber. Meanwhile, Dylan and the Stones prepare to mount the year's final siege.



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It also means a lot more bang for your buck. The amazing truth is, a single Fender 2244 will drive eight typical 8-ohm p.a. cabinets beyond their rated power! Try that with the amp you're using now.

On second thought, don't try it.

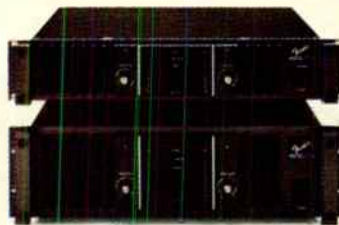
#### **The "Brownout-Proof" power supply.**

With most amps, you're totally at the mercy of the local AC line voltage. When it drops (as it almost always does under heavy loads), so does your output power.

Our solution is a sophisticated phase-controlled, "back slope" power supply that maintains full output with AC voltages as low as 105v. Typical amps lose as much as 20% of their rated power under these "real world" conditions (a good

reason to beware when comparing amplifier specs). **New thinking about heat sinking.**

Heat. The number one enemy of electronic components. Typical convection cooling puts an absolute limit on the amount of power you can get out of an amplifier. So we developed a unique forced air, turbulent flow heat



exchanger. The system uses forced air drawn through the amp's front panel—instead of the hot air inside the typical amp rack. The output devices' individual heat exchangers are built of copper for its superior heat conduction, instead of the cheaper and less efficient aluminum that most use.

Our heat exchanger is one reason that Fender amps are physically smaller than the competition's—and inherently more reliable.

#### **"Super Rails" for superior performance.**

For all their brute strength, Fender amplifiers don't miss a trick in circuit sophistication. One example: separate "super rails" supply voltage for the driver stages, which ensure that the output devices are driven cleanly, right up to the clip point, delivering cooler operation and lower distortion. There's also a servo feedback circuit that prevents speaker-damaging DC offsets at the outputs.

The bottom line is performance specs that would satisfy the most critical audiophile: THD under 0.05%, >42 volt/microsecond slew rate, etc.

#### **"Real World" advantages.**

Everywhere you look on a Fender amp, you'll find thoughtful touches of excellence that make it easier to work with.

For example, we've provided both ¼" and XLR-type inputs (both male and female)

with high-speed, electronically balanced circuitry instead of the typical distortion-producing, sonically inferior transformers. A single switch lets you select stereo, parallel mono, or bridged mono operation. Others give you optional 20 or 40Hz input filtering to eliminate power-wasting low frequencies. And the indicator panel gives you complete status information, with true peak-reading "bar graph" power meters, plus warning lights for clip and standby. Massive front panel extrusions and heavy-gauge steel chassis ensure survival under the most grueling road abuse.

Fender Pro Sound equipment is built in one of the most modern electronic production facilities in the world—with exhaustive Quality Control measures every step of the way. (Computer-controlled diagnostics thoroughly test every signal path of every amplifier for all parameters.) We hate failures in the field as much as you do.

See the extraordinary new Fender 2244 and 2224 at your Fender Pro Sound dealer soon. Compare them with the most advanced amplifiers available. Judged on specs, on sound, or on sheer value for the dollar, you simply won't find an amp that comes close.

#### **Specifications:**

##### **THD and IMD:**

2244: 0.05%, 20-20kHz  
2224: 0.05%, 20-20kHz

##### **Power rating:**

2244: 440w/channel/4 ohms  
2224: 240w/channel/4 ohms

##### **S/N ratio:**

2244: greater than 100dB  
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# RONNIE LANE BENEFIT

## ARMS AND THE MAN: BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE REUNION CONCERT OF THE DECADE

### BILL FLANAGAN

Ronnie Lane can walk now and he couldn't before. After five years of refusing to admit—first to himself and later to the public—that he had multiple sclerosis, the songwriter was in a wheelchair.

Now the veteran British rocker has found a treatment that he believes could end his long night of despair. Hyperbaric oxygen treatment is essentially the same process as the decompression that scuba divers who suffer from the bends must undergo. It isn't a cure for MS but it can arrest the deterioration of the muscles that the disease brings. Its remarkable effect was revealed to me one evening after our first interview session, when Ronnie suggested we take a break and go out for supper.

He rose slowly and made his way down the stairs from his second-floor flat in London's Kentishtown. As we approached the front steps I offered my arm for Ronnie to lean on. He waved me away. When he reached the bottom Ronnie burst into a wide smile and his girlfriend, Boo Oldfield, clapped her hands together. Seeing my puzzled expression, Ronnie explained, "That's the first time in two years I've walked down those steps without sticks."

Ronnie Lane became famous as the bassist for Small Faces. Together with singer/guitarist Steve Marriott, Lane wrote classic psychedelic hits like "Itchycoo Park," "Tin Soldier," "My Way Of Giving" and "Here Comes The Nice." The other two Small Faces were Ian MacLagen (who went on to play keyboards for the Rolling Stones) and Kenney Jones (now drummer with the Who).

At the end of the 60s, Marriott quit to form Humble Pie. Lane, MacLagen and Jones replaced him with a new guitarist (Ron Wood) and a new singer (Rod Stewart), both pinched from the Jeff Beck Group. A struggle eventually developed for the heart of the Faces between Stewart and Lane.

"It's just that I didn't trust Stewart," Lane recalled. "I had a feeling he was going to leave the band like Marriott did.



Former Face Ronnie Lane with companion/instigator Boo Oldfield.

And I thought, 'The hell with this. I ain't gonna get left in the lurch again. I'll leave first.' If you trim down all the emotional things that went with it, I think that was basically all there was to it. He'd already started to publicly voice dissatisfaction with the band. And he put any good ideas he had—or we had—into his own albums.

"And I thought, well, hell, I've seen all this before. I'll go off on my own now.' And so I did it to dare myself, to push myself in the deep end. I'm a bit like that. I refuse to admit I'm scared of anything. Even to myself." He chuckled. "When really I'm terrified. But it was an exceptional band," he sighed. "Yes, it was. I shouldn't have let it go so easily."

After the Faces, Lane put together the Passing Show—a tent troupe who rolled

around Britain in a caravan, supplementing Ronnie's music with comedians, dancing girls and any animals they could rustle into the big top. It was a wonderful adventure that, together with a shady business partner, cost Ronnie a lot of money.

Although he continued to record fine solo albums, a collaboration with Pete Townshend (*Rough Mix*) and a movie soundtrack with Ron Wood (*Mahoney's Last Stand*), Lane grew disgusted with the music business and bought a farm in Wales. The rock star even went to agricultural college. But multiple sclerosis was ravaging his body. He made a terrific "last album" called *See Me* that was released on the small Jem label and quickly vanished.

Unable to play, then unable to walk,

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EBET ROBERTS

Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck ("he is the best") and self-effacing Eric Clapton greet cheers.

Ronnie slipped into despair. But the oxygen treatments restored part of the strength and coordination he'd lost. Last spring, Boo approached Pete Townshend about putting together some sort of show to raise money for MS research and give Ronnie a chance to perform again.

The result, after many false starts and changes, was the ARMS (Action for Research into MS, an organization of MS victims and their families) concert at London's Royal Albert Hall in September. Eric Clapton, Bill Wyman, Steve Winwood, Kenney Jones, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and Charlie Watts volunteered their time and money. Glyn Johns, Ronnie's old producer, organized sound and supervised filming.

I began interviewing Ronnie Lane three weeks before the ARMS concert and finished the weekend after the all-star show. I wanted to talk about his music, but before Ronnie was done with me, I'd also learned a great deal about personal courage and generosity of spirit. The afternoon of the show, for example, I ran into the Stray Cats and told them of the gig. "A concert for Ronnie Lane?" Lee Rocker asked. "I didn't know about that! When we first came to London, we didn't have any money or know anybody. We met Ronnie Lane in a pub. When he heard we had nowhere to stay, he took us home, fed us and put us up for days." When Lane was asked about that bit of charity, he tried to shrug it off. "They were sleeping in the park," he explained. "And it was cold."

The British press can't get enough of the royal family. They love Prince Charles and Princess Diana as we love Joanie and Chachi. On the morning of the day before the ARMS concert, Ronnie Lane was upset over a report in one of the London dailies that Prince Charles had assembled the greatest supergroup in rock history—and when Lane heard about it, he supposedly asked if maybe the Prince's all-stars could help him, too.

That afternoon at rehearsal at the Albert Hall, a Who's Who of British rock gathered with the jolly camaraderie of old mates at a dart match. Charlie Watts and Kenney Jones came out from behind their drum kits and took a break.

"So many songs," the quiet Stone sighed. "Kenney and I have to keep whispering to each other, 'Which one is this?' 'The one that goes da-da-dum da-dum-dum.' 'Oh, that one, right'"

Ian Stewart, the Rolling Stones' road manager, sometime pianist and (when you get down to it) sixth member, zipped around coordinating activities, getting guest lists from the musicians and finally spending hours writing out each backstage pass and fitting them into laminated plastic. Amid all the hubbub, Stewart offered to sit down and buy me a beer. "If you'll print this completely and not change a word."

I said sure, and he said, "We all got together to do a concert on behalf of Ronnie Lane for research into multiple sclerosis. That's ARMS. With this in view we had the Hammersmith Odeon booked on the 26th of September. Without our knowing at the time, Eric Clapton's management had agreed that Eric should do a concert here on the 21st (for the Prince Charles Trust charity). They had actually done nothing about putting a band together, or the production side, or anything like that. So we thought it would be very much easier for Eric if we took the day before here. Which would enable them to take the same production and the same band. It made it very straightforward for Eric. And straightforward for Charlie and Di. In theory it should have helped the whole thing along. But all we've gotten from Charlie and Di is a load of flak, basically."

Stewart sipped his beer and shook his head. "One other thing. If you could make it clear in your article that this is *not* for Ronnie Lane's personal financial benefit. The whole money is going to ARMS. The whole thing has been set up very carefully, legally—using the Stones' tax lawyers and the Stones' accountants—to make sure that everything is above board and going to ARMS. It's *not* a warm-up for Charlie and Di."

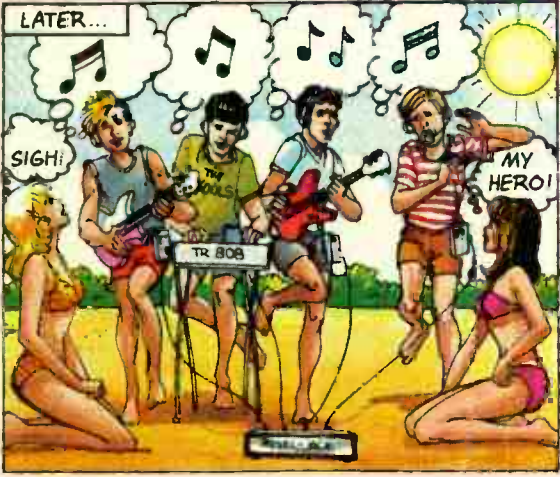
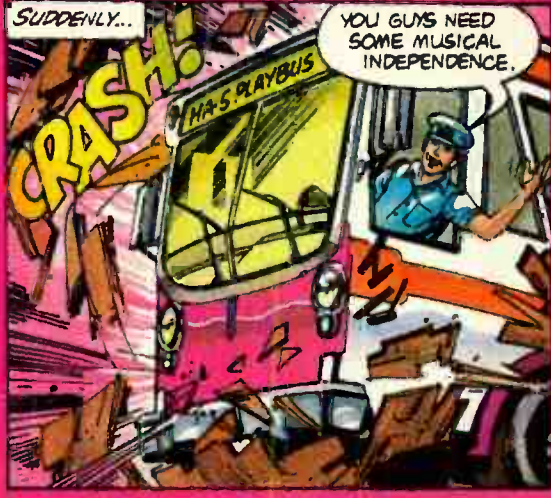
If there was a special sensitivity to the apparent ingratitude of the Prince of Wales, it was exacerbated by a rumor that buzzed through the superstar lunchroom Monday afternoon: It seems the Palace put pressure on Clapton's office to pay Charles and Diana to attend the charity concert for which



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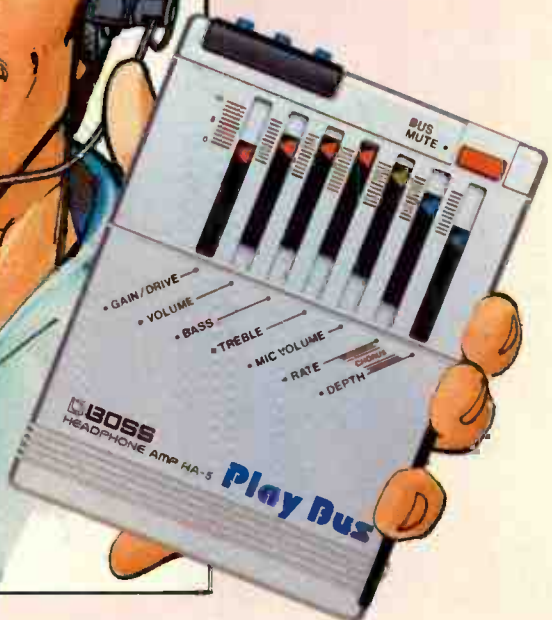
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Charles was taking credit. The Palace allegedly maintained that having Wind-sors in the audience would guarantee a good turn-out (as if having the Stones onstage would not). To be fair to the royal Honeymooners, it was probably not their personal edict—and the moo-lah probably would have gone to the Royal Worthy Cause. But the shake-down was still unbecoming.

I was seated across from Lane at the backstage dinner table when Bill Wyman pulled up a chair and heard about the Palace's request. "Well, fuck 'em," Wyman snapped like a true Rolling Stone. "Call the Palace and tell them not to come."

"Ah, don't bother, Bill," counselled

Ronnie. "It doesn't matter. It might not even be true. Let's ask Eric." Clapton entered the room and sidled up to the counter to collect his supper. "Eric!" Lane called in a mock-proper accent.

"Yes!"

"Is it true, then?"

"Is *what* true?"

"About Prince Charlie?"

"What about 'im?"

"That he wants to be *paid*?" Clapton smiled, rolled his eyes, and nodded yes.

"I say fuck 'im," Wyman snorted.

Clapton came over and took a seat next to the offended Wyman. As Kenney Jones and Jimmy Page pulled up stools, Charlie Watts approached. "Did you hear about Prince Charles?" Wyman

asks Watts. "He wants to be paid!"

Watts misunderstood. "He wants to play?" the drummer goggled. "What does he play?" "No," Wyman explained. "He wants to be paid! He wants money to come! I say tell him to stay home."

"But Bill," Watts reconciled, "You like the Royal family."

"Sure, I like 'em," Wyman rejoined. "But I like 'em to stay where they belong. You don't see us going up into Buckingham Palace do you? Why should they come down here?" Wyman paused for dramatic effect: "Who do they think they are, Paul and Linda?"

The dinner hour passed with more gossip, teasing and good-natured cynicism. Lane and Clapton recounted how they got drunk one night a decade ago and resolved to become blood brothers. They caught hell when Patti Clapton came home and found her carpets stained red. Wyman teased Watts about his illegible autograph—and that everyone in the drummer's family was named Charlie ("'Ello, Charlie. 'Ow's Charlie?"). One got the sense that if a Rod Stewart or a Mick Jagger had been in the room the atmosphere would have been changed—unbalanced. But all present—even Clapton and Steve Win-wood—were basically not frontmen but band players—musicians who became famous as part of a unit.

When Jimmy Page went out front and started jamming with Jeff Beck, Clapton was asked if he wasn't going to join them. "No, no," Eric laughed. "The stars are on now. I'm just the opening act." And if Beck seemed rather remote from the backstage pub club, no one questioned his generosity in appearing; nor his virtuosity. The next night, during Beck's set, Clapton sat in his dressing room and smiled, "He *is* the best, you know. He's the best guitarist in England."

Ronnie Lane's best songs are neither the Small Faces' psychedelic hits or the Faces' blind-drunk music-to-drive-sports-cars-into-swimming-pools-by. Rather they are the beautiful ballads he began to write after the Marriott/Lane team split and has continued to write since. Each Faces album had a couple of these gems. Homesickness was never captured better than in "Richmond," when Ronnie said of the women in a strange city, "They all look like the flowers in someone else's garden." In "Debris" he described watching a woman hunt for a bargain at a rummage sale with a gentleness and sensitivity few out-and-out "I love you" songs ever achieve. In "Glad And Sorry"—just before he quit the Faces—he asked, "Can you show me a dream? Can you show me one that's better than mine? Can you stand it in the cold light of day? Neither can I."

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Hamiet Bluiett, Blood Ulmer, Material, Taj Majal, Allan Toussaint, Kip Hanrahan, Nona Hendryx, Brian Eno and his own Okra Orchestra and N.Y. Hot Trumpet Repertory Company, Olu Dara has yet to be documented on an album of his own. "It's documented in its own way—it's documented in the cosmos," Olu offers, neither bitter nor impatient.

"When I make a record, I want it to be exactly the way I like it—nothing forced, nothing premature. I've been on too many bad records where there was no preparation. I've been on forty LPs, and maybe two that I could send home to my mother.

"Besides," he goes on, "it's so much fun to be able to fit in with different sorts of cats. I see the value of being a sideman almost more than being a leader, because sometimes musicians assume the leaders of certain bands know what they really want; but a lot of times they don't. Your job as a sideman is to put in everything that you think he wants that's not there—just right—to make *him* look good. That's my whole concept of playing with other musicians; to make the leader look *real* good, because I play with a whole lot of nervous leaders who are unprepared; where there wasn't enough time, or money for adequate

rehearsal... I mean that's the reality of being out here. So to me, the mark of a good musician is to take some music that isn't fully formed, and make it sound whole."

Still, for all his experience on the New York scene, Olu is typically written up as a "great young trumpeter." Considering that he was born January 12, 1941, he has to be the oldest young trumpeter on the scene.

"Yeah, isn't that somethin'," he smiles, genuinely amused. "You see, I'm a late starter in New York and I'm just starting to play the horn the way I want to; they think I'm younger because they just heard of me, but I just decided to go ahead and check it out later on in life rather than pursue it. I never pursued music, it pursued me."

So what sort of background did Willie Smith have?

"No," he protests in mock horror. "I deny it. Willie Smith? Sound like Ahmad Jamal's sort of name, not mine. I've had many names," he adds with childlike mystery, "but on my birth certificate it says Charles Jones III. Olu Dara is a gift from a Yoruba priest. He read in the shells that Olu Dara was my original ancestral name, and I accepted it right on the spot—it sounded so natural. It basically means King, someone high up in the order of people; a Senegalese guy told me it meant belief in something; and another guy told me it meant little mischievous one; which is kinda slick—I can relate to that," he laughs.

And what was Charles Jones III/Olu Dara doing growing up in Natchez? "Having a ball. I'm the oldest of seven, which is very nice. I had a very interesting, wonderful childhood. So many people helped me out, and took care of me; living in the same part of the neighborhood with your aunts and grandmothers."

It's so supportive...? "I'm telling you. I'm just beginning to realize it now, from seeing so many people who never had that thing: growing up in some close-knit, isolated place that's more culturally homogeneous. Where generations of people have grown up living and dying together. Especially for children, because I think adults have a rough time of it; you know how adults get along with each other. It's great for children at the expense of adults," he laughs. "You grow up feeling like a king, so that when you get released from the umbilical, go out into the world and get kicked around, it doesn't bother you as much, because you say, 'Hell, I was treated pretty well for seventeen years.'

"And Mississippi is a spacious state—beautiful. I was born in a little town called Louisville. then I moved to Natchez, which is right up the river. Sometimes, 'bout noon, the sky would get as dark as night, fixin' to be a tornado, and everybody cuts the lights out, sits in a corner.

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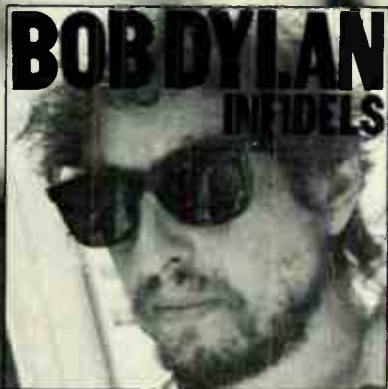
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"I didn't come up in a record culture. No record player in my home until after I left. There were maybe three juke boxes in town that I was around all the time. But some places we weren't allowed into. Other places we could go into at twelve and thirteen and drink, being served by adults and it was cool. It was a kind of open sort of town. Kids thirteen and fourteen years old could drive cars, even with no license, because everyone, even the police, were cool. So, we had juke boxes with everything on them, in capsule form. They didn't overdo you with anything. It wasn't all one style—and that's something I think about now.

"Started out on piano and clarinet when I was maybe ten or eleven. I know I was gigging at about eleven and a half or twelve. I'd play parties, basketball games, football games. I'd play in the game, then play the party after the game. I was a street basketball player, but I never played on the team because they wanted me in the band; they wouldn't let me on the team. So my thing was sports...and I liked to act in plays...being in the band...tap dancing...singing in the choir.

"It always had something to do with something that was moving. Like the railroads. It meant you could explore. A couple of dollars, you could go to Chicago and all the fascinatin' places you heard about. And I loved the woods, since I was surrounded by it. I was always exploring the woods and wild fruits. I'm still like that to this day. If I see a fruit tree, I want one—it fascinates me. It's a gift, and that's one thing I always respected, living down South. Anything I saw, a snake or whatever, was like the most beautiful thing I could see. I knew I was fortunate."

So in a sense, the spaciousness, the color, the relaxation in Olu's music—the youthful playfulness he projects—can be traced to his seemingly sylvan upbringing. Though his musical training was extensive, Olu learned early on to rely on his instincts; more importantly, like a lot of great trumpeters before him (Roy Eldridge and Harry James to name two), Olu's hard swing goes part and parcel with his background as a drummer.

"I learned how to improvise because I was playing euphonium; baritone horn, you know, like a small tuba, and there was never any written parts for it. So when we marched I would improvise my parts; I might also relieve the bass drummer in the parade; play cymbals, French horn, whatever. It was *big fun*, you know, a natural thing, and if you had enough nerve to pick up another instrument, hey. It's where the gigs lay, anyway. Even today, you might see me up there singing, playing kazoo; I've made some gigs on guitar. Of course you have to have some sort of technique to create

a feeling... I mean, to be able to play the feeling you want to get. I've had people attempt to train me formally, all over. But almost every musical situation I've been in to me has been formal in one way or another. But I never got, like *brain-washed* into anything, like in some institutions where the teachers try to turn out students exactly like them."

After a stint at Tennessee State College, and four years in the Navy (where he played drums and cornet), Olu ended up in New York in 1964: stranded. "If I'd had another \$500, I'd been gone. And being a country boy, the sophistication of New York put me in a dilemma. So as soon as I got to New York I said I'm playing everything: funk, rock, jazz, singing, dancing, acting, whatever. That's the only way I found to survive. I saw that if you got bagged in one style, that's all you'd get called for. So I'd sell little vignettes and things, on different instruments; and it was in the contract that they could use me wherever they wanted to use me," he giggles. "There was a lot of money involved in that, too; they were buying stuff like hotcakes."

Drifting in and out of the New York scene, working day jobs, Olu was drawn back into active music making in the mid-70s by friends who brought him into Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers—a trumpet player's band if ever there was one—where he played trumpet, euphonium and cornet, and got to develop his Okra act; singing, telling jokes, finding marks in the audience... and finally settling on the warm, woodsy-sounding cornet as his main instrument. "Cornet has wider tubing, it's shorter in length, and not as piercing or brilliant as trumpet, or so they say. I was attracted to the big, round, soft sound on the bottom, which complements my style because I really like to play in the middle register.

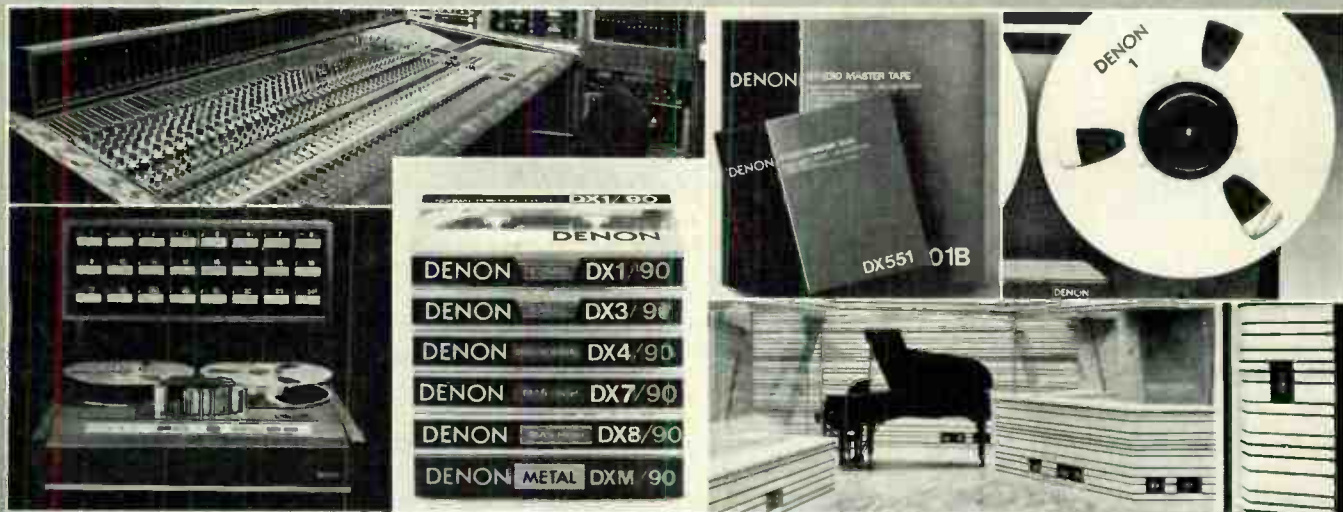
"Blakey's thing was a very helpful experience for me. It did a lot for me, as far as letting me know what I had needed to do about music. I always thought, at that time, if you were a trumpet player, you had to play bebop—that was the pinnacle. I was never all that turned on by it as far as me playing it; I liked to listen to other guys play it. I always wanted to play like Satchmo, that New Orleans style trumpet, because to me *that's* playing; it takes all your heart and soul to play that, and I'm satisfied to play that feeling or to play on top of the funk, like Miles is doing. And I think I understand why he's doing it: that big sound on the band field; people dancing to the sound of the trumpet rather than laying back and listening to the execution. Actually, my thing isn't about execution and articulation—it's about playing from the heart. I can speak with some authority because I've come through bebop and avant-garde and all that, and I had to



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relearn just to get back to where I was coming from in the first place. The only time I ever sweat is when I'm playing funk; and, in a way, it's harder to play than bebop. Cats don't like to hear you saying that, but you can't just skate through those changes and get by. That's like I used to work for this cat in Harlem, and he'd say, 'We gonna play some jazz now.' And I'd say, 'You mean ting-a-ding?' And he'd say, 'Unn uhh. I don't play no ting-a-ding; when I hear cats playin' like that, sounds to me like they're saying, "What-the-fuck, what-the-fuck."'"

On Nona Hendryx's "Steady Action"

and Henry Threadgill's "When Was That" you can hear the fruition of those down home feelings, both in the rock steady calypso colors of Olu's cornet and Kenyan trumpet overdubs on the former and the bracing polyphony and brash charges Dara, Threadgill and trombonist Craig Harris achieve on the latter. Even more impressive is how Olu's orchestrated the Threadgill-Harris-Dara front line in his own Okra Orchestra, combining hard blues and real Southern grease with fiery Afro-Cuban rhythms, a sort of cross between Stax-Volt and King Sunny Adé. And in his brash, World Saxophone Quartet-in-

fluenced N.Y. Hot Trumpet Repertory Company, Olu, Lester Bowie, Malachi Thompson, Stanton Davis and Bruce Purse have achieved the ensemble integrity of a full orchestra, complete with bass lines, sonorous harmonies, twisting solos and ribald interplay. In both groups frontline melodies often become indistinguishable from backline rhythms, and in Okra and Threadgill's Sextet, it often seems as if the horns are playing rhythm while the melody comes directly from the drums.

But Olu almost never got a chance to strut this stuff in New York. He could easily have succumbed to the intense peer group pressure of his jazz friends, who, in bitter elitism, had determined that unless your set consisted of a bebop tune and four two-chord sambas, you ain't a real man; paying lip-service to the blues, as something to be done tongue-in-cheek, not worthy of advanced musical expression. "I'm so glad to hear someone articulate that," Olu sighs. "Man, I'm glad you be a critic and not some jazz musician, because you'd try and be fair. There ain't nothin' colder than jazz cats talking about other musicians. They be the real critics. That attitude has done a great deal of harm to young players, and the older generation of cats as well, and I know it harmed me. It's like when Ornette came along; I didn't know there was any controversy. It only seemed radical 'cause he was doing all that on an alto saxophone. Now if a blues guitarist had come along and done the same thing, they wouldn't have seen it as being radical. People shouldn't be alarmed by anything like that, because for blues players it hasn't got anything to do with being ignorant, it has to do with being from another culture.

"It's like jazz musicians are the only ones who seem to have a need to defend themselves or attack others. Robert Johnson and them didn't have a syndrome about who they were, a superior complex about what they were doing. See, the whole trick for me is to be a jazz musician sometimes, and be something else other times, so I don't have to carry around any burden about who I am. I like jazz musicians though; they're a nice bunch of guys. But sometimes the peer pressure in jazz is so severe—so severe. Your own buddies...cats where I've spent years playing their music, then when I try and get 'em to play mine they say, 'Well, what are you playing that for?' And I say, 'What the hell do you think I'm playing it for? Because it feels good, it's what I know, and people can relate to it.' Just be a full-fledged American, check it all out and know it's real. There ain't any American music I don't love and can't play. I was brought up in America, so why shouldn't I be able to play it? All of it is mine." M

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cesses, Larriva figures, when you can move onto something new? "There's been times when the Plugz were selling out clubs and albums were going like hotcakes and I decided that I didn't like the way we sounded. That's what is really scary to me—doing something that's drawing lots of people and being unhappy with it."

The way the Plugz used to draw crowds began with a combination of Tex-Mex and straight-ahead punk which they soon "abandoned to let the beach bands pick up on." Their sound evolved into a spare, angst-ridden rock 'n' roll, notably successful with ballads and Spanish tunes, catcalling barn-burners like "El Clavo Y La Cruise" and "La Bamba." That version of the Plugz is available on the band's two albums, *Electrify Me* and *Better Luck*. But with the addition of lead guitarist Steve Hufsteder (the Dickies, the Quick), there are now two "creative voices," and together Tito and Steve aim for a more sophisticated, theatrical approach. "I borrow from ethnic song forms," explains Hufsteder, "that kind of music set over a sleazy bar band rhythm section. It's a kind of nightclub cabaret sound, basic because it's just two guitars, bass and drums." Regardless, the highlight of a Plugz set remains their electrified Latino rockers, and much of the newer material

pales by comparison.

Now in the midst of recording their third album for Enigma/EMI, the first with Hufsteder, Larriva is pumped up about the band's latest incarnation. Along with drummer Chalo Quintana's and bassist Tony Marsico's solid rhythm section, the most durably attractive component of the Plugz has been Larriva's flirtatious, almost goofy stage presence. These days, sporting a pencil-thin mustache and droopy, pegged pants, he's going for a more rootsy, south-of-the-border appeal. "I used to feel sort of weird about singing in Spanish," Tito admits. "Now I'm not fighting that ethnic thing anymore. We haven't added that many more songs in Spanish to our set, it's just that now they are more definitive."

Truth time: Does Larriva envy any of his Masque buddies for their speedier route to the top? Nope, he insists, though there is one guy he'd not mind trading places with. In 1973 Tito lived in Mexico City where he hosted a children's game show dressed as a clown who sang and drew pictures. Since his departure, *Cepillin* has gone on to the kind of widespread popularity that only Menudo can top. "That guy's a multimillionaire," he laughs about his successor. "Maybe I should have stayed on the show." — **Margy Rochlin**

## DFX2

### EMOTIONAL RESCUE

"DFX2 has always managed to keep its direction, regardless of the personnel changes we've had," states David Farage, the group's

lead guitarist and backup vocalist. The "we" David refers to consist of himself and his brother Douglas, DFX2's lead singer and occasional

rhythm player. Together the twenty-seven-year-old twins have furnished the material and musical conception for the San Diego-based band bearing their initials since its inception in 1979. The Farages fashion a gutsy, no-frills brand of rock occasionally suggestive of the early Rolling Stones. As a result, "Emotion," from their MCA mini LP, *DFX2*, has won considerable FM and MTV airplay and led to their current tour of showcase clubs across the country.

The idea for *DFX2* grew from the Farages' dissatisfaction after years of playing together in Southern California groups. "Tired of dead-end cover bands," they made the rocker's sacrifice: "We took day jobs," Douglas recounts, "because we knew we couldn't support ourselves playing all originals. We were writing about abstract ideas taken from books we had read, but eventually, we began writing about the down-to-earth stuff we had gone through ourselves." About the time their songwriting matured with tunes like "Emotion" in 1981, the band settled into its core lineup with Frank Hailey on drums and Eric Gotthelf on bass. A live version of "Emotion" was included on a new music sampler of San Diego bands in 1982. The album found its way to KROQ in L.A. and after a few plays, "Emotion" became the station's most-requested song. Shortly thereafter, MCA signed them.

"DFX2 was supposed to be

a full album," David offers, "but because MCA wanted to get us out there, they issued the mini as soon as we had five cuts in the can." Avoiding the contemporary approach of multiple overdubs, producer Howard Steel's minimal production—Jerry Peterson's dirty tenor sax was the only addition—has ably suited a primal rock energy best summed up by the band's execution of the Farages' "Down To The Bone." In part about a woman's overly confining demands, it is also a statement of attitude that characterizes *DFX2* as a whole. Over David's thick-toned chording, Peterson's screeching sax, and Hailey's and Gotthelf's churning back beat, David wails to one and all: "I got myself down to the bone/I don't mind being left alone/I'll rock 'n' roll till I fall down."

Now in the middle of their first national tour, with opening dates for Graham Parker and the Kinks added to the agenda, Douglas readily admits he's trying not to fall. "You know, it's a lot different playing on a national level than in local clubs. It's been a real learning experience and I'm just trying to suss things out." To that end, Douglas has abandoned his rhythm playing onstage and the band has hired Steve Jama! on tenor sax. But while the Farage Brothers and Company are learning about rock industry pratfalls, *DFX2* demonstrated they have a sturdy grip on the music itself. —

**Frank Joseph**





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*Pure, unadulterated reggae from Britain's unlikeliest hitmakers: eight labouring lads from Birmingham.*

BY CHRIS SALEWICZ



“Reggae music,” says Ali Campbell, “is the key to my heart.” Ali, singer and rhythm guitarist for UB40, is presently resting his short, wiry frame against a sofa in the band’s dressing room, relaxing at the end of a long but triumphant British tour. “As far as I’m concerned,” he explains in a sweetly passionate Birmingham lilt, “reggae and dub are the only things worth listening to. It’s the only music that makes me feel elated, that gives me a real high.”

Ali isn’t alone. UB40’s blend of rock-steady riddims, rough but spirited instrumental interplay and sweet, shimmering melodies has proved a powerfully seductive brew. Their recent album, *Labour Of Love*, and a single, “Red Red Wine,” have both recently surged to the top of the British pop charts. Here in Brighton they’ve sold out all 5,000 tickets for a show in the

*With half of us being white, our situation is unique. But really I don't think you have to be black to play reggae."*

acoustically perfect Brighton Conference Centre. More significantly, their success suggests the growing strength of a philosophical counterpoint to the harsh imperatives of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party government, for nearly a decade the dominant force in British cultural and political life.

For UB40 are more than just a trendy English dance band. They're an octet who's stayed together far longer than they've played together, a mixed bag of native urban whites and Jamaicans whose gently phrased musically infectious messages frequently serve as indictments of current British social policy, even as their spirit and success suggest optimistic alternatives. To drive the point home, the band took their name from the Department of Social Security's standard unemployment card, the UB40. And tonight they've chosen to close their tour at the Conference Centre, not coincidentally the same site where the British Labour Party recently held its week-long convention, on the same stage from which Labour leader Neil Kinnock unleashed his ferocious attack against Thatcher's monetarist policies and apparent lack of concern for the lot of England's three and one half million unemployed.

"All other music is just being rehashed," Ali insists. "But reggae is the newest form—fifteen years old at the most. It's evolving at this very moment. It's *happening*."

What's truly surprising about UB40 is not their ebullient affection for reggae, or even their success. It's their apparent unwillingness to weaken the music's militant vigor simply to exploit reggae's natural hit-making potential, much like every other trend-conscious band of Anglo popsters currently marketing their Third World "image." UB40 doesn't merely pay lip service to "roots"; they live them. Perhaps that's been their salvation.

Because for all its popularity and influence, reggae music still sounds a rebel spirit in England; it's a form invariably associated with the outsider. The implications of those persistent reggae rhythms is still clearly disturbing to the protectors of "straight" society here, perhaps due to a deserved sense of guilt. After all, reggae first arrived here in the hearts and souls of Jamaican immigrants who'd been duped into leaving their Caribbean homeland with promises of work and imminent prosperity. In truth, most were forced to adopt roles roughly equivalent to paid slaves, performing unskilled labor beneath the dignity of other Britons.

Such is the prevalent situation in Balsall Heath, UB40's home district in south-central Birmingham. It's a rough, inner-city working class district with a West Indian population of nearly sixty percent. Any white kids growing up in the area were necessarily exposed to Balsall's import culture; thus all the songs on *Labour Of Love*, which features UB40's interpretations of several rock-steady classics from the late 60s and early 70s, were not musiological discoveries, but rather the songs which first drew UB40 into music, songs like Tony Tribe's cover of Neil Diamond's "Red Red Wine," or Eric Donaldson's "Cherry Oh Baby" or the Wailers' "Keep On Moving." Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers To Cross" was another inspiration. Though Ali will get around to also admitting a fondness for the young Michael Jackson, he insists that "*Labour Of Love* is really our roots."

Long before any of the band members dreamed up ideas of starting a group, all were neighbors and close friends. "We were just a gang," recalls Robin Campbell, Ali's guitar-playing

brother, who sits sipping coffee at the other end of the sofa. "And some of us in that gang ended up forming a band, even though none of us could actually play at the time. It's a good thing we went into music—otherwise we'd probably have ended up as a gang of bank robbers."

The two left-handed Campbell brothers acquired guitars, while Jim Brown on drums and Earl Falconer on bass comprised the rhythm section. Norman Hassan became percussionist, Michael Virtue learned the keyboards and Brian Travers picked up the saxophone. Astro, meanwhile, developed his craft as "toaster" and on trumpet.

At the beginning of 1980, UB40 began to play its first dates in Birmingham pubs. It was an auspicious time for a racially mixed group from the Midlands to debut: the previous summer the 2-Tone movement, spearheaded by acts like the Specials and Selecter, had broken out of Coventry, fifteen miles from Birmingham. However, 2-Tone featured the galloping Jamaican ska sound which first surfaced at the beginning of the 60s.

"We definitely rode on 2-Tone's shirtils for a time," confesses Ali, though he insists UB40 were already rehearsing together before they had heard any of the new Coventry groups. "I went to see the Specials, and thought they were a total joke. In fact, I grew to like them, and I think they're all nice blokes. But we didn't want anything to do with the ska revival—we really liked the music, but it wasn't what we wanted to play at all.

"However, because we were a multi-racial band from Birmingham, people automatically assumed we would be a 2-Tone band. So we used to get loads of skinheads and 2-Toners coming to our gigs, which was cool, because it meant we sold them out. They used to get very worried, because you could tell they thought we weren't playing fast enough. But we'd win them over by the end of the set, so it didn't matter."

Signed to Birmingham's independent Graduate Records, UB40 had the first indie single ever to make the top ten, "Food For Thought." *Signing Off*, their first LP, quickly emulated that success. Guitarist Robin Campbell calls that record the sound of UB40 learning to play their instruments; "We got all the numbers together for the first album, and then we had to do them again, because by then we'd learned how to tune the instruments right."

"Up until then we'd written the songs by humming the tunes and then trying to find the notes," offers saxist Brian Travers, perched on a nearby window ledge. "But as far as I'm concerned, I've got to have a different attitude than the others: you can't really bother with a saxophone unless you work really hard at it. And I've only played sax for five years, the life of the band. You need to have one for about a year before you can even blow all the notes on it properly. It took me a while to realize I had to blow from my stomach and not from my mouth."

"People like John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins," he continues, "had their faces measured by a doctor, who said the insides of their mouths were perfect acoustic chambers—they were like the Royal Albert Hall or somewhere like that. My trouble is that the inside of my mouth is closer to the Rock Garden in London's Covent Garden," he adds, referring to an armpit-like cellar dive.

After a year with Graduate, UB40 formed their own Dep label, releasing five albums which include *Labour Of Love*, their biggest hit to date. Their second LP, *Present Arms*, was accompanied by a dub version, which the group insists was the first dub record ever to be sold in Woolworth's (they can barely conceal their pride over this blow struck for the reggae cause). Dep's Birmingham headquarters has since issued an unabated stream of U.K. hit singles.

Yet despite stardom in trendy old England, UB40 remain oddly faceless, thanks in part to their dour, depressing moniker ("social worker reggae" is an oft-heard quick take on the band that bears no relation to UB40's uplifting, modern-day protest



## UNEMPLOYMENT DEPLOYMENT

**Alli Campbell:** left-hand 50s Fender Telecaster; new Gibson SG.  
**Robin Campbell:** left-hand Les Paul Deluxe; 50s Stratocaster.  
**Brian Travers:** Selmer Super 80 tenor sax; Selmer Mark 7 tenor; Selmer Mark 7 alto, Yamaha soprano. **Michael Virtue:** Roland RS-09 organ/strings Jupiter 8; Yamaha organ YC 14; Arp 16-voice piano; Yamaha analog delay; Cerwin-Vega monitor; Yamaha mixing desk; two Boss speaker. **Earl Falconer:** Fender Jazz bass; Ampeg V4 amp, Cerwin-Vega cabinet; Electro-Harmonix phaser, equalizer and delay. **Norman Hassan:** Natal congas; Latin-Perussion bongos; Pearl Syncussion; Selmer trombone. **Astro:** Bach Stradivarius 43 trumpet; selected hand percussion. **Jim Brown:** Yamaha 2000 series, Pearl Syncussion; Zildjian cymbals.

hymns). It's hard to believe that they hail from the same city as teen heart-throbs Duran Duran, given the extreme differences in attitude. "That's because they're a bunch of nambo posers and we're not," notes Alli diplomatically. "Also—and this is important—we were all mates *before* we were in the band. Duran Duran came together to make a band; they sacked people and replaced them. They very much *wanted* to be a pop group—which is fair enough.

"As for UB40, though, we're deliberately imageless, because to put the emphasis on that really does seem like trivial stuff to all of us. We are quite genuinely into the music, and into popularizing reggae as much as we can. And I know our situation is unique, with half of us being white. But I really *don't* think you have to be black to play reggae, any more than you have to be black to play jazz, or to play rock 'n' roll."

UB40 feel their uniqueness allows them to remake the usual business practices of an industry in which they are plainly uncomfortable. Some weeks ago, for instance, I overheard a conversation between UB40's manager and a marketing man from Virgin Records, which distributes Dep. The discussion centered around the singles that would be taken off *Labour Of Love*: while the marketing man was anxious that each 45 should also have its own picture disc released—a standard marketing tactic in Britain—UB40's man was adamant about what he regarded as an utterly immoral and degrading ploy. No picture discs were released.

Another example: recently I was asked to write a feature on UB40 for the British monthly, *The Face*. The interview should *only* be with Alli Campbell, insisted the editor. As I suspected might occur, the interview never took place—Alli managed to put it off again and again until the deadline passed. This is all part of the UB40 method. Explains the singer: "Whenever anyone asks to interview one specific member, they always get someone else."

Should the press manage to locate the UB40 member they want to talk to, they'll further discover that he may not churn out the kind of quotes that are the staple of many guitar magazines. The Campbell brothers, for instance, roundly dismiss any suggestion that they've mastered certain skills on their instruments and bear no resemblance whatever to tech hounds: "It doesn't matter a toss so long as it sounds right," pronounces Robin authoritatively, adding, "Must be good, it costs a lot."

UB40 display a similar candor when discussing their studio production techniques, somewhat alarming in light of the fact that all eight band members co-produce the records. "We're never loose enough with our music in the studio. We squeeze and squash things together and ruin the sound," complains Robin Campbell.

"For example, we totally overproduced *UB44*. We recorded the basic tracks in Dublin, and we did them incredibly badly because everybody was out of their brains for the entire recording period. There's all sorts of gear available over there; as a result, what we recorded was a heap of crap. When we got back to England and tried to mix it, it sounded so bad that we had to try to mask its defects. But in order to clean it up, it became over-treated. They were very noisy tapes, for example: the quality of the recording itself was so bad—the

machines weren't even aligned properly. I reckon it came out sounding really sleepy. And that was because we put it down when we were asleep."

"I don't know," considers his brother after a moment, "I still think it's a good album. It's just more of a mood album—one to sit down and listen to (laughs) when you're stoned."

Still, Alli believes *Labour Of Love* to be "an excellent production." This is certainly major praise, considering he claims not to have "ever liked anything we've done. The only thing I know," he expands, "is that none of our albums will ever be like I want them to be, because nobody else in the group agrees with me about how I think they should be done. I'd make our records drastically different: they'd all be heavy dub albums, with just snatches of vocals here and there. But I'm never going to get my way.

"Mind you," he adds, "I've just heard that Genesis are going to record 'Red Red Wine.' I can't imagine what *that's* going to sound like."

Onstage at the Brighton Conference Centre, UB40 soar. Relaxed at the end of a tour, they give their all for this last British date. Forget their self-deprecating assessments of their playing abilities: there is not a member of this group who doesn't have an intuitive understanding of his instrument, and who doesn't have skills that seem to flow with a divine force.

Blending their own insidiously seditious compositions with the covers on *Labour Of Love*, UB40 create pure music with pure hearts, the dancing audience becoming as much of the event as the group. Notwithstanding Alli Campbell's desire that UB40's records should only contain dub-wise snatches of vocals, the instrumentation is bound together by his voice, an apparently effortless vocal ability that can touch the soul.

As a reminder of what the group is fighting against, about a third of the way through the set, the area immediately in front of the stage suddenly erupts into violence. A vicious-looking crew of youths ignites what obviously has been a thoroughly planned attempt at disruption. Innocent members of the audience are indiscriminately punched and knocked to the ground.

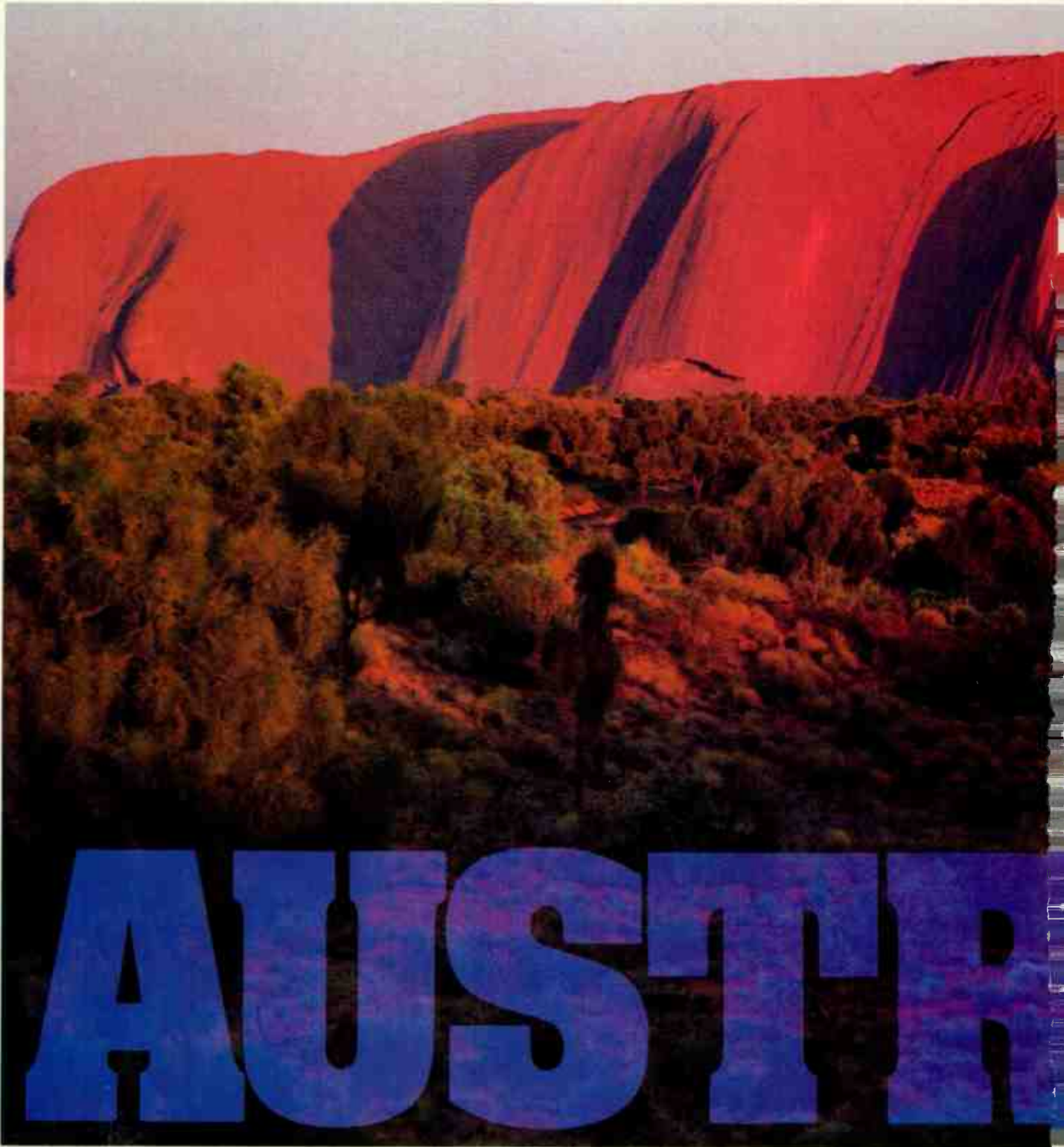
Immediately UB40 stop playing. Crowding together at the front of the stage, they tower over the offenders. "Get out of here! We don't want your sort at our shows," bellows Alli, his sweet voice suddenly taking on a startlingly tough tone.

"We don't deal with people who come to fight," adds Astro contemptuously as the aggressors are led out of the hall by security guards, "We just want this to be a dance. This music is for peace, not violence." ☐

**UB40 off the dole: Brian Travers, Astro, Robin Campbell, Earl Falconer, Jim Brown and Alli Campbell.**







BY DAVID FRICKE

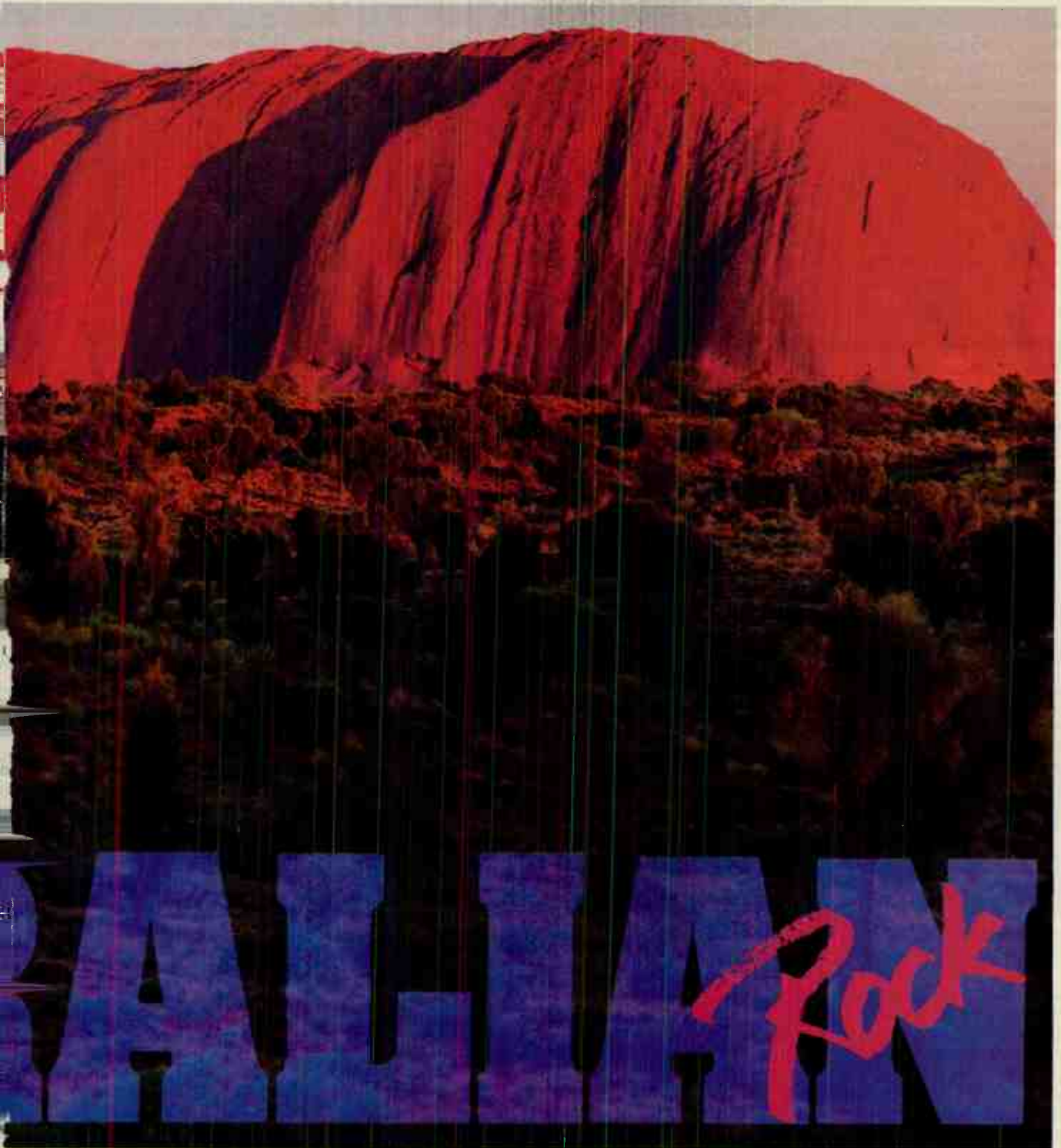


A report from the front of a rock 'n' roll tug of war, where future pop meets aboriginal space in celebration and anger.

**F**or a big red rock out in the middle of nowhere, it is damn crowded up here. The white dotted line running in drunken zig-zags through the deep eroded gullies and erratic humps atop Ayers Rock might as well be running down the middle of the New Jersey Turnpike at rush hour. Tourists practically hyperventilating from the exhausting haul up the steep 40° face of this sandstone monolith, rising up like a giant crimson loaf of bread from the dusty scrub of the central Australian bush, dog each other's heels as they negotiate the pretzel logic of the painted trail to the summit.

The Grand Canyon has a spectacular view. Manhattan's World Trade Center has a spectacular view if the smog isn't



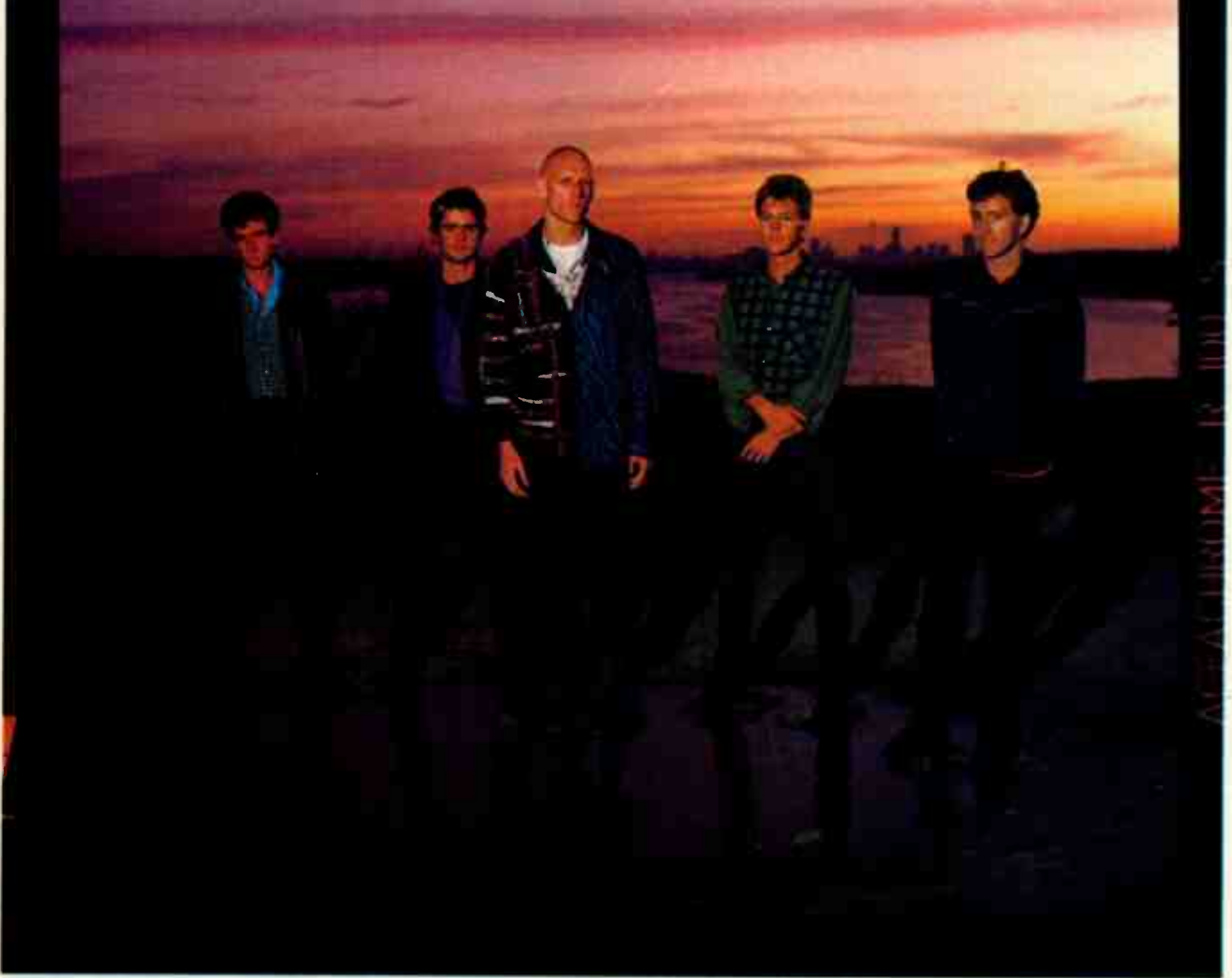


too bad. Ayers Rock, however, is a religious experience. The commotion on top of this rock is the *only* action for miles around. On the naked plain below, stunted mulga trees crack the skyline with spiny brittle branches spreading out like ancient gray nerves. There are also a few desert oaks making puny attempts at majesty with their drooping willowy clusters of small scaly leaves. And from this distance, the yellow spinifex grass and metallic turquoise bushes clumped together in the dry river beds are microscopic flecks against the deep paprika-red clay soil.

The effect is an overwhelming sense of open *arrogant* space that barely tolerates the few hardy white cattle ranchers

and the sad remnants of decimated aboriginal tribes that live there. There is also the wind. At spots on Ayers Rock, it whips through the smooth, almost tubular chutes with a magnum force that nearly whips the eyeglasses off one startled climber. At the summit, it glides briskly, gracefully over the rock in a low undulating moan that seems to carry in its alien syncopated rhythm that same sense of primitive strength from other inhospitable stretches of the Australian continent—the Gibson and Great Sandy Deserts, the high defiant Blue Mountains outside of Sydney, the dense tropical jungles of the far Northern Territory.

I hear that same eerie moan that night in the Telford Alice



PHILIP QUIRK

The wrathful Oils: (l. to r.) Rob Hirst, Martin Rotsey, Peter Garrett, Peter Gifford and Jim Moginie.

## MIDNIGHT OIL

### *Sydney Calling*

**E**ven on the best of days, Peter Garrett—lead singer with Sydney sensations Midnight Oil—is a fearsome sight. He stands six and a half feet tall, has a lean but muscular brick-wall build that suggests an Olympic decathlon version of Frankenstein and looks at you with wide blazing eyes set in a pale menacing oval face topped by a gleaming bald dome. One sunny afternoon last July, I bumped in Garrett on New York's Fifth Avenue on his way to a business powwow at CBS Records, dressed in a loose gray workshirt the size of a Boy Scout tent, baggy pants flapping madly in the hot breeze, and Chinese sandals. Even in a city where commuters take no special notice of bums holding long conversations with stop signs, Garrett turned quite a few heads.

Tonight at a packed Thebarton Town Hall, a former boxing arena a short drive from downtown Adelaide, Garrett is turning 1,800 young excited heads so hard and fast that the place feels like it's spinning. The tropical heat generated by the white interrogation lights erected in prison tower patterns over Midnight Oil causes sweat to pour off Garrett's chrome dome monsoon-style. Egged on by the fierce wallop of drummer Rob Hirst and the twin guitar a-a-r-r-gh! of Martin Rotsey and Jim Moginie, with Peter Gifford's bass savagely jabbing him in the back, Garrett is stalking the Thebarton stage like Bigfoot on speed. He swings his arms like medieval maces, a maniac grin

erupting on his face as his legs do a double-time goosetstep and his massive hands lunge at the humid smokey air in nervous spasms.

The crowd around me couldn't be more ecstatic. One delirious fellow keeps leaping three feet in the air, fist aloft, as if propelled by Hirst's T.N.T. beat. A few feet away, two women who decorated the hall with anti-nuke banners announcing a protest march at Roxby Downs, a nearby uranium mine, dance energetically in a show of solidarity—Midnight Oil gave them permission to hang the banners. Contrast that with the gyrating blonde behind me in a tight black sweater with her string of pearls bouncing wildly against her ample chest.

Everyone looks a little puzzled, though, when Garrett comes out for the encore wrapped in what looks like a giant bath towel. The band plays a calming spaghetti western-like instrumental called "Wedding Cake Island" from their 1980 *Bird Noises* EP. Then suddenly, one of the guitarists grabs an end of Garrett's "towel." Garrett pirouettes madly and the towel unfurls into a giant Roxby Downs protest banner. He yells something about "be there or be fried," and suddenly the band explodes into a series of berserk rockers climaxing with "Stand In Line," the model Oils anthem of defiance and emotional revolution driven by frenetic rhythm, gritty feedback guitars and Garrett's screams shooting up the spine—"Everything's set, everything's fine/ You just got to stand in line," he barks sarcastically, as if he's going to come up and physically shake the complacency out of you.

Because complacency is one thing—one of several, actually—that Midnight Oil cannot stand. It was a live record—



ing of "Stand In Line" that Pete Townshend of the Who heard on one of the band's Australian singles that led to an invitation from the Who to open two shows for them. The Oils went down so well that the Who's management then offered them the opening slot on the group's entire fifty-six-city U.S. "farewell" tour. The Oils said no.

"One reason was that we didn't have any records out in America at the time," Garrett explains as the band enjoys a quick cappuccino break in a north Adelaide coffee shop before the show. "More important, we didn't want Americans to discover us first as a part of the Who. Because with all respect to the Who, their trip around America was a cynical exercise in making as much money as they could. That's not our style, mate."

Other things Midnight Oil does not like: *Countdown*, the top Australian weekly pop television show. The band refuses to allow their videos to be aired on the show (in their view, a crass tool of corporate record company hype) and have no intention of lip-synching to their records in the studio. They would not relent even after *Countdown* host Molly Meldrum pleaded on the air with them to change their minds. Garrett and the Oils also do not like conniving clubowners. At one of the band's regular working haunts in Sydney's North Beach, the management suddenly instituted an absurd dress code, banning T-shirts—and effectively, the hard-core surfer crowd that was the Oils' core local audience. In response, the band bought a supply of workshirts, printed "Midnight Oil" on the backs and passed them out at the door for everyone to wear.

Consider all this. Also consider the hundreds of benefit concerts that Midnight Oil have played over the past six years for unemployed youth, Greenpeace, Save The Whales and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, among others. And don't forget the time that the group nearly signed a big international deal with A&M for their third album, *Place Without A Postcard*. That is, until the company discovered, in Garrett's words, "what a very hard Australian album it was. They wanted hits, they wanted us to change a few lyrics, maybe record another couple of songs. And the band just got up and walked out of the room. Just like that."

Now listen to 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, Midnight Oil's first U.S. release and their breakthrough LP in Australia—gold after only three days and in the top twenty for over a year after that. Charged with an air of impending nuclear doom, sounding the alarm with rage to match ("It's better to die on your feet than live on your knees," Garrett bellows in "The Power And The Passion"), 10, 9, 8... is a document of the last frontier on red alert, *Sydney Calling* and God help us all if you don't pay attention. "Short Memory" zeroes in on Western imperialism and Third World war with biting telegraphic lyrics and a black curtain of acoustic guitars that parts to let "Read About It" run riot ("Another little flare-up... / Imagine any mix-up and the lot would go") with its time bomb tick-tock guitar / drum motif and Garrett's haranguing vocal. In "Only The Strong," in which classic Aussie pub-rock kerrang meets epic punk wrath, Rotsey and Moginie violently twist their guitar chords into grotesque metallic pretzels while Garrett twists his voice into an instrument of animal vengeance.

In a June 1983 *Musician* review of 10, 9, 8... on import, I tried to nail this album on paper with references to "its bold articulation and sly dealing of heavy metal crunch, art-pop inventions and desperate Clash-like urgency." Mentioning XTC helped explain the group's clever flashes of electronic keyboards and percussion, dramatic dub effects and occasional blasts of brass. It was a nice try. But the more I heard 10, 9, 8... and the more I heard of it in concert, first in London at the Venue and then in Adelaide, the more important I feel trying to describe something that speaks so well for itself and its audience.

"I think this business about us being like the Clash is interesting," ponders Garrett, thirty, also Sydney-born. "This is a

band, not a political group. Some people have written about us, saying, 'Midnight Oil makes the perfect young person's political party band. You can have your conscience salved and still have a good time.' But that's missing the point. The point is, we've written songs about these things and we are prepared to act on them. We may put Nicaragua in one of our songs, simply to say, 'Be aware.' But we will not go onstage with a Sandinista flag up behind us. We *will* have the Roxby Downs protesters put up a banner because we're in Adelaide and that's an issue *here*. We're an Australian band. We're not going to preach politics to the world. We act on issues that directly affect our lives."



**This is a band, not a political group. We're not going to preach to the world. We act on issues that directly affect us."**

The Sydney surfers who first came to see the Oils at North Beach pubs like the Royal Antler Hotel in Narrabeen liked that. Furiously independent, living only for their surf, they recognized in Midnight Oil that same mutinous streak. Garrett, a fully qualified lawyer (with a degree from New South Wales University), who is also a fanatic body surfer, explains, "For young surfs, getting a job, getting ahead means nothing. They're quite anarchic and they want to have a good time at night.

"For us, we weren't that interested in getting ahead either. The people we'd met in the getting-ahead sweepstakes were criminals and rogues. We were more concerned with playing and writing and performing. And we found our place to do it."

Prior to this, Midnight Oil was just a loose amalgamation of North Beach jammers led by Hirst and Moginie. They still write the main body of the band's music. But it was Garrett—who signed on after answering an ad for a vocalist—who brought the Oils' rebel tendencies into sharp lyric relief. As a university student in Canberra, he was active in the Australian Vietnam protest movement; he also demonstrated against the South African Springbok tennis tour in 1975.

The effect was immediate. The first song on Midnight Oil's eponymous '78 debut album, recorded and mixed in four days, railed against uranium mining. "We knew even when we recorded that that there was nothing we could ever do again that would be as honest as that album. That was genuinely us, no nonsense, all in four days. And the opening line of that song 'Powderworks' was 'There's a shit storm a-comin'.' And nothing we've written before or since has been so prophetic."

It's coming this way now. Only two days after I arrived in Australia, Midnight Oil was already in the Sydney headlines—"U.S. Finds The Good Oil." Management heavy Jerry Weintraub (John Denver, Frank Sinatra, the Moody Blues) was in the country to catch the opening nights in Melbourne of the current Oils tour. Weintraub wanted to handle the band's affairs in America (in association with the "sixth" Oil, manager Gary Morris), but the band wouldn't sign anything until he saw the band live. They were *still* playing a waiting game when I caught up with them a week later in Adelaide.

"The real questions we should be asking ourselves about going to places like America is not whether getting involved with people like Jerry Weintraub compromises the band," Garrett claims. "A band has only two choices. It has a choice of being its own purist dream and playing in its garage and doing everything for itself. Or, it enters. And as soon as it knocks on that door and says, 'I want everyone in the world to listen to my records,' then it will have numerous other people trying to control its affairs. And then the only thing that band can do is work strongly, vigorously to protect its art. That is the beginning of the real fight."

# IN THE BEGINNING

## First Assaults on America

**C**ontrary to most public opinion in America, Australian rock history was not born yesterday. True, until Beatlemania in 1964, the best Australia could do was a blond imitation Presley-Haley named Johnny O'Keefe who completely bombed in the States as the Boomerang Boy. The Easybeats, led by songwriter/producers Harry Vanda and George Young (brother of Angus and Malcolm Young of AC/DC) and fronted by the bantam singing dynamo Stevie Wright, changed all that. In case you don't remember "Friday On My Mind," possibly the best teenage weekend song of all time and a classic example of their Beatlesque pop flair and white blues gusto, "The Easybeats gave Australia a cockiness and sense of originality we never had before," declares Glenn A. Baker. (His *Absolute Anthology* Easybeats compilation on Albert Records is essential listening on the subject.)

In the mid-70s, Skyhooks did that and more. "Here we were in the middle of dinosaur rock, CSNY, ponderous singer/songwriters," Baker continues, "and Skyhooks came out of nowhere with a fierce parody of glitter rock and all the other bullshit, sending it up uproariously, and at the same time being one of the first to write original lyrics with real Australian meaning. They had giant penises onstage shooting confetti and they just said to everyone, 'Fuck you!'"

"Then they went to America. And when the bottom dropped out of their world, it also briefly dropped out of ours."

To understand how *Men At Work* succeeded in this country, one should understand how Skyhooks failed so miserably. The few Americans who bothered to pay any attention when the group's first two albums, *Living In The '70s* and *Ego Is Not A Dirty Word*, were released here (out of sync, to boot), will remember them as the little Aussie band that couldn't. They arrived in 1976 on giant wings of hype, flapped helplessly on the stadium circuit in front of bozo Uriah Heep crowds and went down in a small blaze of negligible glory. The *Rolling Stone Record Guide* supplied the epitaph a few years later—"interesting, light jazz-tinged rock." (It was, in fact, nothing of the sort.)

For the quarter of a million Australians who made *Living In The '70s* the biggest-selling Oz record of all time and for all the rest who shrieked themselves silly at their live shows, Skyhooks were *the* big band that should've, didn't and paid dearly for it. "Our audience, and particularly the media, had more aspirations and expectations than we did," suggests singer Graeme "Shirl" Strachan over lunch in a Melbourne restaurant. ("Shirl" refers to his youthful countenance and sandy head of springy Shirley Temple curls.)

Much more than the Easybeats and Daddy Cool before them, Skyhooks carried with them to the States the newborn confidence of a country that believed it finally had the goods to compete in the international rock marketplace. Here was a band with a look (perverted facepaint and bizarre, gender-bending duds), a sound (tight, snappy pop songs with smart-ass lyrics and an acute sexual thrust) and an attitude (with six songs from *Living In The '70s* banned by radio censors, they played one of them, "Smut," on a kiddie TV show). But when Skyhooks returned six months later, proud but severely beaten, it was like the whole country cried with them.

"The notion of satire in our act has been overexaggerated," contends Red Symons, the guitarist whose ambisexual raiment and eerie whiteface were a major part of the band's original outrage. "We were quite innocent—"Hey, let's put on funny costumes." But once we put them on, we treated every aspect of the media as part of the act. The week we sold the most amount of records in Australia in one week, we were on five different TV programs. That's not easy in any country.

"You see, people talk about kangaroos and stuff like that here. Ironically, Australia is the most urban country in the world because it is nothing but huge cities. There may be only four or five of them, but there's nothing else. And where in any other Western country you have diversification of industry—Detroit makes cars, Akron makes tires—the cities here are complete microcosms of the Western world. And the small population means in the end that people like me and him, if we have any success in one medium, it is quite possible to get it in every medium. And we did."

"You should never underestimate the media wank we concocted," snickers Symons, suddenly sobering when the word American is mentioned again. "But over there, the single the record company decided to issue off the first album was in fact the most conservative song we had, called 'Mercedes Ladies,' which is just about women who were into cars. That was really stupid."

"Ah, but now you've got Rick Springfield, Olivia Newton-John and Men At Work," sniffs Shirl. "All of a sudden, it's quite fashionable to be Australian playing in America. Whereas when we were there, hey, who were we? We were playing support gigs for Journey before they were even big."

"Well," sighs Red, "if we hadn't opened for them and made them look really good...."

Things haven't changed that much since Skyhooks banged their heads against America's brick wall. Trading under the name Jo Jo Zep, thirty-five-year-old Joe Camilleri tried his luck in the States a few years ago with a spunky CBS album called *Screaming Targets* and a heavily promoted tour of twelve key American cities with his band at the time, a passionate white soul platoon called the Falcons. To minimize tour costs and maximize exposure, each show was simulcast on the local AOR rating champ with subsequent advertising and blanket press coverage. And for three weeks in 1980, Camilleri—a diminutive bundle of high energy and R&B fire with dark Mediterranean features—honestly believed he'd cracked it.

"Oh, yeah, I thought, 'This is gonna be easy,'" he says, a bit embarrassed, between sax overdubs at Richmond Recorders in Melbourne where he is producing a solo single by Jane Clifton, a featured vocalist on his new album *Cha*. "It was weird because we'd just come from England where we'd gotten



**Nobody talks about American or English music in one breath. You subdivide it, make distinctions. To treat Australia that way, to talk about a country producing a style of music, is so stupid."**

really bad press for the same shows where we'd get four encores. Then we got to America and got great reaction.

"Then I discovered that to Americans, music is just part of their daily life. It had nothing to do with the band. If the band was good, the audience would react. But they react because they are having a great time, not because the band has changed their lives. We were entertaining them, they appreciated it and that was it. Tomorrow it would be someone else."

The Church, led by English-born singer/bassist Steve Kilbey, is another interesting example. There is nothing peculiarly Australian about the Church's beckoning blend of 60s guitar resonance and dark shadows lyricism on their three albums, *Of Skins And Heart*, *The Blurred Crusade* and this year's enchanting *Seance*. (A sole U.S. release, *The Church*, a





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**Hunters & Collectors: tribal fury meets electro-dance.**

shotgun compilation of LP and singles tracks, was a 1981 tax write-off.) Guitarist Peter Koppes came to the Church via a band of amateur Anglophiles playing Raspberries-style pop. Kilbey likes to throw avant-garde names like Chrome around and the small music room at the front of his Sydney house is crammed with albums of exquisite 60s and 70s pop vintage—Bolan, Naz, Bowie, Big Star, Mott the Hoople, Cockney Rebel, Be Bop Deluxe.

But Kilbey makes no extravagant claims for the Church's chances outside of Australia, where they maintain respectable second division success with two gold albums and frequent tours. "Why should we be successful in America when Television were not?" he asks pointedly before drawing a sobering comparison with American 70s pop icons Big Star. "We've been much luckier than they ever were, just by being here. We stand out here, for better or worse. We got the video of 'The Unguarded Moment' on *Countdown* and the next week we were pop stars and the record went to #6. But I wonder how many groups there are like Big Star in America today who will never even get albums out."

That Hunters & Collectors, an eight-man, post-punk collective from Melbourne's hip collegiate underground, have an album out in America at all seems a minor miracle. Coming from an especially dark corner of Australia's new pop consciousness, they attack with a harsh tribal fury, sending off glowing amber sparks of staccato guitar over ambitious geometric variations on ethnic funk percussion. Vocalist Mark Seymour doesn't just bark; he bites, chewing hard on the sharp alien imagery of abrasive punk song-mantras like "Boo Boo Kiss" and "Drop Tank" with its ascending prayerful choral motif. Periodically, the band will also conjure up an evil brass coven with their honorary three-piece horn section.

Nevertheless, an album simply entitled *Hunters & Collectors* is out here via the Oz/A&M deal, and, incredibly, it includes a song that went top twenty in Australia with virtually no commercial airplay. Called "Talking To A Stranger," it is a highly accessible marvel of experimental dance music. I made the mistake of asking them about the song's sense of, ahem, aboriginal mystery. "You are on very dangerous ground there," warns Seymour as assorted Hunters gather around a table cluttered with cans of Victoria Bitters at the Sydney Trade Union Club where they are about to play before a packed house of local bohemians. "That can be interpreted as being really patronizing. If we were to say, 'Oh, yeah, aboriginal mystery, good idea,' that would be a lie because we grew up in a white suburban environment. We're not tight with the aborigines, we don't know their experiences. Our music is an expression of our environment."

With its turbulent swirl of bawling rhythms, Geoff Crosby's angry clusters of phantom-of-the-outback keyboards and Seymour's primal screams, the album is hardly short of atmosphere. But despite their bold nightmare aggression on both stage and record, it seems to be an atmosphere more rooted in fear than in some corny romantic notion of pioneer myth. Seymour agrees, chalking it up surprisingly to a lack of confidence.

"The actual amount of fear on our records so far has been as much a product of the actual people in the band as it has been our attitude towards the world. We went to England to live for a while, did a few gigs there and realized that ninety-nine percent of the English bands weren't very good and that we were. We know we have something that is quite special. And we had to go over there to realize it."

"The funny thing was," interjects Hunters drummer Doug Falconer, "by the time we got to England, all that Australian hype business was dead already. They were off on the next big thing. Which doesn't bother us because it's an absurd media hype anyway. Nobody talks about American music in one breath, nobody talks about English music that way. You subdivide it, make distinctions. To treat us that way, to talk about a country producing a style of music is so stupid."

"No one's suggesting that Kenny Rogers sounds like Flipper. But they're both American. It's so stupid as to be unbelievable. But it keeps on happening here and it will keep on happening until someone pulls the plug."

*continued next page*

#### OZ RESOURCES: LABELS & RAGS

You have a better chance of finding the Holy Grail in Omaha, Nebraska than you do of finding Australian import records in this country. The following addresses, together with some air-mail postage and a little patience, should be of some help. Also expect slightly steeper prices: the average LP retails in Australia for \$10.99.

\*Michael Gudinski's Mushroom label has been recording Australian music almost exclusively since the mid-70s. The company does not have a mail order service, but a little pleading may be helpful in scoring old releases by Split Enz and Skyhooks, as well as recent issues by worthy new acts like the Sunnyboys, the Expression and Hunters & Collectors. Mushroom Records, 9 Dundas Lane, Albert Park, Victoria, 3206.

\*Phantom Records—a store with a very hip selection of new and collector's Aussie vinyl. Also has its own record label, cutting cool sides by Surfside Six, Flaming Hands and Shy Imposters. 373 Pitt Street, Sydney, New South Wales, 2000.

\*Hot Records—distributors handling an exhaustive supply of adventurous indie Australian product (Laughing Clowns, Soggy Porridge, Charles McMahon's Gondwanaland Project). Hot is also a record label, star performers being the Celibate Rifles. An ace contact. 314-316 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst, Sydney 2010.

\*Au Go Go Records—Bruce Milne's label specializes in Aussie indie rebel music, your best bets being the Moodists and Scientists. A mail order house for choice underground product, also ace. P.O. Box 542D, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.

\*Oz rock historian Glenn A. Baker has done almost ninety archive compilations for major Australian labels and his own Raven imprint. *The essential Raven LPs are Ugly Things I and II*, explosive collections of 60s Aussie garage punk. P.O. Box 261, Baulkham Hills, New South Wales 2153.

\*ANZ Imports—a U.S. mail-order operation. Write for free catalog. 1765 North Highland, #324, Hollywood, California 90078.

*Recommended Reading:*

*RAM*—7th Floor, 50 Margaret Street, Sydney 2000 (bi-weekly).

*Juke*—603-611 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 (weekly).

*Rip It Up*—Box 5689, Auckland 1, New Zealand (NZ rock monthly).

*Inner City Sound* by Clinton Walker—a detailed history (with discography) of the new Aussie underground. Ask Phantom, Hot or Au Go Go about tracking down a copy. Or try writing to Wild and Wooley Pty., P.O. Box 41, Glebe, New South Wales 2037.



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Pub-rock popsters and Bondi Beach boys Mental As Anything (Greedy Smith 3rd from left, dog 2nd from right.)

PHILIP QUIRK

## MENTAL AS ANYTHING

### *Mental Health*

**F**un facts to know about Bondi Beach, the popular ocean-side community on Sydney's east Pacific shore:

1. It is the jogging capital of Australia.
2. It is also the capital of the Australian heroin trade.
3. It has the largest population of New Zealanders under the age of twenty-five in Australia, more than in all of Auckland. (It has been suggested that this fact may have something to do with fact #2.)

"Let's see, what else is there?" Greedy Smith, the stocky, convivial singer and keyboard player for Sydney band Mental As Anything, stares at the bleak Aussie winter seascape on the other side of our picture window at the Bondi RSL Club, a private drinking-and-entertainment establishment run by the Retired Services League, the Australian military veterans' organization. The coasters sitting under our beer glasses read "The Club With The Million Dollar View." While a few bored pensioners play the "pokeys" (poker machines) on the far side of the room, Smith points out at least a good ten dollars' worth of scenery.

"Peter Wells, the guitarist from Rose Tattoo, used to live in my flat. Now he's got a tattoo shop along that road there," he says, gesturing at a street ringing Bondi's short crescent beach. "And see those guys on the beach in their bathing suits? They're members of the Bondi Iceberg Club, our polar bear swimming club. When it's cold out during the winter here, they throw huge blocks of ice in the water and go swimming." Smith's chuckling is mixed with an involuntary shiver. "Not my idea of a good time, I'll tell you.

"At that concert theatre across the bay," he continues,

referring to a drab building called the Bondi Pavilion, "the Australian promoter of a show we did with Rockpile got into a wild fight with their manager Jake Riviera. Jake was tearing off the sleeves from this promoter's suit. It was really stropy."

Now, fun facts to know about Mental As Anything, whose latest U.S. release *Creatures Of Leisure* on Oz/A&M deserves to sell in fabulously large quantities:

1. Greedy Smith's real name is Andrew. He got the nickname Greedy after the Mentals played a lunch-time show at a Sydney college. "It was catered with all this Kentucky Fried Chicken, huge caterer packs, and I got one and put it next to my organ. I ate fifteen pieces while we were playing. And I'd already had a couple of hamburgers for lunch."

2. Drummer Wayne Delisle was an extra in *The Sun-downers*, a film starring Robert Mitchum and Peter Ustinov, when he was seven. His uncle, a bookie, was in it too.

3. All five Mentals are painters. A year ago in Sydney the band held an exhibition of their works. "Elton John bought five of my paintings," says Greedy. "He was the only one who bought any of my stuff, though. It's a good thing he bought a lot of it because otherwise I'd have had to pay three hundred dollars in framing for a useless exercise."

Mental As Anything may be the most genuinely *Australian* band in the current Oz invasion, as much fun as a barrel of ex-art students playing witty pop tunes in pub-rock party threads could ever be. This is not a "fact" per se, but it should be. It is certainly an opinion shared not only by many Australians but by a small clique of-cool Yanks who have wisely clutched *Creatures Of Leisure* and its predecessor, *If You Leave Me, Can I Come Too?*, to their bosoms.

Just how Australian are Mental As Anything? Reviewers puzzled by their frequent references to Sydney geography and local slang (one old song "Sheila" is titled after the generic, macho term for women), fall back on comparisons to Squeeze,



10cc, the Lovin' Spoonful and, Greedy's favorite, Mungo Jerry, to describe the Mentals' relaxed, slightly alcoholic charm and fluid, melodic songwriting. But that charm and the cuddly hummability of songs like the country-style samba "Close Again" from *Creatures Of Leisure* and the band's 1978 Oz hit "The Nips Are Getting Bigger"—a reference to shots of booze, not Asian tourists or female anatomy—have everything to do with the country's carefree pub manners and extraordinary drinking habits. You don't have to clutch a full can of Toohey's lager in each hand to enjoy the jazzy swagger of Greedy's song "Too Many Times" on *If You Leave Me....* But it helps.

"You can see why a lot of bands come out of art school," Smith explains over a second round at the RSL Club. "You just have to churn out a painting a week, maybe a bit of sculpture, a few drawings. You have so much time on your hands that you spend all your time drinking. But that gets expensive after a while. We just figured playing in a band was a good excuse for getting free drinks."

Now one of Australia's top ten live acts, Mental As Anything have had a lot of experience playing good-time music for hardened pub crowds who would sooner throw a beer glass than drink out of it. That experience is now coming in quite handy as they try to put smiles on American poker faces with their special antipodean stage whimsy. Smith remembers one show they played in Wausau, Wisconsin the night the Milwaukee Brewers lost the World Series: "It was a pitiful turnout, maybe fifty people in this tiny wooden shack of a club. We played a couple of songs and those people just sat there. So I said into the mike, 'Aw, come on, it's only a game.' Then there was this electric silence—probably because they couldn't understand what we were saying.

"Then Peter O'Doherty did his usual thing with the bass, going off stage and playing in the audience, sitting on women's laps. I went down, too and eventually the whole band got off stage. To actually get them up dancing, we went out onto the floor and played to each person individually. And it turned out to be one of the best nights we ever had. After the gig, we went out back to the bus and everybody from the gig got on, too. The mother of the promoter, this woman who was about eighty, brought along all this left-over fried chicken and liquor and we had this great party. It was a very meaningful experience. These Americans can be quite friendly."

## GOING UNDERGROUND

### *Saints And Celibates*

**M**aking a pay-phone call from the Strawberry Hill Hotel, a seedy punk 'n' beer palace in Sydney's gritty inner-city quarter, can be very dangerous. The problem is that the call box, a bulky red affair that looks like a fire hydrant with a thyroid condition, sits squarely on the bar along the narrow aisle leading from the main drinking area to the back room, with its peeling brown paint and warping corkwood walls. There, bands with exotic handles like Zulu Rattle, Leaping Fences and Soggy Porridge, parade their avant-garde wares for the downtown leather-and-Mohawk crowd.

Out front, the atmosphere seems cordial enough. Punks share bar space with grizzled old-timers who come down every night for their customary sip no matter what racket is going on in back. But the tip-off should have been the scuffle between the two bartenders, which started with insults behind the bar, went to fisticuffs in the aisle and ended with the loser tossed in a heap out the side door. Tempting fate, I then step over to the pay-phone to make a call when suddenly a brawl that started back in the band room over some spilled beer hurtles down that aisle, sucking up everything in its path—coiled fists, bloody noses, an empty beer bottle poised menacingly in the air, and this helpless Yank yelling desperately into

the phone for help. In the back room, tonight's band, X (not to be confused with America's own X), are playing perfect mood music, a primal rip-up of John Lennon's "Mother."

Welcome to Australia Underground, a strange, uncharted urban basement of experimental sounds, revolutionary attitudes and alternative economics. It is not always this violent; in fact, rarely so. But if the high energies at work here do not always result in boozy punch-ups and smashed glasses, they usually explode in frantic guitar scratch, lunatic jazz inversions and bizarre industrial clatter. And like the wild, beer-born roar of Midnight Oil and the Angels, those energies are a direct reaction to the middle-class egalitarian stasis of Australian society.

In its own small, determined way, independent music flourishes in Australia to a degree that is an embarrassment to American rock ethics and could put a good scare even into smug English hipsters. During my three weeks in Australia, I devoured over a dozen current fanzines and street music publications, interviewed an editor of the world's first regular independent cassette magazine (*Fast Forward*) and heard radio like you would not believe. I mean, the Residents' twisted version of "Jailhouse Rock" on Sydney's government-sponsored 2JJJ-FM at 9:30 on a Saturday morning? One afternoon in Adelaide, non-commercial station 4MMM-FM played a half-hour set that included the Cramps, Sydney voodoo-Iggy maniacs the Scientists, "Tobacco Road" by the Blues Magoos, U.K. noise merchants the Fall, and favorite Oz renegades the Birthday Party, Pel Mel and the Go-Betweens.

"Taking into account that our population is considerably smaller than that of America, I think the indie music scene is much the same here as I imagine it would be in America or London," opines Virginia Moncrieff, a 2JJJ staffer and producer of the station's weekly demo tape show. "That is, the scene is based around the inner-city areas. The interesting thing about inner-city gigs is that everyone in the audience is involved in the music some way—they're in a band, they write about music, their brother is mixing the sound. There is a lot of highly politicized activity here on behalf of independent music, both for the independents themselves and for the quality of their independence."

A lot of that activity takes place in a modest, two-floor rowhouse in the residential Richmond section of Melbourne. Amid the clutter of empty cartons, music publications of every allegiance and description, and a priceless collection of independent Australian records (in fact, every Aussie punk record ever issued), Bruce Milne operates a mail-order company and plots the release schedule of his own nifty, highly respected Au Go Go label. Together with ex-partner Andrew McMillan, Milne started the extraordinary cassette-zine *Fast Forward* and kept it going for thirteen issues, finally calling it a day in late 1982.

The loss of *Fast Forward* is still mourned in Australia. Packed in colorful vinyl wallets, stuffed full of witty, informative indie news and views, this unique tape magazine mixed interviews with promising new underground bands with samples of their work in a breezy format underlined by the editors' religious commitment to alternative music. In retrospect, Milne feels "the real impact of *Fast Forward* was that what we were doing appealed to only five percent of the Australian public. But if we could have connected with five percent in every country, it would have been enough to build on.

"The original idea of *Fast Forward* was to put together a magazine that would spread information around. We wanted to let Australians know they had bands like Hunters & Collectors, Pel Mel and the Laughing Clowns right here, playing and recording. We wanted to take away all the myths about making records, 'here are the addresses to write to, do it yourself, get involved.' The irony was we got a few write-ups in places like England's *New Musical Express* and that got us a lot of respect from record companies in Australia who didn't even know we existed. We had to go that far to be recognized."





Urban teen ear-bashers the Celibate Rifles.

PHILIP QUIRK

It's an old story that bears repeating. In 1976, a Brisbane foursome called the Saints released a song called "(I'm) Stranded" on their own Fatal label. Crucified by the straight rock press as an ugly bundle of white guitar noise played at ridiculous speed, the record was elected Single of the Year by *Sounds* in Britain.

Today, splintered into offshoot bands and solo projects, the Saints are firmly installed as lords of Australia's new punk church. "(I'm) Stranded," of course, is the official hymn, a lunatic blast of chainsaw guitar played with demon energy and minimal melody, sung by leader Chris Bailey in a dry, near-monotone as poisonous in its casual despair as Johnny Rotten's acidic barking. What's more, "(I'm) Stranded" anticipated "Anarchy In The U.K." by two months and came out almost simultaneously with the Ramones' debut album, conclusive proof that Australian music is not wholly derivative but is, in fact, the product of a weird parallel universe exploding with the same furies and frustrations. Bruce Milne says "(I'm) Stranded" made him quit school and become a punk journalist.

Radio Birdman convinced him he'd made the right decision. Led by a Detroit-born medical student Deniz Tek, who transplanted his MC5/Stooges fixation to Sydney's cracking inner-city sidewalk, this savage late-70s troop of high energy maniacs blew apart any preconceptions about Australian rock still left standing by the Saints. They covered Iggy's "T.V. Eye" with a vengeance, raised Blue Oyster Cult kind of hell with stun fuzz guitars and punky bark of blond surfer devil Rob Younger, and went down in a blaze of mythic glory after one indie EP (*Burn My Eye*) and three killer albums (*Radios Appear I and II*, *Living Eyes*). Americans steeped in MC5 and Blue Cheer culture cannot appreciate the cataclysmic effect Radio Birdman had on Australia's emerging punks. So Damien Lovelock, lead singer of spiritual Birdman descendants the Celibate Rifles, will tell you.

"But there's one thing on a really basic level why Birdman was so popular," explains Lovelock, twenty-nine. "England, where I was born, is a dead country to me, a quaint cold museum. America is such a huge place you can't talk about one characteristic. But Australia is an incredibly powerful country just to walk around in—the forests, the sea, the sun—it's raw, it's rugged. You get a sense of drive when you go out into the bush, you're overwhelmed by it. It's not a frightening kind of power, not a damaging thing. It's just awesome, beautiful in a brute physical way.

"There was nothing around musically you could identify that with until Birdman came along. And then suddenly a million other bands sprung up doing that same thing. People recognized in Birdman that power of the country itself. It was a release of that energy, a *positive* release. If the Dead Kennedys lived down here, they couldn't write that kind of music because they couldn't feel the convoluted, repressed vibe you need to generate that stuff."

The Celibate Rifles—Lovelock, guitarists Kent Steedman and David Morris, bassist James Darroch and drummer Phillip Jacquet—do live here and the vibe that burns off their Hot Records album *Sideroxylon* is one of desperate extremes; urban teen frenzy and lyricist Lovelock's adult fears erupting in a glowing atomic fireball of bazooka guitars and terminal volume. "What the Rifles do, I guess, is civilized aggression," Lovelock suggests, "like a passion more than just anger." "Civilized" is not a word I would use to describe Steedman's psychotic wah-wah guitar stutter in the middle of "Gonna Cry" or the band's frantic washboard bounce through "Society," two brief barrages from the Rifles' album, a black vinyl torpedo packed with Birdman/Pistols/New York Dolls dynamite against which an army of Men At Work would never stand a chance. But I hear that passion loud and clear, whipping hard into my stomach and up the side of my head, one night in a tin gardener's shed located on a remote stretch of woodland in Sydney's outer suburbs where the Rifles rehearse.

The crumpled set lists taped on the walls—soundproofed with pathetic remnants of old carpets—include the MC5's "Ramblin' Rose" and Iggy Pop's "I Gotta Right" with originals like "Killing Time" and "Tick Tock," three-minute bullets that ricochet around the tiny room when the Rifles play. David Morris, hammering his rhythm guitar like Johnny Ramone, is wearing a homemade Celibate Rifles sweatshirt with the words "Subtlety Sucks" scrawled on the back. Tonight, the Rifles have no time for subtlety, ripping through David Johansen's "She Loves Strangers" with the same violent joy that they practice half a dozen new numbers. With the amps and drums pulled around like wagons in a circle, the band is playing so hard and fast that you can understand how Damien Lovelock's throat hemorrhaged during the recording of "God Squad" for the LP. "I don't want to see people's ears bleed," Steedman insists during a cigarette break, "but part of our performance is the ear-bash of the volume. It's gotta be loud or it's not worth it."

I will say right here that *Sideroxylon* (no, I don't know what it means and it's likely the band members aren't too sure themselves) is not just one of the best independent Australian records I heard there; it is one of the best records of any kind I've heard all year; uncompromising in its attack, unflinching in its rebel sentiments. Like that of their maverick brethren—Saints splinter band the Laughing Clowns with their nervy brass-and-rhythm games, chamber folk-Velvets trio the Go-Betweens, Melbourne extremists the Moodists—who make fascinating scratchy pop in the dark shadow of Joy Division—the Celibate Rifles' sound and emotional fury is the flammable extract of big country ambitions and local experiences filtered through universal urban tensions. The Celibate Rifles and the hundreds of Australian bands like them may never get out of what Bruce Milne calls "that five-percent ghetto." But a little action in the Australian underground still goes a long way. "In America," notes Damien Lovelock, "you can call yourself an underground band and never get beyond that. Here the lines are not so distinct. Sure, you can think of yourself as underground and never get to AM radio.

"But there is also the possibility that you can and you don't need payola. Like our reissue of the *Jacques The Fish* EP actually getting on 2SM-AM—it can happen by fluke. And it's not unusual to see a Sydney 1983 band playing New York Dolls-type stuff and they'll be supporting Men At Work. Those things can happen here."



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The Warumpi Band

## YOUNG, GIFTED & BLACK

### Aborigine Rock

**T**he first thing you notice about the small clusters of aborigines parked in the dry river beds running through Alice Springs or shuffling zombie-like down this outback city's modern two-block-long shopping drag is their state of miserable, humiliating poverty. Usually attended by a scrawny, flea-bitten dog, they are a viciously sobering vision of oppression and shredded dignity in their white-man's hand-me-downs, ill-fitting T-shirts, blue jeans and thrift shop dresses crusted and gray with bush grime. The dismal state of their dress is even more dramatic in contrast to the severe midnight blackness of their skin and the noble sculpture of their Negroid features.

The second thing you notice is their eyes. With frozen poker faces, these aborigines—descended from tribes crassly uprooted from their traditional bush homelands—look at you with a chilling neutrality. Set in light chocolate irises often inflamed by the diseases carried by bush flies, it is a black laser glare that cuts straight to the heart, speaking volumes of sadness and simmering resentment. And it asks, over and over again, what conceivable evil could inspire one race to such depths of cruelty towards another?

It is a question young white Australians are increasingly asking themselves. Decades of torture, virtual enslavement and open slaughter of Australia's aboriginal tribes by immigrant whites have accumulated into a burden of guilt that young whites here wear with the same sense of helplessness and shame American college students bore during the 60s civil rights movement. Not surprisingly, that guilt has found an expression in the new Australian rock music. Despite its clichéd AOR guitars and lilywhite Fleetwood Mac harmonies, the recent hit Aussie single "Solid Rock" by Goanna was an earnest attempt to dramatize the brute upheaval of traditional aboriginal life for a mass white audience.

More extraordinary is the effect white pop music is having on the new black generation. In electric rock 'n' roll, young aborigines have discovered a voice of unity and power much louder than political speeches and far more effective than bureaucratic pleading. Politicized urban aborigine bands like No Fixed Address and Us Mob don't just have an axe to grind; they plant it straight into the heart of the matter.

Go one-on-one with "We Have Survived" from No Fixed Address' 1982 mini-LP *From My Eyes* and hear the difference. Billy Inda (who ironically played the token didjeridu fills in "Solid Rock") opens the song with a dark rubbery groan on the didje clocked by chattering boomerang percussion. Suddenly the band jolts into a chooglin' metallic reggae strut with a grudge to match. "We have survived the white man's world," boasts singer/drummer Bart Willoughby bitterly, "and the horror and the torment of it all." "Genocide" by Us Mob, from the soundtrack to the aborigine rock documentary *Wrong Side of the Road*, fights back just as hard with a hard marriage of steely funk and fuzz guitar fire.

Then there's the Warumpi Band, a collection of young

blacks from the isolated Central Australian settlement of Papunya. At this writing, the group had yet to play a city bigger than Alice Springs and was still awaiting the release of their debut single for Sydney's Hot Records. They knew only of the radical black magic of reggae through No Fixed Address; otherwise, their repertoire is still mostly old rock 'n' roll and C&W covers with a few originals boldly mixed in.

But their humble story is actually a revealing peek into the aboriginal condition and the charge the young bucks are getting out of rock 'n' roll. The story is best told by Neil Murray, a white twenty-six-year-old guitarist from Victoria who joined the Warumpi Band after arriving in Papunya as part of a bilingual program to teach aboriginal children to read in both English and their native tongue. In turn, he learned a few things about playing music for fun and profit from the band—guitarist Sammy Butcher, drummer Gordon Butcher, bassist Dennis Minor and singer George Rurrumbu, a stone Little Richard freak who does a dynamite "Dizzy Miss Lizzy" complete with mile-high pompadour. And after hearing some of these road stories, I don't want to hear another rock band complain about Holiday Inn room service again....

"The aboriginal settlements out in the bush, which are a lot like your Indian reservations, have been in existence for twenty or thirty years now. In the past ten years or so, films have been regularly coming out to places like Papunya. Most of these films were made in America and among those films are things like *Rock Around the Clock* and a lot of old Elvis movies. I can remember seeing some Chuck Berry footage at one of the movie nights and the guys just freaked out! It was amazing to them, a black man jumping around and acting like that. Seeing things like that, hearing that music, had an incredible impact.

"The thing is, traditional music, especially at Papunya, was never really secular, never performed for fun or enjoyment. Most of the music the men play is secret stuff, part of religious ceremonies. The reason rock 'n' roll has become popular is because of the younger generations brought up in the settlement. They realize it's a much livelier music and they can dance with the girls. There's one old bloke of sixty or seventy and he coined a word for this rock 'n' roll music. He called it 'Nguntji wire.' 'Nguntji' basically means 'for fun' or 'for no reason.' And 'wire' is because you play it with electric instruments.

"When I got to Papunya, a couple of guys in the band could play, they'd bang on an old acoustic guitar with one string that might be lying around. But I brought my own amplifier and guitar from Victoria and generated a lot of interest. Some of the guys were on welfare, contributed some money and we got some guitars and tube amps to jam with. The YMCA had a P.A. system so we got together enough money to buy it. Somebody else might have a motor car and we'd just drive off, playing Papunya and in nearby settlements like Yuendumu.

"Basically, there was a core of about four or five guys in the band. But at other times, there might be different people playing. I had to adapt my idea of what a band was like, the white fella's conception, to the aboriginal way of living. It's a sharing thing with them. So I'd be working on a song with the bass player and we'd work out a good run to play. I'd turn around to work with the drummer, look back, and there would be a different guy playing bass. This was perfectly natural for them. The bass player just decided to let his brother play for awhile.

"The tours are such an organizational shambles. That is, there is no organization. It was a problem of never being sure whether all of the gear was in order or if we had enough motor cars. Our gigs may or may not coincide with the cashflow of the community where we were playing. So we'd end up with no money and we'd let all the countrymen in for free, because they were our countrymen.

"So often we'd be broke with no money for food. Or there

*continued on page 106*



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# JIMMY PAGE



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A GUITAR  
PROPHET, AS TOLD BY THE  
MASTER OF GNASH 'N' FLASH.

JOHN TOBLER & STUART GRUNDY

Photograph by LAURENS VAN HOUTEN

World Radio History





**J**immy Page was born in Heston, West London, on January 9, 1944, and moved with his family to nearby Feltham during his infancy. He spent his formative years, from the age of eight, in Epsom, Surrey. For such an inventive and mercurial player, it is strange that he made no moves towards the guitar until his fifteenth year. "I remember going onto the playing fields one day and seeing this great throng crowded around this figure playing guitar and singing some skiffle song of the time, and I wondered how he did it. He showed me how to tune it, and it went on from there, going to guitar shops and hanging around watching what people were doing, until in the end, it was going the other



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

**Yardbirds: Keith Relf, Chris Dreja, Jim McCarty & Page.**

way, and people were watching you."

The young Page, too impatient for guitar tutors, took to pulling solos off great rock 'n' roll records: "Solos which affected me could send a shiver up my spine, and I'd spend hours and in some cases days trying to get them off. The first ones were Buddy Holly chord solos, like 'Peggy Sue,' but the next step was definitely James Burton on Ricky Nelson records, which was when it started to get difficult. The particular record which first made me get interested in playing was 'Baby Let's Play House' by Elvis Presley, because it was so infectious."

A mutual obsession led to Page's early friendship with Jeff Beck: "I think I met Jeff through his sister—he came around to my house with a homemade guitar and played the James Burton solo from Ricky Nelson's 'My Babe' and we were immediately like blood brothers. We're still friends, of course."

Playing at the local dancehall in Epsom led to an offer to join Neil Christian's Crusaders (another guitar alumnus was Ritchie Blackmore). Page leapt at the chance to play in London, so Christian sold the idea to Jimmy's reluctant family: "He had to talk to my parents first, which was quite a courteous thing to do—I was tailored in the mold to do what all young lads do, which was to go through school and pass exams, which was what I was doing—certainly, being a rock 'n' roll musician wasn't the choicest of professions, but he reassured my parents and said he'd keep a watchful eye on this young lad, and anyway, the gigs were at weekends."

Despite Christian's rosy picture, Page did not take well to the rigors of a rock 'n' roll lifestyle, and actually planned an alternate career: "I couldn't carry on—I couldn't understand why I was getting ill at the time, and I just retreated to the only other thing I could do, which was a pretty grim prospect. It was painting; and I went to art college at Sutton, although I was also accepted by Croydon—I don't know how, because I was a terrible draughtsman."

Fortunately for the development of rock guitar, Page found another way to stay in music without ruining his health: the world of session playing. Another early acquaintance, producer Glyn Johns, can be credited with this blow to the art world. Predictably, the studio waters did not immediately part for the young guitarist: "What went wrong there was that they stuck a row of dots in front of me, which looked like crows on telegraph wires. It was awful. I could have played it so easily, when another chap came and played this simple sort of riff, I gave myself hell for it. It wasn't so much a matter of a lost opportunity as a matter of pride—I felt really stupid."

Page compensated quickly, however, and began to build an extraordinary resume of hit sessions: "I'd been allowed into the whole sort of impenetrable brotherhood, and it was great fun and games to start with, although it had its embarrassing moments, such as recording with Van Morrison and Them. One particular time I'd been booked as a guitarist with a group, and often, there'd be a drummer, and bit by bit, as the evening went on, another session musician would appear, one sitting next to the bass player, another sitting next to the keyboards, so in the end, it was just Van Morrison, session players and the group, but the session players were just duplicating the group. You can imagine the tension, and what these chaps from Ulster must have thought—it was so embarrassing, you just

had to look at the floor and play because they were glaring." (Page survived to play on Them classics "Gloria," "Here Comes The Night" and "Baby Please Don't Go.")

"For the first eighteen months, doing sessions was really enjoyable, and I'd come to terms a lot more with the technical side of it and having to read music. Although I could never read music in the same way that I could read a newspaper, I could scan through a sheet of music and know it by the time they counted the song in. So I never actually learned to read, although I wish I had.... As the situation and mood of the music scene changed, the guitar would go further into the background, to such a degree that where I'd initially been doing all the hot licks, now I'd be doing, for example, a session with Tubby Hayes, then something with Petula Clark, and to follow that, anything from rock 'n' roll to a jingle to a folk session. I was really having to stretch my musical resources and knowledge without even realizing it, which was really good, as far as discipline and an education went.

"So at the start and for some time afterwards, it was really good, until the day I was booked to do a muzak session, and then it really came down hard as to what it was all about. The way they do these things is you have a sheet of music which looks like a magazine or something, and you just keep turning over and over, and they don't stop—for someone who was having a bit of trouble with reading music, it was terrifying. The whole thing wasn't enjoyable any more, and putting that side by side with the fact that I was getting booked on muzak sessions, I just wanted to leave. After that, I tried to find out what I'd been booked on, and I actually turned things down if I thought it would be a waste of everybody's time."

Page's secret life singles included hit records by Billy Fury, Joe Cocker, the Kinks, David Bowie (then Davy Jones), the Who, Jackie DeShannon (with whom Page had "a whirlwind romance"), Nico, and as a producer/sideman, an Eric Clapton-John Mayall session that led to an *Anthology Of British Blues* on Andrew Loog Oldham's Immediate Records.

At this point, Page radically increased his visibility by joining the Yardbirds at the behest of old pal Jeff Beck. Page actually joined as a bass player, replacing Paul Samwell-Smith: "Mind you, Samwell-Smith's was a big position to fill, because he was a noted bass player, and although I may have played bass before, I'd never played it in that role, but the thing was that we hoped we could get Chris (Dreja, rhythm guitarist) to play the bass parts, and then Jeff and I would be doing a sort of dual lead thing, which really could have started a whole new thing going. Viewed that way, the rest of the band seemed really keen on it. Eventually, we did the dual lead thing, although there aren't that many recordings of that lineup, which is a great shame."

Beck was already looking toward his own band, however, for which Page served as midwife. "Jeff's solo project was to be instrumental, although it could have been vocal, and this thing was cooked up, the 'Bolero.' I was mainly instrumental in getting it together, I think—Jeff obviously added lyrical parts to





it, and he also put a riff in the middle of it, but the major part of it was mine, and I did arrange it up to the middle point where the riff comes in. The other side to that occasion was that the band which played on 'Beck's Bolero' might have turned into the first Led Zeppelin, because Keith Moon was on drums, John Entwistle was going to do the session, but something else cropped up, and John Paul Jones did it, and Nicky Hopkins was on piano, and there was a lot of talk afterwards of actually getting a band together—Keith was really keen on doing it, but there were certain politics involved—and singers were approached, but suddenly, it got a bit hairy and everyone backed off. Steve Winwood and Steve Marriott were the two immediate names that were thought of—Rod Stewart didn't come up until later."

Encouraged by the success of "Bolero," Beck departed the Yardbirds; rather than making the best of their remaining na-

important to him, as opposed to the way we see it."

With the Yardbirds relegated to the Rock Hall of Fame, Page began looking for new players. His co-conspirators were Chris Dreja, now a converted bassist, and Yardbirds manager Peter Grant. Possible candidates included Terry Reid and Procol Harum drummer B.J. Wilson, but destiny dictated less stellar sidemen.

"I was mainly going after Terry Reid, who had really impressed me during a Yardbirds tour when Jeff Beck was in the band, and we toured with the Stones. As fate would have it, he'd signed to Mickie Most, but he recommended Robert Plant. I went to see Robert and was gassed out, because he was really great. It seemed really strange to me that somebody that good hadn't emerged before, but it always seems that at the end of the day, someone who's good will come through—a classic example of that being Albert Lee. I wasn't sure about



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

*It's hard to describe the feeling of playing numbers like 'Communication Breakdown'... so staccato, just a knockout to do. It was electrifying to be a part of it."*

**Early Zeppelin: John Paul Jones, Page and Robert Plant crank it out.**

scent superstar guitarist, however, the Yardbirds seemed dispirited: "It wasn't the happiest period, and it must have been very depressing for the founder members of the band, because they'd lived through songs that I hadn't like 'Heart Full Of Soul' and 'Shape Of Things.' I think the straw that broke the camel's back was one particular song, 'Goodnight Sweet Josephine,' which we weren't at all keen about. We knew it wasn't anything like the sort of thing we were moving towards, because by this time the band had started to feel itself as a four-piece unit, and I'd managed to get some identity into it with new material and new directions for some of the things that they'd done before and suddenly this number was put to us. We knew it wasn't right, but we decided to try it to see if it worked, but it didn't. Unfortunately it came out—in the States, not in Britain—and it was really upsetting.

"I wanted to keep the group together, but Keith Relf came out with it and said, 'The magic died for me when Eric left the band,' which seemed most peculiar to me, because I thought the best stuff they'd done had been with Jeff. But if you think about it, you can see that those were the days that were more

who to use as a drummer. B.J. Wilson was somebody I'd worked with on the Cocker sessions and he was really good—but I wasn't absolutely sure, because it was something where you had to really work out the chemistry to make sure it matched before the first rehearsal, or else it would be a total disaster and might spoil three elements out of four. Robert suggested Bonzo (John Bonham), and obviously, when I saw him, there couldn't be anybody else as our drummer. At that point, as far as I can remember, there were some outstanding contracts to be fulfilled with the Yardbirds, and Chris Dreja had to stay there, but then John Paul Jones, who I'd met through studio work, rang up. He was getting into sessions about halfway through the period that I was doing them, and he was firmly established by the time I decided to get out. He was doing arranging as well, and he'd done stuff for Andrew Oldham on the Stones records, and for Mickie Most, the Donovan things. He called and said, 'I hear you're getting a group together and I'd like to be part of it,' and when that happened, Chris told me to go ahead, and suddenly there it was—four guys that could go into a rehearsal room and know it was going

to be dynamite."

Page is particularly proud of the fact that when Atlantic Records signed the new-born Led Zeppelin, they put them on the parent label, rather than Atco, the U.K. subsidiary: "As far as I know, we were the first white band on Atlantic, because all the earlier white bands had been on Atco. At the time, we said we'd really like to be on Atlantic as opposed to Atco, because it was the first true independent label that had really sailed through and done it well."

That first Led Zeppelin album took the rock world by storm. In one extraordinary paradigm, the entire genre of heavy metal at its most inventive and sophisticated emerged full-grown. Most essential was Page's marriage of raw power to delicate texture: "I think it's all there on the first LP, but personally speaking, I was trying to explore the different avenues of the guitar, establishing that we could play acoustically, as well as with electric instruments, right from the start so that it didn't make any difference come the third LP, when there was more of a leaning towards acoustic numbers than before. Apart from that, I wanted the band to come through with something that was hard-hitting dynamite that other musicians would respect as well, but would be so good that everyone in the band would feel committed to it, which was how it went, in fact. What was great was that such a respect was built up between the four of us for each other.

"We rehearsed quite a lot within the framework of the numbers, but the full construction—the embellishments, the overdubs, and certain lyrics like the verses on 'Communication Breakdown' where there had just been a chorus—were added. We had numbers from the Yardbirds that we called free-form, like 'Smokestack Lightnin',' where I'd come up with my own riffs and things, and obviously I wasn't going to throw all that away, as they hadn't been recorded, so I remodeled those riffs and used them again. The bowing on 'How Many More Times' and 'Good Times, Bad Times' was an extension of what I'd been working on with the Yardbirds, although I'd never had that much chance to go to town with it, and to see how far one could stretch the bowing technique on record. Obviously for anyone who saw the band, it became quite a little showpiece in itself. It was really enjoyable to do—some of the sounds that came out of it were just incredible—and sometimes it would sound like that 'Hiroshima' piece by Penderecki, and other times, it would have the depth of a cello. 'Good Times, Bad Times,' as usual, came out of a riff with a great deal of John Paul Jones on bass, and it really knocked everybody sideways when they heard the bass drum pattern, because I think everyone was laying bets that Bonzo was using two bass drums when he only had one.

"'Dazed And Confused' came from the Yardbirds, and that was my showcase, show-off bit with the bow, and that was one example, I guess, of how everything but the kitchen sink was in that first album from my end. I'd always been interested in every facet of and approach to guitar playing, from flamenco to classical to early 50s rock 'n' roll—it's always intrigued me, because the tonal quality of the approach to classical guitar is totally different in its finger style from say, folk guitar, and the way the fingers have to shape on the right hand to attack is quite different. The tones are absolutely stunning, and from that, you can get to Django Reinhardt's beautiful tone and emotive feeling. I just love every aspect of guitar playing, and I



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

**"The musical press' attitude is that you're God one minute and crap the next."**

try to play a little bit of everything.

"The idea of 'Communication Breakdown' was to have a really raw, hard number. It's difficult to describe the feeling of playing those numbers at the time, but it was so exciting and electrifying to be part of it, and that one was always so good to play so staccato—just a knockout to do."

*Led Zeppelin* was made at high speed, which Jimmy explains was partly due to the fact that the band had previously played some live dates. It was engineered by Glyn Johns, who later claimed he also produced it; Jimmy alone was credited with the production, and still feels that the credit was correct, although it was in fact the first complete LP he had ever produced.

"What happened afterwards came as a massive surprise; that success, and to be perfectly truthful, the shock didn't hit me until a number of years later. We were touring until the day when we were presented with a gold record—I thought, 'My goodness! A gold record!'"

The first and last months of 1969 saw Led Zeppelin albums released. *Led Zeppelin II* differed from its predecessor in that the material was not as well-established before recording. "We were extending the repertoire at that point, and recording at the same time, so we were pretty much working like a twenty-four-hour commitment every day. There were so many overdubs applied to the numbers that some of them actually changed their format. I can remember during that time around the end of the second LP, we started to work on 'Since I've Been Loving You,' which we recorded on the third LP, and that was one we got used to playing onstage, but it was the hardest one to actually record. That was at the point where we were getting very self-critical. Contrary to the rumor, I was quite happy with the album, because I thought it had the energy that was totally relevant to what was happening onstage at that point."

The best-known track from *Led Zeppelin II* is undoubtedly "Whole Lotta Love." "The riff came from me, but don't ask me where it came from before that, because it just came out of thin air, as nearly all riffs do. It was pretty infectious. I suppose,



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although its being on *Top of the Pops* every week killed it over here, which was a drag."

Another standout track, especially from Jimmy's point of view, was "Heartbreaker." "That song's pretty much in two sections—it stops and there's a whole guitar bit before it moves into the solo, like changing gears into overdrive. It was fairly similar to the sort of thing that was coming out in live performances—I wish there was more material recorded live. But as far as that heavy metal label we were given, it wasn't that, because it wasn't just like hitting a riff and going on and on at it at the same intensity; it was a question of light and shade and dynamics, and it would be really loud one minute and so soft that a pin could drop and be heard the next."

Equally significant was the large part Robert Plant was taking in lyric composition. "In the early days, I was writing the lyrics as well as the music, because Robert hadn't written before, and it took a lot of ribbing and teasing to actually get him into writing, which was funny. And then, on the second LP, he wrote the words of 'Thank You'—he said, 'I'd like to have a crack at this and write it for my wife.'"

Between the recording of their second and third albums, Plant and Page went to India, where they spent some time in a local recording studio. "The intention was always to do a complete world tour, at the same time recording in places like Cairo, Bangkok and Bombay, and involving local musicians as well. It was just an experiment to see how well we would get on, so we recorded two tracks in India, 'Friends' and 'Four Sticks,'



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Page wields double-neck axe for live "Stairway To Heaven."

just to see how it would go, and it was tremendous. It would have been lovely to do that with the group, but we never got around to it, and those two tracks never came out in that form."

They were, however, included on *Led Zeppelin III* and the untitled fourth LP, respectively, but in more straightforward studio recordings by the complete band. *Led Zeppelin III* was released in October, 1970, and received a mixed critical reaction. "We went and stayed in a cottage in Wales, and wrote some songs which fitted in with the mood there, so obviously one recorded them—our albums were mostly a statement of where we were at the time we recorded them. But after the second LP, which had a lot of hard-hitting rock, it was interpreted as us mellowing and losing all our power."

The critical flak led directly to some basic rethinking for the fourth album, which was released in 1971. It lacked a title, and in fact lacked words of any sort on the sleeve (apart from those dimly visible on an Oxfam poster photographed as part of an urban landscape). "The band came under a lot of attack from the press after the third LP—the musical press attitude is that you're God one minute and shit the next, and you've got no right to be recognized by anyone else and become successful or whatever; we decided to release the fourth LP with nothing on it whatsoever, no name of the band, but just the runes [symbols apparently relating to each individual band member], and just saying, 'This is us—you don't have to buy

the LP, so don't if that's the way it is.' That was a hell of a legal battle—I remember sitting in the label's office for a whole afternoon and being told it had to have this, that and the other written on it, and I said, 'Well, it doesn't, and if it does ...' You have to make certain stands at times—afterwards, it may seem totally ridiculous, but at the time, the band was in total agreement, so it was worth doing."

In July, 1971, Zeppelin was inadvertently involved in a major riot in a stadium in Milan, Italy. "As we started to play in this football stadium, we could see movement around the catwalk, and all these riot police coming in. There was smoke at the far end of the outdoor arena, and the promoters ran onstage and said would we tell them to stop lighting fires. So Robert asked them; but suddenly there was smoke by the front of the stage, and it was tear gas! The police were just provoking the audience. It was pandemonium, and no one was immune from this blasted tear gas. I was terribly upset afterwards—I couldn't believe that we'd be used as the instrument for a political demonstration like that."

November 1971 brought the release of the fourth album, including the quirky rhythm puzzle of "Black Dog" ("I didn't have a black dog, but there was one at Headley Grange, where we recorded the album.") and the AOR anthem, "Stairway To Heaven": "That really sums it all up—it's just a glittering thing, and it was put together in such a way as to bring in all the fine points, musically, of the band, in its construction. When it came to the point of running it down with Robert, there's actually a first rehearsal tape of it, and sixty percent of those lyrics, he came in with off the cuff—that was amazing. I wanted to try this whole building towards a climax, with John Bonham coming in at a later point, an idea which I'd used before, to give it that extra kick. Then there's this fanfare towards the solo, and Robert comes in after that with this tremendous vocal thing. At the time, there were quite a few guitars overlaid on that, and I must admit I thought—I knew—it was going to be very difficult to do it onstage, but we *had* to do it, and I got a double-necked guitar to approach it. We were doing a tour in the States, and we'd worked this song in, and I remember we did it in L.A. and got a standing ovation at the end of it."

Page regards "Stairway To Heaven" as the pinnacle of the band's achievements, which he considered tragic, "because we haven't got the opportunity to explore anymore."

Almost eighteen months later, in March 1973, Zeppelin released a fifth LP, *Houses Of The Holy*. The band began to work on other projects: shooting began on a film; the Swan Song record label, owned by the band, was launched during 1974; and during 1975 came the first Zeppelin release on Swan Song, the double album, *Physical Graffiti*.

As well as many new tracks, the fifteen songs included several items recorded some time before, but for various reasons not included on previous albums. The track from the album most singled out was "Kashmir." "Along with 'Stairway,' that's probably the one that most people would think of if we were mentioned, although they were totally different numbers in terms of content. The intensity of 'Kashmir' was such that when we'd done it, we knew that it was something that was magnetic within itself. You couldn't really describe what the quality was. It was just Bonzo and myself at Headley Grange at the start of that one—he started the drums, and I did the riff and the overdubs, which in fact get duplicated by an orchestra at the end, which brought it even more to life. It seemed sort of ominous and had a particular quality to it; it's nice to go for an actual mood and know that you've pulled it off.

"*Physical Graffiti* was the longest album to make, because we had about three sides of new material recorded, and it seemed to be a good idea to put on some of the numbers that had been left off previous LPs. There was a period of going through, listening to the different tracks and adding things if they were necessary. There would usually be a guitar solo needed, which I'd do, and I'd usually add other parts as well,





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and at other times, Jonesy would do bits. You'd have the overall idea of what it was going to be like, especially once the vocal lines and phrasing were sorted out, because then you'd know where not to play, which was as important as knowing when you should play.

The first of two 1976 albums was *Presence*, which was recorded in three weeks, particularly impressive considering Robert Plant had been involved in a very serious car accident, made worse by his inability, due to tax problems, to recuperate at his own home or to be with his wife, who had also been injured in the accident.

The second Zeppelin album of 1976 was the double sound-track LP of the film which had been in preparation since 1973, and finally premiered in October 1976, *The Song Remains The Same*. Following this, there was a lengthy silence from Led Zeppelin, partly explained by the tragic death of Robert Plant's five-year-old son in July 1977. By mid-1978, the group began preparations for what was to be their final album, *In Through The Out Door*. Then 1979 saw them fully active again; a subsequent international tour seemed to indicate that the group were gearing up for further work, but on September 25, 1980, John Bonham was found dead in Jimmy Page's house. The coroner's verdict was accidental death. After a period of uncertainty over whether or not Bonham would be replaced, the remaining members of Led Zeppelin finally decided that they would not relaunch the group with a new member, and instead went their separate ways. After a lengthy hiatus, Jimmy Page released his first solo project during 1982, his soundtrack to the Charles Bronson vehicle, *Death Wish II*.

"I went to see the film at the director's house, and he asked me if I liked it. I said I thought it would be a challenge, and he correctly presumed that I wanted to take it on, and told me that I had eight weeks to do it. I walked out of his house after having had a very pleasant afternoon, feeling like a sledgehammer

had hit me over the head. I had eight weeks to do forty-five minutes of music—that's collectively. The longest section was two and a half minutes, and most of the bits were seventeen seconds or forty-five seconds. I worked from videocassettes with timing on them. I'd find a metronome count where particular movements would coincide on the beat, which might be a dissipated beat, but would have a sort of tempo, and then count the bars from it and work on, being totally confident that something would be dead on the nail. I wrote everything from scratch that way, apart from one riff that I'd had before—the rest of it was off the cuff. It was an absolutely incredible exercise in discipline, which was terrifying, but I just about made the deadline."

One surprising aspect of the *Death Wish II* LP was Page's use of synthesizers, something for which he was less than well known. Did he suspect that the age of the guitar was nearly over? "The thing is that technology changes so fast that you see developments in every area. I must admit that guitar synthesizers had stimulated my imagination for quite a long time, but before the Roland I am using now, none of those available would track properly. You'd play, and it would be late, or it would just stop tracking, and the pitch to voltage would go wrong, making a horrible squeak. But this particular machine is the works: it finally gives a guitarist a chance to compete with keyboard players. The guitar synthesizer that's been in any way comparable to the keyboard has been a long time coming, but it's here now, and I think we're going to hear a lot more of it. So you'll still see me with something that looks like a guitar—I might have some strange sounds coming out of it, and I may not be using the bow to do it, but I'll still be there."

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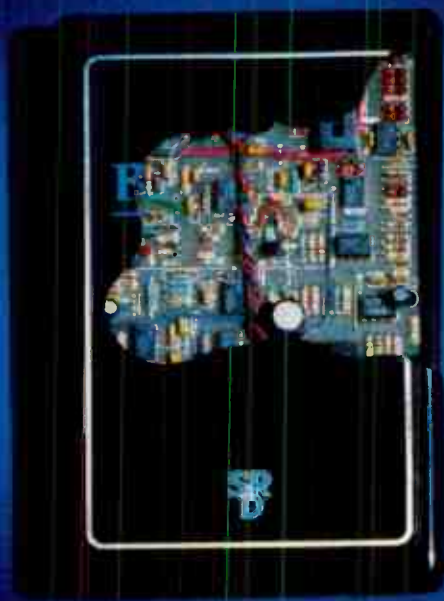
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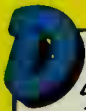
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# STEVE NIEVE

BY MICHAEL GOLDBERG

**“You want to interview Steve?” asked Elvis Costello’s manager, the feisty, pugnacious Jake Riviera. “Well then, you’d better ask him about amplifier settings.” He cracked a smile, and explained himself: “Steve’s been up all night and we’ve been kidding him about the guy from *Musician* magazine who’s going to ask about**

settings.” Riviera laughed.

I followed Riviera to the dressing room. There sat Steve Nieve, arranger, composer, orchestrator and keyboard player extraordinaire. Unshaven, dressed all in black, with a black fedora atop his head, slouched on the couch, he looked like a sleazy character out of Orson Welles’ *Touch of Evil*.

With straight face, Riviera introduced us.

“Now Steve,” I began, before I’d even taken a seat. “The first thing I want to talk to you about are your amp settings....”

A look of horror crossed Nieve’s face. Suddenly there was laughter from the adjoining dressing rooms.

“Just kidding,” I said.

For six years, twenty-five-year-old Steve Nieve has been a lieutenant in Elvis’ army. From the Peter Gunn-meets-Jamaica mystery of “Watching The Detectives,” the first Elvis track he played on, through the horn-dominated soul revival *Punch The Clock*, Nieve has helped sculpt the unique pop sound that has made Elvis Costello one of the most respected of modern day rock ‘n’ rollers.

Steve Nieve deserves to be respected as well. A classically trained pianist who studied at London’s Royal College of Music, he can play garage-trashy a la ? and the Mysterians (*This Year’s Model*),

pump out Nashville honky-tonk (*Almost Blue*) or do a Booker T (*Get Happy!*). Perhaps his most stylistically distinctive work is evident on *Armed Forces* and *Imperial Bedroom*, where he works his classical roots into Elvis’ material, giving the tunes a majestic neo-Sgt. Pepper quality.

Those classical roots still remain dear to Nieve who, when he’s not recording or touring with Elvis, composes classical music. In London, one can sometimes find him playing this music at a small French restaurant, L’Escargot. Recently he recorded an entire album of his own compositions, *Keyboard Jungle* (on Demon Records). The music is not what one expects from a driving force in one of the key modern rock units. Recorded digitally in four hours, *Keyboard Jungle*, an album of instrumentals, finds Nieve, and only Nieve, holding forth on a Steinway grand.

“I like the idea of going against the system,” said Nieve, a softspoken young man not used to being interviewed (this was only his second interview—ever). “I think someday music won’t be so commercialized. There was a time, before record players, when people could make their own music, however terrible it was, to entertain each other at home. It seems to me that the way records are going, a lot of them are

sounding the same as the last one. I’d like to see a time when it goes back to that thing of people entertaining each other in their houses, rather than buying a record by Styx and they don’t even know what the lead singer looks like. It’s just a noise, it’s just a record company-produced thing. And especially in America, the way the radio is set up, they completely dictate what kind of music those kinds of bands make. That’s why my album probably won’t get played on the radio. But then it’s completely what I wanted to do.”

Born in Bishop’s Stortford, Nieve grew up in the small English town of Erith, just down the road from a factory where Vox organs were made. His parents played classical music around the house and he took piano lessons from a neighbor, beginning when he was six years old.

It wasn’t until Nieve turned fifteen that he got hip to rock ‘n’ roll. “Studying classical music, they’d play you something and then you’d have to write it down by ear,” he says. “That was part of the training. Of course most of the kids were into pop music. So one time the teacher said, ‘Let’s just listen to pop records,’ and he put on ‘Metal Guru’ by T. Rex and we were sitting there writing it down.” Nieve laughed at the memory. “I thought, ‘This is great!’ So I had to go out and buy it. And that’s what started it all going.”

From there it was less than a year before he had bought his first Vox organ (which he played on Elvis & the Attractions’ first American tour) and began playing in local combos including the Albinos (“We never played any gigs; we just rehearsed.”) and Second Foundation, a ten-piece band with a girl singer that covered the hits of the day. Still, playing pop music was just a hobby, until the keyboard player joined the Attractions in 1977.

That Nieve ended up in the Attractions was pure luck. He was attending the Royal College of Music in London at the time. But he was tired of college life. Nieve wanted out and thought it might be fun to play in a pop band. Looking through the musician's classifieds in the back of *Melody Maker*, an ad for "keyboards for a rocking pop combo" caught his eye. "So I called them up and they had so many people calling them up that they were trying to put people off," said Nieve, lighting the first of numerous Camel cigarettes that he would chain-smoke during the interview. "The secretary said to me, 'Yeah, we've got this Elvis Presley impersonator.' I said, 'Great, I'll come down.'

"It was like an audition," he continued. "They had Steve Goulding from the Rumour on drums and I think Martin Belmont on guitar and I just walked in this room and there was a Hammond there. I had never seen a Hammond before. So I was trying to figure out how that worked. I just played three songs. 'Less Than Zero' was one of the songs. This was before *My Aim Is True* came out. I'd never heard the songs. It wasn't like I decided to join Elvis' group. I just wanted to get into a band. But then after that we went into a place in Cornwall and rehearsed for a week. And then when I got back to London I got a message from the college that I'd been expelled. So it was perfect timing."

The combination of Elvis Costello and the three Attractions—Nieve, bassist Bruce Thomas and drummer Peter Thomas—has been a particularly potent one. In six years they've recorded eight superb albums. Nieve says the group works intuitively; there's no formula for making an Elvis Costello record. "It's a difficult thing to talk about 'cause we've recorded so many things and they're all recorded in different ways, really. Some albums we go away to a little country cottage and stay there a week to learn the songs and they go through totally different transformations. Sometimes we'll be doing a song of Elvis' in some different way and we'll get up in the morning and he'll have been up all night and have rewritten the words because of the new music."

And what has kept this band together for over six years? "Good question. Nearly all the bands that were around when we started have split up," he says. "I tried to figure out what it could be and I thought maybe, bands like the Clash or the Pistols that had some big statement to make, once they made their big statement, there wasn't really much else for them to do. Whereas when we got together we didn't know what we were doing. So we just carry on not knowing what we're doing." He laughed. "I think that's why we stick together."

Asked about the garage Vox sound

that dominates *This Year's Model*, Nieve said, "That was what we sounded like live at the time. That was the only keyboard I had. When we started out, everything had to be done on an organ. And as time progresses you start moving into bigger studios that have space to fit pianos in and so you say, 'Okay, I'd like to play piano.'"

As for the genre-hopping that characterizes the recording career of Elvis Costello & the Attractions—garage rock to psychedelic to soul to country—Elvis and the band are heavily influenced by what they're listening to as they make a record. "Until I started making records, I hadn't really listened to pop music. That's the great thing about working with Elvis. He's got the biggest record collection you've ever seen. In fact, it's so big you can't get in his house now. I think he's going to have to move. It's not that it's something that I've heard and liked, it's something that Elvis has just played for me. It's an instant thing, rather than



looking back. It's a new discovery for me. We might have been driving to the studio and Elvis puts some Aretha Franklin on."

Which is how the country album, *Almost Blue*, came about. "When he first started playing Loretta Lynn, I just got completely involved in Loretta Lynn. Mainly because it was just before my daughter was born and a lot of the songs were about family life. Being on tour and knowing that my wife was about to go into the hospital, it really cheered me up. I think that was what steered us into doing that album. Halfway through the tour we went to Nashville and did a couple of takes and said, 'Yeah, we're going to come back and do a whole album.'"

For four Englishmen, cutting a country record in Nashville was a rather strange experience. Nieve calls producer Billy Sherrill "a pretty weird redneck. He was just sitting in the studio and he pulled three guns out of his pocket and put them on the table. First producer I've ever met with guns in his pocket. Constantly tellin' these jokes: 'What's black and white and can't turn around in an

elevator? A nun with a javelin through her head.' Pretty strange jokes."

Making that record, which took one week, was a breeze. "You'd just walk in, put the headphones on and start playing the piano and it would sound like a George Jones record straightaway."

Of the work he's done in the Attractions, Nieve is particularly proud of his orchestrations for "Town Cryer" and "...And In Every Home," which appear on *Imperial Bedroom*. "In school, I used to write a lot of orchestral stuff, but I never actually heard it played. This was the first time I ever wrote something down and heard thirty people playing it back to me. It was amazing. It's a costly thing to have all those players, so I was quite nervous about it. I actually recorded it myself with a synthesizer first, just to make sure it was going to sound the way I wanted it to. When I was actually writing it out, I sat at home with a Portastudio and a Prophet and after I'd written out the parts, I recorded them so I could really hear the whole thing."

Nieve's orchestrations were unusual, to say the least. "I had this concept about violins. On one track ("...And In Every Home") I didn't use any violins. It was all violas. I think that gives it a slightly different sound. And on 'Town Cryer' I just did violins, about thirty of them. The guy who booked it just couldn't believe it. It was so I could get this really massive, piercing string sound."

Then there are six clarinets he used on "Town Cryer" as well. "I was trying to emulate, not copy, the sound of Glenn Miller. I think he achieved that through the use of block clarinets. I might be wrong but that was my idea."

In addition to an arsenal of keyboards including a Prophet 5, Fender Rhodes, Synclavier, Casio 247, Bosendorfer grand piano, Fairlight CMI and Vox and Hammond organs, Nieve is particularly enchanted by the Emulator. "I've been experimenting programming records into the Emulator. You can get four or five seconds—enough time to get in a whole bar of a song. And then you can loop it and you play one key and the whole track comes out of it. You can do some pretty interesting things with intros of songs. You can loop them on the wrong beat. Of if you get a bar of something, use it as a rhythm track and who's going to know?"

"I also found that if you program in something like that, so that you have the whole track on one note—there's a code so you can make all the notes on the Emulator play the same note—then you can press down like five notes, but slightly out of time with each other, and get these really amazing phrasing effects. You know those scratch records? I'd like to do that with the Emulator,

*continued on page 88*



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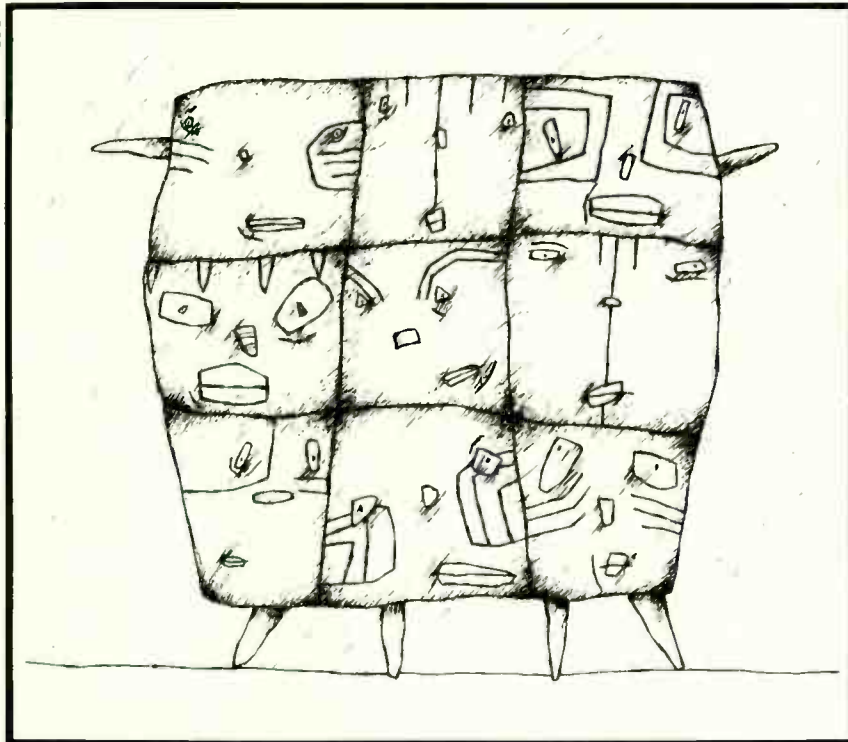


# MICRO PROCESSORS FOR THE MASSES

A CHIP OFF THE STARTING BLOCK

BY FREFF

LINDSEY LOCH



Meet the microprocessor, a clever little idiot capable of half a million operations a second.

Okay, enough jive talk about computers and the coming revolution in musical instruments. Look around you; it's not coming, it's *here*. In fact, it's been here since 1976, when the E-Mu Systems 4060 synthesizer keyboard hit the marketplace. The heart (or more accurately, the brain) of that product was a tiny chip of programmable silicon called a Z-80. A microprocessor.

That was the real revolution. Everything since has been inevitable, unavoidable, and a hell of a lot of fun.

Have you ever played a Prophet 5, or a Memorymoog, or a PolySix? Used a Drumulator or a DMX? Set your ten-dollar digital wristwatch to time a track in the studio? Do you find yourself sneering at a synth that *doesn't* have all the latest techno-bells and whistles, like sequencers and arpeggiators and program chains? Congratulations, friend. You're a true child of the revolution...though odds are you don't know very much about the device that made it possible.

In this case, however, ignorance is something less than bliss. Tooling

around the presets on these instruments is like using a 747 to bop by the corner grocery—a gross waste of potential. And with MIDIs (Musical Instrumental Digital Interfaces) springing up on every synth in sight, that's truer than ever. MIDI is more than just a way to let your keyboard/drum machine/whatever interface with other keyboards/drum machines/whatevers. It's nothing less than a direct line to the microprocessor itself. That means control. That means *freedom*. Learn the way that the microprocessor "thinks"—which isn't so tough, because music and programming have a lot more in common than you'd guess—and you can make it do what you want it to.

The keys to the kingdom have been offered up. The cost? Learning a few new tricks. Those that do are going to have a great time. And they'll owe it all to some Californian named Craig (God bless him, wherever he is) who asked for the impossible.

A microprocessor is nothing more than a small computer. So small, in fact,

that the average one could fit on a fingernail with plenty of room to spare. But don't let size confuse you. The microprocessor may be tiny, but it has many things in common with its larger cousins. For one thing, it's an idiot.

Really. Don't ever let anyone tell you computers are complicated. The glitziest computer in the entire world is still only a moron with the capacity to understand two numbers (0 and 1) and do three tasks: 1) add one number to another; 2) subtract one number from another; and 3) compare two numbers to see which is larger.

Not a very impressive list. A human being that stupid would be in an institution. But computers do have a few saving graces that make them dumb-but-useful, instead of just dumb.

One is that they're fast. Very, very fast. In the time it takes a human to read the command "subtract one number from another," a computer could have done the actual subtraction several million times. Another is that they don't actually think, no matter how many bad science fiction films you've seen to the contrary; they just add, subtract, and compare like they're told to do. Endlessly. Which means we can make a code out of those 0's and 1's (this is called *machine language*), assign real meanings to the numbers, like "turn on the washer" or "call up Preset Sound 37," and actually start making the little buggers do practical work.

This seems very obvious now, in a world where drugstores are selling home computers and cars are equipped with microprocessors programmed to improve gas mileage. But relatively speaking, 1975 was the Dark Ages. Microprocessors had only existed for three years. And since what they did was calculate, calculate, calculate, nobody had thought of much to do with them except put them inside of pocket calculators.

That changed, of course, in hundreds of ways and in hundreds of places. But the one shining moment that changed our *musical* lives happened in Santa Cruz, California, and it went like this....

Dave Rossum, of E-Mu Systems, had built one of the very first polyphonic synthesizer keyboards. If you had enough bucks and patience, you could take this keyboard and lots of E-Mu synth modules and actually play ten notes at a time. Of course, it was all hard-wired together, using discrete logic circuits, and if you wanted to change your sound, you had to individually adjust all the synth modules by hand, but, by God, it was a polyphonic, and a whole lot of people were interested in it.

Including Craig. Whose last name is

*continued on page 82*



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# MICK FLEETWOOD: PERSONALITY POWER

ANOTHER ANIMAL IN THE ZOO BY SAMUEL GRAHAM

BILL SOSIN PHOTO RESERVE



"Don't get too clever"; Mick provides solid, no-frills support in all weather conditions.

Mick Fleetwood played a drum solo once—but he really didn't mean to. It was in Chicago, back in the days when Fleetwood Mac was a blues band led by guitarist Peter Green. They had just finished their set, and it had gone well. With a few drinks in him, Fleetwood was ready for an encore.

"Everyone else in the band said, 'No, we better not go back on,'" Mick recalls. "But I just said, 'The hell with it. I'm going back out.' So I went onstage, expecting them to follow me, but they didn't. I was left out there alone, and I thought, 'Well, it's shit or bust now,' so I went for it. Actually, it went down a storm. Just at the end, I think, the others came and went, 'Daahhh.'" Fleetwood chuckles, strumming a final chord on his air guitar.

It's a little short of implausible. Here's a guy who came up in the era when drummers like Ginger Baker (surely you remember "Toad") and John Bonham (how could you forget "Moby Dick"?) were pounding audiences 'round the world into numb submission with twenty-minute percussion paroxysms. Yet Fleetwood was utterly content to forego drum solos. "I never even wanted to do it," he says simply. "It was an ego stroke I could well do without."

Mick Fleetwood, apparently, is one musician who harbors no illusions about his technical abilities. "It's quite obvious

that my style is one that has become known for its simplicity," he acknowledges. "The fact is, I'm just not interested in developing my prowess. But I'm incredibly interested in enjoying playing my drums in a musical situation. In fact, I'm wonderfully happy being completely utilized by a situation."

He's had plenty of opportunities for that, God knows. Fleetwood and bass player John McVie have been Fleetwood Mac's backbone for the full sixteen years of the band's existence. They've played behind an assortment of mercurial personalities in that time: Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan, Bob Welch, Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham. Through it all, Fleetwood and McVie have supplied no-frills support solid enough to anchor a dinky in a hurricane. Because of the many lineup changes, what has endured in Fleetwood Mac is not so much a particular sound—although their records have been consistently clean and straightforward—as a spirit. Fleetwood himself once called it "a simple, honest approach to music," and one can only deduce that he and McVie (and later Christine McVie as well) are the ones who have propagated it. Because of them, Fleetwood Mac's music is rarely spectacular but almost always tasteful.

In the last few years, Fleetwood's

leadership qualities have emerged in more tangible ways. At first, he was just Fleetwood Mac's very tall, very thin drummer, the one who'd dress up in drag and look silly on album covers. But about nine years ago, the band ran afoul of then-manager Clifford Davies, who put a bogus Fleetwood Mac on the road for a few dates while the real members were taking some time off. A nasty and protracted lawsuit ensued, and when the dust cleared, Fleetwood Mac were managing themselves—that is, Mick Fleetwood was essentially the manager. And so he remains, along with lawyer Mickey Shapiro, for although he still doesn't mind looking foolish, Fleetwood is the most level-headed and reliable of the bunch.

The same goes for Fleetwood the musician. "I always say, 'If you don't know how to play everything, just do one thing really well,'" he says of his drumming. "That's basically what I still do." Okay, so he's no Buddy Rich—but when Mick Fleetwood hits the skins, you know it, because he plays every stroke with an authority that makes most other drummers sound diffident by comparison. He is the foundation; and he's shown that even if you don't sing, write songs or solo, your music can bear a personal imprint.

"The fact that I don't write music, I think, seems to make other musicians feel safe," Fleetwood muses. "I haven't got any particular axe to grind—like, 'This is the way I would write it'—so no one is threatened. It's turned out to be really healthy.

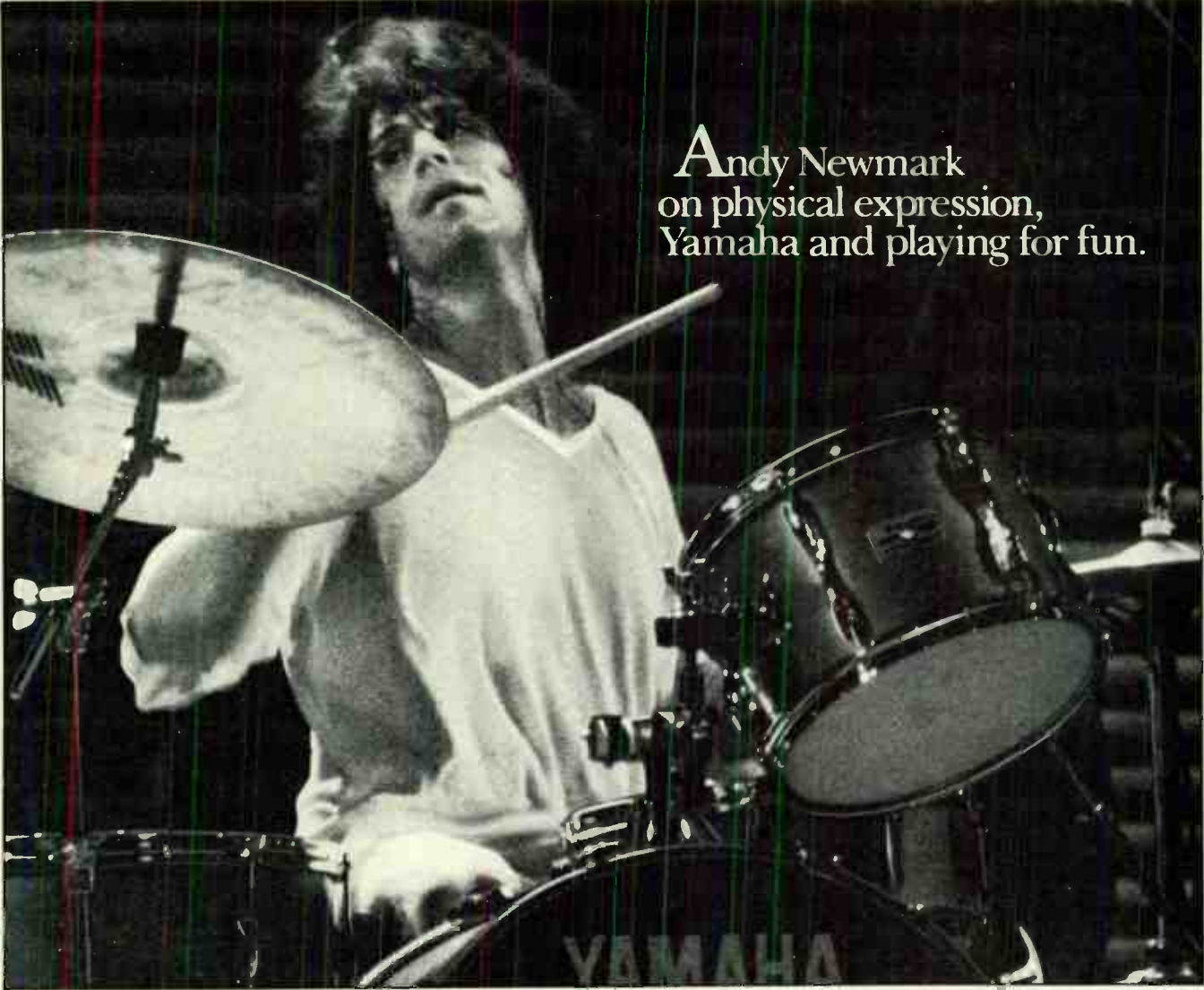
"Of course, the others have to realize that they are playing with me as a drummer. What they see is what they get, and if they think for one minute it's going to be anything else, they're wrong. That's an absolute."

Fleetwood may have inherited his penchant for percussion from his father; turns out the elder Fleetwood played a bit himself, although his son didn't even know until after his death. As a kid at boarding school in England, Mick used to drool over drum catalogs, happily plotting his future. "I had this great dream at school," he confides. "I wanted to work in a club in the West End of London, playing drums, and I wanted to be the club owner. I *did* end up playing in a club, a real sleazy place where I got paid five pounds a week. I was sleeping in my sister's attic; I had a bicycle, and I'd ride up and back to the club. I was underage, but probably because of my height, I got away with it."

Early inspirations included Tony Meehan, drummer for the Shadows ("the English Ventures"), and Sandy Nelson, who enjoyed a couple of dumb instru-

*continued on page 84*





Andy Newmark  
on physical expression,  
Yamaha and playing for fun.

"In general, my whole approach is very physical. It becomes like a body language when I play. The sound that comes out seems to be an extension of my personality. I dance on the drums. What I do basically is to try to project an attitude for the length of a song. My 'sound' could be called warm and thick, and my playing is deliberate.


"If I tapped the drums lightly and was very civilized about the situation, it wouldn't have the same sound. And my Yamahas can handle it. They don't choke when you play harder. They take on a quality that hits you physically. These drums have the kind of bottom that cuts through *everything*.

"Even though I use a small kit, there are a lot of textures coming out, and it's from the dynamics. Or from hitting the drums in different places. With less drums, I get to know each one better."

"Up until Yamaha, all of the drum kits I'd used were like 'six of one or half a dozen of the other.' Frankly, it didn't matter which one I

played. The minute I sat down and hit the Yamahas, they sounded like an EQ'd drum set after it's been mixed for an album. I actually wondered if they'd somehow managed to 'synthesize' my drum sound. Before I owned these drums, I never cared if I took my own kit to a recording session. I have an ally in the studio now."

"I can conduct music like a business, but I never had any delusions that it was just about *that*. I started playing drums because it was fun and that's still why I do it. Forgetting about the phone calls, the diplomacy, the politics — when I'm actually playing the drums, I still get that same childish joy. It's fun."

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# YAMAHA SYSTEM DRUMS

# EDDIE JOBSON DOES IT HIMSELF

GETTING IT RIGHT AS COMPULSION

BY FREFF

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE



Violinist/keysman Jobson, a veteran of Roxy Music and U.K., hones his new solo LP, *Zinc*.

There have just got to be easier ways to make a record... but not if you're Eddie Jobson, violin and keyboard whiz (ex- of U.K., Frank Zappa, Roxy Music and Curved Air), and the project in question is *Zinc/The Green Album*, your first solo showcase. It wasn't that Eddie, who admits he's a perfectionist, was asking the impossible: he just wanted it to be Right. If that meant getting up at five a.m. to drive a hundred miles to the studio every day, or auditioning hundreds of musicians on two continents, or learning to do a half-dozen things he'd never done before, from lyric writing to lead singing to drum tuning, then that's just the way it had to be, right?

So what if it took three years...?

"Invariably," sighs Eddie with a slight shake of his head, "everything I do ends up taking longer than it should and goes over budget."

*Zinc/The Green Album* is quintessential Jobson, the kind of chordally and rhythmically complex music that typified 70s English art rock, but done with an ear for the 80s. The drums, played by Michael Barsimanto on most of the album (and by a Jobson-programmed Oberheim DMX on "Turn It Over" and "Listen To Reason") are leaner, harder; there are very few cymbals. The only

synths used are a Yamaha CS-80 and Minimoog, with Eddie deliberately avoiding sound-settings associated with his earlier work. "I used more phasing, flanging, pulse-width modulation, and a lot of excess vibrato, all modern trademarks, as well as a lot of percussive sounds. Whether something is 70s or 60s or 80s is determined entirely by how you arrange it; that's how we categorize things chronologically." In fact, he has succeeded at what he set out to do. The best of that classically-based English style has been slimmed down and toughened up. The musicians on *Zinc* cook. And the "green concept" behind the album, never explicitly stated, hasn't the faintest hint of rosy 70s cosmic-consciousness; instead it's about ambition, and struggle, and the losses that accrue before the final fall.

Some of that attitude clearly derives from the experiences Eddie went through after the demise of U.K. in 1979, which left him deeply in debt and musically out of fashion. It was a time of heavy changes. He got married, found new management, moved to the United States... even cut his hair short and started wearing suits. "I went through this whole anti-rock 'n' roll period. What I was trying to do was get back into the real world. You know, cats and dogs and

kids, and going to sleep at reasonable hours and eating regular meals and seeing my wife." During that time he supported himself on savings, some royalties, and the sale of his English property. The game-plan seemed straightforward enough: put together a band, finish new demos, sign a record deal and hit the road again.

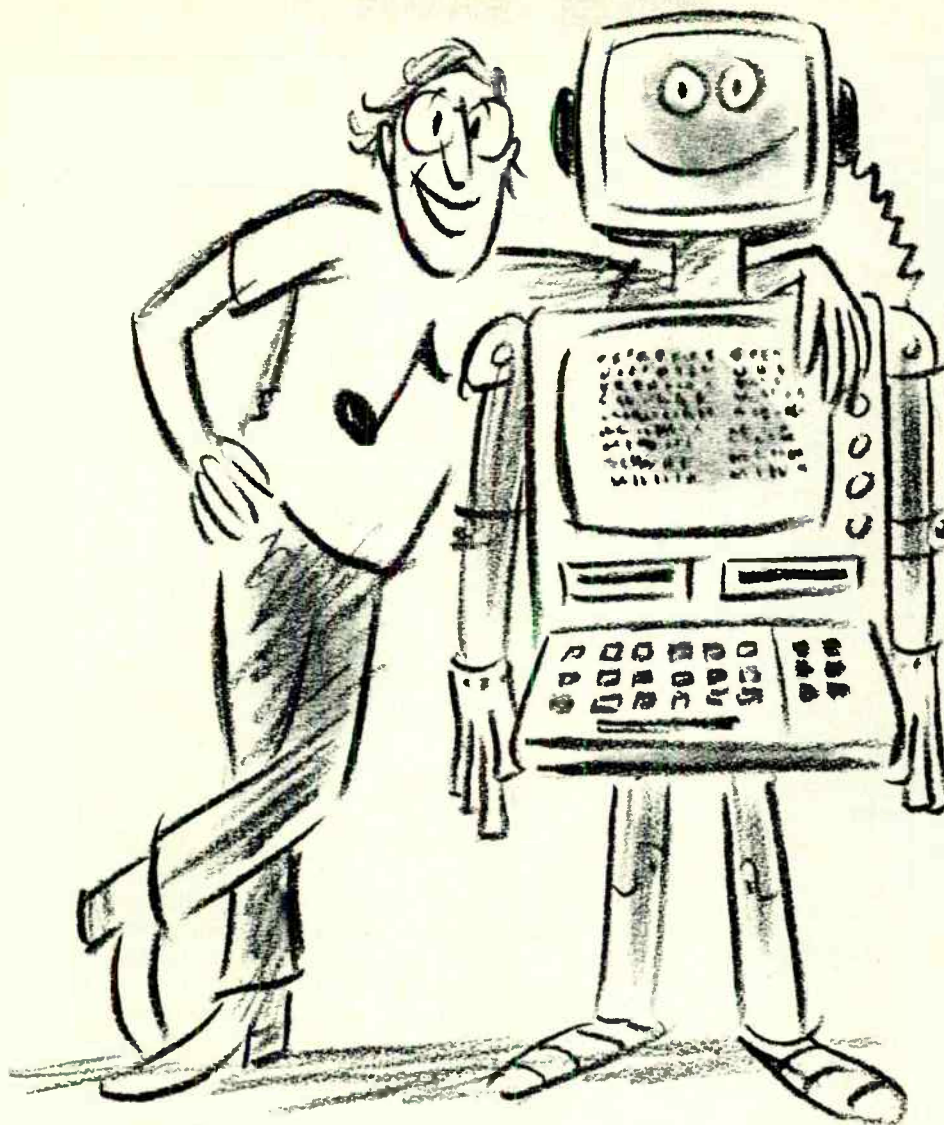
It wasn't that simple. Record companies, in slavish obedience to their two new Big Things (disco and punk), were not interested. So what if U.K. had filled 50,000-seat stadiums? The stuff just wasn't "in." So Eddie slogged on alone in his uniquely analytical, expensive and time-consuming way.

Take auditioning drummers, for example. In London, New York, and Los Angeles, he went through hundreds of identical tryouts. "I had every drummer play the same kit. All I had to play on was a funky—in the sense of falling apart—rented clavinet. And what I would do is start playing some of the chordal things that were planned for the project, just sort of vamp, and let the drummer lead the music. It almost always went off in some awful Latin/fusion direction. But then, in L.A., I found Michael Barsimanto. He didn't play right away. He just listened. And then he turned his sticks around to the fat end and started thunderously beating the kit with almost a punk beat. It sounded twice as loud as when the other chaps had played it... he was just a lot more straight to the point." He also stayed away from the ride cymbal, which pleased Eddie ("most drummers use cymbals to fill out their playing with this thick wash of white noise, giving it the *illusion* of energy"). Michael was in.

But it didn't stop there. Finding the Right drummer led inevitably to recording the drums Right. Which meant doing it the Jobson way. First, the kit was moved out of the drum booth and into the middle of the studio. Second, Eddie went out to a music store and came back with up to twenty-five different types of drum heads, testing each one until he found the set that had the sound he liked. And finally, there was tuning. He sent Michael away and did it himself, even though he'd never tuned drums before, just because he had such specific ideas. "I knew what I was going for. That's been the case through the entire record. It was just a lot easier for me to do things myself instead of trying to communicate what I wanted to other people."

You begin to see why it took three years, even allowing for the interruption of an album/tour stint as a "guest artist" with Jethro Tull. At every step of the way, Eddie kept having trouble getting other people to do things the way he saw or





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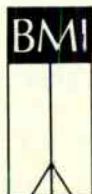
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heard them in his head...and ended up doing them himself.

Lacking a lyricist, he created the "green concept" behind the album and used that as a guideline for writing the first song lyrics of his career. Lacking a vocalist, he did the singing himself. "I didn't tell anyone that the voice on the demos was mine, so that if the companies hated the vocals I could just drop the whole idea and start searching for someone suitable." (They didn't. Eddie recorded all the lead and backing tracks on the album, even the highest pitched ones, without recourse to varispeed, harmonizer or falsetto.) Later on, after Capitol Records had finally entered the picture, the two-fold pressures of schedule and personal vision forced him to essentially mix the album alone, driving back and forth from Kingdom Sound on Long Island to Bearsville Studios in upstate New York to Electric Lady, in the heart of Greenwich Village.

Mixing for himself gave him a chance to make up for past deficiencies. "I've never been happy with my violin sound on record. This time, I tried to make it sound more like a violin. In the past I've tried so hard to get rid of bow noise that a lot of people think my best violin solos, like on Tull's 'The Pine-Marten's Jig,' are actually guitar solos." Two different violins were used in recording: a Barcus-Berry and the custom plexiglass and metal ring design that he's been using onstage since his Roxy days, the creation of a London sculptor. Like the synths, they were always recorded directly into the board. An Orban parametric eq was used for pre-processing, and later touches of echo were added to flavor the sound.

With *The Green Album* behind him, Jobson is looking ahead to the next record—which he thinks he will probably engineer from scratch—and to video promos, which he has already started to storyboard.

"Last night, I was up half the night being a graphic artist, and tomorrow at the photo session I'll be a model, and Friday at Sigma Sound I'll be a record producer, and then have to turn around and spend time on the phone as a manager or a lawyer...but really, all I am is a piano player."

Oh, yeah? Twenty bucks says he ends up directing and editing the videos, to get them Right. Some things are just inevitable.

**Micros** from pg. 76

lost somewhere in Dave Rossum's memory and the mists of time.

"This guy Craig came up to see the keyboard," recalls Rossum. "He had his own keyboard design, which was physically unconventional—the keys were in funny places—and he wanted to talk to us about interfacing his keyboard with our system. I listened to what he said

and it just suddenly came to me, like a smack in the head, what a dummy I was not to have used a microprocessor in designing my keyboard. Because what he was asking was just economically impossible. It would have meant making new printed circuit boards—which meant design time and photography and acid baths to wash down the boards—and changing the parts lists. But if I'd used a microprocessor, I would have had programs controlling the instrument, not wires, so if somebody came to me with an interesting request like this, I could just go sit at a terminal, write a new program, burn that into a ROM (Read-Only Memory) chip, and plug it in."

It was definitely a rueful moment. "Back then microprocessors were fairly new, and none of us designers were anywhere near as smart as we are now...or at least *think* we are now."

It didn't take long for Dave and one of his partners, Scott Wedge, to catch up with their new inspiration. Wedge concentrated on software, while Rossum focused in on the hardware angle, choosing to use a new faster microprocessor called a Z-80.

While time has proven out his choice—today the Z-80 is one of the most commonly used microprocessors in the world—there were two very practical considerations involved. One was that the company that made the Z-80, Zilog, was practically next door. The other was that E-Mu couldn't afford to put together a development system, so Zilog did it for them. (No fools, those folks at Zilog—you don't sell much product if you don't support the development of new applications.)

See, a microprocessor by itself is useless. You have to have a program to run on it. That's what the development system is used to create. (It's a little like the relationship between a record player and a recording studio. The one is just a paperweight that spins, if the other hasn't been used to record some music.) That machine language of 0's and 1's I mentioned earlier—people don't speak that very well. And it takes a *lot* of it to tell a microprocessor what to do. So in order to make it possible to write programs in less than six or seven hundred years, you use another computer—the development system—as a translator. It takes a command in what is called *assembly language* (which still isn't English, but is at least understandable if you take the time to learn its codes) and automatically converts it into machine language, in a process called "compiling." Then, having used the development system to compile your program, you put it into a ROM, plug that into the microprocessor, and run it.

Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Microprocessors are unforgiving as well as stupid, and even the slight-



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est mistake in a program can cause the whole thing to shut down and blurt the equivalent of a computer raspberry in your face. Which sends you back to the drawing board.

Literally, in the case of Rossum and Wedge. They and E-Mu's resident musician, Ed Rudnick, would sit for hours before the blackboard in their one-room engineering office, brainstorming. In that summer of 1976 they pioneered many of the things we take for granted these days: split keyboards, arpeggiators, 16-channel internal sequencers.... It led, eventually, to the 4060 keyboard I mentioned at the beginning of this article. The start of the revolution. And it also led to the real hero of that revolution: the

Prophet 5.

"It was an ambitious project. We all realized that," says Rossum. "It was also exactly what the market wanted."

Dave Smith, founder of Sequential Circuits, had been working on non-musical microprocessor designs and applications for several years. He and John Bowen (a one-time Moog employee) had had an idea for what would essentially be five Minimoogs in one box, and knew only a microprocessor would make it possible. E-Mu had done consulting work for him on Sequential Circuits' synth programming unit, and they'd also been involved in the design of some of the new SSM (Solid State Microtechnology) chips, the first

VCOs and VCFs to be done in integrated circuits. Working together to apply what they knew to a marketable instrument was obviously the next step.

They faced a lot of 'ifs' and 'what ifs' in those days. They didn't know at the time if the microprocessor was fast enough to keep up with the musician. It could do hundreds of thousands of operations every second... but sometimes it takes a hundred or a thousand operations just to keep the LEDs lit. For instance, to change a program on a Prophet, the microprocessor first has to detect that a button has been pressed, then find the program in memory, figure out where each single code in memory is going to go to, transfer them, and then take into account anything else that might be happening in real time, like keystrokes or bends on the pitch and modulation wheels and updating the LEDs. That's actually around two thousand separate instructions that the microprocessor has to execute. If you had to do them by hand it would take you hours. (Remember that, next time you blithely punch up different programs in the middle of a fast one-handed arpeggiation.)

And so, after a seemingly endless string of all-night programming sessions by Dave Smith, the Prophet 5 appeared in public in January 1978. In the six years since, it and its descendants have thoroughly changed the way that music is composed, performed and recorded, at a rate which is actually *speeding up*. A couple of years ago the first digital drum machine appeared on the marketplace at \$5,000. Now the same technology is showing up in units that cost a fifth as much. And next year... who knows?

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*Next month, in part two, I'll prove I'm not a starry-eyed idealist by telling you about all the problems with microprocessors. I'll also tell you exactly what it's going to be like in five years, and show you how the musicians of this world are already proving my closing line to be fact, not fancy. ☐*

**Fleetwood** from pg. 78

mental hits twenty or so years back. "Yeah, I'd play 'Let There Be Drums' till the cows came home," Mick grins, and indeed Nelson's use of toms—not just for fills but for his primary patterns—is still echoed in Fleetwood's own drumming.

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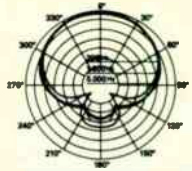
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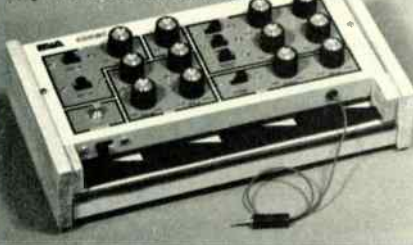


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Fleetwood taught himself to play by accompanying the music he'd hear on records or on the radio. The way he tells it, actual lessons would have done little good anyway.

"I think the way I didn't learn at school also applied to my drumming," he explains. "In school, I could talk—probably better than I can now, with half my brain fried. I could feel comfortable getting up in an open debate or something, talking or just getting on with people. But in class, I used to draw blanks, where I *could not* learn something. I couldn't even learn the alphabet. If I have to recite now, I'll probably make a mistake.

"If you're not gonna be academic about it, you're left with emotions. I couldn't and didn't want to be taught something by someone else; I just wanted to do it myself. It's the same with drumming. Even now, if someone tries to tell me what to play, I go into a blind panic, as if I've never played drums before in my life."

He's equally candid when comparing his playing twenty years ago to his playing now. "I don't think my approach has changed much at all, actually. I still can't count bars. I literally do it from listening, as opposed to knowing in advance what I'm going to be doing. And when it comes to learning a song, I can't be told what to play; I just have to play it. Like the other night with Billy (Burnette, a cohort in Fleetwood's latest project, a band he calls Mick Fleetwood's Zoo), we were doing some demos. Same old way: I said to Billy, 'I'll wait until you start, and I'll just follow along.' It's the same as it always was."

That attitude served him well when Fleetwood and some other musicians traveled to Ghana in 1980, a trip that yielded his first solo album, *The Visitor*. "The interesting part was playing with other drummers who played regular trap kits, like mine, yet played them differently," Mick says. "More often than not, I just played through what they did, staying on the off-beat and keeping a constant time, and it worked out."

A trip to Africa, needless to say, requires no small amount of planning and preparation. Mick Fleetwood's Zoo, on the other hand, fell together rather casually and ended up as the nucleus of *I'm Not Me*, the second Fleetwood solo project. Bass player/vocalist George Hawkins, who has worked with people like Al Jarreau and Kenny Loggins, was part of *The Visitor*. Guitarist/vocalist Steve Ross, who once toured and recorded with the Beach Boys, was a roommate of Richard Dashut, Fleetwood Mac's co-engineer/producer; and Burnette, whose own solo career has failed to flourish despite a couple of above-par albums, is a musical acquaintance who also became a

friend. They played a few gigs together—including a *Saturday Night Live* when they were Lindsey Buckingham's backup band—and with Fleetwood at the helm, what began mostly as a lark became a working band with plans to tour in late '83.

It figures that Fleetwood would have been less than comfortable hiring an army of studio players to make his album. As he sees it, it's not worth making music without "some onward-going community spirit. Even if I was fronting a band," he observes, "as a singer or whatever, I'd still want to be part of a real band, versus that sort of pickup musician jive—you know, 'See you later, lads,' and that's the end of that."

*I'm Not Me* was recorded primarily at Fleetwood's spacious home in Malibu. They used the large, high-ceilinged living room as a studio; the "control room" was an upstairs bedroom, equipped with a 24-track Neotech board and an MCI tape machine. After a year of sporadic work, broken up by Mick's Fleetwood Mac commitments, the quartet (with the help of Buckingham, Christine McVie and others) had polished off the kind of album one expects from Fleetwood: good songs, unpretentious performances, and gimmick-free production (by Fleetwood and Dashut). *I'm Not Me*, with its mixture of Burnette, Ross and Hawkins originals, recent covers and moldy oldies, may not scare Def Leppard and *Flashdance* off the charts—but it won't give you a headache, either.

Fleetwood himself barely plays at all on two tracks from *I'm Not Me*. Oh, it's not that he is completely without an ego; he simply recognizes his limitations and stays well within them. He genuinely wants to keep things simple—and not just in music. The drawing on the album's inner sleeve illustrates his outlook. It depicts a devil, a little girl and a blackboard; the legend below reads, "God is nowhere," scrawled the atheist. But the child read, "God is now here."

Fleetwood calls this "a healthy sentiment. You know, I think it becomes increasingly important to preserve innocence. That's how I look at most things. No matter how much people might whisper in your ear, like the old devil in that picture..." He pauses momentarily. "I guess the real point is, don't get too clever." ■

### Mac's Attack

Mick Fleetwood plays Tama Drums. His bass is 28x16, his rack toms are 14x9 and 15x10 and his floor toms are 18x15 and 20x16. His cymbals are Paiste, consisting of 14-inch high-hat, 26-inch and 20-inch crashes and a 20-inch crash with rivets; a 22-inch ride, a 20-inch China, a 20-inch dark China, wind chimes and a 36-inch gong. His sticks are Regal 5B nylon tips.



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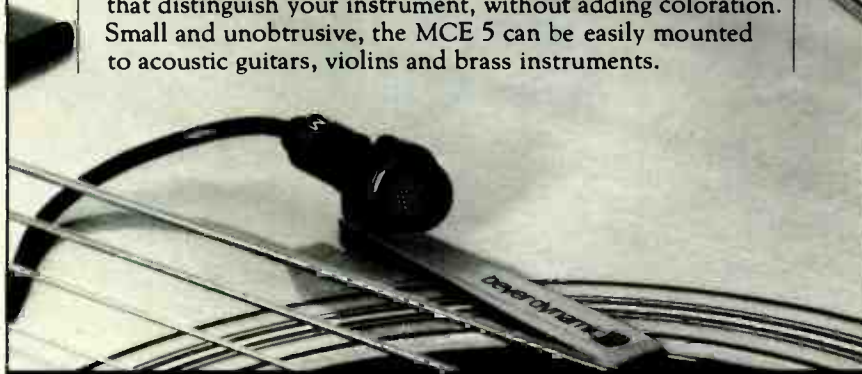
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Nieve from pg. 74

so that halfway through a track you could program one part into the Emulator and then you could edit the song in the middle of the track, have a really weird phase section, 'cause you can make half the keyboard play the sound backwards. If you had one note playing a bar of music, then you could do scratching just by alternating notes. You wouldn't have to ruin your records," he laughs.

"I met someone in L.A. who has programmed 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag' into the Emulator. He's divided the keyboard up into bass, drums, all the instruments except the voice."

Nieve thinks the synthesizer is the electric guitar of the 80s. "I think what's interesting at the moment is that twenty years ago the electric guitar was something that was pretty cheap to buy and people picked it up and made this noise on it and it became rock 'n' roll. What is interesting today is that the same thing is happening with the keyboard, especially something like the Casio. Young kids can go to a shop and buy a Casio for ten dollars or something and learn to play in some sort of way and maybe come up with something that someone who has learned to play piano wouldn't have come up with. And I think things like Eurythmics are what you're actually looking at. I think that's a great thing. And hopefully there will be some wild racket invented instead of all this plippy, ploppy stuff that I can't stand."

Does Nieve, playing in a band that draws so heavily on the music of the past, think it's possible to make really new music? "I think the main thing you have to bear in mind is the people who listen to it. I think that if you want to do something new and completely ignore the people who listen to it, then you're not going to do anything. If you're gonna make some kind of new music, you have to make some new music that people are going to want to listen to. I mean when people like Beethoven were stretching music, they were able to do that and still be the most popular musicians of the day, whereas today there are people writing weird atonal music that no one has ever heard and what's the point of that? I think the most important thing is the audience. It's like a triangle. There's the person who thinks of something, the person who can play it and the person who listens to it. And if you ignore one of those three points, then the music you're making isn't really worth listening to.

"If there's a planet billions of light years away with beings with ears on it, I wonder if there is another kind of music, or whether they're actually listening to the Beatles," he smiles. "I think they probably are." ☐

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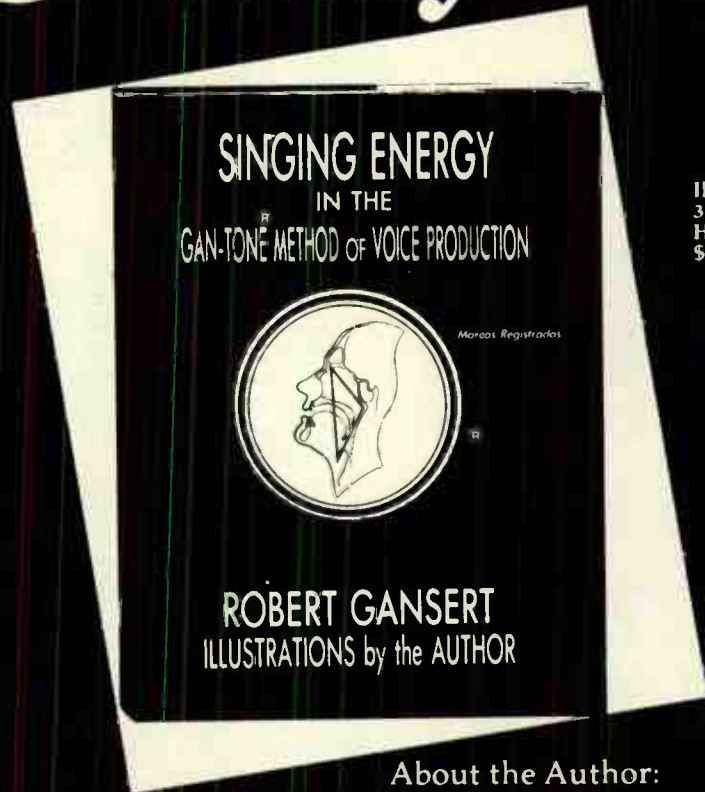
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# RECORD

R E V I E W S

## The Rolling Stones *Undercover* (Atlantic)



Just when you'd sworn the Rolling Stones weren't going to have you to kick around anymore — that they'd become terminally boring onstage, and that you would not behave like a lab rat to scam tickets next time they hit town—they've come back to bet their dollars to your doughnuts that they can still be great. *Undercover* proves it with astonishing, insolent ease. On "Too Tough," a prime example, the best rhythm section on Main Street sets up such a not-to-be-denied groove that the guitars just coast on while Mick Jagger, in a burnt-out croak reminiscent of *Between The Buttons*, sings: "Saw you on TV last night/ In a rerun soap/ You were young and beautiful/ Already without hope...."

This is the sort of glib world-weariness Mick's trafficked in since the early days, but that's okay; no matter how steep his social climbing, no matter how many millions the Stones' next label deal nets them, Mick keeps his own, commoner's wrath near at hand. (Don't play with my man Mick, you patricians; you'll play with fire.) *Undercover* deals with those great levelers, love and violence. Instead of the wasting diseases that punish lovers in soap operas, *Undercover's* victims, like lovers in grand opera, face real bloodshed. They're heated up, tied up, beat up, chewed up, bloody. There's a clear twining of aggression with sex here—much more pronounced, let's hope, than in real life. But it's a creatively screwy way to look at personal relationships.

"Mick's very close to his animal nature," Carly Simon once said, and maybe she wasn't just being coy. Jagger is a generation's missing link, the hairy, cloven hoof that was stuffed into a high-heel on *Tattoo You*, the stud horse, in "Bitch," who kicks in his stall all night. Yet he's also a canny sexual operator who's nobody's beast of burden. Love, on *Undercover*, is as serious as a heart

attack. The ten songs here, along with the six or seven sick jokes on an album cover featuring a past-her-prime stripper's pasty flesh, add up to a singularly cheerless work.

Despair so relentless is somehow refreshing. All this decadence is, after all, the old Jagger-Richards shtick, and the most cynical thing about it is the songwriter's assurance that we'll keep celebrating to it. With the band never tighter and Keith's guitar work bristling through the heart of every song, they make it easy to kiss off our qualms. On the aforementioned "Too Tough," the pummeling beat finally draws up short to let Keith and Ron Wood punch their way out of the "suffocating love" Mick keeps complaining about with a fevered but fluent guitar break. They also spar spiritedly on "She Was Hot," a song that's nothing more than a series of stanza-length vignettes about various women who tear the clothes off our philandering hero. "All The Way Down" steps out of the album's slow-grinding raunch to let Jagger speed-rap through a hasty memoir that owes a bit to Dylan and Lou Reed and should find a home, at half its present tempo, on Marianne Faithfull's next LP.

"Undercover Of The Night" is the proffered single, a dance track so full of topical clichés it feels synthetic. But the key songs in this album's bleak mood are the ones that begin and end side two (or "back side"), by a large margin the better half of this album. Amidst a rich texture of percussion and fast-picking guitar, Jagger absently recites the jet-set horror story of "Too Much Blood," then chatters about it, shuffling personae and trading squawks with the adventurous horn section. Mixing the delicacy of Chabrol with the bleakness of Scorsese, the song gazes on the blood without flinching and reminds us, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

Bookending the side is "It Must Be Hell." The locomotive riff is clipped from *Exile On Main Street's* "Soul Survivor," and like that song, it's just an amphetamine Delta blues, but it has a pungency that links it to "Salt Of The Earth" and an anthemic quality to rank with the Stones' best. "Only fools," warns Jagger, "end up in...asylums they helped to build."

This is a record about all the heart-breakers, bone crushers and cock-suckers lusting for blood and money as the capitalist dream crashes headlong towards nothing. That Jagger and his bandmates are raking up their share simply underscores their achievement in throwing the whole sloppy mess right on our plates. — **Fred Schruers**

## John Cougar Mellencamp *Uh-Huh* (Riva)



It says right here in Cougar and/or Mellencamp's official biography that he grew up in Seymour, Indiana, which is polluted by

decades of chemical waste dumpings. Chemical waste has been getting a lot of bad press lately, some of it written by friends of mine who tell me that we're all going to die of horrible, disgusting, smelly diseases, and if our gonads don't fall off before we procreate, the next generation will amount to little more than drooling bags of tumors and pus.

But before we all panic, I think we should listen to John Cougar Mellencamp's new album *Uh-Huh*, which is pretty good. I mean, here's a guy who apparently has been dirtying up his brain with dioxins and PCBs for years, and yet he has just about the cleanest sense of riff of anybody on the radio. You have to go back to early Bad Company to find someone so loath to waste notes. And besides being clean riffs, they are very catchy riffs, easy to discern and remember amidst the usual musical waste dumpings on FM radio.

As for the guy's lyrics, I have a quibble or two. Probably his most famous line is that one from "Jack And Diane" about holding onto sixteen as long as you can, 'cause life goes on long after the thrill of living is gone. Cougar and/or Mellencamp seems to have been asked about this so much that he sings an explanation in the "Authority Song" on this new album: "Growing up leads to growing old and then to dying/And dying to me don't sound like all that



Echoed In The Press

# ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN

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THE ALBERT Hall's ornate dome swells majestically to enclose a vast bubble of overhead space. What setting could be more appropriate for Echo And The Bunnymen, purveyors of the world's most vaulting, stratospheric rock sound? But rather than aim for the heights, which they reached in any case, Popsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Echo unleashed the most urgent, frontal punk assault I've ever seen them deliver. And I'm still reeling.

In harmony with the uplifting aspect of this opulent, Victorian cathedral of Culture, our expectant chatter hushed to the strains of Gregorian chant and stained-glass windows projected onto the backdrop. Thoughts of choirboys, altars, the sacred and profane sprung to mind. But rather than surrender to flights of religious fancy induced by the basilica-like setting, the fab four — like Dylan, the Stones, The Who, Chuck Berry and Mott The Hoople famously before them — played it as merely a gigantic rock 'n' roll cellar-club.

Strung in a line along the stage's lip like a firing-squad and shrouded in *Apocalypse Now* dry-ice, they lashed into 'Going Up' from the first album, which segued after a chorus or two into 'With A Hip' from their second. Apart from socking it to us from the whistle, this one-two knock-out exemplified how very similar one rabbit punch is to the next — and yet they both lay you flat. Echo And The Bunnymen can reproduce their style in seemingly endless permutations, yet the elements of their method are unchanging — Les Pattinson's dark, probing bass, Peter De Freitas' tautly controlled drum frenzy, Will Sergeant's orchestra of searing guitar sounds, and Ian McCulloch's rhythmic urgency on guitar and vocal grand opera Hamlet.

... Echo And The Bunnymen know their Rock, and right now they are the Rock against which all others must be measured.

Mat Snow  
New Musical Express  
7/30/83

# THE SOUND

# OF



# THE ECHO

# KEEPS GETTING LOUDER

## Echo And The Bunnymen

The new five-song E.P. features "Never Stop" and a live version of "Do It Clean" recorded at the legendary Albert Hall concert. *(reviewed left)*

*"Echo And The Bunnymen know their Rock, and right now they are the Rock against which all others must be measured."*

— New Musical Express  
7/30/83



Watch MTV for the video of "Never Stop" recorded live at The Royal Albert Hall

much fun." Death is a drag. Okay. I'm thirty-two now, and I'm sixteen years closer to dying of some horrible, disgusting, smelly disease than I was when I was sixteen. But that is the only aspect of my life that isn't better than when I sixteen. So I'm letting sixteen go, and John Cougar and/or Mellencamp can have it.

This is, as I say, a quibble. There are many sentiments on *Uh-Huh* beyond all argument, such as: a lot of people are hypocrites ("Crumbly'n' Down"); success is relative and not what it's cracked up to be ("Pink Houses"); it's good to rebel ("Authority Song"); and playing a guitar is an effective way to attract the opposite sex ("Play Guitar"). Not revo-

lutionary as insights go, but not exactly evidence of dioxin-induced brain damage either.

So I figure it's time to get scientific about all this chemical waste brouhaha and start feeding, say, Loverboy a spoonful of PCBs with their oatmeal every morning and see if they come up with any riffs as interesting as the eight or ten best riffs on *Uh-Huh*. Pretty soon Monsanto would have rock stars standing on reeking piles of Agent Orange declaring that without chemicals music itself would be impossible. Or at least we'd be a few years closer to Loverboy coming down with a horrible, disgusting, smelly disease. — **Charles M. Young**

## UB40

*Labour Of Love* (A&M)



In England, where UB40's stature lies somewhere between that of the Beat and the Clash, *Labour Of Love* is a charming od-

idity, a break from their own work to lovingly recreate their favorite reggae songs of the late 60s and early 70s. There, it's their seventh album, and the lightness and simplicity of it balances well against their more strident and political songs, time out for a dance between throwing bricks. Here, as their second American release (following a poorly chosen sampling of their work), it's a little confusing, like being confronted by Dylan's *Self Portrait*, John Lennon's *Rock 'N' Roll*, and Brian Ferry's *These Foolish Things* before you've had a chance to hear their own work, before you've had a chance to see what their choice of roots and covers refers back to.

If the Beat always pumped just a beat too fast, UB40's brand of mystical reggae was almost as slow as an opium dream, lazy and self-absorbed, and their best songs ("Tyler," "King," "Love Is All Is All Right," "Burden Of Shame") have always had the edge and the ease of a drowning man dictating his memoirs. *Labour Of Love* maintains that ease while softening the edge, which, given the material, is only appropriate. This is the pure pop reggae of fifteen years ago, all sweetness and sadness and puppy love, Jamaica as an island in the sun, Trenchtown no more than a passing shadow.

Ali Campbell's vocals have never been as free or as relaxed; there is none of the constraint or uncertainty of his recent work, and Astro's toasting is yelping exuberant especially on "Version Girl" (a strange, untroubled ripoff of Don & Juan's "What's Your Name?"). "Sweet Sensation" nearly matches the quiet wonder of the Melodians' original and Neil Diamond's (yes, the great reggae artist Neil Diamond) "Red Red Wine" has the frothy popiness of Johnny Nash (circa "Hold Me Tight") mixed with Tommy James & the Shondells. Only "Johnny Too Bad" and "Many Rivers To Cross," songs that have already been driven around the block a few too many times, come off as less than inspired, and they come off as very much less than inspired.

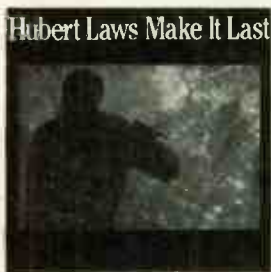
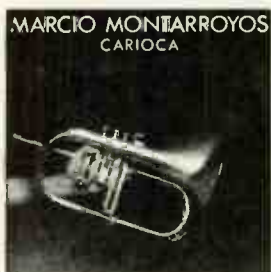
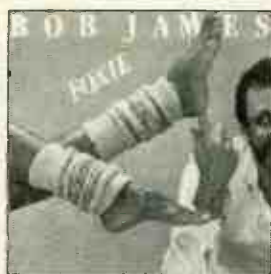
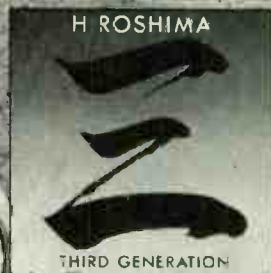
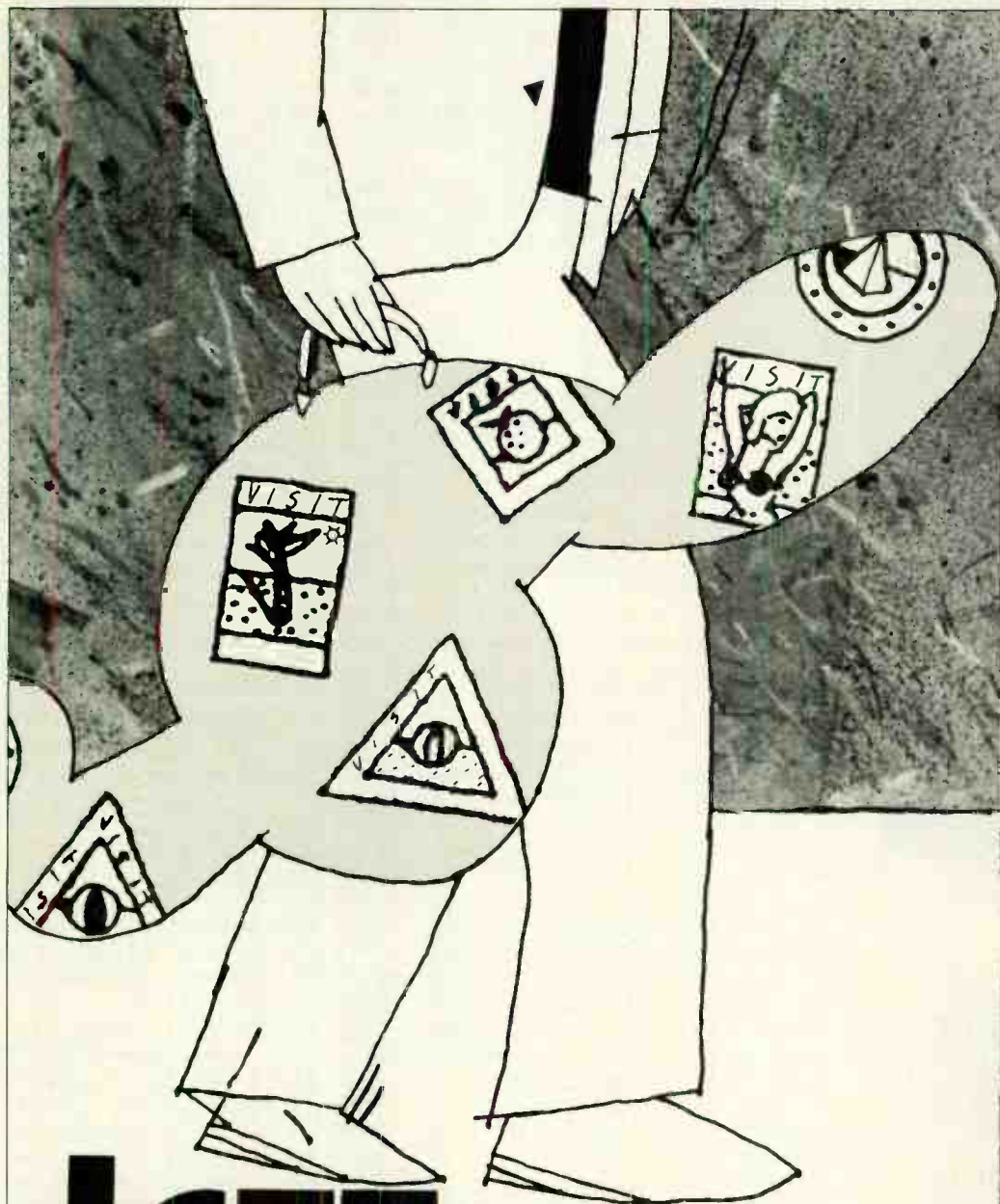
In all, *Labour Of Love* is a perfect bridge between *The Best Of Studio One* (just released on Heartbeat) and the new Black Uhuru or Sugar Minott or Pablo Moses album; maybe it will also

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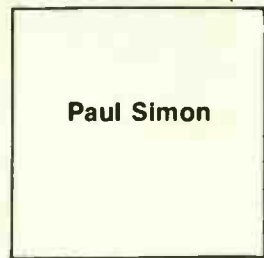


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draw an American audience back to UB40's own *Signing Off*, *Present Arms* or *UB44* and ahead to what they do next. On with the dance and back to the bricks. — **Brian Cullman**

**Paul Simon**  
**Hearts And Bones** (Warner Bros.)



Paul Simon

For the last ten years of Paul Simon's uncommonly distinguished career as composer, lyricist, singer and communicator, it has been

his determination to create rock 'n' roll for adults. That is, for people who have lived long enough to take their own lives seriously, and who have digested enough accurate information about themselves to appreciate what a burden that can be, people who are humble enough to be both amused and moved by that process.

Simon's best work is so well crafted that the listener is far too thrilled and touched by the end result to calm down long enough to analyze it. Yet the work itself is calm, thoroughgoing, deft without undue precision. On *Hearts And Bones*, he sings about the silent, frenetic metaphysical fisticuffs that go on between head and heart, and the ways they abruptly announce themselves in the outer world. To say that Simon ennoble the ordinary would be an apt miscalculation by the narrator of the two (of course) incarnations of "Think Too Much," for what Simon actually does is recognize very simple truths—and their nagging dualities.

In sweetly whimsical songs like "Allergies" there is deep sadness. From the anxieties of "When Numbers Get Serious" emerge forms of tranquility. Out of the paralyzed creative melancholy of "Song About The Moon" springs fresh drive and purpose. In the rueful resignation of "The Late Great Johnny Ace" there is renewal. Ballads like "Hearts And Bones" and "Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War" reveal the strength of ardor and the nearness of terrible solitude. On *Hearts And Bones* the high defines the low, the low reflects the high. Beautifully.

The bittersweet surrealism of "Rene And Georgette..." finds the couple moving toward an imagined moment of ultimate privacy and supreme tenderness in which they dance naked to "the deep forbidden music they'd been longing for." The Harptones punctuate Simon's plaintive singing with spectral traces of doo-wop, evoking "the Penguins, the Moonglows, the Orioles, the Five Satins"; the impossible fact of love is cemented with a quirky completeness that nearly summons tears.

The musical nature of "Rene And

Georgette..." and the presence of the Harptones also epitomize another facet of Simon's career: more than most recording artists of his generation, he has sought out collaborators and musical colorists with incredible sagacity. Whether it's Al DiMeola, Urubamba, Maggie and Terry Roche, the Dixie Hummingbirds, Toots Hibbert's reggae band or Toots Thielemann's jazz harmonica, no one has ever been treated as a guest artist in a mere genre turn, because the song itself has always been the point.

I've heard several excellent records in the 80s, but this is one of the few I feel entirely comfortable pronouncing a masterpiece. In the very best work of a truly gifted artist, its creator disappears. Yet we still hear a strong voice, through which we learn not who the artist is, but who he or she strives to be. Brave to *Hearts And Bones* on both counts — **Timothy White**

**Culture Club**  
**Colour By Numbers** (Virgin/Epic)



Thank you, Boy George. With your lipstick, mascara and expressive singing, "shocking" appearance and winning music, you supplied

1983's best object lesson in tolerance. Now that you know we all love you, do you think maybe you could shake us up again?

*Colour By Numbers*, Culture Club's followup to its successful *Kissing To Be Clever* debut LP, not only solidifies the band's position as purveyors of easy-listening grooves—it threatens to fossilize it. The opening "Karma Chameleon" sets the pace: breezy, slickly produced, with bouncy guitar/synthesizer rhythm fills, cooling female backing and harmonica right out of the Chuck Wagon Gang. The lyrics, with vague references to romantic discord, are less important than the sound. Clean? You could pipe this into a hospital operating room and not worry about infection. Most likely no one would notice it either.

The following nine tracks are just as safe. Culture Club is technically proficient, but its music tends to be generic. On *Colour By Numbers* you get neo-Motown ("Church Of The Poison Mind"), disco bump ("Miss Me Blind"), a couple of ballads ("That's The Way" and "Victims"—both feature George solo against piano) and pop pure enough for the strictest salt-free diet.

George's paradox is his freaky visuals versus such wholesome output. The effect reduces him to shtick, an entertainer of less than three dimensions. If he's expending more energy on songwriting than dress, his true talent lies in

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# ROCK

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

## S H O R T T A K E S

**The Bluebells** — *The Bluebells* (Sire). It isn't the hooks-galore approach of "Everybody's Somebody's Fool," where the driving rhythm guitar resurrects the cheer of AM radio circa 1965, that makes this mini-album one of the most invigorating records of 1983. Nor is it "Cath," a folk-guitar-and-harmonica-powered number that would be a great love song in any era. But match those two with ballads of quiet confidence ("Aim In Life") and sobering irony (Brendan Behan's "Patriot's Game"), and there's something to get excited about.

**U2** — *Under A Blood Red Sky* (Island). Not only did U2 have the live show of the summer, but they've followed it up with the sort of live album that ought to keep you warm until well after the spring thaw. With Jimmy Iovine at the board, the sound is sharp enough that record buyers will finally understand how the Edge earned his sobriquet, and warm enough to capture Bono Vox in all his boyish charm. As for the performance, well... for once, you didn't have to be there.

**Cyndi Lauper** — *She's So Unusual* (Portrait). "Unusual" is a good word for someone who'd open up an album with a killer cover of the Brains' "Money Changes Everything" and then close it with a Betty Boop impression, although "misdirected" would do in a pinch. The album has its moments—the Chrissie Hynde-meets-Darlene Love rendition of "When You Were Mine," for instance—but, like a badly tuned engine, *She's So Unusual* misses as often as it hits.

**Green On Red** — *Gravity Talks* (Slash). Like L.A. scenemates the Dream Syndicate, Green On Red rechannels punk's ferocious idealism back on its sources, generating a sound that's somewhere between Television and *Tonight's The Night*-era Neil Young. Despite a penchant for dime-store irony, the songs are affable and melodic enough to flirt with pop, but the ragged vocals and full-tilt instrumental work keep *Gravity Talks*, along with the listener, forever on edge.

**Lionel Richie** — *Can't Slow Down* (Motown). Granted, the Manilowisms of "Three Times A Lady" and "Truly" are enough to write Richie off as Motown's Mr. Mush, but on *Can't Slow Down*, even the ballads show their share of punk, not to mention funk. Still, the real surprise

comes with the likes of "All Night Long," in which Richie out-Q's Quincy Jones. It's worth remembering that Michael Jackson isn't the only hit machine in R&B.

**Other Music** — *Incidents Out Of Context* (Flying Fish). Matching metallophones with synthesizers and cyclic gamelan melodies with trance-like (Steve) Reichian grooves, Other Music manages to collect a lot of good ideas in a very rewarding package. Because the instruments combine standard chromaticism with their own fourteen-tone scale, the harmonies are unusually warm and haunting, making the melodic interest especially savory. Worth seeking out. (1304 West Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614)

**Michael Sembello** — *Bossa Nova Hotel* (Warner Bros.). You could sum up Sembello's sound as Michael McDonald with a rhythm machine, but that would be unnecessarily cruel to McDonald. And the rhythm machine.

**John Anderson** — *All Of The People Are Talkin'* (Warner Bros.). Whether Anderson's vocal persona strikes you as genuinely "aw shucks" or utterly shuck and jive, there's no disputing that it comes from a desire for authenticity that redeems even the most brazen exaggeration. After all, playing the rube is something of a country music tradition in itself, and so long as Anderson can keep turning in performances as electric as "Black Sheep" or "Let Somebody Else Drive," who cares if his drawl grows broader with each new album?

**XL's** — *XL's* (Boss Beat). Imagine a cross between the Nighthawks and the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, and you're on the way to understanding the XL's. This is bar band rhythm and blues with the emphasis on the *rhythm*, and when this Atlanta quartet leans into "Chain Of Fools" or "(I've Got To Use) My Imagination," the grooves they set are anything but hand-me-downs. (9400 Roberts Drive, Suite, 1-J, Atlanta, GA 30338)

**The Temptations** — *Back To Basics* (Warner Bros.). You only need to hear "Miss Busy Body" to understand that the title is no boast. When Dennis Edwards pushes hard over the familiar funk of the Norman Whitfield arrangement and the

trademark harmonies join in, this is as good as it gets. Never mind that "The Battle Song" with the Four Tops is too full of showbiz camaraderies to prove anything—just think about how great it feels to have another good Temps album.

**Teena Marie** — *Robbery* (Epic). Although there's nothing here as delightfully innocuous as "Square Biz," Teena Marie's attempts to show that her reach doesn't exceed her grasp are quite impressive, from the title track to "Ask Your Momma." Now if she could only ditch the demi-jazz numbers like "Casanova Brown"....

**John Hiatt** — *Riding With The King* (Geffen). It's hard to say which is more annoying here—Hiatt's narrative smugness, his phlegmatic approximation of soul singing, or the lassitude of the backing bands (one of which belongs to Nick Lowe). But any of the three is reason enough to give this a miss.

**Whodini** — *Whodini* (Jive). Who put the techno- in this funk? Thomas Dolby, Conny Plank and Dolby disciples the Willesden Dodgers, that's who. That's how Whodini keeps away from the usual tedium of bip 'n' beep records, and why "The Haunted House Of Rock" is as much fun as the title suggests. The raps aren't bad, either.

**Michael Bloomfield** — *Bloomfield* (Columbia). There are few guitarists worthy of this kind of overview, and precious few retrospectives as revealing. Bloomfield was never as flashy as Clapton or Beck, which is perhaps why his superlative blues stylings never brought him the fame those two enjoyed. Consider this evidence, though, and you're likely to conclude that, whether with Paul Butterfield or Electric Flag, Bloomfield stood well above other "rock" players when it came to genuine blues feel.

**Jennifer Holliday** — *Feel My Soul* (Geffen). Producer Maurice White does his best to tame Holliday's awesome lung power, but unfortunately, that all too frequently means making his arrangements equally shrill. Still, there are enough bright moments to suggest that Holliday really does understand that there's more to soul than the ability to emote at *fortissimo*, and with any luck, it will turn out that her flash really isn't all in the pan.



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**Australia** from pg. 58

would be so many people on the road with us that there would be too many mouths to feed. So any tucker [food] along the road that could be gotten easily would not be passed up. If we're driving and we see a goanna [lizard] along the road, we'll swerve to try and run over it. Or we'll pull up in a screeching halt, everyone hops out and picks up a rock to throw at it. They're good eating, too. But we wait until we get a few goannas before we set up a fire. Because Hilary, who sometimes plays bass with us, can eat three or four on his own.

"Usually at the settlements, there is somebody who is related to one of the guys in the band or who knows them, even if it's all the way over in Western Australia. Aboriginal tribes are like this big kinship system and there are obligations that go with those relationships. So there's always somebody we can stay with, sit in their camp. Or we'll just sleep along the side of the road.

"We're starting to write songs now in the band's language, Luritja. Before, the guys were conscious of singing white man's music, Western sort of music. But they are proud to be singing in their own language. 'Kintorelakutu' ('Towards Kintore'), is about the outstation movement, where communities of people are going back to live in their traditional homelands. It tells how the people were removed from their traditional lands, what happened to them with alcohol, dying from disease, and comes up with the realization that to save themselves they had to go back to their grandfather's country. It's an affirmation of their heritage.

"Us Mob once came out to Papunya to play and the guys have seen No Fixed Address in Alice Springs. I remember the guys talking to me about all the great gear they had which they'd never seen before. Also, those bands play reggae-influenced music and they'd never heard that before. They were intrigued by that. But those bands are from the cities and they've had more access to different forms of music. The only thing the guys in my band have been exposed to is old rock 'n' roll films."

Murray suddenly looks up in amazement, struck by an astonishing thought. "And do you realize, they haven't even seen Jimi Hendrix yet."

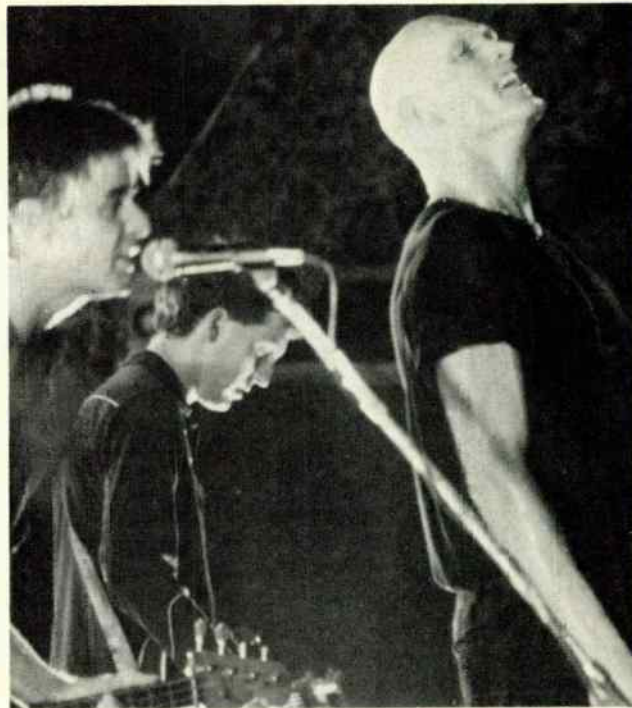
## DOWN UNDER

### Over and Out

Over ten thousand miles and two months away from Ayers Rock, Men At Work—the band that started it all in the first place—play the final show of their seven-month North American tour at New York's Radio City Music Hall. And it shows. The five grubby wisecracks who first charmed audiences here in 1982 with their cheeky stage manners (Colin Hay and Greg Ham's kangaroo boxing dances), cleverly underdressed MOR melodies and dry Australian wit (remember, "Down Under" is a novelty song, not the national anthem) tonight sound exhausted and bored. The spring in their step sags through "Overkill," "Dr. Heckyl and Mr. Jive" and even "Down Under."

One cannot begrudge the Men their fatigue. They established the rights of Australian pop music to compete on an international level, they established the quality of that music and they added Vegemite and chunder to our vocabulary. They struck a well-placed blow for the fallen (Easybeats, Daddy Cool, Skyhooks) and opened doors for the youngbloods (INXS, the Divinyls, Midnight Oil). They did their part. They deserve the rest.

Vocalist Tim Finn of Split Enz was not being cynical when he told me back in Sydney, "Men At Work's done a great thing, good on 'em, pat on the back and all that. But the thing I regret about all this Australian invasion talk they started was, what



**Oils Peter Gifford, Jim Moginie and Peter Garrett burn.**

about the other bands and songs that have been great for the last ten, fifteen years in Australia and New Zealand? It's your loss really—we've always had a lot of your music, but you never seemed to pay much attention to ours. And in some ways, we're far richer culturally for it. We get so much input from around the world that Australia—and I really mean this—is like a synthesis of what's best in the world."

The last word, though, goes to Greedy Smith of Mental As Anything, not just because he's a real card but because he might be right. "The way I look at Australian music, I figure the Americans put out all this great music in the 50s and early 60s. Then the English came along, started playing it their way and just took it back to America, playing American music in a new way. And that's what we're doing. I said this on a TV interview the other day: what Australians are doing is just playing all this music we learned from America and sending it back with a few corrections."

There is a pregnant pause, followed by a sheepish grin. "I guess it's a pretty arrogant thing to say. But it seemed funny at the time."

### BEING THERE

At this writing, Qantas, Australia's major carrier, is still offering a low-season round trip air fare of \$799 (March-August) to Sydney from San Francisco or Los Angeles. That tourist class fare (not bad for a seventeen-hour flight, three meals, two movies and free drinks) goes up to \$1000 and slightly over in the high seasons. (Other airlines serving Australia are Pan Am, Continental, CP Air, Air New Zealand.) Trans Australia and Ansett, the two national airlines, offer a thirty percent discount to foreign travelers on all fares within Australia. (Note: visitors need a visa.)

Like anywhere else, Australian hotel rates can range from the insane (over \$200 a night for a ritzy suite at the Sydney Hilton) to the absurd (four dollars a night at Griffiths House, a youth hostel in Alice Springs). More typical of reasonable, big city accommodations is the New Crest Hotel where I stayed in Sydney (\$54 a night average), a modern hotel in the bustling Kings Cross section, a kind of R-rated Times Square with plenty of restaurants and ready access to taxis and the commuter rail system. For more hotel and travel information, contact the Australian Tourist Commission, 630 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10019, or pick up Robert W. Bone's *The Maverick Guide to Australia* (Pelican Publishing Company), a helpful guide with a keen eye for value.



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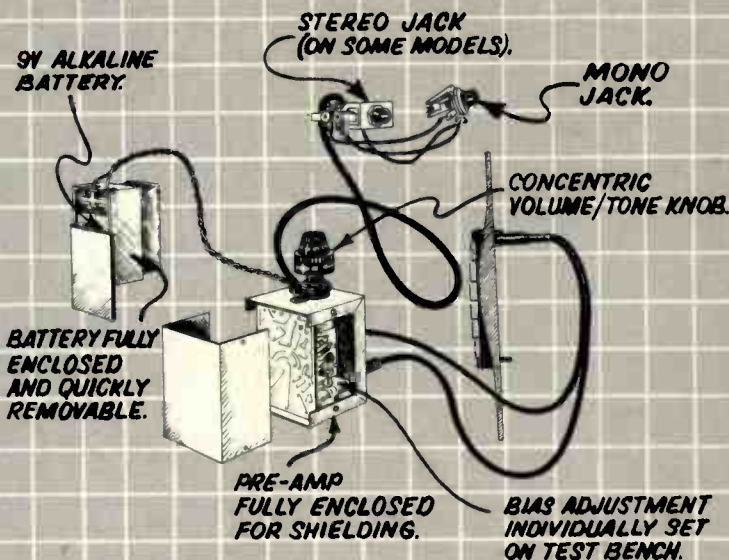
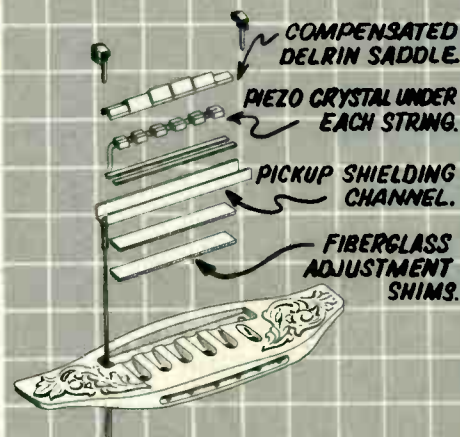
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