MUSICIAN

TOWNSHEND PART 2

ICD 08582

$1.95 (CANADA $2.25) No. 47, SEPTEMBER, 1982

What's a bad boy like Eddie doing in a nice magazine like this?

THE CLASH
QUINCY JONES
THE JAM

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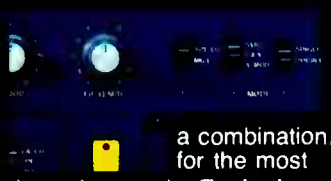

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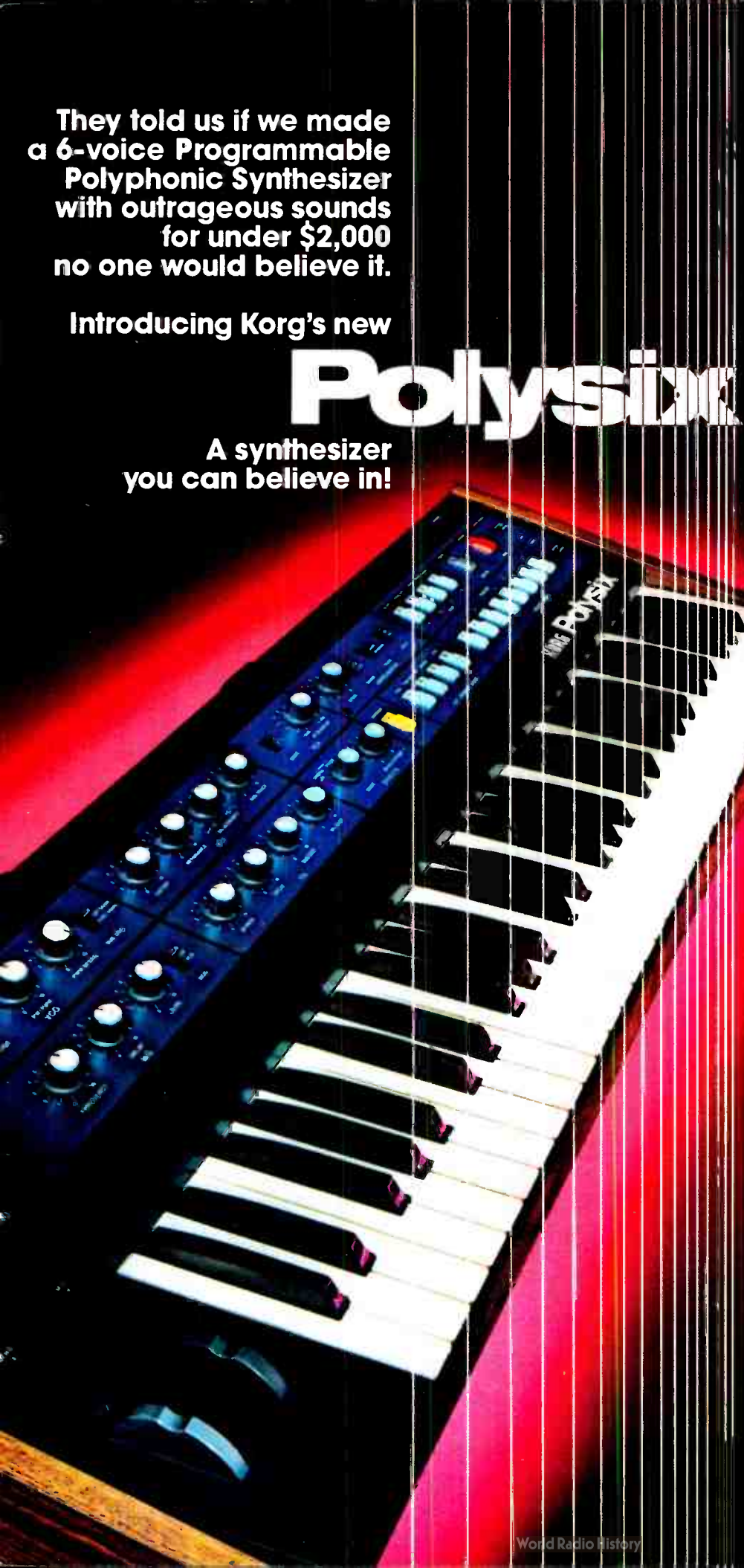

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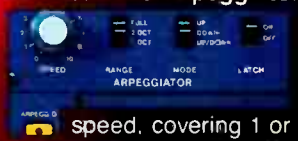

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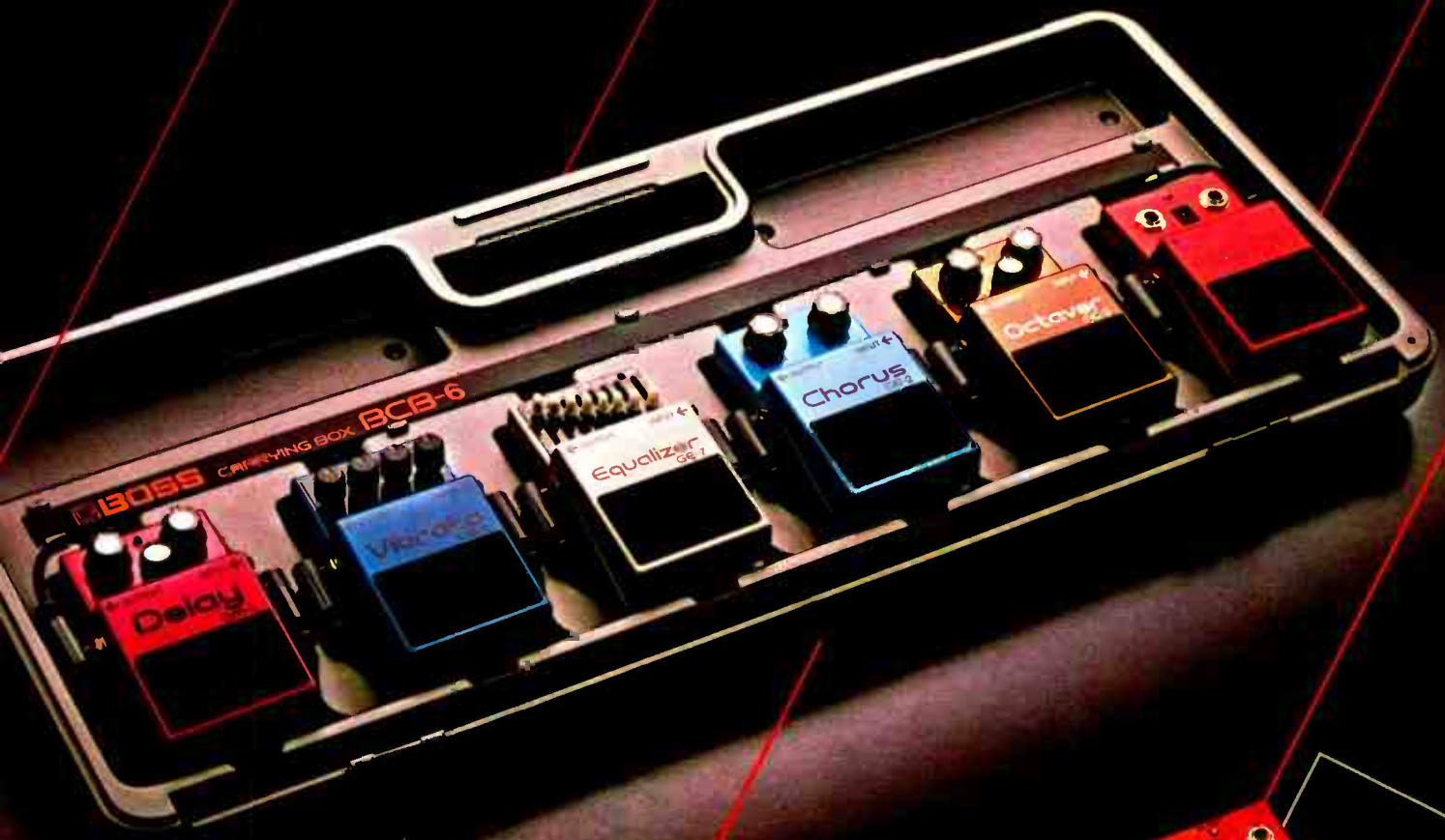

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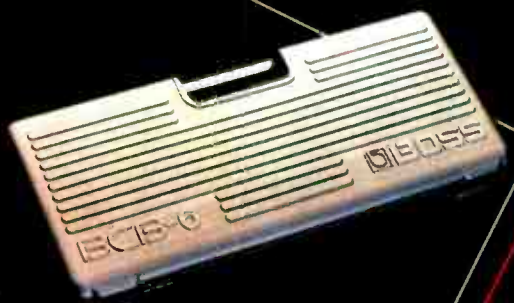

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MUSICIAN

NO. 47, SEPT., 1982

Eddie Van Halen transcends the hyperbole of arena rock with a truly electric style of guitar playing often borrowed and rarely duplicated J.D Considine conducts a rare lengthy interview with the crown prince of 6-string flash 'n' skill as well as brother Alex and superfop David Lee Roth Page 58

The Clash have elevated their punk anger and politicized anarchy into a modern mythology, but no one is trying harder to break through these new rock conventions and make good on their original promise than Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Joe Strummer Mikal Gilmore probes the paradoxes and triumphs of the reborn Clash Page 38

Quincy Jones has become the most important producer/innovator in R&B, his name synonymous with a state-of-the-art sound, a gallery of star clients and a 1981 Grammy blowout His extraordinary career as jazz trumpeter, big band arranger record company exec and studio miracle-maker chronicles a Renaissance man for our times Page 66

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Steve Gadd
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LETTERS

ANGRY EXPECTATIONS

I would like to commend Geoffrey Himes on a fabulous and comprehensive article on Graham Parker. After enjoying his New York concert immensely, I was disappointed to read so many articles panning *Another Grey Area* and criticizing his live performances. While I was not fortunate enough to see the 1979 tour which drew rave reviews, I was truly elated with the N.Y. shows.

As Parker states, he is not a static artist. The trouble with some critics is that they do not allow for the evolution of an artist. They feel Parker is missing that angry dimension to his music. But rock 'n' roll should not be a production line in which musicians are tied to a product. Too often in the 70s and 80s musicians have suffered from a creative demise when trapped in a mold. People are not stagnant; why should Graham Parker be? He has given anger its rightful place in rock 'n' roll...but has also made "passion no ordinary word." My sincere thanks.

Maureen Garner
Kew Gardens, NY

NO WAVE

I think Nick Lowe is underestimating the effect American radio has had on America's creativity.

It may be true that a lot of the groups to come from England's new wave movement were "pretty ghastly," however they did have and continue to have their Sex Pistols. We here in America have yet to achieve anything remotely close to England's great new wave groups. With talent like the Psychedelic Furs, Clash, Costello, U2, etc. coming from Europe, who can take new American music, typified by groups like the Go-Go's and X seriously?

For our sake, I hope Mr. Lowe is right and that the American public is growing tired of safe radio.

Andy McMillan
Seattle, WA

EXCEPTION OF A LIFETIME

I just received the April issue of *Musician*, don't know why it's so late arriving, but after I saw there was an interview with Joan Armatrading in it, it didn't seem to matter. I've never been one to write a letter to the editor but this is the exception of a lifetime. The article on Joan was fantastic!! When I was in college I first heard a record of hers and being a Cat Stevens fan I was caught up by her style immediately. She is so unique, and I think you did a terrific job in covering her both as an artist and a person. Thank you so much.

Sparkie Allison
Westfield, MA

GIRLS ARE COOL

Thanks for the article on Lou Ann Barton. As a female guitarist, I'd like to see more in-depth articles on female musicians. How about it? I'm sure everyone will agree there are great female guitarists, drummers, keyboardists, etc. as well as singers out there. Please tell us about them.

Susan Westbury
Bremen, OH
P.S. The guys are great, too.

FENDER CORRECTS ITSELF

Thanks for the "Fender Reinvents Itself" article. We believe that it covered a newsworthy happening in the industry. As could be expected of stories of its length, however, there were a few inaccuracies:

Toward the end of the article, it sounds as if Fender is manufacturing electric guitars in Japan to be sold in America. Not so. The plan is to supply America's needs from the Fullerton, California plant as always. But to compete more effectively in the Japanese market (the world's second largest for musical instruments), Fender will make electric guitars in Japan to be sold mainly in Japan, with surplus production being exported to other countries to be sold under the Squier label.

Fender's new amplifier faceplates are not plastic; they are aluminum painted black.

The marketing director for Fender amplifiers is *Paul* Rivera—industry design wizard—not *Jake* Rivera, the artist manager.

We just felt the need to set the record straight.

Joe Phelps
Public Relations
Fender/Rogers/Rhodes

GUITAR GENUFLECTION

It seems that an issue of *Musician* isn't complete without several awed references (usually a whole article!) to the "holy members" of the guitar world, you know, the '52 Telecaster, the '57 Stratocaster, the '59 Les Paul, etc.

Come off it, you guys! Can't you think of something else to write about? And who wants to sound like old fart Eric Clapton anyway?

Lurleene McCallister
Jacksonville, FL

YES *SUH!*

Okay, Mr. Roy Trakin, maybe the B-52's album *Mesopotamia* is not on the level of their debut album. I agree. Maybe Byrne did take them off their straight-and-narrow path. I agree. But to go so far as to call them "hicks" just because they're from Georgia? Watch your mouth, boy!

Greg Cook
Dothan, AL

WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN

I consider myself pretty versatile in my music listening as well as in my playing, that is why I think your magazine is the greatest. Reading some of your articles has made me wonder what I was missing not listening to King Crimson (a group of which none of your critics can say a discouraging word) and Robert Fripp (whom you so often toot the horns over).

I bought the King Crimson album *Beat* (who could resist after your article on vocalist/guitarist Adrian Belew a few issues back) and I found out what I was missing. I can't believe I got fooled by an old friend. Please subtract the $6.98 I paid for the album from my subscription renewal.

Christopher Amos
Fort Worth, TX

ABET ANAGRAMS

Thank you for J.D. Considine's intelligent evaluation of the latest King Crimson album, *Beat*. That review really helped me to relisten to a record which I had initially passed off as the group's greatest disappointment. As far as subtlety goes, King Crimson/Robert Fripp have placed an anagram on the album which I discovered with some help from my mother. "Sartori In Tangier," the frantic pseudo-violin string solo stands for "string riot in aria." Does this title have some other meaning? Keep up the outstanding work; *Musician* is definitely the best mail I receive.

Lanay DePalma
Rochester, NY

DEFINITIVE

On Robert's Fripp:

It is curious that Webster's *New Collegiate* defines "frippery" as "affected elegance" (come on now, Robert, is that *really* your surname?), a perfect analysis of a man and his music.

Cheryl Curtis
Aukland, New Zealand

BATTY IDEA

Would you please ask Robert Fripp how much money it would take to bite Ozzy Osbourne's head off (I'm loaded).

Alan Cohan
Philadelphia, PA

ECONOMY OF EXPRESSION

thanks gang,

that last issue was literature. nick lowe and such but/and by the time I hit the lester bowie.....great work.

best luck and success in the efforts.

jw

In issue #46, we miscredited the following photos, which should have read: cover, and photo on p.54 by Michael Putland/Retna; photo on p.53 by Ebet Roberts. Apologies also to Randee St. Nicholas (p.40) and Michael Zagaris (p.48).

3 GREAT PLAYERS 3 GREAT STYLES
3 GREAT GUITARS

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music industry news

Witchhunt Department: Faced with what he called "documented evidence" that demonic messages were being transmitted to rock 'n' roll listeners through background masking, or recording the message backwards, Representative Robert Dornan of California introduced a bill in Congress requiring labeling of the potentially dangerous product similar to that on cigarettes. Offending artists were said to include Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, Pete Townshend (?!), AC/DC, Rush, Fleetwood Mac and the Eagles. Said Warner exec **Stan Cornyn**, "I predict that this publicity will stimulate a rash of backward-message singles on independent labels... just what we needed to fill the gap left by the picture disc."

Home taping royalty: After raising ineffective initial opposition to the **Coalition to Save America's Music**, the forces opposed to a tax on blank tapes and tape machines have regrouped and made convincing progress, forming the **Audio Recording Rights Coalition**. Senate passage of the levy once seemed assured but Senators Mathias, Moynihan and Bentsen have recently suggested that all parties sit down and negotiate a settlement, hinting that a lot of legislators remain unconvinced. Interestingly, it is the resurgent anti-tax troops that don't want to come to the table and the pro-tax ones that do.

Chicago's chart reappearance was not as easy as it might seem. Released *outright* from CBS after its last two releases fizzled, Chicago took on a new guitarist/singer, **Bill Champlin**, who as leader of California heroes the **Sons of Champlin** was no stranger to a good horn section. The group began production of a new album at their own expense, using producer/arranger **David Foster**. Warner Bros. got interested in the album and signed the band to their Full Moon label. The LP, *Chicago 16*, is now #35 after only four weeks, with the single at #15.

In the wake of a proposed ban on synthesizers by the London Musician's Union, synth players have formed a sub-union to fight the measure. A group statement suggests the motion "is probably based on certain M.U. members' paranoia about their own musical capabilities and certainly suggests a lack of understanding toward the role of synthesizers in the development of music." Doesn't that make all you synthesists proud?

A tribute to **Jim Morrison** of the Doors, "Three Hours of Magic" will air over Labor Day weekend on a syndicated London Wavelength show. The show includes refutation that Morrison was a druggie or alkie (as reported here and elsewhere) and contains not only interviews with survivors but two of Morrison's last songs, "Orange County Suite" and "Whiskey, Mystics And Men."

Diana Ross was unable to get the sound right for her London debut show and after kicking one of her monitors off the stage, angrily lectured her orchestra. Damn right she's the boss.... **Merle Haggard** is doing an album with **George Jones**.... **Billy Joel** is finishing an as-yet-untitled LP of new material which includes some **Dave Grusin** orchestrations.... **Garland Jeffries** is recording a new disc, *Guts For Love*.... **Richard Perry** is producing a solo LP for **June Pointer**, having finished the new **Pointer Sisters** LP.... Feminist fave rave **Holly Near** has a new album under construction for Redwood Records... other good do-bees in the studio: **Orleans**, **Burrito Brothers**, **Skyy**, **Floyd Cramer** and **KC**.

Chart Action

The triumphant return of art-rock was made complete when Asia took the top album spot back from Paul McCartney's *Tug Of War* and booted him down to #9. Looking the other way and clutching their valuables were Willie Nelson, the Human League and Toto, all dark horse winners in the summer sweepstakes. The Stones brought in *Still Life* at #49 and took it to #6 the next week; that's chart-muscle, mates. John Cougar's *American Fool* continued its convincing rock 'n' roll showing to the consternation of the luckless experts, but the complete surprise to everyone was Survivor's *Eye Of The Tiger*, which plopped from #37 into the top ten and thence to #7. Loverboy, .38 Special and a wounded but still tough Van Halen topped off the big ten.

As Stevie's *Musiquarium* drifted down into the teens, it faced the new challengers, all tough and fresh to the action: Rick James, REO Speedcookie, Kansas (with a new lead singer), the Dazz Band, Steve Miller (who had a twenty-point leap this week) and the Motels.

The Scorpions were unable to maintain their rapid rise and Rick Springfield went from #19 to #64; but the Clash fought to #22, Squeeze hung strong at #32, Frank Zappa's *Ship Arriving Too Late* got to #37, and Pete Townshend's *Chinese Eyes* checked in at #53 and rose ten places in a week. Big things are expected from new releases by Fleetwood Mac, Crosby, Stills & Nash, and Robert Plant, but nobody's taking anything for granted any more after the poor performances by "can't-miss" LPs by Queen, Cheap Trick, Heart, Dolly Parton, Carole King, Kiss, Chic and exercise kids Richard Simmons and Jane Fonda. The jury's still out on Blondie's *The Hunter*, marking time at #33.

The Human League have completed the first phase of British Invasion II by claiming the #1 spot on the singles charts for three weeks straight, holding off Toto's "Rosanna" and John Cougar's "Hurts So Good." Asia's "Heat Of The Moment" went from #4 to #24 while Survivor's *Rocky III* theme and the Dazz Band's "Let It Whip" took its place. Fleetwood Mac's "Hold Me" came out of nowhere to challenge, while Soft Cell's "Tainted Love" was right behind.

The Soul charts were renamed the Black charts this month, but *The Gap Band IV* was still the album to beat, despite Rick James's *Throwin' Down*. Dazz, Stevie and Ashford & Simpson rounded out the fave five but new talents One Way and Jeffrey Osbourne were not to be ignored. — *Jock Baird*

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DAVID LASLEY: MEMORIES OF THE MOTOR CITY

Dave Marsh reviews Detroit's legacy of struggle and self-invention and discovers a new standard-bearer.

Lasley combines his soulful falsetto with evocative songs to make a fine debut LP.

BY DAVE MARSH

As you may know, I am not ordinarily the sort of person who touts solo albums made by James Taylor's backup singers. On the other hand, David Lasley is certainly the most soulful backup vocalist Taylor's ever had, and the only one whose solo album, *Missin' Twenty Grand* (EMI-America), owes a greater debt of inspiration to Smokey Robinson than to Bob Dylan.

To me, Lasley's record is immediately marked as one of the finest of the year, if only for its artful combination of falsetto soul singing and reflective, confessional songs, supported by tight, funky, sophisticated but always light-handed arrangements, refreshing after so much wooden white funk on both shores of the Atlantic this season. Not to mention much adult good humor: I defy any human, of any sexual persuasion, who has ever cohabited with a fellow post-adolescent not to appreciate Lasley's deadpan account of his dealings with his "roommate," the usual unfaithful, deadbeat slob.

The emotional center of *Missin' Twenty Grand* is the same stretch of inner city Detroit where my inaugural critical outpost, *Creem* magazine, resided until 1972. It's a small piece of land, maybe a couple of miles square, from Third Street down around Selden and Alexandrine, a spot that makes the Bowery look cozy, up to Motown on Grand Boulevard and then west, maybe to the Twenty Grand Lounge itself, the Motor City's finest soul club, the place where I (for one) first heard Bobby Bland and Wilson Pickett sing. So Lasley's liner notes, his very album title and certainly, his best song, "Third Street," evoke for me more than just a place—they are also a part of an age and my coming of age.

Lasley has rendered those first moments when a kid who has come from a small town, a suburb, even (in his own case) a farm, pulled into the urban center by the wigged-out rhythm and blues or rock 'n' roll of the day, encounters the real demi-monde—not the stuff they show on TV, but the authentic bizarros who always inhabit such areas. "Met my first drag queen at fifteen/ Didn't know till I was sixteen," Lasley sings, and the space between those lines—between the seeing and the knowing—and his eerily confident falsetto establish a universal encounter.

Other people went through the same thing in different ways and different towns; my own version of Third Street was more white and druggy, less gay and thuggy, but close enough for me to recognize Mrs. Brown, the lady who swiped Lasley's sound and sold it back to him for a quarter a play on the jukebox, and even the asshole who picks a

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"IMPERIAL BEDROOM." ON COLUMBIA RECORDS AND TAPES.
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fight with the kid crying at the counter of the all-night cafe.

Yet there is something specifically Detroit about all of this, or at least about the particular way in which it returns to haunt every one of those it touched. There is something that resides in Lasley's liner notes, something that compels the ex-Eagle Glenn Frey to be certain to mention his Motor City roots on his first solo album, something shared, I suspect, by George Clinton, Iggy Pop, David and Donald Was, Bob Seger, Ron Banks, Mitch Ryder, Commander Cody, all those who escaped. In a way, it might be nothing more than the memory of those who did not.

Or maybe I just feel that way because I've been listening to some of the forgotten crowd lately, on a bootleg compilation, *Michigan Brand Nuggets*, annotated with the kind of in-jokes that are usually the province of New Yorkers (the kind who don't know where Soupy Sales really got his act together). This new *Nuggets*—the title is a glancing nod at Lenny Kaye's original punk rock sampler—features seven tracks by Bob Seger (including the notorious "Ballad Of The Yellow Beret" and the hilarious "Sock It To Me, Santa") and five by the MC5, which alone would be reason to seek it out. Seger was all along one of the great rock 'n' roll voices, and one of the best of the form's synthetic songwriters; the Five were the *sine qua non* of punk rock, granddaddies of the Dolls and the Pistols, and to this day, the single most cataclysmically exciting band I have ever seen or heard.

If *Michigan Brand Nuggets* contained only the Seger and MC5 material, it wouldn't be worth more than a footnote; there's nothing among the Seger songs that comes close to "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man," which you can still get from Capitol. And "Borderline"/"Looking At You" by the Five isn't worth nearly as much as *Kick Out The Jams*, the devastating debut just reissued by Elektra at a bargain price.

What moves me is the amount of forgotten talent scattered across the two discs, from the one-shot, doo-wop goof of Tim Tam & the Turn-ons' "Wait A Minute," to the incipient folk-rock of Southbound Freeway's "Psychedelic Used Car Lot Blues" to the full-throttle growl of the Woolies' "Who Do You Love." There's a story behind every one of these records, and what happened to the people who made them: one of the Turn-ons is now a booking agent; one of the Freeways, Larry Miller, went on to become Detroit and San Francisco's first hip DJ; the Woolies later became Chuck Berry's favorite backup band. Or take the four tracks by the Rationals, a band very much in the David Lasley spirit—white soul, performed with aching intensity, and a great lead voice, Scott Morgan. When you realize that Morgan cut the gorgeous, impassioned

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version of "I Need You" (the Chuck Jackson hit) when he was only about fifteen, the fact that he did not go on to become a star of international stature seems utterly unfathomable.

It isn't only the ghost of wasted opportunity and unrecognized talent that haunts my Detroit memories (though I assure you that if Scott Morgan had been a New Yorker his name would be revered today alongside, say Danny Kalb's). So much of the music from that place, not only the mid-60s white garage band stuff collected on the new *Nuggets*, but also a good deal else, from Little Willie John to Was/Not Was, is imbued with the spirit of a strange brand of freedom, in which the continual blues-based quest for the magic of self-invention is tied to an equally ceaseless willingness to build from scratch. This is what ties Berry Gordy and the MC5, Mitch Ryder and George Clinton, Iggy Pop and Smokey Robinson, what unites "I'll Try Something New" with "Kick Out The Jams," and "One Nation Under A Groove" to "Journey To The Center Of The Mind." That and a sense of struggle, inevitable because there is no place I know where the fragile process of self-invention through music could possibly be more difficult than in the ugly industrialized streets of the Motor City.

I don't mean to exaggerate this quality; nonetheless it's as fundamental and unavoidable in Detroit-based music as the touch of the idyllic and pastoral that enters all San Francisco music, even John Fogerty and Sly Stone's. And it is just this kind of regional accent which has been lost now; even as new regional music centers spring up, their styles are internationalized so that I, at least, can no longer recognize any spiritual or emotional difference among them.

To the sort of music fan who does not make much distinction between a nation controlled by Ronald Reagan and one run by slightly less inhumane types, such distinctions may be altogether too fine to matter much. But to me, they are the difference between making one's way in the world and spending that life trapped. And ultimately, this is the quality that draws me most wholeheartedly to *Missin' Twenty Grand*, which is dedicated "to the children of the world with hope that in my lifetime we may all know a world that does not perceive a boy or girl, a man or a woman by the color of their skin."

That may be the ultimate statement of what it means to be a white kid singing soul. And it links specifically with David Lasley's allusions to gayness and its consequences, which are scattered throughout the album, and expressed more vividly and certainly more proudly than any others I know in pop music. Without them, this would be sensuous and gorgeous music; with them, it's as overwhelming as an unexpected call from an old friend.

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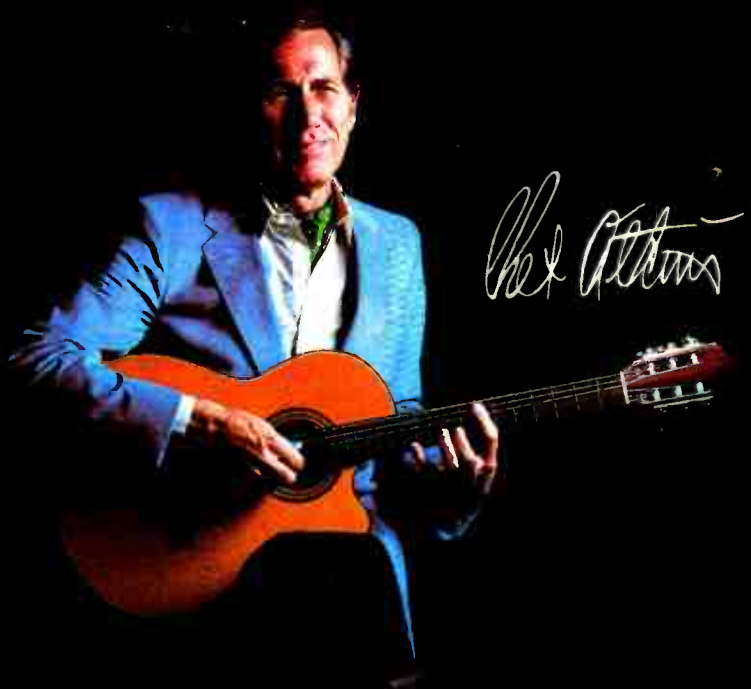

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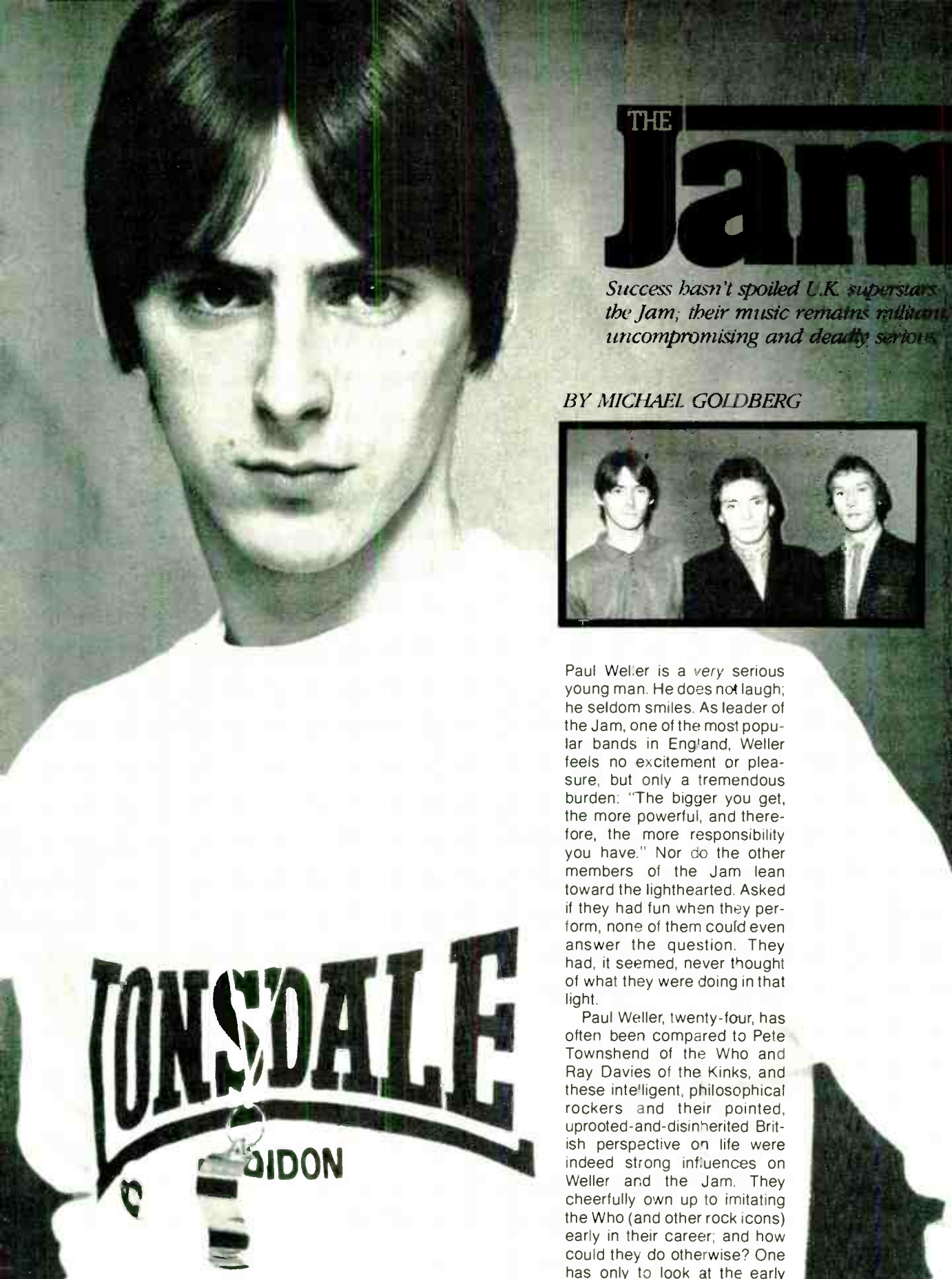

THE Jam

Success hasn't spoiled U.K. superstars the Jam; their music remains militant, uncompromising and deadly serious

BY MICHAEL GOLDBERG

Paul Weller is a *very* serious young man. He does not laugh; he seldom smiles. As leader of the Jam, one of the most popular bands in England, Weller feels no excitement or pleasure, but only a tremendous burden: "The bigger you get, the more powerful, and therefore, the more responsibility you have." Nor do the other members of the Jam lean toward the lighthearted. Asked if they had fun when they perform, none of them could even answer the question. They had, it seemed, never thought of what they were doing in that light.

Paul Weller, twenty-four, has often been compared to Pete Townshend of the Who and Ray Davies of the Kinks, and these intelligent, philosophical rockers and their pointed, uprooted-and-disinherited British perspective on life were indeed strong influences on Weller and the Jam. They cheerfully own up to imitating the Who (and other rock icons) early in their career; and how could they do otherwise? One has only to look at the early Jam photos, the ones with a very Mod Paul Weller in a thin-lapeled suit, skinny tie and granny glasses leaping into the air *a la* Townshend, slashing

ALL PHOTOS BY PAUL COX RETNA

away at a Rickenbacker guitar. One has only to listen to cuts like "In The City," which could have come right off *The Who Sing My Generation*; why, the Jam even covered the Kinks' "David Watts."

But the Jam, with Weller on guitar and vocals, Bruce Foxton on bass and Rick Buckler on drums, have come a long way since their first two derivative albums. By their third LP, *All Mod Cons*, the group had evolved a more mature and original sound of their own that only thinly echoed their early influences. Their aggressive pop rock, equal parts mid-60s British Invasion, Motown soul and punk wallop, now reaches the upper strata of the English charts and for several years now they have won the *New Musical Express*'s readers' poll as Britain's best group. Paul Weller has emerged as one of the major pop heroes of his generation for his dead-serious, committed commentary on the state of modern British youth. It's a role he's taken to quite well, with his thoughtfulness and bitterness intact despite the success of recent years.

The Jam have recorded six albums, the last three being *Setting Sons*, *Sound Affects* and *The Gift*. Weller has shown himself to be a powerful songwriter whose lyrics are particularly relevant to British kids inhabiting a nation in the throes of disintegration. Weller is an optimist, but troubled by the state of the world: "I believe in life/ And I believe in love/ But the world in which I live/ Keeps trying to prove me wrong," he sings in "Running On The Spot." A game belief in the possibility of change permeates the Jam's recent English hit, "Town Called Malice": "And stop apologizing for the things you've never done/ 'Cause time is short and life is cruel/ But it's up to us to change/ This town called Malice."

Though the Jam are stars in the U.K., they have not taken the New World by storm; five years after their first tour of America, the group remains largely unknown. Their records are seldom heard on U.S. radio and the continuous raves from the rock press have not yet convinced John and Jane Q. Record-Buying-Public to let Jam albums join their REO and Journey collections. This lack of U.S. acceptance is a sore point with the group, but not altogether unexpected. From the beginning, the Jam's strategy, worked out by the band and Weller's father, Jam manager John Weller (a former bricklayer), was to forego the American market as unreachable and to concentrate on hand-to-hand fighting in the trenches of Britain. Thus was forged the legend of the Jam as true representatives of the British kids, but at the cost of the kind of small but valuable foothold in the States that brother-warriors the Clash have attained.

I spoke with the Jam at their hotel in downtown San Francisco. The Jam have granted few interviews in the U.S.; the one that follows provides a small window into the ideals of three angry young Britons who refuse to budge an inch for commercial acceptance. Whether you like the Jam or not (and I like them very much), you can't ignore them, but the fact that they are one of the most important contemporary English bands and the probability that they will be heard from again and again in the 80s makes ignoring them a difficult and dangerous prospect.

Musician: *The Jam is a very popular band in England, why not in the U.S.?*
Buckler: Well, I think the size of the country is one thing. We're not really into doing eight-month tours. Probably radio is another. Because radio here almost takes the place of the weekly English press. So radio is quite important. But radio is as bad here as it is in England, really, as far as selection. So there's lots of things like that. Frustrating things.
Weller: Also, I think what we present is different from what Americans are used to. I think it hasn't got the same sort of traditional things that make up American music. We're not using traditional rock 'n' roll values. I don't see where we're using rock 'n' roll whatsoever, really. Or rock music. I'm not talking about just Elvis, but the whole 60s thing and the 70s thing. Just the whole sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. I mean those are only superficial things; the whole image. The rock 'n' roll message is supposedly "Go out and have a good time and forget it," that whole thing...and the whole youth rebellion thing, which is all bullshit anyway. And I just don't see us fitting into any of that at all.

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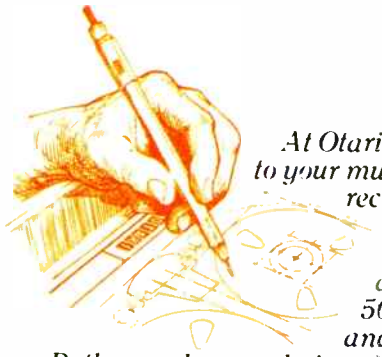

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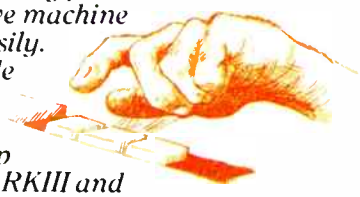

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Musician: *As I understand it, you're personally interested in more than just the Jam becoming popular in the U.S.*
Weller: Just one group isn't going to be enough. It's got to be a whole thing. It's like when the Beatles came over in the 60s. It wasn't just them, was it? It was initially, but then the whole thing broke.
Musician: *Why hasn't that happened this time around?*
Weller: It was a different environment then, I think. Because I think you'd just gotten over the initial shock that teenagers were actual people, you know. They had money in their pockets and they were going out and spending it on things they wanted to do...the whole 50s teenage thing. And I think in the 60s, teenagers were really taken seriously. People actually examined them and looked into their lives and their values and what they were doing. But I think over the course of the last twenty years, people have forgotten about it again. In England, that's definitely the case. Even the riots last year weren't enough to stir people up. So I'm sure a bleedin' pop record isn't going to do it.
Musician: *Is it important to you, at this point, to become popular in the U.S.?*
Weller: Well, my attitude is that if it happens and it happens on our terms, then great. But if it doesn't, I ain't going to lose any sleep on it. I don't really care if it happens. Unless the whole thing totally changed, the whole music scene. Like in England...that's the way it sort of happened in England; we've got a lot of stuff in the charts at the moment, the music scene has changed, at least a bit. A small step forward. Groups have more power now. If the same thing happened in America, that would be different, more worthwhile, really.
Musician: *When you say groups have more power, obviously the Jam do, the Clash do, the Police do. But is that different from the Who or the Stones?*
Weller: It's not just those groups you've mentioned. Take Pigbag. They've just had a big hit in England. They've never done any promotional thing 'cause they're on an independent. They've never had thousands of pounds spent trying to push that they're like the boys next door or any of that bullshit. They've just totally done it on people liking their record and going out and buying it. And it's taken them a year to do that, but they've done it and they've done it entirely on their own terms; which I think is just fantastic. And their LP just went straight up to number eighteen. So that's what I'm saying about power.
Musician: *So basically it's opened up over there?*
Weller: Yeah, a lot more than what it was before, yeah. And that's entirely due to the punk movement of '76, I think. It would have never happened without the Pistols.
Musician: *When the Jam began, you seemed apart from punk bands like the*

Photo by Greg Savalin

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Pistols and the Clash. Now you're more in synch with the English kids than any other band....

Weller: I think that's probably true. We've stuck to the ideals of the original punk movement. That may not be the right word, punk...the punk thing, whatever you want to call it. We've stuck more to that than any of our sort of peers have. Most of them have split up anyway. But the others have gone off into their own excesses.

Musician: *In the early days of the Jam's career, everyone who wrote anything about the Jam compared you to the Who. In retrospect, do you think that was justified?*

Buckler: Well, not really. I thought it was pretty poor journalism myself. It was easy to do, the comparison. I don't think they were really looking at us. I don't think we sound anything like the Who. I think it was probably a fashion thing, the Mod thing.

Weller: Obviously, I admit to being influenced by Townshend. The Rickenbacker sound and the chords...it stems from that. Some of those songs, like the early songs, they were really heavily Townshend influenced; "Sounds From The Street" and all that stuff. But I just think we went over the top with it. Like we came here in '78 and had done *All Mod Cons* and it was still the same thing. Even now, I've seen some articles over here. They think it's the Kinks now, in the States.

Musician: *Paul, what about the Pete Townshend thing? He wrote an article about you in* Time Out *(an English weekly magazine). Why do you think the two of you have been lumped together?*

Weller: Well, you've got to look at it this way. Suppose I'd never played a Rickenbacker guitar. Say I started out playing a synthesizer, but still had written all those same songs like "In The City," no one would even have talked about Pete Townshend. That's basically what it is. But the bond thing, the link between me and Townshend is a press thing. We've got as much in common as I have with that chair over there. There's like twelve years between us or something...which is a difference for a start. But I had a lot of respect for Pete Townshend. He seems to have a lot of integrity, still. And he seems to me to be very honest. But I also feel sorry for him because I think he's out of touch. However much he seems to think he is, he's not.

Musician: *Why not?*

Weller: Well, for a start, he said that what the Jam is trying to do is very honorable, but ultimately it's a waste of time. I think anyone who says that has got to be out of touch. I can never see an eighteen-year-old Pete Townshend saying that. Obviously, with age, you always lose sight of some of your ideals and values, but if you have any sense, you hang onto them.

Musician: *But over a period of time, if you try something and it doesn't seem to have an effect....*

Weller: Yeah, I know what you're saying. But that's his own fault. That's his fault for going out onstage for the last fifteen years or whatever and playing "My Generation." Like he's trapped himself in. His audience is his prison now, but it's a prison which he's helped build, by going out and doing the same damn things. That's why we don't do any of our greatest hits. And we won't play anything off our first two LPs. And whenever we have some new songs, we ditch the old ones and play the new stuff. And no matter how much they want to hear "In The City" or "Down In The Tube Station" or "Going Underground," it's too bad. Because we ain't gonna get stuck in that rot. We don't want to get trapped by anyone, least of all ourselves.

Musician: *How do you feel about the Clash?*

Buckler: First album was good.

Weller: In the early days they were brilliant. But they're sort of like the Stones. I mean they're not really a group anymore, they're more of a myth. People go to see the myth of the Clash, they don't go to see the group. They don't do anything for me at all.

Musician: *Some of your songs seem directly based on other people's songs. "Start" is like a rewrite of the Beatles' "Taxman" and "Disguises" sounds like "I Can See For Miles" and "Town Called Malice" has that Motown thing. Is that borrowing conscious?*

Weller: "Disguises" was, yeah. (looks over at Buckler and Foxton) Should I tell him? It's whatever I listen to at the time. It seems to bug other people more than it

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EXCERPTS OF AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE JACKSON, FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF HIS LATEST ALBUM, "NIGHT AND DAY," WHICH WAS WRITTEN AND RECORDED ENTIRELY IN NEW YORK CITY.

INTERVIEWER: Does the album title, "NIGHT AND DAY," reflect 24 hours a day in the city?

JOE JACKSON: Yeah. Since moving to the city, I've seen many bizarre things while walking the streets. There is an amazing wealth and diversity of music going on here. I was describing a mood, a feeling of optimism. I feel this album is very optimistic. All the really uptempo stuff is called the "Night Side," whereas the ballads are on the "Day Side." Nighttime represents excitement. Daytime is when you have to cope with life and think about what's happening—and get over your hangover...like the point between getting over one hangover and acquiring another.

INT: The tracks from the "Night Side" all run into each other at a fast-driving, infectious pace...
J.J.: I thought it would make it that much more intense—like being in a club where every record cross-fades into the next. The poor, unfortunate listener doesn't have a chance to collect his thoughts—or take a breath! The side's last cut, "Steppin' Out," is a song about the romance of nightlife...

INT: What do you think it is, about nightlife, that gets into people's blood?
J.J.: Because it's fun, you know?

INT: "Breaking Us In Two," opens up side two. You've called it the "Day Side" because you like to take it a bit slower and easier...
J.J.: This album is a 50/50 mix, which I think is nice. If you feel in the mood to listen to some ballads, you can just put the "Day Side" on.

INT: It seems you're not afraid to sing with conviction and emotion, which is rare today.
J.J.: Yeah. You know, people are too concerned with whether they're going to appear cool, or hip, or whether their "street" credibility will suffer if they do this, or that. No one's going to be hip forever. Who cares. The important thing is to follow your instincts, and produce the best music you can.

INT: Again, from the "Day Side," the cut "Real Men" really grabs people. It's dramatic, almost Phil Spectorish at times. The instrumental is quite clear and the words are striking. They mean something.
J.J.: Yeah. Well, hopefully that's true. It's a song about the age old battle of the sexes. Times are changed, but no one's really quite sure whot the score is. I think your average male has had his masculinity and supremacy threatened to the point where he's not sure what it is he's supposed to do. Intelligent, forward thinking, in the sexual arena, is being done by women. It's all about the way stereotypes have reversed, turned upside down and become meaningless.

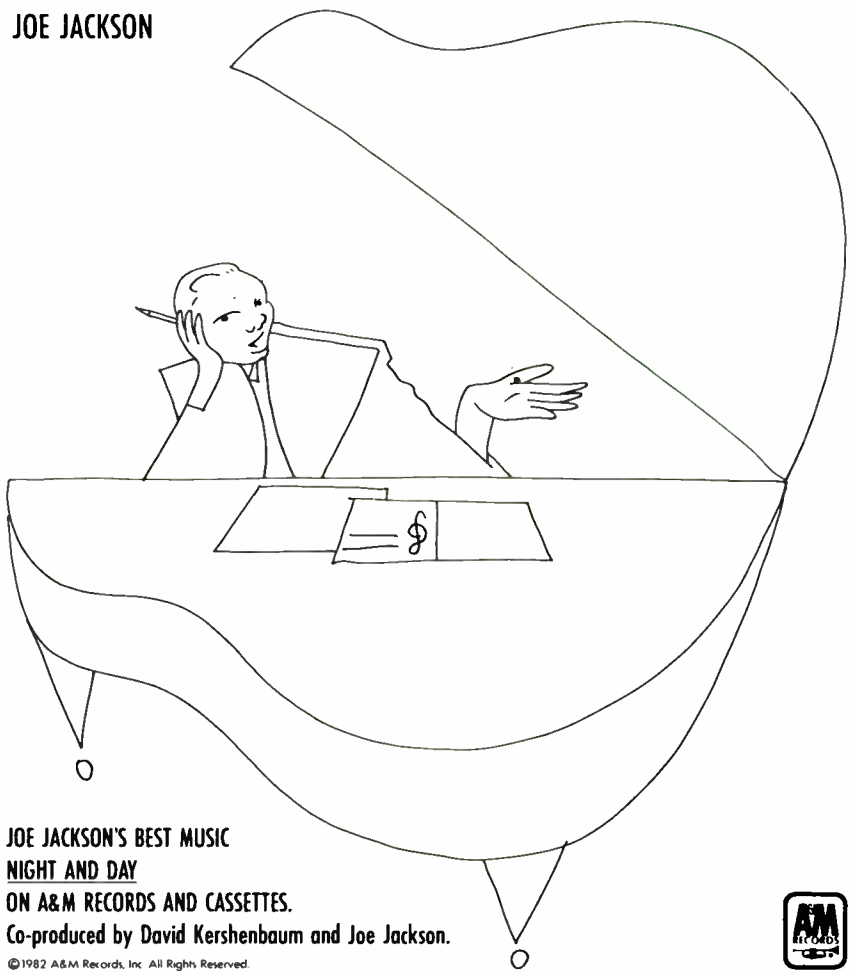
INT: Will you begin touring?
J.J.: We start off going all over Europe and England. We end up doing the biggest tour ever, of the States—four or five months. We have a few days off, now and again, to try and prevent ourselves from going crazy, but we'll be covering the whole country. Canada, as well.

INT: All of your albums have been so different... Any hints on the next?
J.J.: I've got a few ideas, but I'm not saying...

JOE JACKSON
NIGHT AND DAY

"People are too concerned with whether they're going to appear cool, or hip, or whether their 'street' credibility will suffer if they do this, or that. No one's going to be hip forever. Who cares. The important thing is to follow your instincts, and produce the best music you can."

JOE JACKSON



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does me. I don't see any sort of frontier when it comes to writing music. No limitation. Like I'll use anything, any riff that I hear, if it suits me and what we're doing. 'Cause there are only a certain number of notes in a chord or in a scale. So I don't see how it really matters. It depends on how you use it, I think. If you don't actually do anything with it, then I would agree that it's a pretty pointless exercise. But I always think I use it in a good way. But it's not particularly that conscious most of the time. It's just whatever I listen to, I'll get into it and I'll want to try to reproduce something like it. Not copy it, but *do something* with it myself. And not just the Motown or 60s stuff. It could be anything whatsoever. Like I think Pigbag is a good example of that. Like "Precious" and "Circus" on *The Gift* LP. I listened to their stuff. But I think it's a good thing. I find that very positive. I'd like people to do that with our music.

Musician: *Paul, when you were a teenager, you got into Mod. Yet at that point Mod was a thing of the past. Is Mod a philosophy for you?*

Weller: Don't know. Couldn't explain it to you. It's just the sense of purpose. That's why kids get into those cult things anyway, 'cause they don't feel part of anything else. Put on a certain wardrobe of clothes and you are something. That's always been the way it is in England. That's the way it started for me as well. Not so much now, 'cause I'm older. But I still believe in that. It's the same feeling as the Jam, that gives you a sense of purpose as well. Maybe there's no real sense at the bottom of it anyway. But it means something to me. It's that English thing. They've always had that, always gotten into these little cult things.

Musician: *What kind of responsibility do you feel to your fans?*

Weller: Well, not a total one. Our responsibility, I think, is just to be honest. And also trying to give something in the music. I don't like to talk about the message, that sounds a bit dated, but just in the lyrics and what we're saying and what we're doing, just have some kind of message of hope or some kind of strength they can get from it. Just so they'll know someone is on their side, I suppose. If you make people think, that'll be something.

Foxton: Mostly I think it's worthwhile to go on believing in people. At the end of whatever period of time we last, if someone, somewhere definitely got something out of what we're singing about, talking about, then it's going to be worthwhile.

Weller: It's like the case of this one person from Newcastle who listened to the LP and started to get a union thing organized where he worked, just from listening to songs like "Running On The Spot" and "Ghosts," where the basic thing was that you've got the power to take things into your own hands. Now, that's just one isolated case, and it's like a piss in the ocean compared to the major things, but at least that's one person who's *done* something. I'm sure there are a lot more instances than that one person. A world could be built if we got through. Maybe that's it, maybe it's just a question of minor conquests, but they add up to something.

Musician: *Is this something you think about a lot, this question of having an effect?*

Weller: I just see our country...I mean, it's gone down the pan, economically...it's emotionally depressing. I just think of the Jam as helping to pull it out of that. Not because we're marvelous or the new messiahs, but because I don't want to see it happen. So that's basically where my motivation comes from. Being an Englishman, my main concern is where I live. I see young people who are so reactionary and it's because of all the crap in the last ten years, politically and economically. I just like to think we could help pull young people out of that.

We deal in common sense, really, and a lot of people in England have lost sight of common sense. Like on the last tour, some people in our audience, when the Falklands thing was starting, were saying, "Well, I'll probably go and fight." I couldn't believe it, from seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds. I thought, "At least I wouldn't think that way, whatever the situation."

Musician: *What did you say to that kid?*

Weller: I said, "You're bleedin' mad!" What has it ever done for you? It depends on what you're fighting. The

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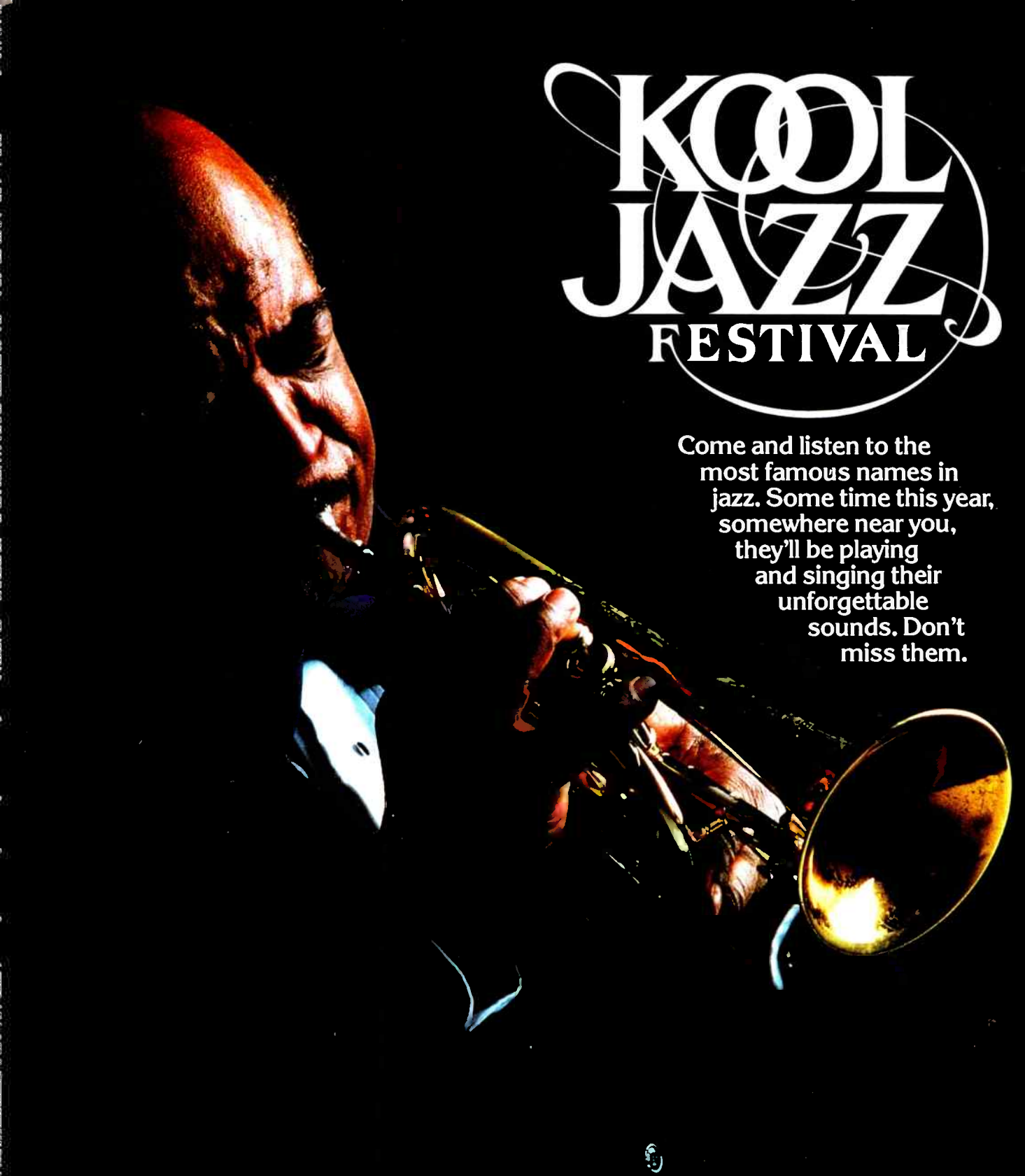

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PAUL COX/RETNA

Left, bassist Bruce Foxton; lefter, drummer Rick Buckler; leftest, Paul Weller.

Second World War was a different situation; you were fighting someone like Hitler. But like Vietnam, a situation like that, when you're fighting for nothing... I don't know. There's a lot of people who feel the way that kid did, *young* people ...which is frightening.

Musician: *Do you believe that a song or a band can affect people in a significant way?*

Weller: Well, going by my own experience, there are songs that affect me

Musician: *Sure, but looking back over the past fifteen years, despite bands in the 60s with good intentions and positive messages, things seem to be getting worse. Reagan, Thatcher....*

Buckler: Whose fault is that? Who put them there?

Weller: Probably all the people who were dropping out, listening to all the 60s music. Some of them must have voted for Reagan.

Musician: *Then what can a song do, what's its secret weapon?*

Buckler: The communication thing: what can you do, you're only one person? But if you realize that there are other people who have the same views as you, well at least you can say to yourself, "Well, I'm not alone, so maybe the problem isn't that difficult." If you want things to change, you don't have to vote for all these cruddy people. You don't feel so alone. In England you get the apathetic thing where everybody's saying, "I don't care who's in the government 'cause they're all as bad as each other." There isn't a whole lot of alternative, I know.

Weller: I don't know to what extent you can really change things with music. The Beatles, at one point in time... I think they could have, if they had chosen to use it in that way. I'm not sure.

Musician: *Lennon tried, bed-ins for peace....*

Weller: People are basically lazy. Whether it's a political party or a pop group, as long as they just agree with what those people are saying, that's it. That's where they think their responsibility ends. "Oh right, so we agree with the Jam. I agree with all they say in their lyrics." That's it. You know what I mean?

Buckler: That's a good *start*.

Weller: But it never goes any further than the bedroom. So it's not even up to us. I suppose the more you think about it, the more depressing it is.

Musician: *What can a band actually do?*

Weller: Well, the thing is you don't know until you try and find out. A lot of people say, "You're wasting your time. Music can't achieve anything more than make people dance." But until you actually try it, you don't really know. So maybe it is a waste of time. You might find out in the end that it's a waste. But it's better to try than to give up and join the rest of the sheep. That's the way I see it. M

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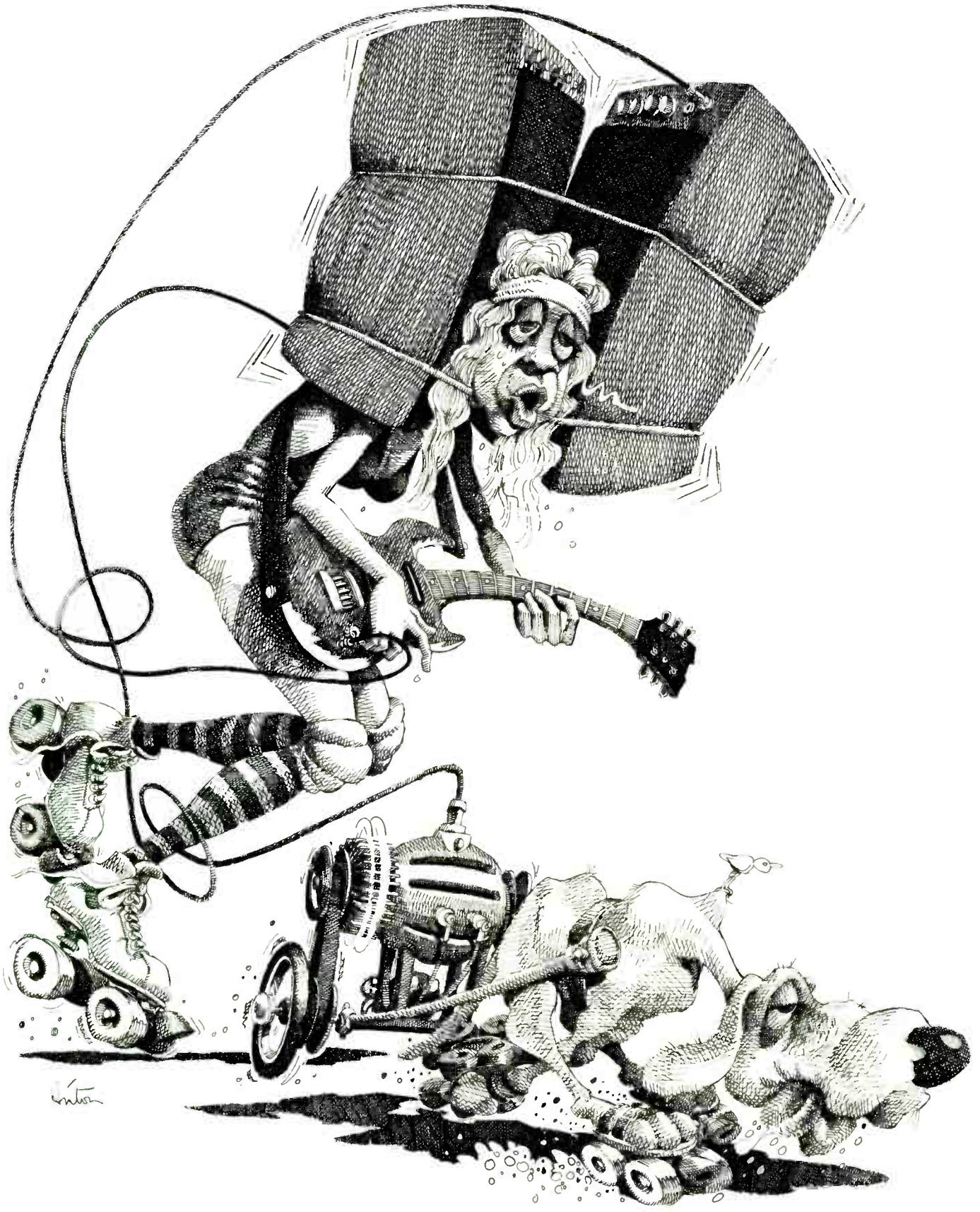

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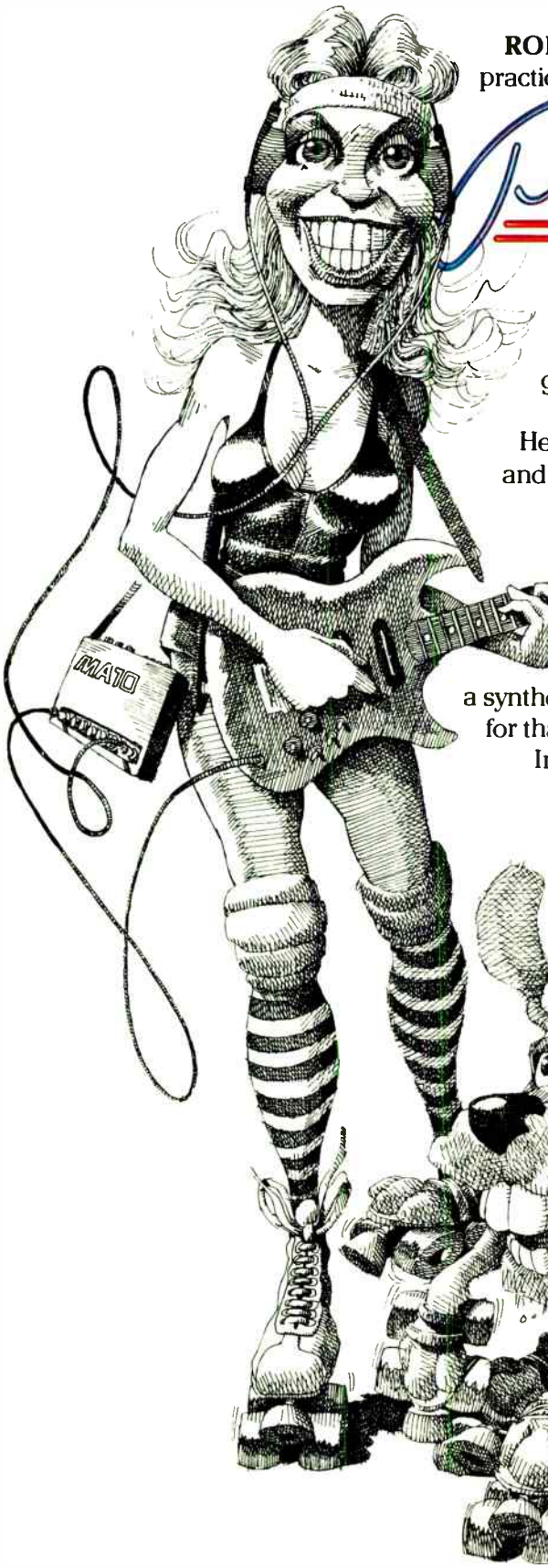

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R.E.M.

Just as there is the Motown sound, an ECM sound, and the sound of money rolling into Asia's bank account, there is definitely an Athens, Georgia sound. Maybe it's in the local drinking water or something they put in the cafeteria food at the University of Georgia. But whatever it is, it has made the B-52's young America's favorite party band and spawned an astonishingly long line of exceptional post-punk dance bands that includes gang of avant-funking four Pylon, minimalist power duo the Method Actors, art-surf instrumental miniaturists Love Tractor, and now Next Big Thing R.E.M.

You hear this "sound" first in the bottom, the hydraulic 4/4 pump of the drums and combined brute upper-cut and subtle harmonic articulation of the bass. Over this there is often just one guitar—sometimes two or the odd Vox Continental organ, as with the B-52's and Love Tractor—dancing in expanding melodic circles, not actually playing leads but rather shifting glassine arpeggios and church-bell chords that spread a liquid resonance over the spartan rhythm thrust. Instead of singing, the vocalists engage in a kind of linear monologue, a highly stylized singspeak ranging from Fred Schneider's class clowning with the 52's to the breathiness of Pylon's Vanessa.

R.E.M.—which stands for rapid eye movement, the deepest high-dream-ratio portion of sleep—have added an important new wrinkle to the Athens method by adapting it to pop songs. There is something of Pylon's jagged nuevo funk propulsion in their dance-floor attack, certainly a strong hint of the B-52's go-go aesthetic in singer Michael Stipe's St. Vitus frugging onstage. But where many of the Athens mob tend to write forceful rhythmic structures instead of shower-singing tunes, R.E.M. cast a potent spell with an accessible, aggressive fusion of 60s pre-acid classicism, the streamlined angularity of current Brit-pop, and hellhound garage-punk drive—the way the *Fifth Dimension* Byrds, U2 and the Music Machine might sound together in one room.

The magic certainly works long-distance. The group's 1981 indie single debut "Radio Free Europe"/"Sitting Still" was a dark-horse winner in the *Village Voice* critics' poll, 45 rpm division, on the strength of its sunny wrap-around hooks, an organic synthesis of almost pleading melodic gentility and celebratory dance spirit in the arrangements, and the band's own brash exuberance with Peter Buck's ringing guitar figures underpinned by bassist Mike Mills and drummer Bill Berry's emphatic step. Although it suffers from dry, rather indifferent production, R.E.M.'s new I.R.S. EP, *Chronic Town*, goes the single five better with a quintet of stirring originals that incorporates British Invasion revisionism (note the structural parallels between "Gardening At Night" and the Records' "Starry Eyes"), the dark yet graceful lyricism of vintage Love and their spiritual descendants Television (the driving cathartic "Carnival Of Sorts: Boxcars"), and the crack swagger of modern punk-funk ("1,000,000"). Through it all, Michael Stipe sings with the steely expression of the Hollies' Allan Clarke combined with the gutteral bleating of Roky Erickson.

But based on a wired, wonderful workout at New York's Danceteria this past spring, neither record prepares you for R.E.M.'s stage rage—the explosive Who-ish collision of Buck's metallic guitar bash and Townshendian variations on the pogo, the bullish Rickenbacker boom of Mills, the steady slam by Berry. A strangely arresting figure in his ragged sweater, Stipe breaks into a psycho-watusi and pounds his chest vigorously for vibrato, whipping his body across the stage the way Roger Daltrey slices the air with his microphone arc. Yet this whirling dervish energy never cancels out the native tunefulness of these songs.

The last year has shown that there is assuredly a new pop in the American air. It's already part-dB's, part-Fleshtones, part-Bongos. Now it's part-R.E.M. A very big part. — *David Fricke*

R.E.M.

LAURA LEVINE

MARIANNE FAITHFULL

The first thing I overhear is this kid in black jeans and a Jim Morrison T-shirt—"She wouldn't be doing any of this if she hadn't been Mick Jagger's girlfriend." This, in a nutshell, is the curse of Marianne Faithfull. It's a curse that has made the establishment of an independent career an uphill and often backwards-sliding struggle.

The cult that formed around "Broken English" lifted at least half of this curse. This comeback album, made after too many years of being notorious rather than productive, forced even Marianne's worst detractors to admit that she could actually make records. What remained to be seen was whether she could cut it on a live stage.

There's one school of thought that looks on it as a near-miracle that Marianne Faithfull should be able to get onto a stage at all and that she be awarded points accordingly. An abortive gig at the Mudd Club in 1980 added a good deal of weight to this argument. I still can't go along with this idea. Rock has come too far and weathered too much for it any longer to be a triumph if an artist makes it to the microphone semi-sober.

On the night in question, and on this most basic level, Marianne passed all the tests. Looking cute-after-all-these-years in a wide Panama hat, she stood up for the whole lengthy set; her rasping nicotine and cognac voice showed no real signs of strain and she presented a show with no visible lack of concentration. In fact, Marianne went a lot further than the minimal essentials. The most important fact is that she has a band that seems singularly devoted to providing her with the maximum support so that Marianne can, unequivocally, make herself the center of attention and the star of the show.

From an opening with (you guessed it) "Broken English," they stuck close

LINDSAY LABRECHT

Marianne Faithfull

to the recorded material. This was not surprising. Both Barry Reynolds and Terry Stannard (guitar and drums) had worked on the two Island albums and Reynolds had been Marianne's major songwriting collaborator over the last couple of years. Fernando Saunders on bass and keyboard player Godfrey Wane were acceptable and super professional acquisitions. Together, the four of them managed to pull off the perfect backup band trick of being simultaneously smooth, tight and unobtrusive. The band has the knack of being oddly timeless. Wane's keyboard patterns kept matters firmly

rooted in the 80s while Reynolds's occasional "Keithisms" nod in the direction of the broader traditions of both Marianne and rock in general.

At first this holding to record was fine, but, after a while, a problem started to develop. Most of the original material came under the loose heading of dramatic, mid-tempo angst. Unfortunately all the tunes that they chose to cover were also mid-tempo angst. (Lennon's "Working Class Hero," the Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," Springsteen's "Because The Night," "The Ballad Of Lucy Jordan.")

This made for a definite monotony as the audience was led down the length of the show. Marianne has a limited range and only a small reserve of vocal tricks. Her major asset is a finely tuned sense of drama. On record, she can easily get away delivering shock-value lyrics with a hoarse, world-weary deadpan and occasionally leaping desperately for a near-impossible note. Onstage it works for each individual number but when the technique is repeated on song after song, attention starts to waver. Marianne has a sense of drama, but her pacing is non-existent. You start praying that she'll do some uptempo shouting or, at the other extreme, include the wrenching "Sister Morphine"—anything for contrast.

Despite this blindness to the dynamics of a show, Marianne Faithfull still has something for rock 'n' roll, a presence, a kind of courage. If she could pull her act into tighter focus, she could be rock's equivalent of Marlene Dietrich (I don't doubt she entertains that fantasy). I don't know if she managed to change the mind of the kid in the Jim Morrison T-shirt. I just hope she made him aware that he was witnessing a display of class, maybe damaged class, but class all the same. — *Mick Farren*

ANTHONY BRAXTON

As part of the "Composers' Concerts" sponsored by the Kitchen at Symphony Space, featuring the music of Braxton and Muhal Richard Abrams, Braxton's two nights represented a small milestone in his continuing battle to be accepted as a serious composer. Presenting works currently available on record—"Composition 95" (Arista) and "Composition 98" (hat Hut)—the first night brimmed with all the elements of Braxton's music for which his critics love to flagellate him. It didn't swing in the traditional way and if you put your perceptual blinders on, much of it sounded "European." He has received a wealth of critical acclaim and yet been the primary brunt of nasty comments about effeminate, white sounds and selling out one's black heritage. But after all the rhetoric blows by, Braxton's music remains constantly searching, delicately poetic at its best, emotionless at times, yet always interesting, creative and intelligent. In effect, Braxton continues to deliver the same message Lester Young used to: "Play from your mind not just your gut."

Braxton's first night at Symphony Space offered a taste of Braxton as multi-instrumentalist and composer. Not that there's really any difference between the two, but I still heard people walking into the first set, devoted to Braxton's work for two pianos, asking questions like, "Where's Braxton? Who are these pianists in black robes?" The two pianists were Ursula Oppens and Fredric Rzewski, the performers Braxton had in mind when he composed the piece. A part of Braxton's series of ritual and ceremonial works dealing with "the meta-reality dynamics...conceived with extra-vibrational intentions," "Composition 95" begins with the haunting melodica motif that weaves its way through the work in many different guises, returning at the end in its pure form as a slowly vanishing melodica vamp. The two pianists exchange themes and textures in a hypnotic ebb and flow of dynamics and moods. The work left me with the ultimate impression of the restless and cyclical nature of human spirituality. There are few pianists who could have performed Braxton's composition with the insight and conviction that Oppens and Rzewski brought to it.


ALAN BECKER

Anthony Braxton

"Composition 98" featured the formidable talents of trombonist Ray Anderson, pianist Marilyn Crispell, trumpeter Hugh Ragin and Braxton dealing with various techniques of notating music. The work moved through pointed horn sprinkles, building multi-phonic storm clouds, Cecil Taylor thunder claps to the softly glowing finish, a string of contrasting cells. You could visualize a score filled with directions like, "glissando here," "collective improvisation here," "harmonics here" and so on. But what could easily have been sterile in less capable hands was shaped into a vital performance by Braxton and company. Anderson and Ragin, two of the most powerful new voices on their instruments, knew exactly what Braxton was after, while Braxton ran through his arsenal of instruments, projecting a distinct personality on each. Crispell had an exceptionally strong command of Taylorisms, as well as possessing a clearly punctuated style of her own. — *Cliff Tinder*

RALLY FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREEZE

The June 12 disarmament rally for nuclear weapons freeze was the largest demonstration in American history. By 2:30—as perennial protester Joan Baez sang John Lennon's "Imagine" a stone's throw away from where the composer was shot—600,000 marchers had already squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder onto the Central Park lawn, and another 300,000 were still streaming north on Fifth and Seventh Avenues. If the crowd's epigram-studded T-shirts and buttons were any indication, their concern was far more political than musical. At times the music from the big, high-tech stage seemed irrelevant to the issue of nuclear holocaust. More often, though, it was the axe-grinding speakers who strayed furthest from the topic at hand, while the musicians provided the afternoon's most inspiring moments.

Linda Ronstadt was in good voice, but it was hard to understand what a sluggish version of "Tumblin' Dice" or a lovely version of "Blue Bayou" had to do with the day's themes. Rita Marley wasn't much better as she closed the show with dope-smokin' and Jah-worshiping songs from her own album and totally neglected her late husband's political songs. Pete Seeger, though, once again displayed his sense of the moment by jumping onstage with his banjo just before the park curfew to lead the crowd and Marley's band in a reggae-tinged "If I Had A Hammer."

James Taylor responded to the sentimental solidarity of the march's wildly successful turnout with a nicely understated version of the sentimental "You've Got A Friend." He gave his own "Stand And Fight" an angry rock 'n' roll defiance. He chose oldies that offered encouragement to the snowballing nuclear freeze movement; he sang Ike & Tina Turner's "Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine" with Ronstadt; he sang Smokey Robinson's "It's Growing " with Chaka Khan. Finally Taylor and John Hall sang "Children's Cry," which they and Johanna Hall had written specifically for the march. It was a simplistic but nevertheless effective sing-along anthem: "Feel the earth; see the sky/ Hear all the children cry/ That we intend to live/ And it's the bomb that has to die."

Like Ronstadt and Taylor, Jackson Browne used the "Peter Asher Band": Waddy Wachtel, Don Grolnick, Dan Dugmore, Leland Sklar and Rick Schlosser. Browne pushed them into an irresistible rock 'n' roll momentum on his duet with Gary U.S. Bonds ("The Pretender") and on his duet with Bruce Springsteen ("Running On Empty"). Yet the show's highlight came when Browne left Springsteen alone onstage to strum a white acoustic guitar and blow echoes of a 1963 Bob Dylan through his wire-held harmonica. Springsteen sang "Promised Land" in a slower, sparser form than he ever has with his band. The deliberate pace and mournful harp notes reflected how experience has left the songwriter wiser and wearier. It gets harder and harder to claim, "I still believe in the promised land," but Springsteen stubbornly held out that hope to the marchers.

The superstars onstage weren't the only musicians to contribute to the march. More than a hundred players volunteered to help the Bread & Puppet Theater lead the march with a ten-block puppet procession that crystalized the day's themes in visual and musical imagery. Two dozen percussionists created a crazed military march as a bone-rattling giant skeleton army danced the dance of death and dog-faced, stilt-legged red demons celebrated the end of the world. Giant white cloth birds fluttered atop 10-foot sapling rods as an *ad hoc* conch shell band sounded seagull cries off the glass skyscraper walls. — *Geoffrey Himes*

Jackson Browne and Bruce Springsteen


EBET ROBERTS

Stubborn Survival and the Paradox of Permanent Revolution

THE Clash

Joe Strummer points at the rough-hewn crop of Mohawk hair that flares from the top of his head, his thumb cocked back like a hammer on a pistol. "You know why I did this, don't you?" he asks, leaning forward, a conspiratorial smile shaping his lips. We're seated in a dressing room backstage at the Hollywood Palladium, where the Clash are midway through a five-date engagement—their first appearances in Los Angeles since the group's 1980 *London Calling* tour. Strummer and his bandmates—guitarist Mick Jones, bassist Paul Simonon and drummer Terry Chimes—are about to hit the stage for the afternoon's peremptory sound-check, but first Joe wants to share a little revelation about his

BY MIKAL GILMORE

BONNIE SCHIFFMAN

newly acquired headdress.

"I did it," he says, "to try to force some confrontation this time around. I wanted people to react to it, to ask me just *what the hell* I'm on about. I thought it might stir up a little *friendly* conversation, if you know what I mean."

"And has it?" I ask.

Joe gets a look that's part disappointment, part bafflement. "No, not much. Maybe people find it a little too scary, you know, too *serious*. Over here, you Americans never seem to know how to take matters of style. It's like you view it as a threat, as rebellion. In England, style signifies, um...like identity. I would never equate something as simple as a radical haircut with a true act of rebellion."

"So, Joe, then what *is* true rebellion? Because cultural revolt seems to be the signal thing the Clash stand for in a lot of people's minds."

Strummer regards the question in silence for a few moments, then fixes me with a level stare. "Cultural revolt ...I'm not sure that's it exactly. But I'll tell you what I've come to think *real* rebellion is: it's something more personal than that—it's *not giving up*. Rebellion is deciding to push ahead with it all for one more day. *That's* the toughest test of revolt—keeping yourself alive, as well as the cause."

PUNK PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance as revolt: the notion may seem a far cry from the brand of immediate, imperative, insurgent passion that made Joe Strummer's early exclamations seem so fearsome and world-wrecking—the youth-prole sentiments, stricken terrorist manifestos and iconoclast allegations that stoked incendiary rally calls like "1977," "Guns On The Roof," "White Riot" and "Safe European Home"—but at the same time, no other band in recent history has made stamina stand for as much as has the Clash.

Indeed, over the lightning distance of six years, four U.S. tours (and at least twice as many U.K. treks) and five album sets (comprised of eight LPs and a hundred songs), the Clash have managed to stake a larger claim on questions of cultural, political and moral effect—place greater weight and liability on the purposes of rock 'n' roll—than any other band since the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or the Who. Probably the only other band that compares with them in terms of social and aesthetic force these last ten years is the Sex Pistols—and their design, it seems, was simply not just to raze popular culture—by making it accommodate visions of moral terror and social murder—but also to level the world around it, themselves included. The Sex Pistols could never have made a second album, and chances are they always knew it—but then making records wasn't their long suit. For the Clash, making music is a way of making further possibilities of life, a way of withstanding inevitable defeats—a way of *"not giving up."*

Yet trying to live out revolt as daily ethos can be a steep act; for one thing, it means no doubling back. Since 1977, each new Clash release has sought to outdistance its predecessors in bold and irrevocable ways. *Give 'Em Enough Rope* (1978) magnified the band's musical force, while also broadening their sociopolitical focus, from the narrow obsessions of U.K. punk sedition to the fiery reality of the world outside—a world mired in tyranny and aflame in blood and mutiny. *London Calling*, at the close of the following year, carried revolt over to the means of style and the object of history—resulting in the band's most sharply crafted, popularly accessible effort to date. It also resulted in a resounding statement on how to live heroically and honorably in a world where such notions spell certain disillusionment and probable subjection ("Clampdown," "Death Or Glory"). And then, in 1980, the group issued their uncompromising, bulky masterwork, *Sandinista!*—an opus that tried to expand the vernacular and sensibility of popular music by melding rock's form with remote cultural idioms—like reggae, gospel, Euro-pop, American funk and rap—and unflinching social realities; in other words, by mixing dread with innovation, for matchless effect. Overall, what has emerged is a body of work that has upped the ante on punk—forced it to reach outward, to risk compromise, to embrace conflict, even it if means conflict with punk's own narrow presentiments.

What also results, though, is a kind of self-imposed state of contradiction that can, on occasion, seem to undermine the group's grandest designs. After all, it's one thing to start out to upend rock convention, and quite another to end up proclaimed as the World's *New* Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band. Yet the physical impact of the Clash's live shows, and the stimulative force of *London Calling*—incorporating, as it did, American symbols and symptoms as text, and American rock 'n' roll as context—had just that effect: it made the Clash appear as the last great hope, if not preservers, of the very tradition they had set out to thwart.

Yet the Clash have also tainted some of their best gestures with a maddening flair for miscalculation and self-importance. *Sandinista!* falls under that charge for many critics and fans ("Imagine," one writer friend told me, "the audacity, the waste behind believing that *everything* you record deserves to be heard; who do these guys think they are—the Keith Jarretts of punk?"), though for my taste, it's the Clash's strongest, best enduring work, an unrepressed paradigm of creativity.

Less successful, I think, was last year's late spring series of concert events at Bond's Casino in New York (eighteen shows in fifteen days), that seemed to indicate on one level the Clash's startling naiveté about audience prejudices and business concerns, and on another, their inability to adopt *Sandinista!*'s range and depth to a live format. (In true scrupulous fashion, the Clash, along with friend and filmmaker Don Letts, documented the whole debacle in movie form: *The Clash on Broadway*, due for release later this year.) More recently, there are the problems of *Combat Rock*—a heavy-handed, strident, guileful, muddled album about artistic despair and personal dissolution that derives *from* those conditions rather than aims to illuminate them—and, of course, Joe Strummer's widely reported defection—or "hiatus," as the group calls it—of a couple of months ago.

Not surprisingly, the Clash worked those setbacks to their favor. Strummer returned to the group after a month-long sabbatical in Paris (though by that time, virtually their entire U.K. tour had been blown out of the water), appearing stronger and more resolved than ever before. What's more, *Combat Rock* proved to be the band's most critically and commercially successful record in England since 1978's *Give 'Em Enough Rope* (not bad work for a band that had grown painfully, almost fatally, unfashionable in their own homeland).

Not even the loss of Topper Headon—the prodigious drummer who had reportedly held great influence on the band's recent musical progressivism, only to bail out five days before their current American tour for reasons that may never be publicly explained—not even that could disarm the Clash's resurging spirit. Manager Bernard Rhodes and road organizer Kosmo Vinyl simply recruited original drummer Terry Chimes (once known, splendidly, as Tory Crimes) on a work-for-hire basis, and sequestered him, along with the group, for three days of relentless rehearsals. Forty-eight hours later, the Clash, the very same Clash that had recorded the group's resplendent 1977 debut album, were on tour once again in America—a bit battle-scarred, more than a little uncertain at moments, but playing with more mastery, unity and momentum than they ever had before.

In fact, oddly enough, it's the hard-core potency of their current shows that may be the only thing to fault the Clash for this time around. From the opening edict of "London Calling" to the closing salvos of "Complete Control," "Clash City Rockers" and "Garageland," these are urgent, clamorous throat-throttling shows—as if the band had just jumped out of *Black Market Clash* and onto a stage, replete with ferment and sweat. But in that, they're also surprisingly prudent affairs. Missing are all the adventurous touchstones from *Sandinista!*, or even the off-center filler pieces from *Combat Rock*. The lamentable "Know Your Rights" and "Should I Stay Or Should I

Go?" were the staples here, with occasional game stabs at "Rock The Casbah," "Car Jamming," or the beautiful, mournful "Straight To Hell."

And yet...and yet, though this is the Clash's unabashed greatest-hits concessional tour, these were also the most moving, powerful and meaningful shows I've ever seen from this band. In part, that's because to watch the group now is to watch a fellowship of artists, ideologues and rockers who have finally come to know the full measure of what it means to live out their claims: that it isn't enough to intend to redefine or reinfuse pop culture or to connect it to an explosive real world unless you realize that with every new motion, every new offering, one has to make good and make better on one's original promises. It's also to watch a band that has come to realize that they can have those offerings denied, those motions deflated, as much by their own misintelligence as by any outside force. But mostly, it's to see a band—if not the greatest, then certainly the bravest—hell-bent on living out and passing along their hard-earned conviction of real revolt: keeping their cause deadly, but their effect life-giving.

MICK JONES: CLASH NOW

JANETTE BECKMAN/RETNA

For Jones, reality is not necessarily depressing.

"I'll tell you what makes these shows so strong," says Mick Jones, one late afternoon, over eggs and hash-browns at a popular Santa Monica Boulevard diner. "It's a celebration: we're out there celebrating that we *exist*—we made it this far, we made it another night."

Jones pauses for a few moments and pokes idly at his still unexplored breakfast. "Don't you think people just like it because they think they're getting the old Clash this time around—the Clash the way it should be? I bet that's what it is."

"No," I answer, "I think they like it because it seems like an explosive, unyielding show. Also, to be frank, because the band's never sounded more confident or better unified."

Mick ponders that for a moment as he watches the flutter and traffic of the the boulevard. "I think we *are* playing pretty good...I feel all right about the shows, but I don't feel it's as much fun as it used to be somehow. We used to kind of *explode*. We play better now but for me personally....

"I'm in a place now where I'm working onstage in accompaniment to what Joe's doing with the words. My part of it is to hold it all together, help keep the rhythm section locked. Joe stops playing the guitar a lot, you know, and those are moments where the instrumentation could use a bit of embellishment, so me hands are going all the time. But also, I'm just not going over the top as much these days, leaping about and all that. I'm trying to control myself a bit more."

"But," I say, "you have some of the show's most commanding moments, particularly your performances of 'Police On My Back' and 'Somebody Got Murdered.' In fact, 'Murdered' seems to get the best response of the evening. Every night, scores of people yell along on the line: 'I've been very hungry / But not enough to kill.'"

Mick nods approvingly. "The important thing about that song is that it isn't any particular person who gets killed—it's just *any*body. It's funny, in some places we play, where people live in extreme poverty—like Northern England—the audience seems to understand the line about *not killing* better. But in richer places, people understand the other part better, the part about 'Somebody's dead forever.' I think it's their way of saying that, even though they might have money, they understand they can still lose it all—not just the money, but their lives. But the audiences are more mixed here in L.A., aren't they?"

He starts to pick gradually at his breakfast, now that it's good and cold. "A*meri*ca," he says, a thin tone of distaste in his voice. "The people here never really took punk or our kind of music seriously—always treated it like some sort of bloody joke. It's a shame that a group like the Sex Pistols had to come out here to the land of promise just to burn out. Come out here and act out their gross end—that Sid and Nancy play. America screwed them up. That's what we've tried not to have happen to us, going the way of the Sex Pistols—getting swallowed up by America."

"Still," I say, "it seems you spend as much time here as in England. In fact, all the press reports say that you're the one in the group who's insisted on doing so much recording in New York."

"Well, New York's pretty much like London. London's a great place—there's still more going on there musically than in America—but after awhile it can make you feel like part of the oppressed. It kind of drags you down. New York provides us with a freedom and spirit which London can't. Though I daresay that if Thatcher's stopped, I'd feel better about spending more time in England."

"It's interesting that almost all of your music since the first album has moved more and more away from strictly English concerns and styles. *Sandinista!* seemed like a rampart of Third World concerns."

"Yeah, well it was, and that didn't particularly win a lot of hearts and minds at the record company. We knew it was going to be difficult, because we kept meeting resistance with the idea, but we were very stubborn and went straight ahead. *Sandinista!* is quite special to me. It wasn't, as some critics say, a conscious effort to do ourselves in. Originally we'd wanted to do a single a month, then put out a double album at the end of the year, like *London Calling*. But CBS wouldn't have that, so we thought, "All right, three albums for the price of two it is. We probably could've gone without releasing another record for a year or so. I think people would've still been listening to it—there's enough there.

"*Combat Rock* is like the best of *Sandinista!*—a concise statement, even though it contains just as much diversification. There's an art to making one album as well as three, you know."

"Yet," I point out, "*Combat Rock* has also been received by some critics as your weakest effort. It seems kind of dissolute and death-fixated, what with all these tracks like 'Death Is A Star,' 'Straight To Hell,' 'Ghetto Defendant,' 'Sean Flynn'...."

"Music's supposed to be the life force of the new consciousness, but it's really dealt *death* as style. The poor junkie on the street has been led into it by rich rock stars and left to die with their style."

"All me favorite tracks!" blurts Mick with a delighted smile. "I know what you mean," he says after a pause. "Some critics are saying this record reflects the group's *'depression'* or *'confusion,'* but that's not true. I think it's really clear that we know where we're at—we're not confused at all. The problem is, a lot of people equate reality with depression, so they find this album depressing. I think it just touches on what's real. I wouldn't say it's exactly optimistic, but I wouldn't call it pessimistic either."

"But some critics, both here and in England, have found the Clash's brand of political rhetoric and realism just as naive as that jaunty romanticism of the pop bands."

Mick takes a sip of his coffee and regards me with a bemused expression. "You mean like the *Village Voice* calling us 'naive,' and *Sandinista!* a 'pink elephant'? Well, we are , and it is. It doesn't particularly discourage us, that kind of talk. It's important we stick to getting our point across. Not just because people will try to discredit us, but because somebody has to counteract all the madness out there, like the bloody war fever that hit England over this Falklands fiasco. It's important that somebody's there to tell them that there aren't any winners where there aren't any real causes. It may appear that Maggie Thatcher's won for the time being, but not because she's made the British winners. Instead, she's made them victims, and they can't even see it.

"So who's naive? We're not just another one of those bands out there saying, 'Join the party!' Don't get me wrong, we have our share of fun too, but these days, I don't know...it just seems all the parties are so far away."

"Do you think your audience understands that?" I ask. "Some of the people I've seen at your shows—both the punk contingent, plus the mainstream crowd that have adopted you as the new Rolling Stones—seem to miss the Clash's point by a mile. Slam dancing, not to mention spitting on and pelting opening acts like Joe Ely and Grandmaster Flash, doesn't seem much different to me than any other mindless party ritual."

Mick bristles mildly. "They're not really assholes, are they? They just don't know how to act. I mean, at Bond's it wasn't actually racism. At first, we sat around backstage thinking, 'What jerks!' But when we made it clear that we were having a rough time with the idea of them adoring us but hating the opening acts, it seemed to stop. I think it was just initial overexcitement."

"Still, aren't there times when you wonder just who your audience really is, and if you're really reaching them?"

"All the time, all the time," says Jones, his voice quiet and museful. "For every example you get of people who you think are really into it, who have really got the message, you also run up against the people who are completely misinformed. We just do the best we can to contain those contradictions, and hope enough of our meaning rubs off here and there."

Mick glances at the wall clock. It's nearly time to head out to the afternoon's sound-check. I pose one last question: "When Joe disappeared, did you think it might be the end of the Clash?"

Mick smiles wryly. "That Joe—what a bastard, eh? If he ever does that again...um, yeah, for about ten minutes I sat down and died. I thought the group might be ending, and I thought it was a shame, but I wasn't about to let it stop me from getting on with living.

"It was bad timing on Joe's part, but it was also an admirable thing. It's very difficult to put your own needs first like that, but the only problem is, once you start doing it, it's easier to do again. Still, it made us ask ourselves what we were going to do. It *certainly* made Topper ask himself what was happening with him. I even thought about getting into something else myself, but it will have to wait now.

"We all decided we could start over with this band—Joe, Paul, me—and now, some nights, it's almost like we're a new group out there onstage.

"We should change our name, don't you think? How about Clash Two?" Mick mulls the idea over a bit more, then bursts into a titter. "No, wait, I've got it: how about Clash *Now*?"

PAUL SIMONON: NO RULES

TANNENBAUM/SYGMA

Simonon considers armed resistance at Asbury Park.

How *has* the Clash managed to hold together? After all, punk never offered itself as a breeding place for enduring comradeship.

Paul Simonon, the group's craggily handsome bass player (recently elected to *Playgirl*'s "The Year's Ten Best Looking Men" list), ponders that question as he picks his way through a bowl of guacamole and chips (all the band's members are vegetarians) shortly before leaving the hotel for that night's show.

"You're talking about things like corruption, disintegration, right?" he says in his thick Brixton accent. "I tell you what I've seen do it to other groups: drugs. I've been through all sorts of drugs; at one time I took them just for curiosity, and I *learned*—it's not worth it. It's like a carrot held in front of you, and it's the downfall of a lot of bands we've known.

"We just cut it out—we don't deal with that stuff anymore. I'd much rather use the money to go out and buy a record, or a present for me girlfriend, or phone me mum up from Australia."

"Do you feel comfortable sharing that anti-drug concern with your audience?" I ask.

Simonon shrugs and gnaws another chip. "Sure. I don't see

why not. I think that's part of what we're about, is testing our audience."

"Do you ever worry, though, about leaving the audience behind—worry that you might be growing in different directions?"

"Well, I think it's this band's natural course to grow. When we did *London Calling* we got a lot of flak, but that was just a warm-up. I think the real turning point for us came when we recorded 'The Magnificent Seven'; it was the start of a whole new music for us. I thought, 'This is going to wake people up, especially the ones who keep expecting us to do the same old thing; maybe it'll even make them chuck the bloody album out the window.'

"But we knew that's what we wanted: to test the people who'd been listening to us. We didn't want to be dictated by anybody else's interests. That could've happened very easily after the first album, either way—we could've gone off in a more commercial style, because of what the record company people wanted or gotten deadlocked into a hard punk thing, because of what the fans wanted. We didn't do either one, and I suspect that's hurt us as much as it's helped. We certainly had an easy formula that would've carried us for awhile."

"Do you think you still attract much of a punk audience in America or England—you know, the hardcore and 'Oi' types?"

"Yeah, a little, but by and large the music of those bands doesn't interest me. I've listened to it, but so much of it is just noise for its own sake. Plus the things they deal with, things like racism and getting drunk and slapping your girlfriend around the face—I don't have any use for supporting that kind of thing.

"You know, people ask me all the time if we're still *punk*, and I always say, 'Yeah, we're punk,' because punk meant not having to stick to anybody else's rules. Then you look around and see all these bands that are afraid to break the rules of what they think punk is. *We're* punk because we still have our own version of what it means. That's what it is: an attitude. And we'll stay punk as long as we can keep the blindfolds off."

JOE STRUMMER: ONCE A BUM...

DEBBIE LEAVITT

Strummer sports Mohawk, vehicle for friendly confrontation.

"Is it true that Bob Dylan was in the audience last night?" Joe Strummer asks, as we settle down at the bar at the Clash's hideaway hotel, a couple of hours after the next-to-last of their five-night engagements at the Hollywood Palladium. "Somebody told me that Sinatra came to one of the Bond's shows, but I thought that was a bit far-fetched. But Dylan...."

I tell him that yes, Dylan did come out to see the Clash, and from all accounts, seemed to enjoy what he saw.

Strummer just shakes his head, muttering in incredulity.

"Would that have intimidated you," I ask, "knowing that Dylan was out there?"

"Well, yeah. I mean, somebody told us he was up in the balcony, watching us, but you always hear those kinds of rumors. But if I'd known it was true, I'm not sure how I would've felt. Playing for Dylan, you know, that's a bit like playing for ...*God*, ain't it?" Strummer orders us a round of drinks—a Bloody Mary for himself; a rum and Coke for me—and continues his musings on Dylan.

"You know, me and Kosmo (Vinyl, the band's road manager and press liason), we're the only real Dylan diehards around the Clash. In fact, when Kosmo came down to Paris to take me back to London after I'd split, we went out celebrating one night at a French bar, with me playing piano, pounding out Dylan songs, howling stuff like, '*When you're lost in Juarez/ And it's summertime too....*'

"I realize it's almost a cliché to say it," he continues, "but we probably wouldn't have done the kind of music we have if it hadn't been for Bob Dylan. It's easy for all these cynics just to write him off, but they don't realize what he did—I mean, he spoke up, he showed that music could take on society, could actually make people want to save the world."

"There are many of us," I say, "who have put the Clash in that same league as Dylan, or for that matter, as the Rolling Stones. We see you as spokespersons, as idealists and heroes, as a band who are living out rock 'n' roll's best possibilities. In fact, we've even called you, time and time again, the World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band. Did those kinds of claims ever confuse the band's purpose—after all, you'd set out to play havoc with rock 'n' roll—or did they instead help you secure the kind of mass audience you now enjoy in America?"

"No to both questions," says Strummer. "First of all, we never took that 'World's Greatest' crap seriously. That's just a laugh. What does it matter to be the greatest rock 'n' roll band if radio won't even touch you? I mean, let's face it: we *don't* have the sort of mass audience in America that you mentioned, and it's because radio won't play our music. If you listen to the airwaves in this country, *we don't matter*—we haven't even made a dent, outside 'Train In Vain.'

"The last time I talked to you," he continues, "that time in London, just before our first tour here, I think I pissed off the idea that America might really matter to us. But now I understand just how important it is: you can reach more people here than anywhere else in the world, and I don't mean just record buyers. I mean reaching real *people*, making them wake up and see what's happening around them, making them want to go out and do something about it."

"But do you think that's what's really happening, Joe? Do you think people are coming to your shows to be galvanized by your message, or just to see the Clash—this generation's Rolling Stones? Aren't there times when you look out there and wonder who your audience actually *is* at this point, if their ideals are really the same as yours?"

"Yeah," he says softly, "every night. You have to figure you're really only playing *to* a few of them, and just playing *for* the rest—you know, entertaining them—but that's not so bad. I reckon each show we reach some new ones, *really* reach them. It's like fighting a big war with few victories, but each of those victories is better than none.

"But I'll tell you who we're really playing for: it's not the critics, who already have their minds made up and are all hardened against the world anyway—it's the young ones out there who haven't been spoiled by life yet; they carry more hope for the world than a few critics or cynics. You know, we get accused all the time of sounding naive, or pandering to naiveté, but I *believe* in naiveté—it's a good breeding ground for changing things, for getting fired up. Those naive kids who go away from our shows with a better idea of a better world—at least they haven't written it all off yet. Their ideals can still be inspired."

Joe tosses back the rest of his drink and signals for a fresh round. The liquor's starting to do its work. We're both feeling voluble. "Let me tell you," he continues, "if you can't find cause for hope, then go *get* some somewhere. I mean, I've had some bad times, dark moments when I came close to putting a pistol to my head and blowing my brains out, but...." Strummer lapses into a private silence, staring fixedly at the remains of the drink before him. "But screw that," he says after a few moments. "I think if you ain't got anything optimistic to say, then you should shut up—*final*. I mean, we ain't dead yet, for Christ's sake. I know nuclear doom is prophesied for the world, but I don't think you should give up fighting until the flesh burns off your face."

"But *Combat Rock*," I note, "sounds like the Clash's *least* optimistic record."

"*Combat Rock* ain't anything except some songs. Songs are meant to move peple, and if they don't, they fail. Anyway, we took too long with that record, worried it too much."

"Still, Joe, it does have sort of a gloomy, deathly outlook. All those songs like 'Death Is A Star,' 'Straight To Hell'...."

"I'll tell you why that record's so grim: those things just have to be faced, and we knew it was our time. Traditionally, that's not the way to sell records, by telling an audience to straighten up, to face up. The audience wants to get high, enjoy themselves, not feel preached to. Well, why not, there's little enough hope in the world. I don't want to kill the fun, but still...."

Strummer hesitates in thought for a few moments, then leans closer. "Music's supposed to be the life force of the new consciousness, talking from 1954 to present, right? But I think a lot of rock 'n' roll stars have been responsible for taking that life force and turning it into a death force. What I hate about so much of that 60s and 70s stuff is that it dealt death as style, when it was pretending to deal it as *life*. To be cool, you had to be on the point of killing yourself.

"What I'm really talking about is drugs. I mean, I think drugs ain't happening, because if the music's going to move you, you don't need drugs. If I see a sharp looking guy on a street corner, he's alive and he's making me feel more alive—he ain't dying—and that's the image I've decided the Clash has to stand for these days. I think we've blown it on the drug scene. It ain't happening, and I want to make it quite clear that nobody in the Clash thinks heroin or cocaine or any of that crap is cool.

"I just want to see things change," he continues, hitting a nice verbal stride. "I don't want it to be like the 60s or 70s, where we saw our rock stars shambling about out of their minds, and we thought it was cool, even instructive. That was death-style, not life-style. Those guys made enough money to go into expensive clinics and get their blood changed—but what about the poor junkie on the street? He's been led into it by a bunch of rock stylists, and left to die with their style. I guess we each have to work it out in our own way—I had to work it out for myself—but the Clash have to take the responsibility to stand for something better than that.

"Like I say, I don't wan't to kill anybody's fun. But certainly there's a better way of having fun than slow suicide." Strummer takes a long sip at his drink, and an uneasy expression colors his face. "Suicide is something I know about. It's funny how when you feel really depressed, all your thoughts run in bad circles and you can't break them circles. They just keep running around themselves, and you can't think of one good thing, even though you try your hardest. But the next day it can all be different."

I'm not sure what to say for the moment, so I let the mood hang in the air, as palpable as the liquor. Finally, I ask if Joe's sudden disappearance to Paris was a way of working himself out of a depression.

"It sure was," he says quickly. "It's very depressing in England these days—at least it can get that way, it can get on top of you. But I had a personal reason for going to Paris: I just remembered how it was when I was a bum, how I'd once learned the truth from playing songs on the street corner. If I played good, I'd eat, and that direct connection between having something to eat and somewhere to stay and the music I played—I just remembered that.

"So I went to Paris and I only got recognized once, but I conned my way out of it. I'd grown a beard and looked a bit like Fidel Castro, so I simply told them I was my hero. I didn't want to be recognized."

"While you were gone," I ask, "were you worried it might

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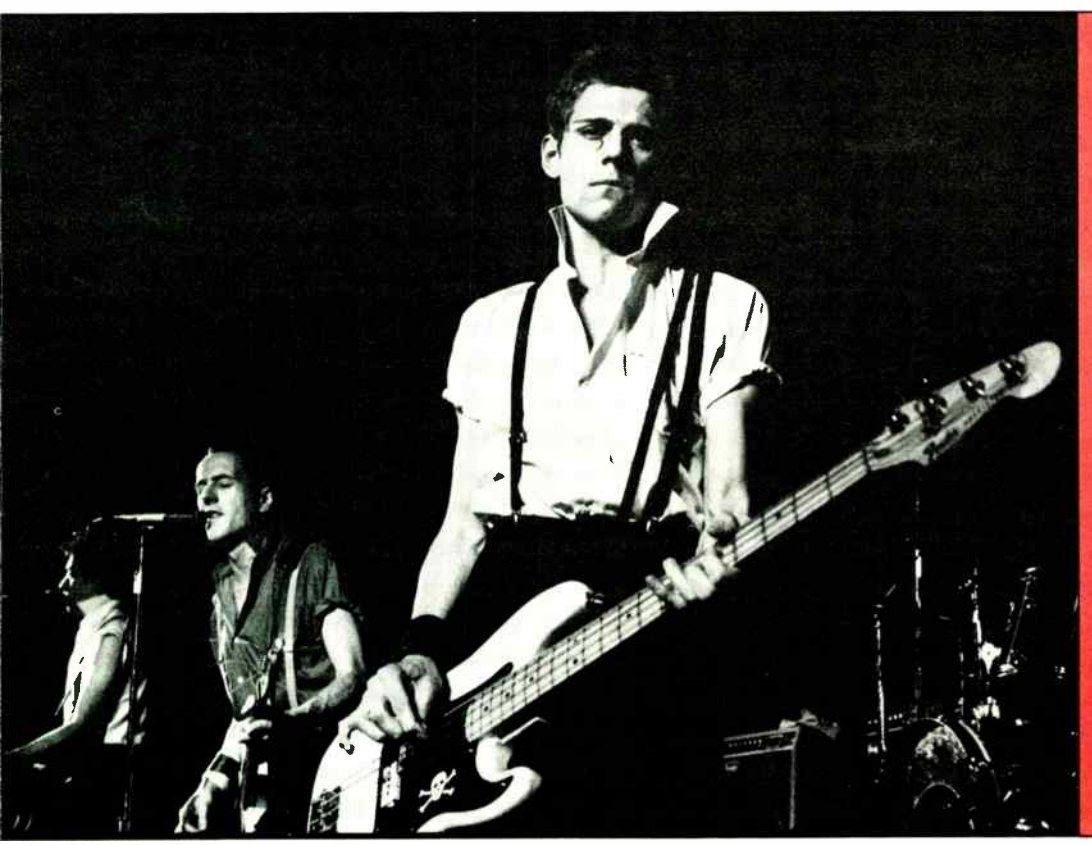

"We all decided we could start over with this band. Some nights it feels like we're a new group onstage."

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THE RAT, THE RIVER AND THE HOTLINE TO GOD

Today is Peter Townshend's thirty-seventh birthday. Peter is not keen on birthdays. (Then again, you wouldn't be either if you'd staked half your career on a line like "hope I die before I get old"). In any case, here we are celebrating over dinner at a posh but not ostentatious London restaurant. Peter looks positively natty in a smart blue blazer and slacks, his wife Karen a vision of warmth and elegance beside him. "God," mumbles a discomforted Townshend, "thirty-seven sounds so... *old*." "Come on," says I, "compared to somebody like Bill Wyman you're a spring chicken." On second thought, chicken is not the right word. No, *Time Out* had it right: with that prominent schnozz and sourful visage he's more like a turkey contemplating Thanksgiving. Meanwhile, the bush-league aristocrats and upper class types (twits?) around us take no notice of the cultural icon in their

INTERVIEW/PETE TOWNSHEND • PART 2/BY VIC GARBARINI

DAVIES/STARR

midst. Ah, sanctuary. Not a Who fan in sight. A place to relax and avoid the madding crowd. In fact, we're talking Robert Goulet types here... maybe Donny and Marie when they really want to get down. No autograph hunters. But wait, here comes a svelte young thing, pen and pad in hand, seeking an audience. Peter listens to her whispered requests, nodding indulgently. Ignoring the pen and the paper he reaches under the table, emerging moments later with ... his shoe.

His shoe?

He peers inside, and announces the size, width, manufacturer's name, and place of purchase. This is all duly noted by the s.y.t., who gushes her thanks and leaves. Townshend turns to his baffled guests, and with a goofy smile and shrug offers this succinct explanation: "Fashion magazine."

Oh.

Being the rock establishment's premier elder statesman and spokesman offers both opportunities and pitfalls. "Let's face it," muses Townshend, "I'm in a unique position. I'm one of the few people in England who can have tea with Prince Charles in the afternoon, and then go out and talk to some street kids who've just picked up the guitar." Actually, Peter Townshend is so empathetic to both roles that he'd be perfect to play the twin lead in *The Prince and the Pauper*. Except for one minor problem: by the final scene he'd have confused the role so thoroughly that neither he nor the audience could distinguish rabble from royalty. Sometimes this evenhandedness, coupled with his twin demons of anger and self-doubt can be as much a curse as a blessing, but behind what can appear to be a baffling and contradictory exterior is a reservoir of strength and compassion, courage and honesty. Ironically, Townshend seems reluctant to completely acknowledge his real gift and powers either to himself or others. In part 2 of our interview he reveals himself to be a major artist and poet who's half convinced he should be a journalist; a ground-breaking innovator on guitar who's insecure about his lack of technique; a conduit of creative visions who is embarrassed to be a channel for the ineffable—and who is often intimidated by lesser talents; a firm believer in rock 'n' roll as a life-affirming force who occasionally thinks it would be glamorous to destroy himself; the conscience of rock—who can't forgive himself his own weaknesses.

In short, a lovable putz.

As we began part 2 of our interview we agreed to quickly clear up a few misconceptions about his political commitments before delving into the music itself, and his relationship with the Who. By this point I'd begun to find the guy so eminently appealing and admirable that I decided, with true Townshendian logic, to come up with an opening salvo that would catch him off balance.

MUSICIAN: *Considering your reborn political conscience, and the responsibility you feel to speak out on certain crucial issues, what would you do if Abbie Hoffman walked onstage today while you were playing and started to give a speech? Would you whack him with your guitar and knock him off the stage like you did at Woodstock?*

TOWNSHEND: I think I'd probably do the same thing again, because I feel that the stage is a sacred platform. If you're taking responsibility for it you have to be sure it's used for the right purpose. The Who don't provide a stage for any old asshole to come up and start spouting. We're responsible for what happens on that stage; and after Cincinnati it's becoming clear that a lot of people hold us responsible for what goes on offstage as well. In any case, I never agreed with the motives of the revolutionaries of that particular time. I thought they were all potential "superstars" who were trying to find another way of becoming big wheels. It was something I saw as fairly shallow. Perhaps I was wrong....

MUSICIAN: *Nah, you were right. The cause was noble, but as usual most of the leaders were jerks. You've always exhibited some degree of spiritual and political commitment throughout your years with the Who. How is your commitment today different from what you stood for ten years ago?*

TOWNSHEND: What I'm now saying is that instead of being quite prepared to destroy myself for my art, I am now quite prepared to be destroyed... for the *planet*. All right? That is the

difference. And I don't think that either alternative is particularly noble, because both have been done a million times before, by better and lesser men. But I think that recently, one thing that I hadn't seen rock doing enough of—particularly its spearhead establishment figures—is not so much just going and playing at a No Nukes concert, but saying, "Why the hell are they doin' it!" What are they prepared to stand for, and stand by? That's not to say that anybody's gonna come up with instant answers or anything, but just...it's a unifying, rallying stance. This is something that I tried very, very hard to get across on *Chinese Eyes*: not to point a finger and say *they're* the evil ones. It's *us*. We're the ones who are guilty—as a group, and as a race, for allowing things to get out of hand.

MUSICIAN: *So how can we start to set things right?*

TOWNSHEND: I do believe that everybody on the planet, whether they like it or not, is a spiritual aspirant, and that the most valuable demonstration of how he deals with his or her problems can be seen in how he handles the commitments he makes to the most important human beings in his life, whether it's his wife, his offspring, his workmates or whatever. And that includes how the individual deals with his own contradictions and problems...his conscience. That's the place to start. But I also believe that if you get to the point where our generation is at, where we've never had to fight.... I've never seen a bomb go off. I've never been trained to stick a bayonet into a dummy, let alone into another human being. And yet I know that in order to rid the planet of nuclear weapons that are sterilizing the world into inactivity, we have to fight—to physically fight, or physically effect some kind of change.

MUSICIAN: *It sounds like you're talking about going to war.*

TOWNSHEND: No, I'm not talking about going to war, not in a literal sense. But in an allegorical sense, rock 'n' roll has been at war all through its history.

MUSICIAN: *As a musician, what are your weapons?*

TOWNSHEND: My work. It's all I'm capable of doing, I suppose. I have to do what I do in my area, and that's where you come down to what are the principles you're talking about, which is that the individual is the key.

MUSICIAN: *But obviously your work goes beyond mere propaganda.*

TOWNSHEND: Sure, like on "Won't Get Fooled Again" I never set out to make any statement at all, and yet something came through; the pieces fell into place and I think that's obviously where things are most effective.

MUSICIAN: *Will the new Who album reflect this sense of commitment?*

TOWNSHEND: The album we're finishing now is probably the most dangerous one the Who have ever made. We've actually sat down and found the common denominator, and I have to say, the lowest common denominator of feelings that we all share, and said, "Right! *That's* what this record is gonna be about—something we can all identify with. And it's changed our attitude a bit, because now we have something we want to take out and work one hundred percent—we want to shove it down people's throats, in a sense. And we know that we can't sustain that kind of level for very long. So as I said before, after a year we'll wind up things, and then it's open ...and don't bother to write me sixteen-page letters thank-you-very-much, telling me we're still valuable, or we're better than Talking Heads, or we're not too old, blah-blah-blah-blah. People always assume, kids in particular, that you're stopping because you think you're too bloody old.

MUSICIAN: *Well, you're the guy who wrote "Hope I die before I get old." Do you worry about it?*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, a little bit; usually at the wrong times. I suppose it's because rock doesn't have an established, dignified way to absorb its heroes into old age. But if you look back at blues and jazz, they provided it eventually. I think the Who and the Stones are the only remaining bands of that particular era who have reached this point. Ray Davies and the Kinks are also coming along...it seems to be taking them a hell of a long time, possibly because Ray has the gift of irony, and irony is tricky to respond to. It's difficult to know who the real Ray Davies is. Is he the man who's trying to be funny, or is he the man who really cares about the old traditions and qualities of life being lost? Or is he just using them as interesting subject matter to write songs about?

> "However big or small, you're always a channel and a servant of God. Even if you're a *rat*, you've got the hotline to God."

MUSICIAN: *The very tension of wondering makes you wake up and actually examine the issues he's talking about.*

TOWNSHEND: I agree, it does me, anyway. Ray's always been a big influence on me; I've never been able to write in the same way, though I've often tried. In fact, I'm terrible at it. I think "Keep On Working," from *Empty Glass*, tries to be a Kinks song but just doesn't work. I mean, "Lola" or "Low Budget" is so much better....

MUSICIAN: *On the other hand,* Chinese Eyes *seems to be heavily influenced by Springsteen's work, particularly* The River. *The music and lyrical themes are very similar, even the names of some of the tunes.*

TOWNSHEND: Actually, there are two songs, "The Sea Refuses No River," which obviously caught your ear, and "Slit Skirts," where I've actually taken Bruce's writing form and demonstrated another facet of it. And on "Slit Skirts" I attempted—it wasn't a hundred percent successful—but I attempted to actually break that form down, to smash at it. One thing I really enjoy about solo albums is that I can afford to be as academic as I like.

MUSICIAN: *When you're working on a solo project, do you see yourself addressing a slightly different audience, or emphasizing different aspects of your work than you would with the Who?*

TOWNSHEND: I look at it like this: there's a widening gulf now between the two poles of rock. One is very intimate and very private and very much like reading a book. You sit at home with your earphones on, completely private, listening to a record, listening to statements and feelings and moods. Then there's the concert, which is the shared, celebratory experience—the affirmation of rock, where you all get together.

It's a bit like a literary luncheon. Everybody sits at home and they brush up on their latest Edmund O'Brien, or whatever it is that's gonna be discussed, and then they go to the literary luncheon and they all kinda quaff wine together and toast everything and start throwing out lines from Proust and Joyce and everything else. But ecstatic! They've done their homework, folks. And rock 'n' roll is like that. You can really work on both levels, the public and the private; because the world is such a media-devastated place, we do really treasure those moments of privacy, the act of putting earphones on and listening to something in quiet, the kind of meditative peace which people used to be able to enjoy when there were less people on the planet. But we still need the football game, the other side of it. So as those poles get wider apart, the use of both the extremes is what fascinates me. And that's why on both the solo records I try to use both of those extremes. In other words, have moments in the lyrics which can only really be effective when I'm talking directly to somebody and they're all alone, but also when there's a load of kids sitting around at a party, smoking pot and having a good time drinking beer, so that *they* will also get something from it. And also a couple of songs which would be great on a stadium stage in front of 20,000 people.

MUSICIAN: *Anything you've done recently that's touched both those aspects, or where something more came through than you'd originally planned?*

TOWNSHEND: I do that all the time. One of the best examples is what the Who did over the last six weeks with a song of mine, which is the key song on the next album. Basically, we

just started with the word "war" and went from there. It's possibly one of the best Who tracks we've ever done, I believe. It's very archetypal, very 60s issue, but it's also bloody great. I started it off with just a clock ticking, and we went from there, just dum, dum, dum dum—a kind of throbbing noise. You do it to remind yourself that that's the starting point of a lot of music these days: the half-beat, the ticking clock, the throb, the pulse...the *rhythm*.

MUSICIAN: *Speaking of throbs and pulses, you helped introduce synthesizers to rock on* Who's Next *over a decade ago. What do you think of the current crop of synth bands like Human League and Throbbing Gristle? Is there something in the human spirit or feeling that gets filtered out, that can't be put through an instrument like that? Is there an inherent limitation?*

TOWNSHEND: I prefer to take a different stance: I think the Human League are very interesting because they're a summation of a lot of different loose ends, which they've managed to gather up with the help of a very brilliant producer, Martin Rushent. They create a backdrop, and the sterility of the sound and its continuity, its pulse, is similar to the sterility of the backdrop in disco music. It's a deliberate backdrop against which you then make your very clear statement, whatever that happens to be. And it just so happens that the Human League write very poignantly pointed songs. On the other hand, if you use that backdrop the way Kraftwerk does, and make a fruity and creative synthesizer sound, and then on top of it you put, "I...AM...A...ROBOT," then you can take that, *and bury it as deep as you possibly can, however skilled they are.* There's just no point in it. Everything has a value, and everything can be used. It really depends on how you do it and what your motives are, and what you're trying to say.

MUSICIAN: *As you say, with the Human League something comes through that's, well, human....*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, and I could also point to someone like Thomas Dolby, who plays synthesizer on lots of people's records, and actually manages to humanize and speak through the instrument. The problem that surrounds a lot of synthesizer or computer-based music at the moment is the lack of true control. Computer technologists will tell you again and again that there's nothing dangerous, nothing inhuman about a computer. Like a pencil, it's what you write with it that counts. Or like the Gutenberg Galaxy. Somebody discovers that you can print words, and the first thing they printed was the Bible, right? Great thing to print. I don't know what was first committed to a computer, but I very much doubt it was as interesting and vital as the Bible. It was probably a ledger list of overdue accounts for Exxon Oil.

MUSICIAN: *But considering what you were saying about the value of struggle and friction—the struggle to master your instrument—is there a danger that the computer or synthesizer makes things too easy?*

TOWNSHEND: I don't think you need...remember the guitar and piano are inherently frustrating and limiting mediums to a lot of people. They're not natural to everybody, though some people will strive hard to overcome it. But the great thing about computer and synthesizer technology is that it brings music into the hands of people that are amusical, and I think that's healthy. I mean, a lot of my early stuff came about because I was lucky enough to be given a home recording studio when I was nineteen years old; that really helped me as a writer. I think the fact that you can go out and buy a home recording studio for $400 today is great. Obviously, the more people who use the medium, the better.

MUSICIAN: *How did you come up with the initial sequencing on "Baba O'Reilly"?*

TOWNSHEND: Oh, *incredibly* difficult: I went out, bought a Larry Berkshire organ, pushed the marimba button, and *played*. And people kept saying, "That's incredible synthesizer work on that," and I'd say, "Okay, sure, you're telling me, right?"

MUSICIAN: *Wasn't there something about programming your vital statistics into the machine?*

TOWNSHEND: Oh, that was totally misconstrued. What I was actually doing was collating all kinds of detail about six subjects for the *Lighthouse* film. One was Arthur Brown, the other was Meher Baba, and the rest were four members of the band. I took astrological details and I was going to take heart rates, pulse rates—everything that I could find out about people—to use as controlling parameters for synthesizer music. Now this was back in '72, and the synthesizer, even then, was still pretty much of an unexplored instrument. I realized I was pushing the technology a bit hard, so I backed off. What I did do in the end was create the musical equivalent of a found poem—like taking a few lines out of a newspaper and calling it a poem.

MUSICIAN: *Is there a special possibility or potential that exists in the period before you've totally mastered an instrument or technique?*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, I mean, people use open tunings on guitar, don't they? Somebody who's stuck in a rut on a song will detune a couple of strings on the guitar and suddenly they discover new chords for the first time. Then, later on, when they tune the guitar back again, they realize that the chord that took an hour to find in that other tuning is actually A major—but it's like hearing A again for the first time.

MUSICIAN: *Along the same lines, your first major single, "Can't Explain," seemed to be a classic Kinks chord sequence slightly rearranged.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, that was, because we were using the same producer as the Kinks at the time and we were trying to get him more interested in us. So I sat down and wrote something that I thought was similar to a Kinks song, hoping he'd think, "Well, this is going to be easy to produce, so I'll take them on."

MUSICIAN: *It's funny, but to me, "Clash City Rockers" sounds like "I Can't Explain Chapter 23." Same chords and timing.*

TOWNSHEND: It's very difficult not to borrow or be influenced; the limitations within the framework of rock are bounded by simplicity. That's what makes it so great: the severity of the limitations. I think the reason jazz didn't last as long as it should have—didn't evolve to its logical conclusion—was because everybody was so determined to break the framework of the limitations that had been set down by vamping around the song. Now that was great while you could still recognize what the player was doing within the framework of the song. But when you lost the song, what was happening? The guy just sounded like he was goofing off. To me, Parker is still the epitome of bebop exploration, because he would take a song, a standard, and fly all about it like a butterfly.

MUSICIAN: *Along the same lines, do you ever suspect that if you were a truly great lead guitarist, knocking off scales and whatnot, that it might have actually inhibited your ability to come up with some of the ideas and innovations you created?*

TOWNSHEND: I think the epitome of somebody who used the instrument in the way I've always wanted was Hendrix; he was a great virtuoso, but only within a certain framework. He was no Larry Carlton or Pat Metheny, both of whom I happen to like, but then I don't think either of them would aspire to what Hendrix achieved, because it costs too much. But going back to your earlier question, I think Hendrix was someone who actually communicated something through the *music*. He was a channel, and there was tremendous purity, and he did it with just the guitar. His voice got in the way; the band got in the way; the songs got in the way; his lust got in the way—*he* got in the way. Everything got in the way, but once you put a guitar in his hands, he communicated, and in a most magical way. I saw his first twenty or thirty concerts in this country, and they were absolutely...magical. You actually did feel a tremendous sense of uplift, and that's, I suppose, what I always wanted to do. I wanted it to be easy. I wanted to pick up the guitar and create that, and it annoys me that I've never been able to do that. It still bothers me today when I sit down and try to play a guitar solo, even though nowadays I can play very well.

Equipment

Onstage, I have been using the same setup for about twelve years. I use two Hi-Watt 100 amps, each with two four-over-twelve cabinets with JBL speakers. Occasionally I'll use an MXR-Dynacom—usually just for solos. And that's it. In the studio I experiment quite a lot—I use all kinds of things. I tend to stick to either a direct pre-amp principle or use an MXR in front of an old Fender Twin. In the studio, I usually stick to an old '52 Tele.

I sometimes use Schechters to record with, and I've got a nice old Gretsh that I use, but I like to use Fenders. I like old Fender amps, around the '55-'56 period, and Teles—'52 Teles, of which I've got two, and they're both quite good.

I use a very strange string setup. It's quite heavy and I use Gibson strings, just their stock, medium-gauge set, which has got an .012 first, and an .056 sixth. The only concession that I make to bendability, as it were, is on the third, instead of the .020, I use an .018. If I've used other makes, Ernie Ball is one make that I've used. And on acoustics, I use the D'Aquistos.

I've got a J-200 Gibson acoustic guitar, which is a '67, and is quite nice. And I've got a small, old Martin. Not that I record with it very often. I don't do as much acoustic recording as I used to.

MUSICIAN: *But knowing your limitations, you rarely get indulgent. There's nothing facile in what you play like some of the more flash guitar technicians....*

TOWNSHEND: Well, I think that's basically because their hands are faster than their brains....

MUSICIAN: *While we're getting technical I want to ask you about another area you've pioneered: the science of smashing guitars. You've gone through Fenders, Gibson Les Pauls and SGs, Rickenbackers.... Which are the best to smash and why? You seemed to have had a real hard time with that Telecaster in the Monterey film.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, Telecasters and Stratocasters are just too tough. But I actually got to enjoy bashing Stratocasters because of the "boinging" noise they made when you bounced them off the ground. You could actually smash them against amplifiers and...this is a true story: once on the "Murray the K Show," I chopped a Vox Super Beatle amplifier in two. They're made out of chipboard, little bits of wood that they glue together, and I chopped right through the whole thing. It was a 4 x 12 cabinet, and it fell into two bits just like that (joins and parts hands symetrically), I picked up the Stratocaster and carried on playing...*and it was still perfectly in tune*! Now *that's* a guitar for you! I think they're the most beautiful guitars ever designed.

MUSICIAN: *Why have you cut down the power chord/heavy metal quotient in your playing lately?*

TOWNSHEND: One reason I don't like playing that kind of heavy metal guitar anymore is because it hurts my ears. It's the frequencies at which my ears are irreversibly damaged ...they're very, very sensitive. Say you damage your ears at two kilohertz; any loud noise at that frequency produces pain, which is the ear's warning system not to screw around at that frequency. So I'm in a kind of Catch-22 situation, 'cause what I've done best for twenty years has damaged that part of my hearing. The only time I did it recently was on a couple of John's songs, because it was what he wanted, and I came out of those two sessions with my ears ringing for a week. And I thought,"Well, there's another db lost, you know." I'm just very anxious to preserve my hearing.

MUSICIAN: *The fashion consciousness of the English rock 'n' roll scene, with its rapid turnover of trends, is confusing to many Americans. What's the point of it all?*

TOWNSHEND: To me, fashion is always an indication of a need for some kind of identification and unity with other people, and of changing moods in society. That's why I've always felt it's one of the first places to look for change and volatility.

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, but it's double-edged; it can lead to unity in some cases, but also to herd consciousness in others. Doesn't that scare you?*

TOWNSHEND: No, I think that's very interesting. That's why the song "Uniforms" on *Chinese Eyes* is obviously double-edged, because it recognizes that fact. But it also recognizes the fact that there are *behavioral* uniforms as well. I don't know if you would identify a herd instinct in the current coke snorting phenomenon sweeping the leading societies in London, New York and L.A., but I think there's a kind of uniform in that. Most people I know who snort coke don't even get a buzz from it, they don't even *like* it, and it costs them a fortune! I've worn a number of uniforms at various periods, but about two years ago, while the Who were touring, I was wearing the basic Clash outfit, red handkerchief and baggy trousers and whatever else. And it really didn't come into its own until I went to a Clash concert, where I actually blended into the crowd and had that feeling of being lost, and at the same time of being...found.

MUSICIAN: *How do the rest of the Who feel about your new activist sensibility?*

TOWNSHEND: When I first started to talk like this, I imagined that a lot of the things that I said would fall on stony ground. But in actual fact, everybody felt very much the same. They all feel a great...sense of urgency I think is the only way to put it. So apart from actually acting as a writer, and the discontentment that I feel, I think there's another side to it, which is the fact that I do have a great sphere of influence outside of the area which I embrace in my public work. I'm probably much more of an establishment figure than a lot of people in America believe, or know, and I can reach all kinds of people using all kinds of tactics.

MUSICIAN: *Like what kind of people and tactics?*

TOWNSHEND: Well, I would prefer not to talk about that. I mean, I suppose people at all levels. I'm not saying that I can go and knock on the door of the Prime Minister and give her a hard time, but there is nothing stopping me from doing that. What *would* stop me doing that at this moment, is the general apathy of the people around me. I'm not going to make an asshole of myself, but I think that if a group of people that felt the same frustrations that I do appeared and started to unify with some kind of alternative approach, which I felt was correctly spiritually balanced for this age, I would react to it. And I would be quite willing—and so would my family—to change and adapt my lifestyle. By that I mean give up a lot of the ostensible luxuries and freedoms that I now have, in order to become part of a forward-moving thing.

Let's face it, a lot of the people in the music business don't give a damn about what's going on in the world, and they can't get away with that. It's the greatest hypocrisy to be in the escapism business, and yet have no knowledge of what it is we're trying to escape from.

MUSICIAN: *You said earlier that you felt the Stones tour was pure exploitation, and that this last Who tour would be under the band's control. Have you given any thought to how it'll be different from the Stones' extravaganza?*

TOWNSHEND: No. (long pause)

MUSICIAN: *Gee, that's a succinct answer. Got any ideas?*

TOWNSHEND: (longer pause) No. I don't think it's possible to do anything with the Who; I think we're on rails just as much as the Stones. I think it's as individuals that we can change things. When I was talking about exploitation I wasn't throwing any wild accusations around. I was just talking about the fact that the Stones have hit the spot by preventing other people from exploiting them.

We were talking about T-shirt sales and those other kind of residuals that go on. I saw a knife fight once outside Madison Square Garden between two T-shirt people, and one of the guys was taken off in an ambulance. This is over selling bloody T-shirts! I wondered what the hell was going on, and now, after looking at the Stones' receipts, I *know* what was going on: twenty million dollars, *that's* what was going on. And that is the kind of exploitation that, to be quite honest, the Who hopefully will be able to control in the same way that the Stones have. But there's no question that it's exploitation. One just has to

hope that one gives enough emotionally and spiritually to compensate for the fact that you're actually asking your audience to keep you alive for another five years.

MUSICIAN: *All right, but what if people say, "Well, Townshend's saying, give up your luxuries and what's he doing?"*

TOWNSHEND: Well, if they don't want to be exploited, then we won't tour. That will suit me fine.

MUSICIAN: *What about doing benefits or anything like that?*

TOWNSHEND: Well, I do a benefit about once a week. I don't know how many benefits the Stones do. I mean, I'm a living, walking benefit. I must give away at least a third of my overall income. But that's not something that anybody needs to crow about. That's my business.

MUSICIAN: *Well, people do expect you to put your money where your mouth is.*

TOWNSHEND: Absolutely. I'm giving you an answer I hope you'll print. I don't think that benefits do anything, other than just show that people are emotionally involved in the same complaint, like No Nukes, or whatever. Who does a *benefit* benefit? (laughs) That's what I always like to know. It took six years for the George Harrison-Bangladesh money to get to Bangladesh. It took a year for the Kampuchea concert money to get to Kampuchea. I mean, by the time the money got to Kampuchea, there wasn't a bloody country called Kampuchea anymore!

MUSICIAN: *Wait a minute, I'm confused. First you say we have to make material sacrifices; then you say your tour will be pure exploitation; then you say you do benefits every week; but now you don't believe in benefits...?*

TOWNSHEND: I'm just saying that I'd like to see people put less emphasis on the necessity for somebody in a band to go out and do a couple of free gigs a year. To some extent, it's an empty gesture, because all the work that the Who do in the U.K., all the profits go to charity. Without exception. In other words, we'd rather do a regular concert, and then take that money and use it in some way which we hope will improve society. Or do you just do a concert so that you look good and feel good, and give the money to somebody else?

For example, we have a charitable foundation in the U.K. which makes grants. We're about to make a grant to the multiple sclerosis charity. And we're doing all kinds of wonderful things: buying donuts for tramps and giving shelter to sheepdogs that have just had their fur shaved off....

MUSICIAN: *...Taking journalists out to dinner.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, taking some journalists out to dinner, and listening to their bloody intellectual ramblings....

MUSICIAN: *Look who's talking. Okay, let's get up close and personal with Pete Townshend. What would you say is your greatest strength, and what's your most serious flaw?*

TOWNSHEND: The best aspect I have is an ability to accept life as it is, and accept people as they are, without judgment or prejudice. And I think my worst attribute is a tendency toward self-destruction...because I think it would be a glamorous thing to do. Actually, if I could only apply the principles that I apply to everyone else to myself, I'd be in good shape. I could

"The framework of rock is bounded by simplicity—that's what makes it so great: the severity of the limitations."

happily sit down with a man who had murdered 500 people, and actually grow to love him. But I can't forgive myself my own weaknesses.

MUSICIAN: *Everybody who becomes a channel of some sort seems to evolve some strategy to deal with it. What's Pete Townshend's strategy?*

TOWNSHEND: It's very hard to talk about, because...it's very easy to look like you have some kind of phony humility. But Meher Baba's teachings on the subject were expressly clear, and my conviction for Meher Baba as the pinnacle and focus of spiritual wisdom in the West is paramount in my life. His statement is that whatever you do, however small or big you feel yourself to be, you're always a channel and a servant of God. Even if you're a *rat*, you've got the hotline to God. Even rats are servants of God whether they know it or not.

MUSICIAN: *When we interviewed Eric Clapton recently, he said this about being a channel: (reads) "...I know I'm not ready for it, not yet...because I'm still frightened of it...I always cut off just when it gets to that point, otherwise I just go...I might never get back." Do you understand that sentiment?*

TOWNSHEND: I do exactly, and I think everybody shies away from it. I don't think it's necessarily through fear, though. I'm *embarrassed* to be in God's presence—not afraid. Once I would've been ashamed, but not now. The moment that you're talking about is a moment of amazing revelation, when you realize that you're a channel, because you're doing something, yet you're not in control of it; you're lost, you feel the transport that you're creating in the audience, and suddenly you realize that in order for this to happen—which you know you've got no control over—there must be something outside you; there must be something omnipotent; and of course, the audience sees you, and they think it's coming from *you*. So you're also lumbered with all that crap, that hero stuff, which Eric has to put up with all the time. He knows he's a channel, and maybe he is afraid of it. But I think also Eric is just a very humble man, who, to be honest, is probably just embarrassed by his own ability to be a channel.

Everybody's afraid of their own potential, everybody is afraid of really striving, they're afraid of getting hurt! They're afraid of getting hurt physically, afraid of their lives being irrevocably taken away from them, which is what happens to people like Lennon. And they eventually have to claim their own lives back. Or they're afraid of getting out of control, because they're not sure that they're strong enough to deal with the misplaced adulation and everything else.

MUSICIAN: *It seems in this culture we need to provide our artists with a way to absorb their experiences and grow from them, rather than be destroyed by them. And look at how many of the great musicians, often the ones who've brought us the most, are now dead and buried because of not learning how to handle it.*

TOWNSHEND: Yes, fine, okay, we take that as an example. There's a lot of young people in music who are determined not to go that way. You do need examples, I'm afraid.

MUSICIAN: *What about the audience: What can they do to help rock evolve?*

TOWNSHEND: They can stop being an audience, for starters. I'm sure everybody who's been to a great rock concert has had the experience at some point in the concert of forgetting they were a member of an audience, because they realized they'd become part of the whole experience. This happens to members of bands, as well, and then both audience and performers share a common experience. And some performers should wake up and stop *performing*; just as some people who go and watch should stop just watching. That's like being one of those creeps who goes and watches other people screw! (laughs) But I don't know...maybe a lot of kids and less obsessive individuals reading a magazine like *Musician* aren't gonna give two bits for this kind of conversation. I think basically they're gonna say, "Listen, when I go to a concert or put on a rock album I just feel great and it makes me forget a lot of my worries, blah-blah-blah."

MUSICIAN: *Nah, don't worry, all of our readers are hopeless obsessives. They have this silly idea that rock can really help change our lives, even if the rest of society doesn't recognize it as a transformative art form.*

TOWNSHEND: I don't think acknowledging it as an art form makes an iota of difference, because there's always some young punk.... Let me put it another way: one of the reasons I'm really pleased that the Who kept going this long is because if we hadn't carried on, and had the Stones not carried on, the

Sex Pistols would never have existed, and I think the Sex Pistols were incredibly vital.

MUSICIAN: *You mean you guys were the standard, the thing they had to react against or relate to?*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, I mean, where would those contemporary abusers of the norms of, say, ballet be—the Marie Rambeaus or the Harlem Ballet—if the tradition of ballet didn't exist? It's the central stream, the thing against which everything bounces. I think we've suggested some kind of analogy of rock 'n' roll being like a river, and what's interesting is that it doesn't matter whether you join that river when it's massive and wide, or when it's a tiny, trickly stream. You're still joining the river, and traveling at the same speed as every other drop of water in that river. Whether you're nearer the source, or still have a long way to go, none of that matters. In fact, you can even make your presence felt initially by jumping in with a big splash and swimming aggressively the wrong way for some time. Or even building a dam, which will hold that river up for a while. And that's, to some extent, what the Sex Pistols did. They made a big splash, and in a sense, they held it up for a little while. And then when they stood back—it *rushed* forward. The nicest analogy I think of is a tap that is kept stopped for a long time, and when it's opened for the first time for a long time, a whole lot of rust comes out. And then, the water starts to run very pure again. And the punk movement, ostensibly, was that rust. But it was also, strangely enough, the first flow of fresh water for a long time. Of course, it was kind of *crazy* looking.

You can endlessly use the river analogy, when it's applied to music, and probably to all art. I think the consciousness that is growing is a consciousness of the fact that we've not *created* an art form at all. It's happened around us. And it's happened because it was needed. And it's happened because all other forms of art are completely and totally ineffective, except for rock.

MUSICIAN: *You're stirring in me the hope that the communal soul that was created by rock may still be able to galvanize and focus on something.*

TOWNSHEND: I think it's the only thing big enough for rock to respond to! I don't think rock's interested in lesser issues. I think they're all part of it, but I think the grand scheme is that rock is taking on the world, slowly but surely. It's a new, alternative, deeply-established, irrevocably powerful art form. With all the phobias and potential of any art form in history.

MUSICIAN: *To finish up, there's just one more weighty question I want to ask you, but it's kind of personal.*

TOWNSHEND: Go ahead.

MUSICIAN: *Okay. Is it true that you guys used to put on monster masks and torment Murray the K?*

TOWNSHEND: (laughs) It's true! We used to get daily lectures from him when we did his shows, and the basis of it is.... Wait a minute, he's dead, isn't he?

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, he passed away a few months ago.*

TOWNSHEND: Oh, well, I can say anything I like then, can't I? Even in the sight of God (laughs). He used to complain because he had what he called his personal microphone for doing the introductions with, and we were fairly irreverent towards it while we were smashing our instruments up five times a day. We got two songs—the act was twelve minutes long—and we used to play "Substitute" and "My Generation" with the gear-smashing at the end, and then spend the twenty minutes between shows trying to rebuild everything so we could smash it up again. Or we'd run around pawn shops trying to buy stuff on the cheap ...and when we ran out of microphones, his used to come in for a bit of bashin'. And so we used to actually get daily lectures from him about abusing his personal microphone, which we thought was pretty funny. Then the last thing was when Wilson Pickett called a meeting, because we were using smoke bombs as well, and he felt that we were very unprofessional, and that the smoke was affecting everybody else's act. Actually, I think he didn't like following us. But they were all on a different *planet*, basically. We didn't really know what was going on and we didn't take it very seriously. And when it got to the last day we all put funny masks on and went in and sat and listened to him with these masks on. I do remember it now, actually. I remember he asked us to take them off, demanded we remove them.

MUSICIAN: *And did you?*

TOWNSHEND: Nope.

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THE NATURAL VIRTUOSO AS HIGHSCHOOL HERO

EDDIE VAN HALEN

No, you haven't wandered into an issue of *Circus* by mistake. Sure, Van Halen is exactly the kind of a band your fourteen-year-old kid brother thinks is the greatest thing since zit cream or the girls' locker room scene from *Porky's*, but so what? Maybe the kid is a little smarter than you think he is. If you go only by what you hear on the car radio, something like "(Oh) Pretty Woman" or "You Really Got Me," an assault on the Kinks classic that rocketed the band to stardom in 1978, it's easy to simply assume that these are just four more metalloid morons out to make a quick buck. But if you really sit down and *listen* to what the band is doing, you may think twice about dismissing them so hastily.

The guitar playing, in particular, almost defies description. Instead of the usual flash-and-dazzle effects most guitarists have been repeating since they were first laid down by Clapton, Beck Page, Hendrix and Blackmore, Edward Van Halen pulls all sorts of crazy stunts with harmonics, his tremolo bar and a host of makeshift techniques that are hard to believe even after you've

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

NEIL ZLOZOWER

seen how they are done. Perhaps the most amazing of these is a two-handed version of the hammer-on and pull-off—a technique in which instead of plucking the note with a pick, the first note is sounded by hitting the string very hard at the fret, then plucking the string with that finger to sound a second, lower note—that on "Eruption" resulted in shimmering arpeggiated figures that sounded more like a Bach harpsichord than rock guitar.

Nor are all these tricks saved for the solos. Van Halen crams guitar moans, growls, shrieks and chatter into almost every available nook and cranny on the band's five albums. Yet the records never end up sounding like guitar solos, largely because this isn't a one-man group—it's a quartet in every sense of the word. On a strictly instrumental level, that means as Edward Van Halen takes his guitar into the stratosphere, his brother Alex is right there, keeping pace on the drums while bassist Michael Anthony draws the bottom line; on an aesthetic level, it balances the music's sophisticated energy with a perspective best summarized by David Lee Roth's deadpanned, "Have you seen junior's grades?"

It's that combination of musical audacity and juvenile delinquent sensibility that has made Van Halen what it is today: a major concert attraction, an FM rock staple and a convenient target for critical abuse. Granted, that last is something of a two-way street—David Lee Roth made few friends in the press when he postulated that the reason more critics liked Elvis Costello than Van Halen was "because most critics *look* like Elvis Costello"—but it's also more the result of stylistic snobbery than objective analysis.

When Van Halen burst out of the Hollywood club scene in 1978, they were the biggest, brashest, most over-the-top heavy rock band around. Their subsequent success has only amplified those tendencies. Describing the band's views about their Van Halen road show, David Lee Roth asks, "Remember when you were in school and the whole thing revolved around who had the biggest tires in back, who had the loudest stereo? Well, we never got past that phase." They sure haven't. On the band's last two tours, the stage was divided between a wall of 12-inch guitar speakers and a wall of

> "Who is the God of Guitars who says it has to be held this way or that way? I just do everything the way I want to. Period."

12- and 18-inch bass speakers, with a drum kit resembling the contents of a small percussion store mounted in the middle. Looking down the barrel of all this acoustic firepower, you begin to wonder what they need a P.A. system for, but without it how could you follow Roth's between-songs patter? Clutching a mostly empty fifth of Jack Daniels during a concert in Philadelphia last year, Roth cheerfully explained to the fans, "Of course I drink on the job. That's how I *got* the job."

Nonetheless, the most ear-grabbing moments invariably belong to Edward Van Halen. As much as Roth's banter and the physical excess of the stage gear testify to the extravagances of the rock 'n' roll life, it's the free-flowing energy and imagination of Edward's playing that captures the music's spirit. His solos are flashy, unpredictable and totally idiomatic, adhering to a logic that seems to apply solely to electric guitar and possessed of an almost palpable dynamism.

Because the members of Van Halen apply their talent to a fairly basic version of rock 'n' roll, a lot of musicians figure they must be as cretinous as every other three-chord wonder. "When we were going to school studying to learn the basics," recalls Alex Van Halen, "they used to call us musical prostitutes because we were playing songs that had no fancy chord changes but only the basic I-IV-V. They used the premise that, 'because my thing has nineteen chord changes and two meter changes, my thing is music and yours stinks.'

"Well, I say stick it. For all intents and purposes, it's much more difficult to write a song that's memorable, that people can sing along with, using only the basic I-IV-V as opposed to applying your musical skills to bend things out of shape."

Of course, there's a certain irony to Alex Van Halen having to defend his music on the grounds of musicality, for both he and his brother, as well as Michael Anthony, come from households where music brought home the bacon. Jan Van Halen was a professional clarinetist and saxophonist who started his sons on piano lessons at age six, while both of Anthony's parents were professional musicians and he started playing trumpet in the second grade. (David Lee Roth, on the other hand, comes from a long line of doctors and other socially respectable types, proving that there's one in every family.)

Edward Van Halen seems to be a natural in the truest sense of the word. Alex reports that "when Ed first picked up the guitar, he could play better than the guys at that time who had been playing for years. My dad, who's been a professional musician all his life, says Eddie plays like Charlie Parker, only he doesn't need the drugs."

His peers are equally effusive. Carlos Santana has called his playing "brilliant." Frank Zappa recently thanked him "for reinventing the guitar." Perhaps the most incisive compliment came from Andy Summers of the Police who said, "He is a natural virtuoso. What impresses me is his passion, his spirit and his musicality. Really, I think he is the greatest rock guitarist since Hendrix."

Talent runs in the Van Halen family though, and Edward didn't get it all. "Alex is better technically at music than the rest of us *combined*," insists Roth. "I remember that before we all got thrown out of school for the last time, Alex redid all of the music for *West Side Story* and arranged it for a fifteen-piece jazz-rock ensemble. And he had to go around to each instrumentalist and show them how to play their part, because nobody could figure it out. He was doing stuff in 11/8 time.... Plus he's got near-perfect pitch. You can play him a song on the radio, and he'll tell you what key it's in."

The idea is to play as a unit, and that holds true as much for recording as playing live. "Most of the time, what a band will do is get a click track and set the drum part down on tape with the bass and maybe rhythm guitar," says Alex Van Halen, "and then they build it from there. We play *together*, and if by the second or third take the song is not to our satisfaction, then we move on to a different one. Because our opinion is if you can't get it right the first or second time, you shouldn't even be there. What we do is rehearse the material to the point where it's ready to be played onstage, ready anywhere, and then go up to Ted (Templeman, the producer) and Don (Landee, the engineer) to put it on vinyl."

Even then, the studio performances tend to be pretty spontaneous. "We know the basic structure of the song, what we're going to do," says Edward Van Halen, "like how many bars will go here, how many choruses we're going to do, whether we're going to fade out. But when it comes to solos, I never work 'em out. I never even know where I'm going to start. The fingers just kinda *go*."

Roth laughs, and confides, "It comes so easily. Of course, there are probably people out there in magazineland right now saying, 'That's because it's crap,' and it may well be. But it's *my* crap. It's fast. It comes easy, and it's enjoyable. Otherwise, it would be just like another job."

MUSICIAN: *Let's start at the beginning.*

VAN HALEN: Alex and I, we were both born in Holland, in Amsterdam. My father was a musician, touring around, and so of course both his sons would be musicians. He played everything, jazz—big band or whatever—and classical. He met my mom in Indonesia, and he used to play in classical concert-type things. Well, he got us to practice piano since we were about six years old. When I was eight years old and Alex was nine or ten, my mom decided to move to the land of opportun-

ity. So we moved over here and quickly lost interest in sitting down and going like this (adopts stiff-armed, ramrod-backed posture of classical piano student).

MUSICIAN: *Did it take long to get indoctrinated to rock 'n' roll?*

VAN HALEN: Not very long at all. We were kind of sheltered from it, we didn't hear very much of it when we were in Holland, even though right across the English Channel was where it was all coming from. It was definitely, "Turn that stuff down!" same as any other kid. Beaten to play the piano, you know....

But we persevered, and I got a paper route so I could pay for my $41.25 St. George drum kit, and while I was out throwing the papers, my brother was playing my drums. He got better, so I said, "Okay, you can keep the damn drums."

At the same time, my parents thought they could expand on Al, so while I was out throwing papers, they made him take flamenco guitar lessons. So I started plinking around on his guitar after he took my drums, and it just kinda went from there. And if you look at both of us now, it's lucky that we both changed because he's twice the size of me. He doesn't look like a guitarist.

MUSICIAN: *Did you keep on playing piano through all this?*

VAN HALEN: Off and on. I actually started playing guitar when I was about twelve, and when I was sixteen I totally dumped piano. Up until then I was still forced to practice. (affects gruff, authoritarian voice) "Okay, if you're going to play guitar, you're going to *have* to play piano and make up for it." I remember if I came home too late on Friday or Saturday night, my mom would lock my guitar in the closet for a week, things like that. *Torture!*

MUSICIAN: *So then it was out of the conservatory, into the garage?*

VAN HALEN: Yeah. It was basically just Alex and me. To tell the truth, it's been Alex and me since then, with whoever. It started out with just the two of us playing, and then we said, "Hey, it sounds kinda thin. We need a bass player." (laughs) So we went through a handful of bass players. Then I got sick of singing, and we got Dave in the band.

And then we started playing clubs, like Gazzarri's and stuff. The old bass player we had used to smoke too much pot and hash. We had a repertoire of about 300 songs that you *had* to remember, and he'd be so high, he'd be playing a different song. So we got rid of him and got Mike. And that's the way the band is now, it's been about eight years—'74-'75 was when Van Halen was formed, and it was Dave's idea to use Van Halen for the band name. I wanted to call it *Rat Salade* (laughs wickedly). I was into Black Sabbath then....

MUSICIAN: *That's funny that it would have been Dave's idea, because he's the one most kids recognize first.*

VAN HALEN: They think he *is* Van Halen, like *Van* Morrison. They think he's Van. We played Gazzarri's for maybe three years, and if it was a good weekend Bill Gazzarri would slip us an extra twenty bucks on the sly, and he'd always hand it to Dave. For three years on end he went, "Here, Van. It was a great weekend."

MUSICIAN: *I understand that in your club days you did a lot of songs most folks wouldn't associate with Van Halen.*

VAN HALEN: In clubs, we used to do "Get Down Tonight," and all that stuff. We'd hum the horn parts, and Dave would sing on top of that. It sounded funny, it sounded *very* funny, but at least we got hired.

MUSICIAN: *Was that a factor in your "anything goes" approach?*

VAN HALEN: Definitely. 'Cause Dave has different taste in music than the rest of us—we all have different tastes. I think the only true rocker of the bunch is Al. He's the only one who listens to AC/DC and all that kind of stuff. Dave will walk in with a disco tape and I'll walk in with my progressive tapes and Mike walks in with his Disneyland stuff (laughs).

We're all so different, I guess that's what makes Van Halen so different. If we were all like Dave, we'd all be playing Dave Music. And even though I write the music, the final product is still all twisted and bent. For a one-guitar band, I think we do have a little variety, and I think that's because of their input.

MUSICIAN: *You can listen to a lot of guitarists and fairly easily tell who they've taken from, but your influences really seem to have gone through the Cuisinart.*

VAN HALEN: I sometimes wonder myself when it was that I turned the corner and went my own way in playing, because the last thing I remember was playing "Crossroads" and being Eric Clapton. I used to play all that stuff note-for-note, and play exactly like him. I don't know where all of a sudden I just changed.

MUSICIAN: *Clapton was a big influence?*

VAN HALEN: My only. He was the only one I ever copied. I didn't care too much for Jimmy Page or Hendrix or anyone else. Beck I didn't even know about until *Blow By Blow* came out (laughs).

MUSICIAN: *What was it about Clapton?*

VAN HALEN: Oh, just a feeling. Clapton just had something that I liked, it sounded smooth and warm-toned, as opposed to

KIRK WEST/PHOTO RESERVE

Edward demonstrates spectacular two-handed pull-offs for salivating multitudes.

Hendrix who was always *eeyarrrowwngk*! Even though I probably do like Hendrix more than Clapton now. All the rest of 'em I've heard and stuff, but never really sat down to cop a lick from 'em or anything. Alan Holdsworth, he's so damned good I can't cop anything—I can't understand what he's doing. I've gotta do this (does two-hand things) whereas he'll do it with one

hand. Or it sounds like it sometimes. Beck, Page, Hendrix, Townshend—I love Townshend's rhythm playing. I love the sound he gets for chords.

MUSICIAN: *What sort of things do you listen to at home?*

VAN HALEN: Progressive stuff, like Alan Holdsworth, stuff like that. Brand X. That's about it. I don't listen to much rock. I listen to a lot of Chopin, piano. Very little rock 'n' roll.

MUSICIAN: *To get back to what you were saying about getting bored by the same thing over and over again, one of the most common complaints about rock 'n' roll from real sophisticated players is that it's all in the key of E. So I'm curious how you feel about rock's musical limits, because while some of your stuff seems to have moved beyond that, on the other hand you're still....*

VAN HALEN: ...in it. That's what's so challenging about rock 'n' roll, that pressure of "You're stuck!" Trying to get out, but you're still in it. Like what you said about playing in the key of E. A lot of guitarists hate rock 'n' roll because you're stuck with that. You're not. You can play any way you want, as long as you're playing chromatic or whatever and you end up on a note that kind of fits the key. And along with the harmonics and the weird noises, you're not limited. I mean, you always have to go to some key, I don't care what type of music you're playing.

MUSICIAN: *In the past couple weeks, I've listened to the new Scorpions album and found myself saying, "Gee, that guy sounds a lot like Eddie Van Halen." Then I put on the new Rainbow album, and there's a solo that could have been you.*

VAN HALEN: (chuckles) Blackmore hates me.

MUSICIAN: *And then there was Randy Rhoads....*

VAN HALEN: Oh, yeah. He did me to the bone, bless his soul.

MUSICIAN: *And the guy they got to replace him does a lot of the same licks, too. So obviously you're reaching somebody.*

VAN HALEN: Yeah (laughs embarrassedly). Yeah, I guess you're right. I met Frank Zappa the other day, and the first thing he said to me is, "Thank you for reinventing the electric guitar." Which was a hell of a compliment coming from him, because I love Zappa.

MUSICIAN: *But I take it you really don't think you've "reinvented the electric guitar"?*

VAN HALEN: I don't know. I just do what I do, and I really don't consider it inventing, or doing anything but what I do. Just because everybody is doing me now...is nice, but maybe two or three years down the line I'll be doing me in a different way.

MUSICIAN: *Turning that around, do you think you'd still be playing the same way if you were back in the clubs?*

VAN HALEN: I think so. I was playing this way when we were playing clubs, and I remember what I used to do, too. Because nobody ever used to do *this* before (he picks up his guitar and does some fast, two-hands-on-the-fretboard playing). After I somehow stumbled on it, when I would do a guitar solo and do that stuff, I'd turn around because I didn't want anyone to see how I was doing it (laughs). I'm going, "Not until we get signed, I don't want anyone to know!" (laughs uproariously)

Actually, it was my brother who told me, "Turn around when you do it. These bastards are going to rip you off blind." And he was right! There was a band called Angel who tried to rip us off, and luckily we just got signed. They tried to go in and do "You Really Got Me."

See, I was star-struck. You know, "Hey, our rock band just got signed!" So I played this guy from Angel our album a month before it was going to be released, and a week later Ted Templeman calls me and he goes, "Did you play that tape for anybody, you asshole?" I'm going, "Yeah, wasn't I supposed to?" "I told you—Damn! I never should have given you a copy!" And I'm going, "Why, what happened?" Well, he had heard from the tour manager with Aerosmith that a band called Angel was in the studio trying to rush-release "You Really Got Me" before we could.

So I'm glad I turned around for a year or two.

MUSICIAN: *What about your guitars? I understand that some of them you built yourself.*

VAN HALEN: Yeah, yeah...I've still got the original guitar I built. You want to see it? (He goes off and comes back with a red, Stratocaster-styled guitar adorned with black and white stripes and bicycle reflectors on the back.) It's the one I record with and play onstage with, and it's the biggest piece of junk you've ever seen in your life. That's my *main* baby.

MUSICIAN: *What is it—aside from the decorations—that makes this guitar so special?*

VAN HALEN: I think it's just that it cost me $200, and I don't believe in spending a lot of money. The most important thing is this pickup. (He points to a humbucking pickup in the bridge position, and then indicates a Fender-style soapbar pickup that is rather pointedly not wired in.) That's just something to fill up the holes.

This is the first one, it's on the first album cover. I originally had a Strat, but I couldn't handle the way it sounded because I'd play so loud I'd get such a hum, such a buzz. And I'm going, "Why is it doing this?" Then someone told me it's single-coil pickups, and I discovered what single-coil pickups were as opposed to humbucking. So I carved out part of the wood and slapped a humbucking in the Strat. But no matter what I did, always right here on the E (plays octave fret on the low E string) I got a vibration. I started looking around for better wood. And then I ran into Charvel guitars, and they had a junk body laying there so I said, "I'll give you $50 for it," and this thing came alive.

MUSICIAN: *So why, with all the guitars since, do you stick with this one?*

VAN HALEN: Every time I get a different guitar, whether it be playing in the basement, onstage live or in the studio, we'll be playing and someone will say, "Are you using a different amp, Ed?" And I'll say, "No, it's a different guitar." They'll say, "Use your other one. It sounds better" (laughs). It usually takes a few songs before someone says anything.

I'll tell you how this happened. I told you I used to have a Fender Strat. When I ripped the guts out—I didn't know how to put it back! I swear to God! The three knobs and the switch ...I'm going, "Goddamn, I don't know what the hell's going on." So I just took everything out and took the two cords that went from here to there (traces the path from the pickup to the volume knob) and the two from there (indicating the jack) and switched them around until I heard something, and clamped it down. That's the way it is, and it works great.

That's how I stumbled onto the one volume knob. All you see kids using now is one volume knob and one pickup. Little do they know it's out of ignorance.

MUSICIAN: *The one thing that's most intrigued me about your sound is that for all the weird things you do as a player, your sound always seems pretty straight.*

VAN HALEN: Yeah. I have a whole effects rack that my roadie built for me and was proud of when he was done, but I never use it. 'Cause it never works, or I hit buttons and I'm going, "Eh, screw it! I'd rather make noise on the guitar." *Instead* of using effects.

I'll use an occasional echo—it's kind of a slow repeat to fill out things, make it a little more majestic or whatever. But I'm not into all these little things that make your guitar sound not like a guitar.

MUSICIAN: *What kind of amp do you use? I tried counting the speakers during one show and lost count somewhere around sixty-four....*

VAN HALEN: Live I always use six old 100-watt Marshalls, each through four speakers. No, eight. Through all my bottom cabinets I use one head, 'cause I have six cabinets supplied, and one head for each cabinet. They're actually double cabinets, eight speakers in one, but I just had 'em built that way because it's easier to move 'em around. They're still divided, they're still separate cabinets.

MUSICIAN: *Do you use the same setup in the studio?*

VAN HALEN: It depends on how loud I feel like playing. When you're close-miking one speaker it doesn't matter how many amps you're using. It really doesn't.

Oh, we use one room mike to mix in there with it, but it's so simple. I mean, Ted Templeman, our producer, got in trouble for saying this. He did an intervew for *BAM* magazine, and they

David Lee Roth

Crafting Your Buzz and Other Responsibilities of Stardom

BY DAN FORTE

CHARLYN ZLOTNIK

MUSICIAN: *There's a quote right here in your bio saying, "This band is the distillation of every vulgar trend that has surfaced in the twenty years of rock 'n' roll history."*

ROTH: Well, that's my father speaking, isn't it?

MUSICIAN: *Most bands would hide that from the public, and most bands' managers would hide that sort of stuff from the band.*

ROTH: Well, we all know about the bands, you know, that have the heavy management, and they have group therapy sessions so they can get in touch with each other and become one with the bass drum. They verge on a Zen sort of a tactic while approaching their music. We talk about what we are and what we think—quite openly—there's no reason to hide it for Van Halen.

MUSICIAN: *How different are the ideas, and how different has the presentation become, from when you four first got together?*

ROTH: Oh, man, Van Halen has been one big bar of soap for me. I'm always bending over to pick it up. I don't care whether it's the music, I don't care whether it's the light show. I don't care what it is—one big long argument, man. I remember the days when it actually took the form of fist fights. And I remember Alex beating Edward heavily about the face and neck with his right hand, while he cradled his poor little head against the brutal cement with his left hand so he could play the next set (laughs). It's been like that; the only thing that's different is that our vocabularies are a little bigger.

MUSICIAN: *Were you really hyperactive as a kid?*

ROTH: I was constantly moving around. My attention span was nil, still is. I was raised on a heavy diet of television and radio, you know, and I've got to have a commercial every ten minutes. I'm always jumping around, the other guys in the band are the same way. You can hear that in the music; there's absolutely no continuity to any given Van Halen record or stream of records.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think the role you play for your audience is overinflated?*

ROTH: I am merely the pond that reflects the oncoming stone. I may absorb that stone, but in the beginning I only reflect it. I am not the aggressive force in question here; I'm merely placid and still. And that's all rock music ever was—it's a reflection of the times.

MUSICIAN: *Was Eddie pretty amazing the first time you heard him?*

ROTH: Edward has always been amazing. Edward is constantly amazing to me. He's always got something new, some new way to play the guitar. He makes his own guitars—and if you saw them up close you'd realize what a joke that is (laughs). People come to him with calibrators and odometers, and all it is is a $50 Dennis the Menace piece of junk.

MUSICIAN: *Do you have a regular rehearsal schedule?*

ROTH: Hell no. (laughs) That's how come we get the words wrong, that's how come it's distorted in the studio, all the way down the line. These little cracks and crevices, though, we chalk them off as personality and slide into another day. For practice, what we did is we played a lot. We played everywhere. Because we like to play. It was that innocent, and remains that innocent. We're just better paid for it now.

MUSICIAN: *How big is the Van Halen traveling circus?*

ROTH: There's about seventy-five people when we go on tour.

MUSICIAN: *What can occupy seventy-five people's time with a four-man band?*

ROTH: I don't have the vaguest idea, Dan, but I do sign the checks. It's a big production. Somebody mentioned to me once, "It's like a big family." I told them, "No, I prefer to view it as a gang." But it makes life eminently more passable on the road, or wherever you are.

MUSICIAN: *If you're touring for, say, four to six weeks across the country, does the gang of seventy-five grow and pick up more people along the way?*

ROTH: Oh, sure. The crew does for sure. Our crew is famous. You know, Dan, it's exactly like the magazines always told me it was going to be—maybe better. You wouldn't believe the stuff that goes on out there. I woke up towards the end of this last tour in the hotel, and, man, I couldn't move. I was bruised. I felt like hell. I finally called up Alex on the phone and said, "What did we do last night?" He says, "Oh, man, we were up in my room on the second floor on the balcony with a bunch of people, and there was a lot of noise and music going on. About 4:30 this morning you bet everybody you could fly, and jumped right off the balcony, man. Yeah, you landed in some trees; we found you down in the dirt." I said, "Man, why didn't you stop me?" He says, "*Stop* you! I bet 'em a hundred bills you could *do* it, man."

MUSICIAN: *Does it ever worry you when you read about another rock star biting the dust?*

ROTH: Well, this is the 80s, Dan, and one must craft his buzz. One has to craft his high. Basically, what that means is being able to time it out. That doesn't mean quit getting buzzed, you just have to make sure you come on full blast right about when the show starts. I'm not serious about my health; on the other hand, I used to jog a great deal. I gave that up, because the ice cubes kept falling out of my cup. I played water polo for a long time, but I had to quit that because my horse drowned. So I just kind of sail along. We pump a lot of aluminum, particularly on the road. It helps if you open it first. You keep one eye on the road, and one eye in the rear view mirror—so you can see how cool you look while you're getting somewhere. You don't even really think about it.

MUSICIAN: *You seem to draw more females than most hard rock bands, and much of the reason for that, it would seem, is you.*

ROTH: Well, Dan, I do have the best legs in the business. And they've got dancing feet at the bottom.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever think about whether these women are coming...*

ROTH: Constantly! This is a major source of my inspiration, and I'm glad you brought that up.

asked him, "How do you do the Doobie Brothers? How do you do Van Halen?" And he goes, "Well, with Van Halen it's so goddamn simple—all I do is throw mikes up there, they play it and we've got it. With the Doobie Brothers, I've got to do this and that and this...." And the Doobie Brothers got all pissed off at him.

MUSICIAN: *How much overdubbing do you like to do?*

VAN HALEN: None, actually. I hate doing it. On the new record, I only overdubbed a few things. No, actually a lot. Let me think: "Where Have All The Good Times Gone," nothing; "Little Guitars," I overdubbed the slide in the middle; "Hang 'Em High," nothing; "Secrets," just the solo—I used a 12-string on "Secrets," one of those double-necked Gibson jobs; "Intruder," nothing; "Pretty Woman," nothing; "Big Bad Bill," nothing; "Dancing In The Street," I doubled the synthesizer with the guitar and overdubbed the solo; "Cathedral" was one guitar; "Happy Trails," a *lot* of overdubs (laughs); "Full Bug," nothing. Well, Dave did a harmonica solo.

I hate to overdub. It's just that I can't stand to wear headphones. I never wear headphones in the studio, I stand right next to Al and play. I prefer to do the solo on the basic track and if it needs it, overdub a rhythm guitar—even though I didn't do that this time around. I don't know, I feel like I'm in a glass bottle separated from the rest of the guys whenever I put headphones on.

MUSICIAN: *It's interesting that you stand next to Al. Is that what you listen to onstage as well? What's in your monitor?*

VAN HALEN: All I have in there are drums and a little bit of Dave's voice, and my voice. Mike I can never hear, whether it be in the studio or live, I never hear him.

MUSICIAN: *Does that bother you at all?*

VAN HALEN: No, not at all. I guess he more follows me than I follow him, and I'm more of a rhythmic player, so I need a lot of drums. And whenever Mike's bass gets in there it garbles stuff up. The frequencies of the bass drums and stuff and of his bass don't work right.

MUSICIAN: *A lot of bands work with a bass-drums axis; some use a rhythm guitar-drums axis, but you guys seem to have an almost invisible axis.*

VAN HALEN: Yeah, yeah, exactly. It's like ESP sometimes. Even if my monitors don't work right live and I'll make a mistake, Al is right there with me, or vice versa.

MUSICIAN: *I was kind of surprised at the down-to-earthiness of* Diver Down, *because the last record was really abstract.*

VAN HALEN: I still don't understand that. So many people tell me that. What is so abstract about it?

MUSICIAN: *Abstract in the sense that the songs aren't really verse-chorus-verse-chorus....*

VAN HALEN: Well, our songs never really have been, have they?

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, but you get that impression on the new one simply because you're doing so many cover versions of old songs.*

VAN HALEN: Yeah, you're right. I guess the reason being those are other people's songs. If you listen to *our* songs on the record, they're just as wacko as those on the last one. They're not structured that way. Our songs never are.

MUSICIAN: *Even then, the stuff on* Fair Warning *went a little farther afield. Like on "Dirty Movies," where Michael goes into the funky bass riff—you don't get that on the originals on this album.*

VAN HALEN: Well, that's a toughie, because "Secrets" on the new album, I wrote that last year. I wanted it on *Fair Warning*, and everyone's going, "Aaaah, pffft!" They didn't like it. 'Cause I do write all the music for the band. They kind of pick out of everything that I have, and they say what they like and don't like. And all of a sudden, just because.... See, Ted Templeman never heard it, and when Ted heard it, he liked it, and all of a sudden they liked it too. (laughs) No, don't print that.

I find myself, when I write, I always go in lumps, "Hey, these five songs all kinda sound the same." So we kinda spread 'em out; we use one next album, and one now. I mean, they're not identical, but you can tell I wrote 'em at the same time, around the same period. It's impossible for me to forget what I've done completely, so I'll never write it again. Because I've done that before.

MUSICIAN: *After talking about some of the things you do, and after listening to your versions of the album material, I can't help but wonder why you don't do a solo album.*

VAN HALEN: Each album already is, actually. I can do basically what I want 'cause I write all the music anyway, so it already is kind of a solo thing. Even though we all get credit, but what the hell. That's a deal we made in the beginning.

MUSICIAN: *To get back to the album, how did you do the acoustic guitar intro to "Little Guitars"? It really sounds like bona fide Spanish guitar there.*

VAN HALEN: Aw, yeah, I did a great cheat on that one. Everyone thinks I overdubbed on that. I'll show you what I did. (He picks up a guitar and picks a single-note trill on the high E string, using his left hand to play the melody on the A and D strings using hammer-ons and pull-offs.) I did it like that, pull-offs and hammering.

That's all I did, and people are going, "Naw, c'mon, you overdubbed that." Then I show them how I did it.

Classical guitarists can do that, but they finger-pick. I can't finger-pick. No, I definitely cheated. I'm good at that, I'm good at cheating. If there's a sound in my head and I want it, I'll find a way to do it. Whether I know how to do it by the book or not, I'll figure out some way. You can ask my wife. I bought a couple of Montoya records, and I'm going, "God...." I actually started trying to finger-pick, and I'm going, "Screw this, it's too hard."

Even Ted was blown away. I had a little machine like this and I put it on tape, and I said, "Ted, what do you think?" He's going, "That's not you, I know you can't finger-pick." I said, "Here, gimme a guitar, I did it like this." They all started laughing.

I just do everything the way I want to do it. Period. 'Cause

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Van Halen's Equipment

Edward Van Halen isn't sure exactly how many guitars he has. "I've probably got at least fifty," he says. "I think."

Fortunately, he uses very few of them. His principal guitar is discussed in depth in the interview itself, as are his strings, effects and amps, but there are a couple other guitars worth mentioning. His acoustic work is all done on an Ovation with nylon strings, "I guess because I like classical music better than I like country music, and that's what an acoustic with steel strings reminds me of."

Michael Anthony has a mere fifteen basses, "but I only take about four or five on the road. My main bass is a Yamaha Broad Bass 2000; it's a prototype that was given to me when we were in Japan a few years back." His other basses are mostly Fender Precisions, with Yamaha pickups and Badass bridges. His strings are Rotosound Swing Bass roundwounds. For amps, he uses SVTs, driving Flagg-System cabinets with 18-inch Gauss bottoms and 12-inch Gauss tops.

Alex Van Halen says his basic set is built around "one kick, a 14-inch by 10-inch rack tom, an 18-inch by 20-inch floor tom and a snare, high-hat and cymbals." The snare is a rosewood 6¼-inch by 14-inch snare with a black-dot CS head, and the cymbals are Paiste, in particular a 24-inch heavy ride and 20-inch rides for crash cymbals. He also likes the new Rude cymbal weight, and uses several of them. Rounding out his kit are 12-inch, 13-inch and 20-inch toms, with single heads for live work and double heads for the studio. "I use Remo black dots," he says, "and I know a lot of people who read this will say, 'Oh, man, you're not being true to the drum,' but I do tape. I use black duct tape to get rid of certain rings. I used to try to get the sound out of the drum without taping anything at all, but I've changed my evil ways." His drums, by the way, are Ludwigs, his hardware hybrid and welded together to keep from breaking when David Lee Roth stands on the drums. As for the bass drums, last time around he used six of them.

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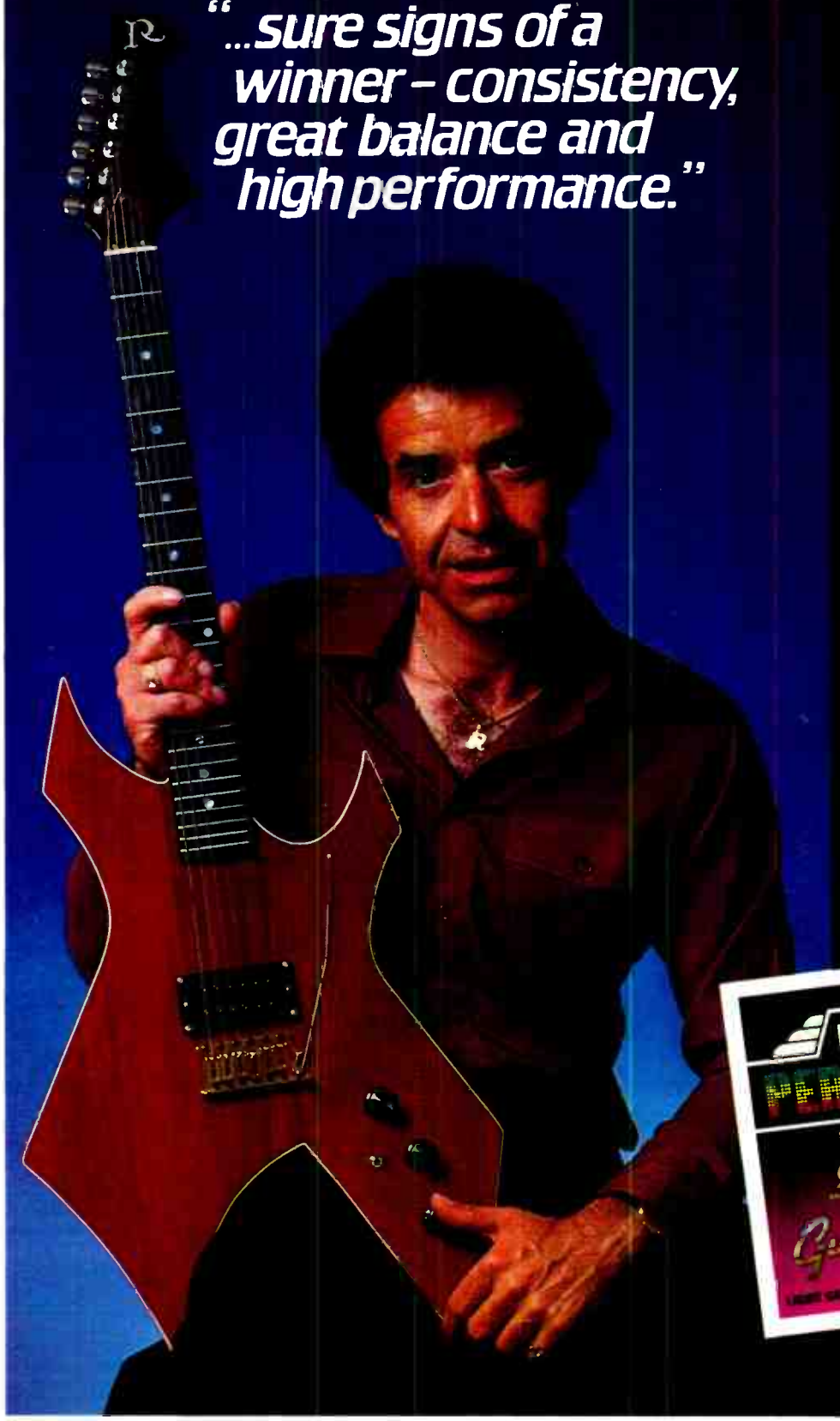

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QUINCY JONES

QUINCY JONES, in the dimly lit control room of the studio, was ready to add a tambourine part to a Donna Summer track, a small bit of finish work before the final mix. A young Latino woman percussionist appeared before him to play the part, obviously awed by the surroundings. It was probably one of her first session dates and surely her first with the legendary Quincy; you could see that she was quite intimidated and terribly, terribly nervous. Quincy noticed immediately and began to try to make her relax; in a fatherly way he would put his arms around her neck and squeeze her, making little jokes, following her around and whispering in her ear, anything to calm her down.

A portrait of platinum production, from the fiscal to the feel, from the big picture to the last detail

Finally she seemed ready to record; she went into the main studio room and began to play along with the Donna Summer track in her headphones. Noting some residual uneasiness, Quincy continued his banter; when she tried hitting the tambourine on her somewhat ample behind, he cracked, "*Whoa*, I like *that* sound!" After five or six takes, all of which seemed acceptable, Quincy abruptly stopped the tape in mid-take and went into the room with her. He took the tambourine and out of nowhere began playing it—and playing it well. He told her how to get more of a sixteenth-note feel, demonstrating exactly the rhythm he wanted. Then, just as quickly, he returned to the board and she reproduced the part in a couple of takes. The track was done.

There had been no condescension in his coaching, and certainly no suggestion that he could've just as easily done the part himself. But one was left with the unmistakable impression that the man had become

BY NELSON GEORGE

part of the music in a way that the word "producer" was unable to convey.

At the age of forty-nine, Quincy Jones is at the pinnacle of an impressive career in music. His sweep of this year's Grammy awards was only the public manifestation of an impeccable reputation within the industry as a studio miracle-maker, a reputation that has produced a long line of big-name clients hoping the magic will rub off on them. For much of his career, first as a trumpet player, then a manager, he was associated with jazz and regarded by many as the logical successor to the masters of the big band idiom, Count Basie and Duke Ellington. But while he still uses arranging techniques learned at the knee of the masters, his chief weapons are no longer the interplay of brass and reeds but an intricate mesh of electronic instruments and state-of-the-art studio technology.

The range of his accomplishments, hyperbole aside, is simply astounding. He arranged *Sinatra Live In Las Vegas At The Sands* with the Count Basie Orchestra. His *Newport 1961, This Is How I Feel About Jazz* and *Quintessence* were three of the last great big band albums. The tense soundtracks to *The Pawnbroker, In Cold Blood, In the Heat of the Night* and *The Getaway*, were his work. For the tube, Jones composed the brassy *Ironside* and majestic *Roots* themes. He took a chance on Lesley Gore and produced the infectious soap opera pop of "It's My Party," "You Don't Own Me," and "Judy's Turn To Cry." Most recently he has produced a string of classy, technically assured and funky black pop albums for the Brothers Johnson, Rufus and Chaka Khan, George Benson and Michael Jackson, as well as his own multi-Grammy winner, *The Dude*. That is just a brief sampling of his post-1960 work, which doesn't include his pre-1960 writing and arranging for Dizzy Gillespie, Dinah Washington, Ray Charles, Clifford Brown, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, Chuck Willis, Lionel Hampton and a legion of others.

> "You have to understand that recording is a strange animal. These guys are working in the fastest lane you can get."

What kind of man is able to deal with such a wide variety of music? Well, for one thing, a man who lives in Los Angeles, the car-craziest town in America, and doesn't drive, residue from years in New York and Chicago. "Q," as his friends call him, has the cool, hip quality associated with veterans of the bebop era. Words like "cat" and "man" flow easily from his mouth, as do references to pretty women, hanging out and urban street life that you'd expect from someone many years his junior. That youthful vitality, tempered by a wisdom acquired the hard way, are strong elements of Jones's personality and both are definitely felt in his music.

There is a clearly identifiable Quincy Jones Sound, a breathtaking immediacy to the vocals, a clarity and a presence to the instruments, a warmth and a grit to the rhythms. Despite a profusion of instruments, there is never clutter; despite the cleanliness and tightness, there is never sterility. The wealth of detail, the careful weaving of individual elements, never obscures the point of the music; the focus is always on the artist. He is now working with his third generation of musicians, the only one of his bop contemporaries (save Miles) who is still contemporary and still has a major impact on music. With one foot squarely in the world of ultra-technology and sales figures and the other in the street, Quincy is a rock Renaissance man: from bebop to rock 'n' roll to soul and film scores, Quincy has done just about everything that can be done in music, yet he still is fresh and open to new sounds and ideas. Perhaps his growing interest in film is the logical place for his overflow of talents to spill into, and his friendship with director Steven Spielberg may yield a film collaboration in the near-future. Quincy frequently talks about his music in cinematic terms and it was there that we began our conversation.

MUSICIAN: *When you were accepting one of your Grammy Awards this spring you made an analogy between a record producer and a film director. How did you mean that?*
QUINCY: Film has always been a love of mine since I was fifteen years old. I love film almost as I love music. So when you love something, you watch it closely, whether it is an art, a craft or your lady, and you come to know it well. Over the years I have seen that the jobs of the record producer and director are quite similar, particularly with all the state-of-the-art technology that rains in on us every few weeks.
MUSICIAN: *Some feel that technology is, in fact, overrunning music, substituting form for substance.*
QUINCY: You can't let it; you have to understand it and use it accordingly. After all, this equipment is here to stay. This will be the digital decade in another three to four years.
MUSICIAN: *Yet you're not really using it.*
QUINCY: I don't think it's been perfected or developed enough yet.
MUSICIAN: *Your engineer Bruce Swedien was saying you used it on the George Benson album and found that you were losing a certain amount of sound.*
QUINCY: I think it will be ready soon. But it still has to be developed to deal with all the characteristics of sound. It scans the sounds and analyzes them scientifically, but it loses those unscientific sounds. There is build-up and dirt that you *want* that it eliminates. It's too clean and I don't want my music to sound like that because it is not conceived that way. Music is conceived in passion and should sound like it.
MUSICIAN: *How would you define the role of the producer?*
QUINCY: Let me put it this way. If the record bombs, the producer didn't give it a good mix; he picked the wrong sounds; the band was wrong; it wasn't in the right key; the tempo was messed up; all of that stuff is on him. You're dealing with millions and millions of minor details. The producer has to be concerned also with an overall vision that comes organically from what the artist is all about, their essence. I don't believe that the artist necessarily has to agree with how you perceive them. Sometimes it is very difficult for them to understand what they're all about and the things they haven't tried. They know very well what they've done before, but not the new things. The producer's role, and the director's role, is to bring these things out of an artist.

Once you define the essence then you have to find the right canvas for it, one that enhances that essence. It is a very personal trip. I like it a lot because it gives me a chance to do everything I've done over the years. Every seven years it seems I change. I've been a record executive, an arranger, a conductor, a film composer, a bandleader and worked with every singer out there from Billie Holiday on. In fact, back in the days when I worked with Dinah Washington, I was actually producing, though we didn't know it then. They'd give you a song and you'd do all the arrangements for it and decide just what it would sound like on record. Then you'd sit in the booth between the engineer and the "producer" and all he'd do is say, "Take one." They just recorded whatever you did.

But that was a blessing in disguise because it really gave you a chance to understand what you were doing and I draw on that experience now.

Whether you're making a film or a record, it's really about making sure you get the details right. The smallest, tiniest detail can make a tremendous difference. You don't indiscriminately put on a horn part, a percussion part or a guitar part. I've been in a recording studio thirty-two years. By now I understand intuitively that there are certain things you can put on a record to create an illusion or an emotion. You can't pile things on. You can put a lot of things on a record and the listener will

never hear them.

MUSICIAN: *You use a lot of different arrangers in your productions, Johnny Mandel, Greg Phillinganes, David Foster, though you clearly could do it all yourself.*

QUINCY: It always ends up sounding like us anyway, you know (laughs). But you just can't physically do it all; produce, compose, arrange on every album. So you take the role of the director in a film. You get the best screenwriters, the best cinematographer and you go at it well armed. You can't afford to be an *auteur.*

You have to have a big vision of the entire project. So if you have to take care of every little detail yourself, such as writing arrangements and songs, your energy slowly ebbs, and you end up with good little fragments, but no cohesive whole. It's hard to keep that ball up in the air sometimes. We've been working on this Donna Summer project on and off for six months. You've got to have more and more enthusiasm, not less, as time goes on. By the time you're mixing you have to have more enthusiasm than when you started.

MUSICIAN: *You have made bebop records, big band records, and kept on going right through rock 'n' roll to now. What do you view as the biggest change in instrumentation during your career? In the past I've heard you mention that it was the introduction of the electric bass.*

QUINCY: I did the very first recording with the Fender bass back in 1953 with Monk Montgomery playing. We did an album together called *Work Of Art* and we did some recording in France with Gigi Grice and Clifford Brown. Leo Fender gave Monk the prototype of the bass and asked him to take it on the road with Lionel Hampton and see what he thought.

It really changed the music because it ate up so much space. Its sound was so imposing in comparison to the upright bass, so it couldn't have the same function. You couldn't just have it playing 4/4 lines because it had too much personality. Before the electric bass and the electric guitar, the rhythm section was the support section, backing up the horns and piano. But when they were introduced, everything upstairs had to take the back seat. The rhythm section became the stars.

Once the kids emulated Bird, Miles, Coltrane; the men today are Stanley Clarke, Louis Johnson. All because of a technological development. The old styles didn't work anymore and it created a new language. It shows the relationship between technology and aesthetics.

MUSICIAN: *As a man who cut his teeth on bebop and big band jazz, doesn't it bother you to some degree that all that music has been forgotten or ignored by young people and become such a minority music?*

QUINCY: But it was then, too. There was Dizzy Gillespie bebop big band and things like that. Yet modern jazz was never a mass music. We came out of the birth of that music into probably the worst era in American music, the 1950s. A real dry spot. Folk music. *Davey Crocket. Mule Train.* Frankie Laine. It was very hard for me to swallow that coming out of bebop, you know. It was very hard to eat.

MUSICIAN: *Weren't you arranging a lot of dates then?*

QUINCY: About midway into the 50s I started doing them. But in 1955 I was still stone into bebop...playing with Lionel Hampton's band.

MUSICIAN: *You were arranging for Tommy Dorsey's television show when Elvis Presley appeared on it in the mid-50s. Do you remember the reaction?*

QUINCY: (laughs) Well, the band was not too crazy about him at all. Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey were the summer substitute for the *Jackie Gleason Show* and I believe the show was called *Saturday Night Bandstand.* Elvis came on and he couldn't keep time. His timing was real bad. The Dorsey guys couldn't (or wouldn't) play with him. So they finally had to bring some guys up from Nashville. Strange. I really don't remember that many details because who knew how significant it was going to be? In an era when "Yellow Rose Of Texas" was a smash, you didn't think this Elvis cat would have much chance of making it.

MUSICIAN: *It was about this time that you moved over to France, wasn't it?*

QUINCY: In America, despite doing some pop sessions, I was still labeled a jazz arranger, which meant I could work with

Quincy's cavalcade of stars: (l. to r.) Stevie Wonder, Brenda Russell, Michael Jackson, Dionne Warwick, Lionel Richie, Christopher Cross, Dara Bernard, Kenny Loggins, Michael McDonald and James Ingram.

big bands, but never strings. So I got a job in Paris with Barclay Records to give me a chance to study with Nadia Boulanger and learn how to write for strings. Over there I did 250 sessions and I worked as music director, the kind of position and responsibility I would never have gotten here.

Then I came back to America and got involved with a proposed Broadway show called *Free and Easy*. The idea was to tour Europe and then come back and open on Broadway. Harold Nicholas was in that show. So was Patti Austin, then about seven years old. Dinah Washington was her godmother.

We were supposed to meet Sammy Davis, Jr. in England and then head back to the States. This was one of the first shows when they used the band right on the stage. Had eighteen pieces. Played Holland, Belgium, the Netherlands and then headed for Paris. Suddenly the Algerian crisis was on

Quincy displays Grammy booty; when you're hot....

and we never got to see Sammy. The show folded. The producers told us we were gonna go home with the guaranteed transportation, which left the next day. Most of the musicians said, "No way." We were going to fight it out. So we were stuck over there without regular gigs for ten months.

MUSICIAN: *Tested your ingenuity.*

QUINCY: And everything else (laughs)...it was the closest I've ever come to suicide in my life. It was tough, real tough. An eighteen-piece band, with thirty-one people and two dogs, drifting around Europe looking for work. No agent. No manager. I called everybody I knew and we did everything we could do to keep it together. I had Clark Terry, Phil Woods, Melba Liston. Just an incredible band. I could talk on that one trip alone for hours.

I thought because our music was good we were gonna make it. Man, it kicked our butts. That's when I learned there was a business side to music and I was determined to know it inside and out. Because of that trip and owing so much money I had to sell my publishing companies. Man, I was down to the bone. In fact, I had gotten a loan of $14,000 against one of my publishing companies, not realizing that the contract said if I didn't pay him back by a certain time, he'd own it. Well, he owns it (laughs). Everything I wrote for Basie is in that catalog. I still receive money as a writer, but he gets all the publishing, simply because I didn't know what I was signing. All the stuff I wrote for Sonny Stitt, Clifford Brown, Milt Jackson and Dizzy I don't control. But, man, you got to keep on stepping.

It turned out to be a blessing. I had to get a job and so I signed with Mercury, first as an A&R man, then as vice-president. I believe I was the first black v.p. at a major label. I was there when Mercury merged with Philips of Europe, which today is PolyGram. We started that whole operation here. We had the Singing Nun, Lesley Gore, and all that stuff.

MUSICIAN: *How does Quincy Jones, great jazz arranger, come to produce a Lesley Gore?*

QUINCY: Well, two of us, Harold Moody and myself, had the reputation of being "bebop guys" since we were the only guys on the A&R staff who were really practicing musicians. They always laughed at us, I'd be doing Sarah Vaughan with strings and some other very musical things. But they'd sell about 111 records. So it got to be a challenge. They threw this demo at me at one of the review meetings in Chicago. They were about to send it back when I said, "Let me have it." The girl was in tune, which was unusual for a pop singer. So I went to New York and found "It's My Party." We cut it on a Saturday. I went to Japan for three weeks and when I got back it was number one. We had many hits with her, "Judy's Turn To Cry," "You Don't Own Me." That went to number two and everybody was complaining at the company about why it didn't go to number one. Then three weeks later there were twelve Beatles singles up there. We didn't realize how lucky we were.

MUSICIAN: *What did you think about the Beatles' music at that time?*

QUINCY: At first I didn't get the message...the first thing about them that really knocked me out was when they did Bobby Scott's "A Taste Of Honey." I didn't really get into them until much later. You gotta realize that until then America completely dominated the world market. I mean a song like the Platters' "Only You" was number one in France for nine months. The idea of a foreign group coming into America and giving anybody serious trouble was unbelievable. That was a commercial revolution.

It's funny. We just recorded McCartney with Michael Jackson a couple of weeks ago and we were talking about things. The guy is forty years old. That's hard to believe. He looks good and his head seems to be in a good place.

MUSICIAN: *His music seems to be getting stronger as well.*

QUINCY: It is a lot of pressure being a Beatle...Lennon's death affected him greatly. It brought a lot of things into focus. That'll make you mighty serious.

MUSICIAN: *What about the pressure of a multi-platinum* Off The Wall *and all those Grammys for* The Dude?

QUINCY: No pressure, man. I feel real happy. I've already made most of my mistakes. I take it in stride. That's why I'm not an advocate of success coming to an artist too young. If you happen to go to the major leagues with only three or four years behind you, you don't have enough of a reservoir to stay there. I've watched three generations of stars go all the way up and come all the way down. Hundreds of people.

Everybody wants to make it right away. Twenty-three years old and washed up. When my generation got into music we did it because we loved it. Our idols weren't making any money. Charlie Parker was starving to death. We never got Rolls Royces and a pound of blow.

MUSICIAN: *What does all this success and attention mean to a young man like Michael Jackson?*

QUINCY: He is the essence of what a performer and an artist are all about. Michael has got all you need emotionally, but he backs it up with discipline and pacing. He'll never burn himself out...always on the case about knowing his direction and how he'd like to grow.

MUSICIAN: *I understand that he's a real pro in the studio.*

QUINCY: Oh, man, he'd come in during *Off The Wall* and put down two lead vocals and three background parts in one day. He does his homework and rehearses and works hard at home. Most singers want to do everything in the studio. They're lazy. Michael Jackson is going to be the biggest star of the 80s and 90s.

MUSICIAN: *The production on Jackson's records like "Heartbreak Hotel" is very much influenced by you. But his lyrics have a quirky personal approach quite different from what Motown and others have given him.*

QUINCY: Very dramatic. Very concise. When he commits to

an idea he goes all the way with it. He has the presence of mind to feel something, conceive it and then bring it to life. It's a long way from idea to execution. Everybody wants to go to heaven and nobody wants to die. It's ass power, man. You have to be emotionally ready to put as much energy into it as it takes to make it right.

That's one thing I learned from films. It takes so long. But if you want to make something beautiful, you have to have the spiritual and physical knowledge to pace yourself to make it through. Got to be ready to deal with infinite detail. Only the very best are.

MUSICIAN: *Songwriter Rod Temperton has become your chief collaborator. What is it about his work that attracts you?*

QUINCY: I heard the Heatwave records and I had to look at them like an X-ray to figure out what it was that so knocked me out about them. After listening enough I could see that it was the vision of this one guy, a complete songwriter, not like too many that I've heard before. He has a natural intuitive feeling for counterpoint, not even knowing what it is. That is one of the things in music that really holds it together. I think that is dealing with pop music on a very high level. Without getting too heady about it, counterpoint adds another strong element to a pop song.

He will not stop until it works. Sometimes he gives me fifty titles on a song. I love a writer who explores all the possibilities and gets into it. It's too easy to just get a couple of ditties together and throw it down. "Take it or leave it," they say. A lot of writers do that. I can't deal with that because it's not enough commitment.

MUSICIAN: *Since you mention commitment, I'm reminded that you and engineer Bruce Swedien have been working together twenty-five years. That's a heck of a marriage.*

QUINCY: We met at Universal Studio in Chicago when I was recording Dinah Washington. He has a similar background to mine. He's done all the jazz greats, funk bands... Natalie Cole, at Chess with Willie Dixon. Bruce was engineer on "Duke Of Earl" (laughs). He did Chuck Berry. Also he was with the Chicago Symphony eleven years. We did films, too. Bruce is the only engineer I know who can do the prerecording on a film, the location shooting, the post-scoring, the dubbing, and the album as well. It's knowing 360 degrees of your stuff. We have no limitations, musically or otherwise. Man, we were back there before we had tapes.

MUSICIAN: *How do you explain why you and Bruce have been able to stay contemporary and have mass impact when most of your contemporaries haven't?*

QUINCY: I don't know, man. It is all the same stuff to me... we are all influenced by the same stimuli. Political events. Social events. We all read the same papers and see the same television shows. If you're alive and living, then you're just as contemporary as anybody thirteen years old.

You can get stuck back in your era. But all you have to do is just go out and listen. Not even consciously. There has been nothing that has happened in the last twenty years of music that has confounded or baffled me musically. If you've got a modern music jazz background, you can hear anything. As kids we all used to run around and listen to Dizzy and Miles and Bird and transcribe those solos. That's how we learned how to play. After you've heard Parker, man, you can hear anything.

Another thing that has helped me was just talking with these guys. I've been writing for Basie since I was fourteen. I used to sit with Duke and throw questions at him. I didn't have to read any book. Dizzy, Duke and the Count would just tell you what happened. Louis Armstrong started it all. Then Roy Eldridge copied him before he developed his own style. Then Dizzy heard Roy Eldridge and copied him before developing *his* own style. That mojo kept on getting passed down.

MUSICIAN: *Is it still being passed on?*

QUINCY: I don't know. The depth of music has diminished a little bit. The emphasis on quality has diminished quite a bit.

MUSICIAN: *Is it possible that a Michael Jackson or a Prince, using the available technology, is still keeping the tradition of creativity going?*

QUINCY: Absolutely. That cat is really talented. There are just certain guys who come along who stand out. When I met Stevie at age fifteen there was never any doubt what he was going to be. All you have to do is want it and go for it. I think Michael has that thing. I think Prince has it too. Just like Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard and Wynton Marsalis are part of that evolution.

Nobody comes along with a style no one's heard before. It's usually a hybrid that develops into something new. There are young guys today who have it, but I see fewer of them. People like Greg Phillinganes, Patrice Rushen, Stanley Clarke. Just to know they're around makes me feel great. Top musicians by any standards.

MUSICIAN: *While you were recording Patti Austin's* Every Home Should Have One *you reportedly were going to do everything in New York, but later came back to Los Angeles to finish the album. Word was you were dissatisfied with the New York session cats.*

"You have to have a big vision of the entire project. If you take care of every little detail yourself, your energy slowly ebbs."

QUINCY: All these guys are good. You have to understand that recording is a strange animal, man. These guys are working in the fastest lane you can get. When you get a reputation, it's like you're the fastest gun in the West and everybody wants to draw on you. You expect these guys to come in there over 300 days a year and create lightning and magic. That's a killer. Sometimes you don't get that lightning to strike. We're all human, man. I was going to take two months to do Donna's album and now this is month number six.

MUSICIAN: *You recently worked with another group of musicians from back East, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. How was that?*

QUINCY: Well, I tell you I had a whole wrong view of him before we met. The cat was beautiful. One of the nicest people I have ever worked with. He had an open mind. No preconceived notions. I could tell he gave up everything to write for Donna. He wrote three songs and then asked for a little more time to get them right, which I could understand.

He wrote this song and wasn't sure whether it was a duet. So I said, "Let's try it, Bruce." He had all of the stops written and came in and cut a demo with the E Street Band. He had all the synthesizer parts written out. Just one of the sweetest guys I've ever met.

The man has more musical knowledge than a lot of people think and has a deep sense of commitment to music. You could feel his spirit in the sessions. He did every take like it was the last show at Madison Square Garden. He really gave it up. Instead of fading the song he gave every song an in-concert ending. Fantastic.

MUSICIAN: *After Donna Summer's album, what do you have scheduled?*

QUINCY: Michael Jackson's album, which already is under way; that should be finished by mid-summer. I'm going to tour in the U.S. for the first time in many years. We did some concerts in Japan last year and recorded a live LP in Budokan for the Japanese market, which may be released here someday. After Michael, I'll do James Ingram's album. We're going to really surprise people with that one; there's more grit and power in his voice than "Just Once" or "One Hundred Ways" reveals. He's going to cut loose on that.

MUSICIAN: *What about the Dude?*

QUINCY: Well, the Dude will have nothing new to say until 1983. He's just going to cool out for awhile. M

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THE WORKING MUSICIAN

The Instruments, The People, The Process

BILL BRUFORD

Art-rock's most tasteful drummer, a veteran of Yes, King Crimson, Genesis and U.K., invents a new style for a new music.

BY MICHAEL SHORE

EBET ROBERTS

Bruford's sprawling "mutant kit" includes hexagonal Simmons electronic drums, Dragon drums, Rototoms and other oddities.

"I used to fantasize about being a jazz drummer when I grew up," laughs Bill Bruford, stretching his long lean frame and shaking the taut blond curls atop his beaming boyish face. The progressive rock master drummer currently in his second go-round propelling King Crimson pauses and sighs.

"No more. I mean, I grew up listening to Riverside and Blue Note jazz albums, Charlie Persip and Art Blakey. I could listen to that stuff all day. It's like a warm bath for me. But as much as I like it, I need something a little more, um, rugged and stimulating than a warm bath sometimes. So, I'm a rock drummer. But I like to think that underneath there's something, something probably jazz-related, that enables me to bring something a bit different to it."

Bruford's gift for understatement is astonishing. In a career spanning nearly fifteen years drumming for British art-rock's A team—Crimson, Yes, Genesis, U.K.—as well as cult underdogs like National Health and Gong, this amiably mannered Englishman has consistently distinguished himself in a field full of chops champions. His technique is immaculate, his precision, even with the most daunting time signatures, irreproachable. Yet he has always stood somewhat apart from his peers. Where many of them descend into what Crimson boss Robert Fripp dismisses as "calisthenic displays of virtuosity," Bruford maintains a tasteful—shall we say, musicianly—restraint. There is definitely something of the jazz drummer's rigorous respect for the rest of his ensemble in Bruford's team playing.

Bruford is also recognized among colleagues and laymen for his distinctive percussive palette and methodology. His trademark snare sound is a crisp, penetrating, ringing pop beat captured on Crimson's live *USA* LP. Instead of incessant octopus rolls around mammoth kits, he sparingly deals out ingenious rhythmic inversions, trap-door angularities, and delicate filigrees that reveal their own idiosyncratic logic. There are many Great Moments in Bruford Drumming—the tumbling rhythmelodic eruptions in Crimson's "One More Red Nightmare" on *Red*, the dramatic instrumental overture of Yes' "Heart Of The Sunrise," the croupier's shuffle of creamy-smooth snare press-rolls and lurking syncopated high-hat interjections in "Lark's Tongue In Aspic Part 2," arguably one of King Crimson's all-time finest hours. For such steady inventiveness, lightning reflexes and attention to detail, Bruford has earned the bellowed admiration of maniacal fans who chant "Bru-ford! Bru-ford!" at Crimson shows the way people from New Jersey shout "Bru-u-uce! Bru-u-uce!" at Springsteen concerts.

But lately there has been a big change in Bruford's style. On *Discipline* and *Beat*, the two Crimson Mark 2 albums, he dispenses with the cymbals (ride and high-hat) and clever turnaround embellishments, instead laying down dense polyrhythms on various toms and electronic drums. He keeps cranking out a

rock 4/4 on the snare, but many of the usual Brufordian flourishes are gone. This is a new King Crimson with its static-motion drones and the interlocking Fripp-Adrian Belew guitar mosaics. And new music requires a new drummer.

"Anyone who read Robert's *Musician* diaries knows about the philosophical discussions we had about the drummer's role, about *everyone*'s role, in this band," Bruford explains. "About playing less when you want to play more, about not having a *high-hat*, Jesus... I had to discard a lot of old equipment and a lot of old ideas. Robert helped me shake off a lot of my old 70s vocabulary.

"But in some senses, the changes I've made are purely physical, purely textural. If you watch me in concert, you'll see that a lot of the tom-tom polyrhythms are really me transferring right-hand ride cymbal patterns from the cymbal to my five Dragon drums, which are long acrylic tubes of varying depths, all about four inches in diameter."

The recent *Beat* in particular finds Bruford keeping rather funky straight time with a fatter snare sound closer to that of Alan White (his successor in Yes). "You noticed that, huh?" he smiles. "This album was something of a turning point for me in that I went with that fatter snare sound and a lot of the time held myself to just keeping time, even droppping in and out with just straight time like on 'Neal And Jack And Me.' But though half of me misses the old days, with the rim-shot snare and everything else, the other half of me is loving that fat snare and just marking the time. The fat snare sound, which just means tuning the heads a little slacker and laying off the rim, is more *felt*. It drives the band in a different way."

Taking into account tuning, climate, sticks, grip, room acoustics and drum heads, the secret of Bruford's trademark snare thwack is apparently in the way he hits it. "I originally developed that style just to be heard, when Yes was playing the Marquee and everyone else had these banks of amps and I had no mikes on my kit." He relies on a deep concert snare, 14" x 6½", both Remo Ambassador heads tuned equally and tight with the drum's extra depth preventing the tuning from sounding choked or shallow. The drum is angled virtually flat, parallel to the ground and Bruford uses the butt end of the stick to hit the rim, "just about any old good medium stick."

Bruford at one time used a Ludwig Supersensitive snare drum but now swears by a Tama bell-brass. What other acoustic drums, pedals and hardware he uses are Tama "because they're well built and sound as good as a drum should sound. I've always said that the sound is more down to the drummer than the drum. With certain exceptions, a drum is a drum is a drum."

Ironically, those "exceptions" make up the bulk of Bruford's present kit, a monstrous hybrid stretching some five or six feet across (Bruford's got incredibly long arms, so no problem). Going across from the high-hat side to the floor-tom side (although he uses neither high-hat nor floor-toms these days), he has three Simmons electronic drums (flat, yellow hexagonal pads), a 14" Remo Rototom with Fiberskyn head mounted on a 22" x 14" wooden Tama bass drum, five Dragon drums, three more Simmons drums, and a 24" Tama gong drum with a head extending two inches beyond the shell diameter which gives it a sustained, resonant note. Where the high-hat should be, there is another floor-mounted pedal-activated Simmons drum which he uses as an extra bass drum or tom or as an auxiliary snare when both hands are busy with tom-tom polyrhythms.

For cymbals, he sticks to Paiste. The metalworks on this kit consist of an inverted 20" 2002 China Type on the high-hat side, a 22" 2002 Ride (or a 20" Formula 602 Medium Ride with sizzles) on the other, next to which stands a 16" Formula 602 Thin Crash mounted by the gong drum. There are also an 11" Formula 602 Splash and various 4" to 8" bell-cymbals, actually the cups cut from old, larger cymbals.

"The Simmons drums," says Bruford of his main arsenal, "took a lot of getting used to. Their surfaces are polycarbonate, which is what they make British police riot shields from. It's hard stuff, in effect like playing on a Formica tabletop. Not only does it throw off your feel—especially when you've got acoustic drums mixed in with them the way I do—but you break sticks all the time and you get these horrible little shocks through your wrist from hitting them too hard.

"Each drum pad," he continues, explaining the Simmons method, "is connected to a programmable module with memories for up to four different sounds, from pure pitched tom-tom sounds to white-noise accentuated snare sounds to metallic or wooden noises. So each drum is effectively four drums; if you have a basic four-piece kit of these things, you immediately have sixteen drums. You could go from a heavy rock kit sound to a toppy jazz kit sound at the flick of a switch. You've got all sorts of malleable synthesizer-type controls, like pitch, bend, attack, decay, sustain, noise-to-tone ratio and click-to-drum sound, all that.

"Most of the time I just use them for tom-tom sounds. But for example, the clinking metallic sound you hear on 'Heartbeat' on the *Beat* album is Simmons drums and the clackety woodblock sounds at the beginning of 'Sartori In Tangier' are Simmons drums. There's also a mounted Simmons pad I use for high-hat sounds, which pop up a bit on *Beat*: it's hooked to a wired-up sort of high-hat pedal, so the pad gives you the swish and the pedal gives you the opening or closing chick or chock. You just program it and hit it up."

Bruford is proudest of the way he utilized the Simmons drums' melodic capabilities on *Beat*'s "Waiting Man." There the electronic pads produce a sonorous wooden sound that remarkably resembles the slatted African log drum he uses on *Beat*'s "Two Hands" and *Discipline*'s "Sheltering Sky." "At the beginning of 'Waiting Man,'" he relates, "Tony Levin began this bass riff and I immediately came in with this Simmons drum pattern that was in harmony with it. Then the guitars fell in with it and actually at one point replicated my drum pattern. There's an example of true melodic drumming that is really functioning as part of the musical whole."

Then there are those moments on *Beat*, like "Neurotica" and "Requiem," where Bruford reverts and gives forth, clanging ride cymbals and all, with his most volcanic freebop drumming since the opening section of Yes' "Close To The Edge."

"Ah, that was fun," he sighs, grinning broadly. "On those tracks, I was actually ordered by Robert to play cymbal time and freak out. On 'Requiem' I used this fabulous big Paiste flat-ride cymbal, which has no cup so it doesn't build overtones. You should really turn up your stereo to hear the sound of the stick on that cymbal.

"It was really funny in the studio, because next to this humungous mutant kit I've got now was a good old little jazz kit for those tracks: snare, bass, two toms, two cymbals, two overhead mikes, and one mike on the kit, just like I used to use. It looked forlorn next to the big kit, but it was great to sort of go back to the old days a bit, get back to my roots."

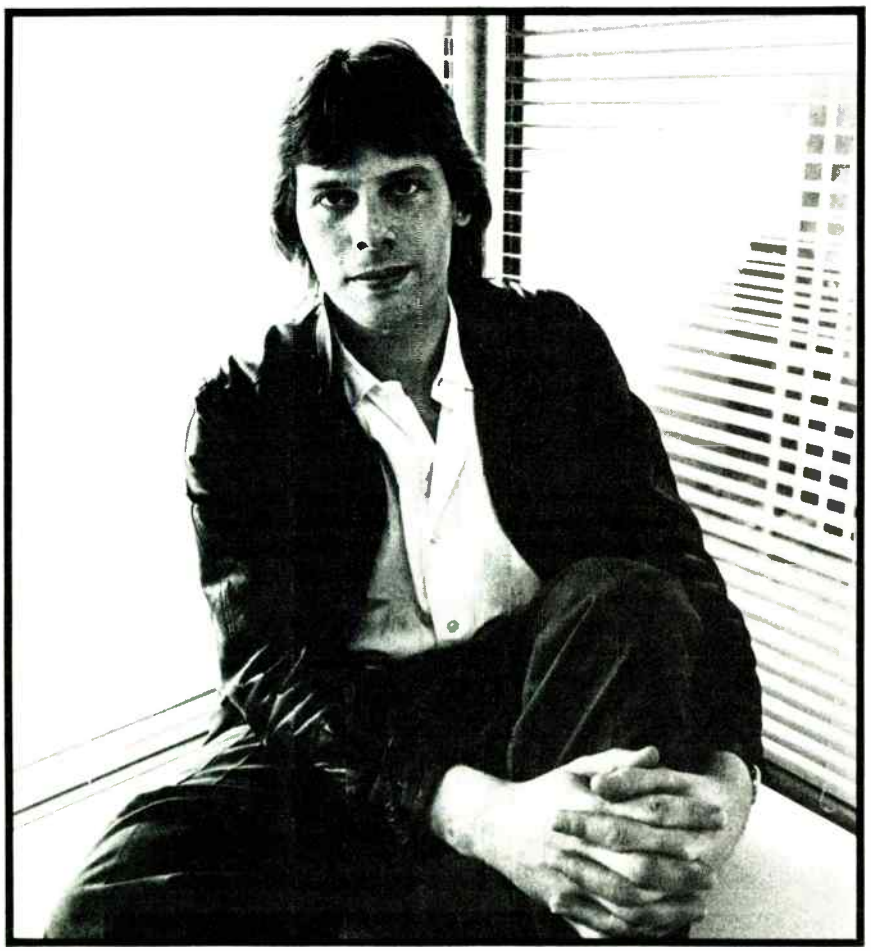
And how does Bill Bruford see his art-rock roots these days? While running off a list of heroes—Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, Charlie Persip—he cites King Crimson's original drummer Michael Giles as his first big "rock" influence. He mentions a demonstration videotape that he made for a Baltimore company which includes archive footage of Bruford pounding it out with Yes and Crimson, noting that he was "pretty pleasantly surprised" at seeing it. "Not just at the performance of the bloke on the drums, but the whole thing. We believed in what we were doing back then." M

P R O D U C I N G

PRODUCER HUGH PADGHAM

Accident & Abuse with the Police, Genesis

BY DAVID FRICKE



RITA RIFF

Padgham is known for his creative use of space and his dramatic drum sounds.

Necessity is supposed to be the mother of invention. But twenty-seven-year-old Hugh Padgham—the British producer and engineer who in the last year has scored astonishing back-to-back successes with Genesis, the Police, XTC and Split Enz—makes a very convincing case for accident and abuse.

"It was at the Townhouse, Studio Two in London that I discovered this incredible live drum sound that I got with Phil Collins on his solo album," relates Padgham, a cheery, modest but talkative fellow with sandy brown hair cut in a Beatle-ish mop, between bites of a super-sandwich in a noisy Manhattan deli. One day, during the sessions for Collins's *Face Value* which Padgham was engineering and coproducing, "Phil was playing the drums in the studio and I opened the 'listen' mike to hear what he was playing. And the most *ridiculous* sound came out, these drums absolutely compressed. I knew we just had to use that."

Or take his heavy-handed way with studio gizmos like the compressor. "An engineer recording a vocal," he continues, straining to be heard over the crash of dishes and jabbering waiters, "will usually set up the compressor the way it's supposed to work, to put a little extra bite or punch into the track. But I like to abuse it. It may not show much on his records, but Phil Collins really loves John Lennon's singing and tries to sound a bit like him, that real strangulated sound with the rock 'n' roll echo. So what we do is compress Phil's voice, really overdoing it so the needle's hammering over the end stop. Who cares about .5 distortion? That's a great sound."

Padgham's last four hit productions (Genesis's *abacab*, *Ghost In The Machine* by the Police, XTC's top twenty U.K. smash *English Settlement*, and Split Enz's number one Australian LP *Time And Tide*) are full of "great sounds" and unorthodox ways of getting them. But there is definitely purpose behind Padgham's maverick ways. Taking a cue from his *Face Value* experience and his earlier engineering on Peter Gabriel's crucial, experimentally percussive third LP (produced by Steve Lillywhite), Padgham sliced away much of the art-rock fat from the traditional Genesis sound with that compressed Collins drum sound and a leaner "live" band sound to highlight the angular, almost Police-like bounce of the songs on *abacab*. In rather ironic contrast, he discreetly applied synthesizers and double-tracked Sting's string bass with electric bass to create the illusion of murky liquid space on the Police hits "Invisible Sun" and "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic."

His chameleonic ability to adjust to radical differences between the bands he produces (the folk-rock acoustic slant of the XTC album, Split Enz's arty Beatlesque excursions) suggest Padgham has no trademark sound of his own. Which he does—and doesn't.

"I like to be as transparent as possible," he demurs, "just a catalyst to make the band sound good on record. After all, it's the band's record, not mine. Say Sting usually has a song written in his head or demo'd and he already knows the vibe he wants with it. My job is to recreate that."

Yet Padgham's work is identifiable through his creative manipulation of space within and around a song. On *English Settlement* numbers like "Senses Working Overtime" and "Melt The Guns," he uses the compound acoustic guitars as a light scrim separating Andy Partridge's lead vocals from the artful bop of the band and Dave Gregory's meatier lead guitar. His insistence on that dramatic "live" drum sound means he will often sacrifice other instruments—double- or triple-tracked guitars, gratuitous keyboard clutter—to maintain a strong percussive thrust.

"XTC's records, for example, often depend on the strange rhythms they get into. So I have come to the conclusion that when there's too much going on in a song, you toss things. I would rather have a few things heard well than loads of things that you can't hear well.

"Like when we did 'In The Air Tonight' on Phil Collins's album, when the drums

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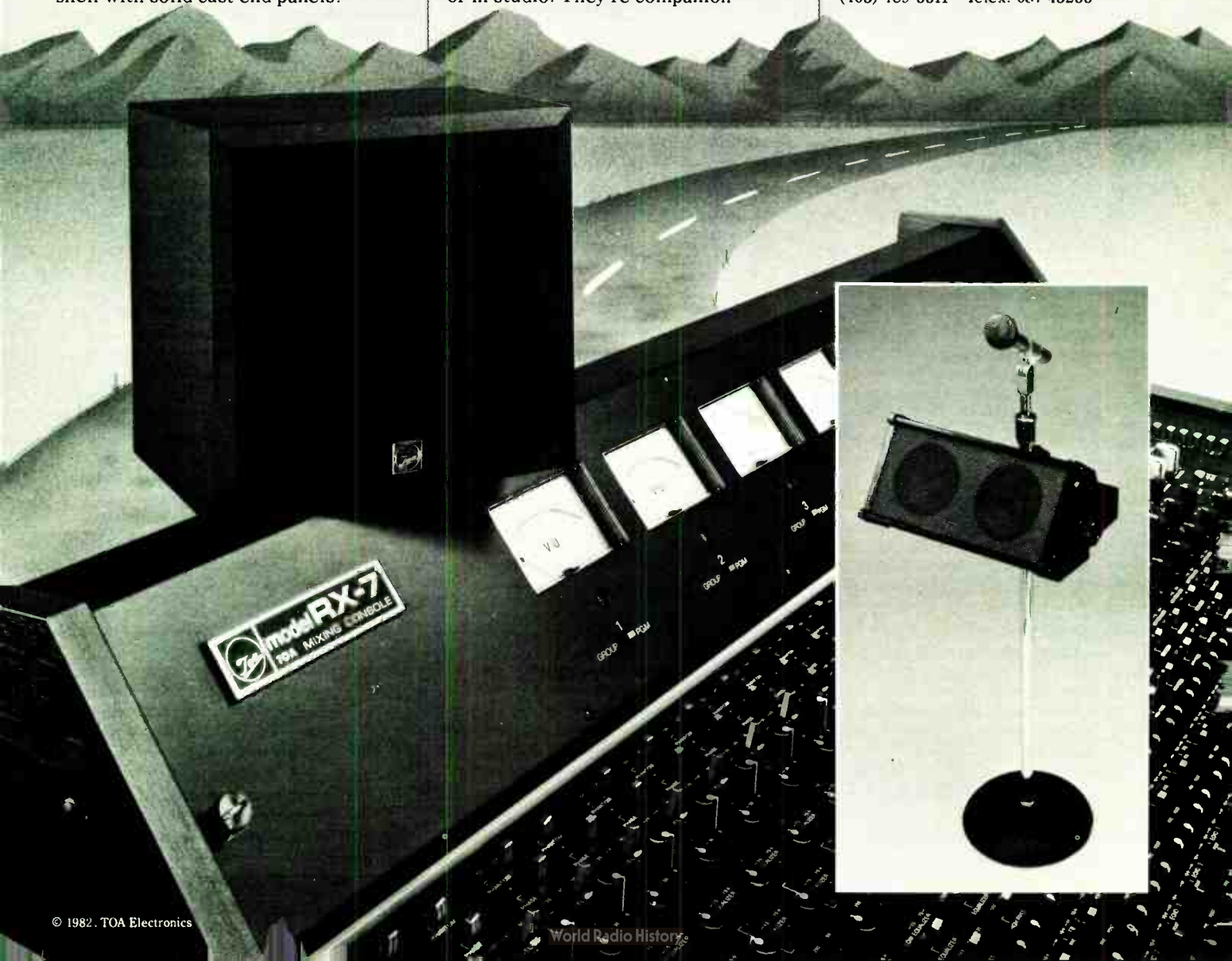

come crashing in at the end, there's more things going on in the background than you can actually hear. We actually ended up using a rough mix of that track on the album because it had such a good vibe to it. Let the world have drums, I say. Everything else on that track just creates an ambience behind them."

Padgham's heavy drum bias comes from his days as a drummer in his old school band (he hails from the green rolling-hill countryside outside London). He briefly switched over to bass guitar but found his life's calling when he took to taping band rehearsals on an old mono Ferragraph tape recorder. Come the mid-70s, the usual round of resumes landed him jobs in a couple of London studios where he was a tape operator on sessions for everyone from Shirley Bassey and teen heartthrob David Essex to Uriah Heep and Japanese avant-percussionist Stomu Yamash'ta.

His experience helping to build the Townhouse—Virgin Records' London house studio where Padgham engineered and mixed sides for the Jam, Spandau Ballet, XTC, Dr. Feelgood and Public Image Ltd.—paid off when Genesis hired him not just to do *abacab* but to help them build their new converted-garage studio in Surrey while he was doing it. (By the way, the Townhouse Two with its customized "B" series Solid State Logic desk, is Hugh's favorite studio.)

"That track 'abacab' was actually recorded there with no monitor speakers, just these little Auratones. And there was no acoustic control in the control room, just bare plaster walls.

"See, all I need is a good room for the instruments and we had built a good live room for them to put the drums in made out of a stone floor with stone walls. For 'abacab,' Mike (Rutherford) played the bass pedals live while playing guitar and we overdubbed the drums, although the track ended up with a jam at the end."

Padgham's *au naturel* approach to recording extends to preproduction, or actually the lack of it, and mixing as well. For XTC's *English Settlement*, he went straight into the studio with the band with only "really crappy-sounding rough run-through" demos to work from. After cutting a basic rhythm track, he and the band would pow-wow in the control room, engaging in a kind of group therapy in which they would iron out fine points like "maybe changing the sound of Dave's guitar so it didn't sound so much like Andy's or that Andy shouldn't play in the chorus because Dave was playing something there."

Split Enz came into the *Time And Tide* sessions even less prepared. "What we did there," Padgham explains, "was go into the studio and work like death on a song. They'd have a basic idea for a tune and I'd say, 'Well, why don't we make the middle section twice as long, cut out the bridge before it...' and we'd build the song *as a song* in the studio." Then the Enz rehearsed the finished song, recorded one working take so no one would forget it, and then came back a few days later refreshed and ready to cut the real thing in only two or three takes, mostly live with only essential keyboard overdubs.

In the mixing phase, Padgham has long sworn off computers because "it takes away from the human element." He prefers to have one or two members of the band help out. "Between us, we can easily handle twenty-four faders," he grins. "With computers, you get really bogged down—'Oh, maybe we should have the high-hat a tiny bit louder in the second chorus.' In the end, the computer starts ruling the mix." For *Face Value*, he and Collins instead did a lot of short mixes, usually no more than an hour per tune, and kept coming back to a song over a period of days, compiling a variety of different, quite spontaneous mixes from which they selected the one with "the best feel."

And "feel," he swears, is what producing and engineering is all about for him. "I don't have any deep, heavy motivations for making records. I just want and try to entertain people and have a good time. That's what music is all about. Before I got into this business, that's what music did for me. It made me happy, it made me dance."

And does Hugh Padgham dance in a control room while he's recording? "Oh, yeah," he smiles broadly, the freckles on his boyish face exploding with glee. "I'm always jumping up and down. I'm really just another member of the band in the studio with my own instrument. Except I play the console."

P L A Y E R S

BUSTA JONES'S FUNK-PUNK

The Bass Behind the New Wave

BY CHRIS DOERING

EBET ROBERTS

Busta's fatback punch and distilled dance essence keep his phone ringing.

Busta Jones has played his bass just about everywhere in this world that people listen to American music, and his music ranges from blues to disco, from hard rock to the avant-garde of funk. Yet he's never lost touch with his Memphis roots (he grew up with members of the Bar-Kays) or forgotten the lessons he learned from his first big-time boss, blues guitarist Albert King. "Albert taught me to be very definite in everything I play," he says. "He was very insistent on a strong bottom."

They had a word for the kind of bass Busta learned to play while working for Albert King. They called it "fatback," and although the name suggests the taste of fried pigmeat, it was coined because masters of the style like Donald "Duck" Dunn and Al Jackson played a little in *back* of the beat, and they made the music sound *fat*. Paradoxically, the behind-the-beat fatback groove gave the music more drive and momentum.

So it's no wonder that musicians as diverse as Brian Eno (who hired Busta for *Here Come The Warm Jets* and *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*) and Euro-disco producer Gino Soccio have heard something they liked in Busta's playing. He's also worked with guitarist Chris Spedding on and off for nearly ten years, recently toured with Gang of Four, and was a pivotal member of the expanded funked-up Talking Heads, both on the world tour documented on the second half of *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads* and on various Head solo projects. For that tour the Heads hired Busta's whole band after seeing them at

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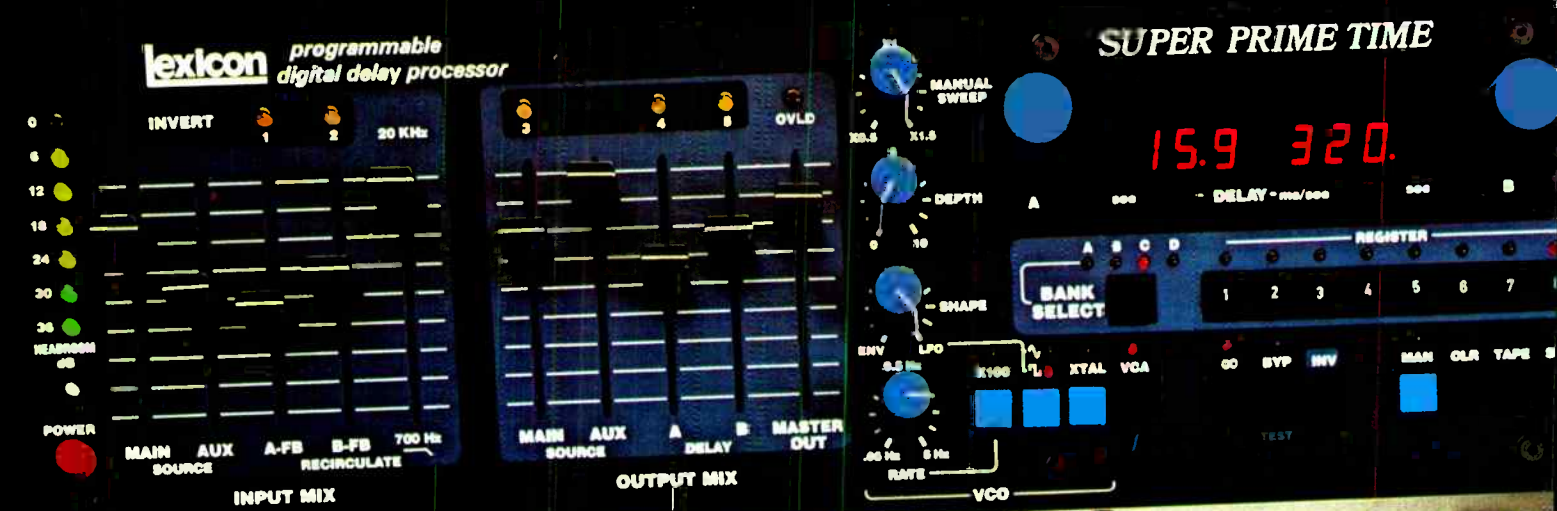

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the Ritz in New York. "Tina and I both played bass on 'Crosseyed And Painless,' 'The Great Curve' and 'Take Me To The River,'" he recalls. "She pretty much played the upper octave of the bass, and I played the bottom. I had never done that before, but it was nice, it gave the music a really big sound."

Bush Of Ghosts and the Heads album that grew out of it, *Remain In Light*, were groundbreaking albums that opened up the territory on which funk and punk now mingle. But as Busta describes them, the sessions were very casual. "We worked on what Brian calls 'exercises,' just different rhythmic things, some straight funk things and some more contrapuntal things where I'd play something and the guitar would do something and then a drum beat, instead of everybody phrasing together. I had been working with Tina, sort of giving her bass lessons. And when you teach someone, you're showing them licks and just a general approach to the instrument, so I guess that had something to do with why they called me for the sessions."

To get a better idea of Busta's approach to the bass and what it has meant to new wave music, compare "The Regiment" from *Bush Of Ghosts* to, say, "Don't You Want Me" by the Human League. The musical notation for both bass lines is almost the same, but the feel is completely different, and not just because the League played their bass line on a keyboard or put in the down-beats that Busta leaves out. We're talking microsecond differences in timing here, but they're differences anyone can hear and feel, and they make the difference between a record you can dance to if you want to (League) and one that makes you want to dance (*Ghosts*).

Part of Busta's sound in the studio is his Fender Precision, customized with DiMarzio P- and J-Bass pickups and a Badass bridge, and the LaBella flatwound strings he uses for recording. He records the bass direct, and his only adjustment is to "go around the instrument, find all the little rattles, and tape them." Flatwound strings have been out of fashion since Larry Graham and Stanley Clarke made the slap-and-pop bass style famous, but Busta's playing is convincing evidence that "that round bass tone works really well in funk and dance-oriented music."

Live is a different story, though, and on *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads* you can hear the sound of Busta's Precision with roundwound strings, and the Ampeg SVT he prefers for stage work. On rock gigs he switches to a wooden Dan Armstrong bass to get even more bite.

Although he's best known as a bassist, Busta has always been involved in writing and production, and his credits in these areas (including two solo albums, collaborations with Jerry Harrison and Chris Spedding, and a Nona Hendryx single) are about to expand with his work on the Ramones' next album. "I really began producing in Montreal with Gino Soccio, although I never got credit for the work I did on those records," he says. "Just from being in the studio so much, I know how the equipment works and how to get different sounds." With the Ramones, "most of the work was done in preproduction rehearsal, so when we went into the studio, they were on. We didn't need to do a lot of takes. See, the Ramones are a band, not just a bunch of session musicians, so what I try to do is get the essence of the band on tape.

"They were really happy that I didn't change them, or try to get them to play anything that they're not. I just showed them how to play what they're playing and make it come off the way they really wanted it. Like when Johnny's playing with his guitar around his knees, he's really trying to get you to see the point, what he's feeling. And the only way he feels that he can make you listen is to play ninety miles an hour. But I showed him he doesn't have to do it like that.

"I thought that Phil Spector (on the Ramones *End Of The Century* LP) was trying to make the sound big and huge by doubling the guitar five or six times and things like that. But what about the playing and the delivery of the parts? The Ramones are known for playing everything really fast, they always race, race, race. So I got them to pull back a little bit, just plant it and sock it a little more, so it's big and fat. Just concentrate on the seed. That's one thing the Heads learned from me, David and I have talked about it quite a bit, because he knows that I have that sense of the essence of it first, the heart of it. Then you can build outward from that."

Busta's next project will be a heavy rock trio with two friends from his Montreal days. It's a dream he's had since he opened concerts for the rock stars of the 70s while playing with Albert King. "I've always wanted to crossover, not the way Prince or Rick James are doing it, because I'm not that slick, but as a real rock 'n' roller, with all the rough edges and everything. It's hard for a black rock act to get a deal, because if you're black you're supposed to just do dance music. But I grew up listening to the same records as everyone else, not just Motown and Stax, but Cream and Hendrix and the British rock bands. I've written a lot of rock songs over the years, and I really feel that it's time for me to get out and do all these things that I've never had a chance to do before."

S O N G W R I T I N G

GREGG ALLMAN

Songwriting with the Revitalized Allmans

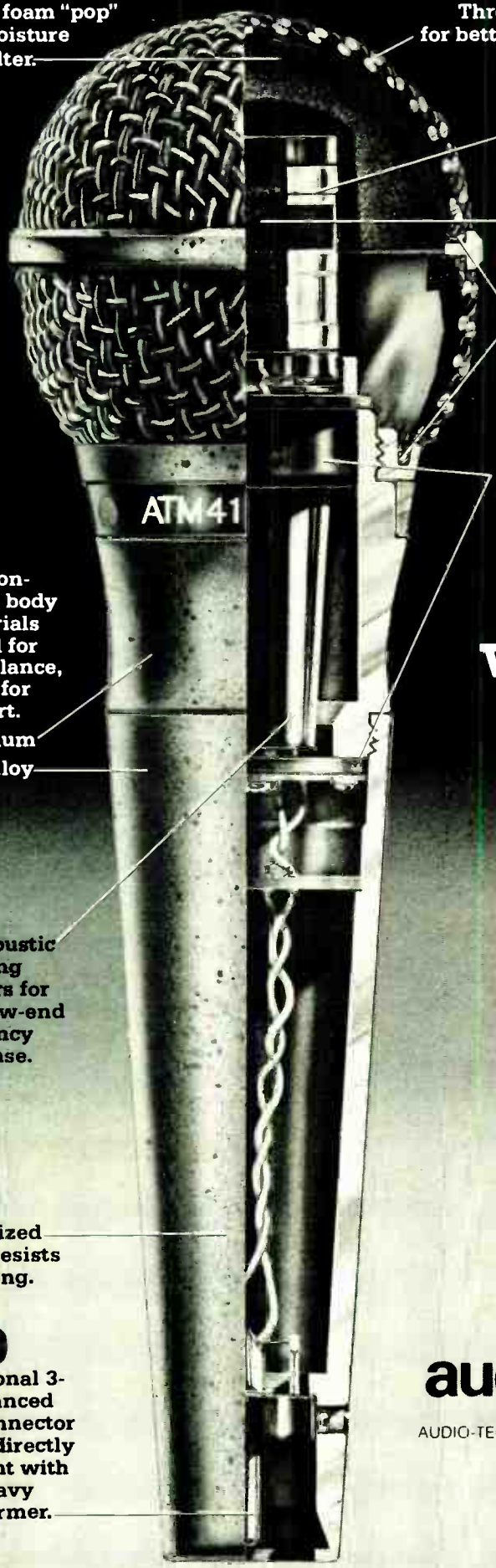
BY BILL FLANAGAN

KIRK WEST/PHOTO RESERVE

Gregg has added hot new players to the old vets, stretching the Allmans' limits.

There are two things immediately surprising about a 1982 Allman Brothers Band concert. The first is consistency: despite changing fashion and a lower public profile, the fathers of Confederate rock can still fill a Yankee arena like Boston Garden with thousands of whooping fans. The second is evolution: new band members Dan Toler (guitar), Frankie Toler (drums) and Rook Goldflies (bass) form an impressive band-within-a-band. While veterans Gregg Allman, Dickey Betts and Butch Trucks maintain the rambling cross of blues, country and soul music influences that is the Allmans' signature, the new kids impose the flash and tightness of a new generation's black/white crossover—fusion.

This new discipline has an accidental ally, too, in the band's recent attention to



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shorter songs. Admittedly, this is an attempt to regain the FM radio play that once went to extended cuts like "Whipping Post" and "Mountain Jam." Their recent hit single "Straight From The Heart" is one indication of success, but a more aesthetically rewarding example is a song Gregg recorded with the Toler brothers in a tiny Chicago studio on a recent free day. "Leading Me On" finds Gregg's soulful growl kicked by the Tolers into virgin territory. The skeleton is R&B, yet the players take the chords and rhythm and stretch them as far as they'll go without ceasing to be rock 'n' roll. Gregg compares the track to Marvin Gaye (I would have said Little Feat) and is only worried about how to edit sixty seconds from its five minutes for the sake of radio. Allman hopes to make "Leading Me On" the first track for his next solo album.

Asked how his solo projects differ from band recordings, Allman smiles, "It's your baby. Yours and yours alone. You have the say-so and if you want to have three washing machines going in stereo, you can do it. If you want a horn, if you want singers, if you want a *gong*...whatever approach you want.

"Not that you don't have that with an Allman Brothers Band album, but with the band, if Dickey or I introduce a song, we introduce it in its rawest form and then everybody takes it. I'll give you a 'for instance,'" Allman offers. "I wrote 'Midnight Rider' in a little less than an hour. A lot of the real good ones just hit you. I got hold of my tour manager and Jaimoe (Allman's drummer Johanny Jai Johnson), and rushed down to the studio. Now, the road manager had never played a bass before in his life. I said, 'All right, hold your fingers like this and do this.' And when I shake my head, stop. I played a 12-string Martin and Jaimoe played congas. We set up three mikes, a 4-track Scully, and hit the button: we recorded with acoustic guitar, congas and electric bass through a D-15 Ampeg. I took that tape, played it to the band and *bang*, we got it all done in one day.

"I can't just sit down and write," Allman says of his songwriting. "It'll hit me at the oddest times. You can be on the *throne*. A lot of times it'll hit you when you're real tired—so tired you're asleep before your head hits the pillow. So I carry a Walkman with a built-in mike. I just sing the part into it so I'll remember, and the next day I score it out.

"I can't read or write music properly. I have a really different way of writing. When I have an idea for a song in my head, I'll write out the lyrics before I've figured out what the chords are going to be. Over each line, I'll put a mark that looks like an asterisk where the downbeats are going to be, so I'll remember the phrasing. It sounds crazy, but it really works. 'Cause you can sing the same words with different phrasing and change the meaning.

"At the end of any line that has an interlude—a music fill—before the next line, I put an arrow, pointing right, with two vertical lines through the stem. For a bridge, I make two vertical lines with an 'S' over them. Like a little river with a bridge. I picked that up from John D. Loudermilk, who wrote 'Break My Mind,' a song Linda Ronstadt recorded. And if I have one line that repeats over and over, I put a horizontal 8—for infinity."

Allman does use standard designations for chords and to note his shifting time signatures. "'Queen Of Hearts' is in 3/4, 6/8 and 11/4," Gregg says. Noting his particular fondness for 11/4, he adds, "In 'Whipping Post,' it gives you an extra two beats to kick off into that next phrase. It's that 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2, 1-2-3...it's like the way a swimmer kicks off from the side of the pool. Five/four, unless you're playing something real soft, doesn't seem strong enough. But if you make those two beats in the 11/4 really solid, people listening won't get lost, it won't sound like something foreign. It won't be like Dave Brubeck's 'Blue Rondo A La Turk' which would drive anyone crazy, trying to dance.

I ask if it's fair to assume that Allman brings more of the blues influence to the band, and Betts the country. "I think that'd be safe to say," he nods. "Originally that was it. But I love country music, too. I was born in Nashville. It's a *wonder* that I like it 'cause my grandmother used to drag me to Miami Auditorium every Saturday night and I'd see rednecks throwing beer bottles at each other. I saw Hank Williams when I was about this high. And we were the first rock 'n' roll band to play the Grand Ol' Opry in Nashville."

Allman concedes, though, that black music has been his greatest influence. "That's my favorite kind of music," he explains. "It is real honest music, you know? Europe's got classical, the islands have reggae. Rock 'n' roll, blues and country music are the only three kinds of music that America has."

R E C O R D I N G

GUITARIST STEVE TIBBETTS

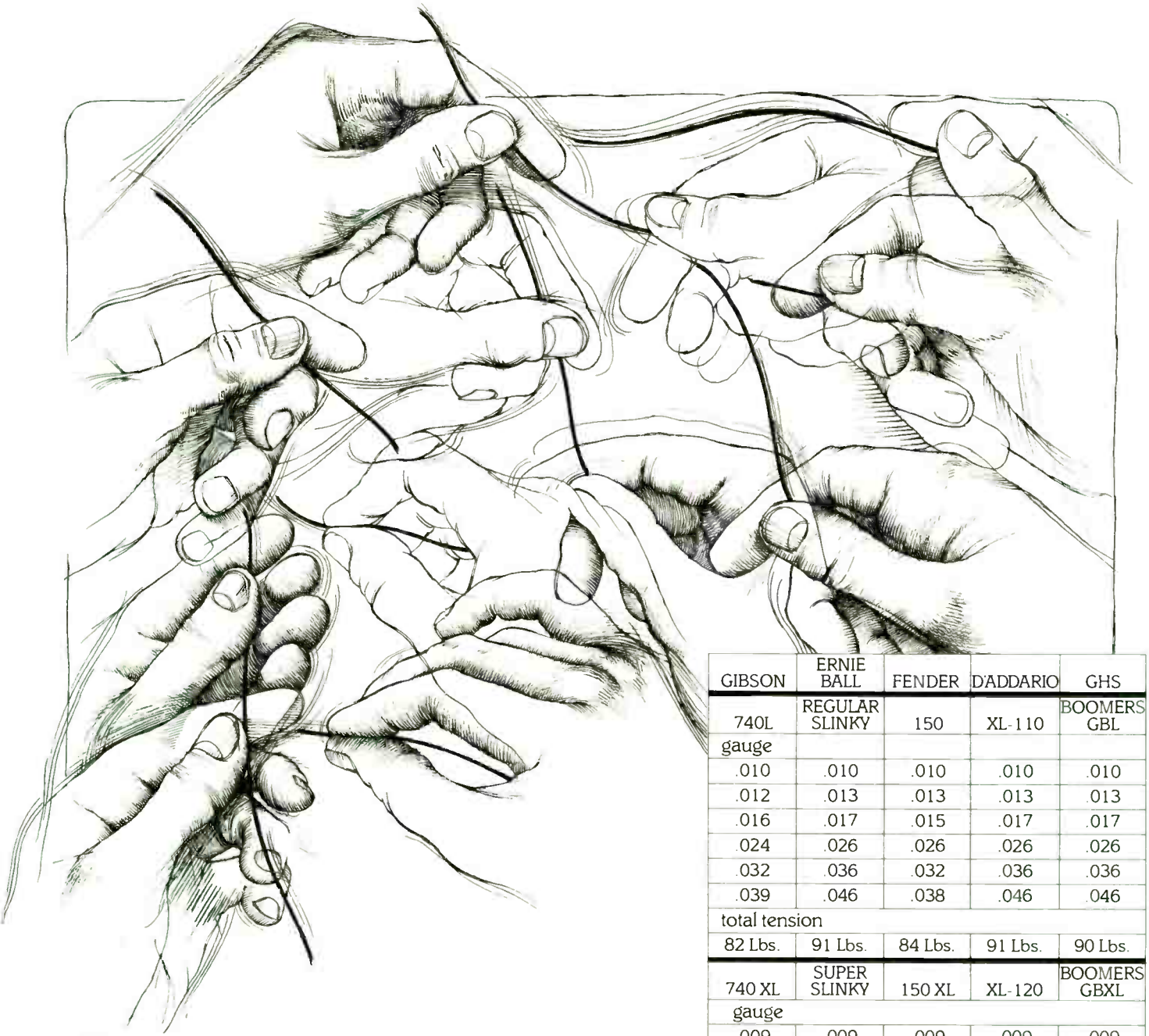
A Boy and his Tape Recorder Meet ECM

BY CHRIS DOERING

Steve is equally at home with acoustic impressionism or Hendrixian firefights.

The Steve Tibbetts story has all the ingredients of a classic American success story. There is the accidental encounter with destiny (an art major at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, Tibbetts recorded his first album while "fooling around" in the school's recording studio during his last semester); the struggle against financial pressures and human indifference (his second album *YR*, recorded in a home 8-track studio, was rejected by every major label in the U.S.); and the final leap into the winner's circle when Mr. ECM himself, Manfred Eicher, heard a copy of *YR* (pronounced "ear," "yer," "wy are," take your pick) and offered Steve a contract. The result is *Northern Song*, recorded like most ECM product, in three days at Talent Studios in Oslo, Norway.

"I knew it was going to be a freak-out," Tibbetts recalled recently in ECM's New York office. "I've hardly been to South Dakota and here I am flying out of the cornfields of Minnesota to Oslo and recording with Manfred Eicher, whose name I've known for years like I've



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gauge				
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.012	.013	.013	.013	.013
.016	.017	.015	.017	.017
.024	.026	.026	.026	.026
.032	.036	.032	.036	.036
.039	.046	.038	.046	.046
total tension				
82 Lbs.	91 Lbs.	84 Lbs.	91 Lbs.	90 Lbs.
740 XL	SUPER SLINKY	150 XL	XL-120	BOOMERS GBXL
gauge				
.009	.009	.009	.009	.009
.011	.011	.011	.011	.011
.014	.016	.015	.016	.016
.022	.024	.024	.024	.024
.030	.032	.032	.032	.032
.037	.042	.040	.042	.042
total tension				
69 Lbs.	78 Lbs.	75 Lbs.	78 Lbs.	72 Lbs.
740 XXL	EXTRA SLINKY	150 SL	XL-130	BOOMERS GBUL
gauge				
.008	.008	.008	.008	.008
.011	.011	.011	.010	.011
.014	.014	.014	.015	.014
.020	.022	.022	.021	.022
.028	.030	.030	.030	.030
.036	.038	.038	.039	.038
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known Phil Spector and Orrin Keepnews. I originally wanted to write simple music so my hands would know what to do and I could introduce my heart into it. But this was my first chance to work with state-of-the-art equipment, a chance to use space as color. Manfred took advantage of that, pulled out the Lexicon Digital Reverb and extended things even more. Here we were in Oslo and he would say things like 'Now we put the fjord echo on the guitar.'"

Space, echoes and color have always been an important part of Tibbetts's music. The economic and physical constraints of home recording enabled Tibbetts to create on *YR* a unique layered style of progressive chamber rock combining the studied delicacy of Eicher's ECM productions, the organic percussive thrust of Oregon (courtesy Tibbetts's rhythm partner Marc Andersen), and an evocative acoustic-electric guitar swirl reminiscent of the more lyrical passages on Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*. (Both *YR* and the first album, *Steve Tibbetts*, are available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012.)

Because *YR*'s piled guitar overdubs are heavy on the electricity, many Tibbetts aficionados have taken the sparse acoustic textures of *Northern Song* as a stylistic departure. Tibbetts, however, points to a remarkable chain of circumstances that includes a landlord who quadrupled his rent when the second album attracted local media attention, forcing him to vacate his warehouse studio, and a downstairs apartment-dweller who was studying for law school. "One chord on electric guitar," he figures, "and it would have been the end of my fingers."

Steve is actually quite modest about his guitar playing, calling the tape recorder his principal instrument and compositional tool. But he is equally adept at both acoustic folk styles and screaming Hendrixian rave-ups. On both acoustic (a Martin 12-string and an Ovation 6-string) and electric (a Gibson SG through a Music Man amp), he describes himself as a texturalist responding mostly to the sensation of the guitar resonating through his body. That is a natural extension of acoustic playing, but with the electric, he turns up the amp so the guitar is "just on the edge, just about to go out of control. The way the electric guitar sounds best is when it's so loud that it resonates the room and your body and the guitar. Then it can turn all into one thing, if you're lucky."

Along with his acoustic guitars and a set of homemade tape loops, Steve brought Marc Andersen to the recording sessions for *Northern Song*. Tibbetts says Andersen is "the star of the album. I think he's an important conga player. He gets a tonal thing that's very special, that I've never heard. Part of it is that we spent a lot of time miking his congas. Another reason is that he has a good knowledge of pitch and what works together well."

Tibbetts describes the recording as "a mutual work session," but admits that it was hard for two producers to work together. Especially, one might add, when they differ on everything from mike placement to recording procedure. Steve likes to "cram the mike as close to the guitar as I can get, so it leaps out of the speakers," while Manfred uses two stereo pairs of mikes three to four feet from the guitar. "I argued with Manfred and Jan Erik (Kongshaug, who engineers most ECM records) about the placement," Steve recalls, "because it sounded distant to me. But now I think it sounds the way I intended it to sound. It sounds like the guitar is sitting across from you, or maybe a million miles away, depending on what you do with the reverb."

Was it hard for someone who took two years to make his second album to adjust to the pressure of a three-day recording session? "I'm just so used to doing literally hundreds of takes, " says Tibbetts, "that it's unusual for me to do it once and have somebody say, 'Let's keep it.' I didn't realize until later what a good idea it was of Manfred's to do that.

continued on page 108

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D E V E L O P M E N T S

RICKENBACKER REISSUES

The Beatle Axes Are Back

By David Fricke

Guitar reissues are good business right now. Fender and Gibson are going back to their old reliables, resurrecting the original Telecaster/Strat/Les Paul/Flying V designs that made them famous, and now Rickenbacker is cutting into the pie with their own "B" series of vintage reissues. That's B as in Beatle. Bowing to public demand, the company is putting back on the racks for a limited time the original Ricks once favored by the various Beatles—the notorious black-with-gold-guardplate 6-string 320 long identified with John Lennon, Paul McCartney's 4003 bass from the Hamburg days, and the sunburst 12-string 360/12WB used by George Harrison.

"These were always our most popular models," notes Rickenbacker head F.C. Hall. "We never stopped making them but over the years we kept making improvements. But some people still want the old ones."

For this B series (the company is not officially calling this a Beatles line) Rickenbacker has gone back to the original designs and parts. The 320B (list price $990), 4003SB ($885), and 360/12BWB ($1140) all have chrome bar pickups, a feature of the old 60s models, as well as the same key winds, cover plates, and colors in trim. An example is the 320B, which is now made with a white guardplate instead of the original gold.

But when Hall says the Beatlesque Ricks are a limited edition, he isn't kidding. "We only have so many parts for these guitars. We have limited hardware and it doesn't pay to retool some of it. The only reason we have enough for these reissues is we saved some for warranty repairs. Although we'll still save a bit for repairs on these models, once we use them up, that's it."

ROCK AMPS

A New Portable Mini Amp

BY DAVID FRICKE

The days of the giant Marshall stack are hardly over, but portability in rock guitar amps is quickly becoming an important sales pitch. Sacramento, California newcomers Rock Amps got into the game a year and a half ago with their Mini Rock, a battery-operated 10-watt portable amp listing for $139 and designed to go head on with Pignose and the other miniaturized competition.

Rock Amps now feel they've gone themselves two better with the recent introduction of the Mini Rock 2 and companion Super Mini 10, two portable amps that advertise more features than you probably have a right to expect from a pygmy amp. The Mini Rock 2 weighs in at twelve pounds, retails at $189, and features volume, bass, treble, sustain and gain control, master drive preset and packs 10 watts RMS with a drive speaker rated at 30 watts RMS. At $270 retail, the Super Mini 10 is only five pounds heavier and boasts volume, bass, midrange, treble, master volume and reverb controls plus a reverb footswitch and a variety of input and output jacks with a 16-watt punch. Both models have headphone jacks, line level output, run on alkaline D-cell batteries and include built-in AC power supplies.

"These are both serious practice amps," contends Donna Haas of Rock Amp, "but we are finding that there is a definite crossover to the beginners who are getting serious, not just kids who are yo-yoing it down the street."

If the Rock Amp minis have any flaws, it's in the look, which does not amount to much more than your basic black box. "True," admits Haas, "the cosmetics don't grab you. But we're a young company and we're doing our best to make the best amp we can for the money."

Besides, when was the last time you spent two hours *looking* at an amp?

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Some of the heaviest Rock and Roll crime waves start here . . . led by the notorious Les Paul and his power-house side-kick: *the Son*. This kid is young. He's tough. And he's already causing big trouble. He comes from one of the best musical families and he's got real talent. But he sold his soul to rock and roll — and he sold it cheap. Know what I mean?

This little S.O.B. is a real heavy when it comes to power playing and he's been getting around plenty for a new kid in town. Reports from City Beat say things get real hot down on the street when he's out cruising. And he's been turning up alot at the toughest jams in town. They say he's been known to do international jobs too. Big league, high class stuff.

So watch it Crimebusters. The Son comes on real clean and he plays it very smooth. But go to put the bite on him and real quick he turns mean and nasty, vicious and slashing. Believe me, he's one tough S.O.B.

Looks like even the big boys downtown are starting to worry. They pinned a federal rap on him for blowing-up Headquarters last night. Sounded like dynamite. Wasted two cops and one old marshall working there, but the Son made a clean break and got across State Lines. He's wanted on the radio and considered armed and very dangerous.

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RECORD REVIEWS

Elvis Costello & the Attractions
Imperial Bedroom (Columbia)

This is Elvis Costello's best yet. I know you've heard that before, and probably about a couple of his albums, but I can't help it if the guy just keeps getting better. And that's exactly what he's done—expanded his scope, enlarged his arrangements, broadened his stylistic base, even increased his depth. In fact, *Imperial Bedroom* is so good that there's almost nothing that can be said about it that won't sound like hype, at least until you've listened for yourself.

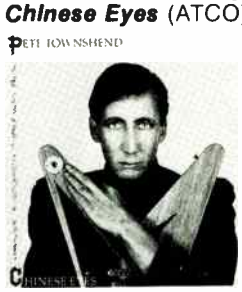
To begin with, Costello simply *sounds* better than before. Not only is his singing sharper and more assured, but it's much further up in the mix, so you don't have to strain to catch every bit of wordplay. Moreover, he makes much greater use of overdubs, ranging from the cheerfully harmonized echoes in "...And In Every Home" to the semi-doo-wop that animates the chorus to "Tears Before Bedtime." Costello has always been an able tunesmith, but this time out he really makes the most of it, and oddly enough, that extra effort is curiously reciprocal because it seems to have generated some of his most graceful lyrics to date.

As the title suggests, most of the songs here are about domestic conflicts, the sort of emotional tyranny Costello has focused on from the start. Here, however, Costello doesn't use the music as a forum for angry reprimands or as formal bases for stylized tales of heartbreak (this being his greatest weakness as a country songwriter). Instead, he keeps his lyrics tied to the ebb and flow of the music, and vice versa, so that the lyrical climaxes coincide with the musical ones. It's hardly a new idea—listen to *Showboat* sometime to hear how they used to do it—but it's one particularly suited to Costello's musical vision.

Especially now, because Costello's eclecticism is just coming into full bloom. After a number of idiomatic albums—the Stax-styled *Get Happy*, the countrified *Almost Blue*, the imitation Abba of *Armed Forces* (Abba & Costello?)—Costello has an unparalleled command of rock's stylistic vocabulary, and with it he leaps casually across genres, often within a single song. Because of this, and because he takes advantage of Steve Nieve's surprising ability as an orchestrator, there is likely to be a strong temptation to consider this Costello's *Sgt. Pepper*. Resist this at all costs, for while it's true that Costello is aiming for a universality of sorts, there's none of the self-consciousness of *Sgt. Pepper* in *Imperial Bedroom*'s diversity.

If there are any parallels to be drawn at all, more likely candidates would include Cole Porter and George Gershwin, songwriters who understood the interplay between words and music, and who appreciated how borrowed styles can pull extra mileage out of tired formats. That's heady company, to be sure, but unusually appropriate in this case. Elvis Costello sounds right now like the most accomplished songwriter in rock; who's to say that's going to be any different ten years from now? — *J.D. Considine*

Peter Townshend
All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes (ATCO)



Who says books are good for you? Look what over - consumption of "elevated" literature has done to Pete Townshend. On "Stop Hurting People," a track off his third solo album, *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes*, we encounter the curious observation that "Love crushes angles into black," and, a bit farther on, this unedifying aesthetic comment: "For that is what true beauty is—time's gift to perfect humility." Say wha? Or how about this, from "Exquisitely Bored," a song about the laid-back life in California: "The peasants here are starving/They look like barrels out in space." Picture *that*. At times Townshend himself seems unsure of just what it is he's trying to say. On "Stardom In Acton," he sings: "Just like the stub of that long cigarette full of hash/ I'm the first to get booked." The lyric sheet has that line as "*last* to get booked," but it hardly matters.

This sort of sub-sophomoric spew disfigures most of the album's eleven tracks, which is a shame. Because in some ways, *Chinese Eyes* is Townshend's most accomplished and admirable solo LP. He's the same talented songwriter he always was (I count the Curtis Mayfield-ish "Stop Hurting People" and the compactly catchy "Face Dances Part 2" among the possible radio hits here, and the brutally brilliant "Communication" among his all-time masterpieces). And he's never sung better, especially on the achingly evocative "North Country Girl" (a traditional ballad drawn from the same source that inspired a similarly titled tune on Bob Dylan's second album) and the martially manic "Uniforms (*Corps D'Esprit*)," in which he deftly navigates a sea of verbiage so dense it might have daunted even Gilbert & Sullivan. But if his skills as a singer, composer and bandleader (the crack backup includes Simon Phillips, Chris Stainton, Polli Palmer and Pete's sister-in-law, keyboardist Virginia Astley of the Ravishing Beauties) remain intact, his lyrics have never been more apallingly incoherent—or downright maudlin: "It's sympathy not tears people need when they're the front page sad news."

Rock 'n' roll has less need of gratuitous high-culture flourishes than perhaps any other artistic form—a lesson one might have thought we'd all learned back in the bad old art-rock days. Townshend is a gifted rocker, and that should be enough. That he apparently yearns for some higher form of quasi-literary respectability is sad, not simply because he's so unsuited for it, but because his particular form of pop genius is direct observation. I can't recall any more telling comment on the waning of marital love than this couplet from the touching "Slit Skirts": "Once she awoke with untamed lover's face between her legs/ Now he's cool and stifled and it's she who has to beg." Pete Townshend still has plenty to say, if only he can relearn the language. — *Kurt Loder*

McCoy Tyner

Looking Out (Columbia)

Well, after years of being whined at by every do-nothing with a typewriter and tin ears, McCoy Tyner has finally gone out and done something different. *Looking Out* is his first attempt at an MOR-pop album, black division, and of course I think he should be flayed alive in a public place for betraying holy jazz, or better yet sent out on the road with his regular working band with no breaks and no hope of reprieve so he can never even see his family again and if we're really lucky we might personally get to be there that glory night he finally drops dead from overwork.

MOR-pop, black division, is aimed at the black middle class, from which I am excluded on two counts, so I am perhaps not the best person to publicly decide whether the date succeeds according to the parameters of the genre—how am *I* to know if it has reached the ideal degree of material complacency and spiritual patness? The album does not thrill me in the way that good Tyner jazz albums always do (as did for example *The 13th House*, Tyner's last set for Milestone and a great, Latinish brass-packed shouter); in fact, my enjoyment confines itself largely to "In Search Of My Heart," a near-ballad on side two with lovely part-writing, some sharp adaptations of Stevie Wonder, and a thoughtfully conceived, nicely sung vocal by Phyllis Hyman. The rest of the album heats up whenever Carlos Santana turns up—he's the most exciting soloist on the album and easily the most impassioned; Tyner and Gary Bartz seem not to know how to adapt themselves to a rhythm section that doesn't chase them bar by bar—and when he doesn't, it's all glossy, accomplished, well done, and not for me.

By all accounts, Tyner, a musician sincere to the point of self-immolation, was genuinely committed to the date; I assume he got what he wanted from it. My guess is that he made it with the part of himself that finally owns a nice home and drives a decent car and wonders why he's supposed to destroy himself at the keyboard night after night while folks smile and whoop. "I wanted to show people another side of my personality," he says in the publicity handout that came with the album, and I believe him. "You can get pigeonholed to the point where you can't budge." True enough. It's not a bad album by any means, and I don't think it signifies a sellout that will end with a compromised Tyner comparing wounds with Freddie Hubbard. It's more a matter of a major artist trying his hand at minor art to see if he can do it. I s'pose he can, but me, I'll be waiting around for the next installment of the same old good old driven monotonous beautiful thing — *Rafi Zabor*

Fleetwood Mac

Mirage (Warner Bros.)

Musically as well as socially, Fleetwood Mac thrives on contrast—the crisp formalism of the rhythm section as bas-relief for the bold impressionism of Lindsay Buckingham and Stevie Nicks. This yin/yang of style and substance achieved heroic dimension on the Mac's great soap opera, *Rumours*, but began to rupture on *Tusk*, where Buckingham's raw adventurism upset not only the band's delicate balance of power but also their public image as elegant pop aristocrats. *Mirage* signals their intent to refurbish that veneer, and not simply because the more outré sonic effects from *Tusk*—the marching band, etc —have been exorcised in favor of limpid instrumental textures and sha-la-la vocal harmonies. No doubt fatigued from slugging it out with each other's personal demons, each of the band's three resident songwriters here attempts to recapture their lost innocence or return to the womb of more comforting personas. Thus in "Book Of Love" and "Oh Dianne" does Lindsay Buckingham embrace the same naive romanticism of those songs' 50s namesakes, while "Gypsy" (guess who?) celebrates an idyllic rebirth of childlike wonder. Meanwhile Christine McVie, who in truth has been writing the same song over and over since "Future Games" (albeit a very good song) reaffirms her time-honored position on modern romance, i.e. head over heels.

Of course there's nothing wrong with spinning such confection, especially when invested with the lean grace and melodic invention that have become this group's signature. God knows there are percussionists who could learn a thing or two about *not* playing from Mick Fleetwood—has there ever been a drummer who shaped more by doing less? The lesson hasn't been lost on Buckingham, whose deceptively simple major-scale leads and chiming, decorous fills (note the subtle varieties of color employed on "Gypsy") help revitalize the more hackneyed vehicles in the Mac fleet. Like its title implies, *Mirage* eschews the hard character and emotional intimacy which fueled its predecessors; but what it lacks in depth it recoups with taste, precision and a seductive "California dreamin'" esprit. Resist it at your peril. —*Mark Roland*

Gary U.S. Bonds

On The Line (EMI-America)

Compared to most attempts at revitalizing lapsed careers, the albums Gary Bonds has made with Bruce Springsteen and Miami Steve Van Zandt are virtually miraculous. Their secret is ambition. Where most other comebacks (even superior ones, like Del Shannon's *Drop Down And Get Me*) are content to be contemporary and entertaining, Bonds & company insist on more: the right to participate actively, comment upon and affect what's happening right now, without abandoning their roots.

When it works, which is most of the time, *On The Line* is bolder and more cohesive than last year's *Dedication*. This is partly because Springsteen plays a much more prominent role, writing seven songs (*Dedication* had four) and adding a darker, weightier production atmosphere. It wasn't fair to consider *Dedication* a surrogate Springsteen album; its sensibility had much more to do with Bonds and Van Zandt. But *On The Line* stands as a kind of interim report from the Boss himself, with Bonds as willing vehicle.

Consequently, even the album's most bouncy track, the Geils-like "Out Of Work," is full of barbs. Even though it's a bit of a shaggy dog story, in which the desperately unemployed laborer-vocalist actually volunteers to serve as the Presidential chauffeur just to get a gig, "Out Of Work" is clearly taking sides on the major issue of Reaganomics. The farcical humor saves it from agit-prop, but not from delivering a cutting, serious message about what is being done to the core rock audience (and not just in America).

This soberness extends to the album's love songs, notably Van Zandt's "The Last Time" (most notable, however, for Steve's brilliant, Robbie Robertson-like guitar solo), and Springsteen's "All I Need" and "Love's On The Line." These songs are masterly in the use of romantic language as veiled philosophy, in the great Brill Building tradition, and "Love's On The Line," which is the story of a marriage at the end of its tether, the kids grown and neither party sure of whether or how to proceed, is a perfect vehicle for the fortyish Bonds.

The album's finest moment comes with "Club Soul City," a brooding recapitulation of the "Heartbreak Hotel" theme. Here, Bonds virtually duets with the great Chuck Jackson; the result is extraordinary soul music, torn as it is between hope and despair. Jackson's delivery of the punchline is as dramatic as anything Springsteen has recorded,

which is saying something.

On The Line is not without flaws. The two Bonds songs aren't as strong as the ones he contributed to *Dedication*; "Angelyne" is too obvious a "Jole Blon" pastiche; and "Rendezvous" suffers from both the fact that Bonds is too mature to make its teenage passion convincing and from the memory of Springsteen's epic live renditions of the tune. Yet the seriousness of intention here wipes away most of my reservations. This is music made to cut and to count, at a time when the vogue runs the other way (and not only in America). When Bonds sings that "love is a river running soul deep," you know that these men have waded those waters themselves. — *Dave Marsh*

X

Under The Big Black Sun (Elektra)

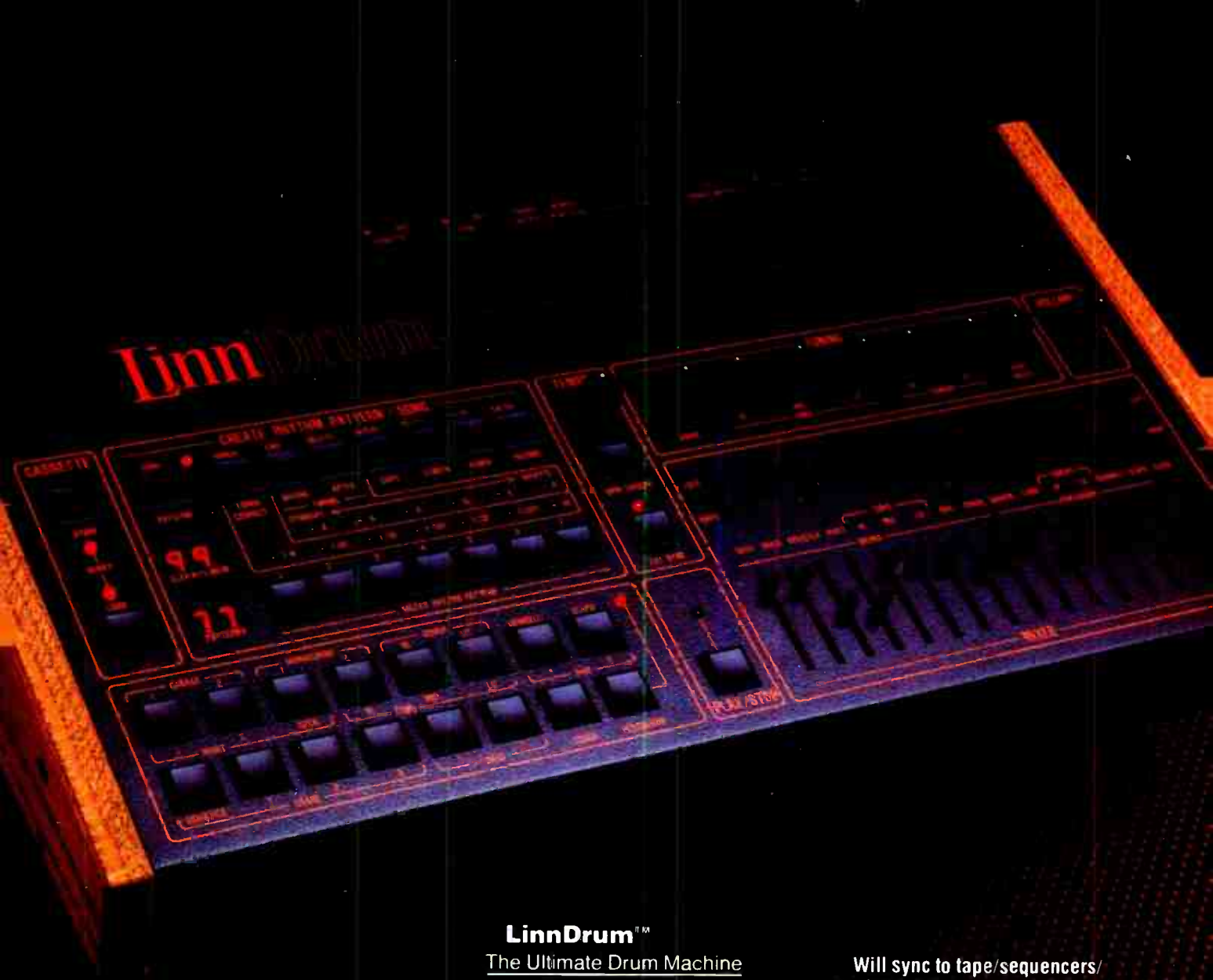
Exene Cervenka and John Doe, X's married couple, are rabid punk stylists who care about us. Anything from wolves to heroin that might be wild and dangerous enough to overcome them, seizes their imaginations because, as equally rabid humanists, they want to affirm that nothing can—at least not without a good fight. This explains Cervenka and Doe's lean thirst for the most raw-boned, apparently damaged rock 'n' roll they can wail out with a guitarist as rockabilly-hungry as Billy Zoom and a drummer as eerily accomplished as D.J. Bonebrake, and why they aren't just off somewhere writing New Worried West poetry. X has made two overwhelming records for the L.A. independent Slash, and *Under The Big Black Sun*, their Elektra debut, is no major-label disappointment: it's still hard to name a better American rock band.

Less musically doctrinaire than 1980's *Los Angeles*—"Come Back To Me," an R&B-flavored elegy to a dead sister, lovingly turns light horror into deep grief, and "The Have Nots" is a *soi-disant* country tune—and somehow less showy than 1981's sensational *Wild Gift*, the new record presents X at their most stylistically confident and succinct. Despite moves into different genres, what X really stalks here is the definition of their Ray Manzarek-produced sound and synthesis; no one needs to wonder about the essential qualities of this great band again. From the bass-and-drums tribal pounce of "The Hungry Wolf," which sums up all their commitments, they go into the fast and funny ingeniousness of "Motel Room In My Bed"—sleep as escape. For an appropriate cover with winning X edges, they do 1930's "Dancing With Tears In My Eyes," and, amid all this nailing-down of themselves, the ambiguous shots of "Blue Spark" stand out as pure and lyrical trouble in a beach apartment. To paraphrase Exene on her marriage ("Because I Do"), X are the married kind—relentlessly faithful about stringing out punk with rockabilly, blues, country and anything else wild enough to get their attention—but they're always searching for something new. And they sound terrific and awful and concerned. — *James Hunter*

Steel Pulse

True Democracy (Elektra-Asylum)

The daunting power of Bob Marley's legend recently was brought home to me when a friend —one who I knew might buy only one record a month—asked me what new reggae LP was indispensible. "Well," I found myself replying, "do you have all the Marley albums yet?" I don't think that comment represents a unique attitude, nor a reprehensible one. But it is this kind of preconception that can add a chilling effect to the artistic and com-



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member "Once In Awhile"? Brown, whose native subject was happiness and youth, was already a brilliantly mature musician at the age of twenty-six, and his music was so complete and perfect an expression of the man we never think to ask more of it than it has, or find ourselves able to imagine what he might have gone on to had he lived. One index of his stature is the degree to which he is still, twenty-six years later, a potent influence on everyone playing jazz trumpet. Ask Wynton, Woody, Freddie, Lester, Baikida.... Like Django, he sounds perpetually alive. As with Bird, every little turn of phrase seems to tell any number of stories, hold a definite world balanced on the upraised palm of its hand. Listen to "Daahoud," or "What's New," or even the tunes on which Brownie battles the impossible tempos set up by Roach, in which he may remind you of the brilliant overreaching he did in that 1953 Birdland session with Blakey.

Not, of course, to overlook Sonny Rollins, who inserts his occasionally bizarre presence into the proceedings most effectively on "Lover Man" and finds ways of finessing Max's tempos with laybacks and lags while fool Brownie actually tries to play them—there's metaphysics in the contrast. PolyGram has also this month reissued this band's *Live At Basin Street* (Mercury/Emarcy), which, oddly enough, was recorded neither live nor at Basin Street, and that's probably the album to get if you're new to Max and Brownie fetishism, or *Three Giants* (under Rollins's name, and the best of all this quintet's recordings), but this new find, and the prospect of two more to follow, makes my initiated heart go pitapat.

Meanwhile, Musician has also made available, courtesy of the same Bill Potts who recorded last month's great Bird *One Night In Washington*, a tremendous trio date by Bud Powell, the greatest of all bop pianists, supported by no less than Charles Mingus and Roy Haynes. The date comes from 1953, catches Bud at the end of bop virtuosity and the beginning of Monk oddity, is perhaps a cut below the work Bud did in the same year at Toronto's Massey Hall but is bop-invaluable withal. I used up all my space on Brownie. Peace on earth and goodwill to Lundvall, who's doing a lot better with the archives than he is with the new releases this month. Time to sign a few oddballs or we'll be forced to take the straw Quixotes from his office. Like what is he trying to be, solvent? — *Rafi Zabor*

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Art Pepper 1925-1982

Because he was based in Los Angeles and white, alto saxophonist Art Pepper was associated with the cool and placid sounds of West Coast jazz throughout most of the 1950s. By the turn of the decade, however, it had become obvious that Pepper's fiery and angular style transcended such neat geographical and racial pigeonholing. He had established himself as one of the most distinctive soloists in modern jazz, but he had also become addicted to heroin, and his career subsequently had to endure several lengthy hiatuses—stretches in the L.A. County Jail, Chino and San Quentin; and periods of voluntary confinement in public and private hospitals and asylums, including the controversial Synanon.

In his autobiography *Straight Life*—coauthored with Laurie Pepper, his third wife, and published by Shirmer/Macmillan in 1979—Pepper gave a running account of his life in images as brutal and evocative in their own way as any in the novels of William Burroughs or Jean Genet. He confessed that he had been an alcoholic, a junkie, a thief, that he had contemplated murder and committed rape. Remembering his first fix, he was not repentant, and he admitted that his hold on his demons was tenuous. "This is it," he wrote, "this is the only answer for me. If this is what it takes, then this is what I'm going to do, no matter what dues I have to pay.... I realized from that moment that I would be, if you want to use the word, a junkie. That's what I practiced, and that's what I still am. And that's what I will die as... a junkie."

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Rumor that he was writing the book awoke new interest in Pepper in the mid-70s, and with the tireless Laurie doubling as business manager and lover, he achieved his greatest popularity and made an effort to reclaim his soul. Pepper played like a man possessed during this period. The buoyancy and confidence of his early style was chastened by an emotional fervor, a sense of mission. Everything unsavory about the man's character—his vanity, his self-pity, his absolute dependence upon and mistrust of women—passed through fire and was cleansed, made into the raw material of an all-forgiving art whenever he brought his horn to his lips and blew the breath of life into it.

Art Pepper: Notes from a Jazz Survivor, a 1982 independent film produced and directed by Don McGlynn, picks up Pepper's story where *Straight Life* left it off. It is a powerful and truly remarkable film which employs the special investigative tools of cinema—voice-over, close-up, back lighting—to locate the hopes and fears that can motivate an improvised solo. In one scene, Pepper stares into the camera and says that he wants each performance to be the best he has ever given, because he knows that each might be his last, given his age (56) and the abuse to which he has subjected his body.

Pepper died June 15, after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage six days earlier. His last record (the last to be released during his life, at any rate) is not the best he ever made (it is not as darkly lyrical

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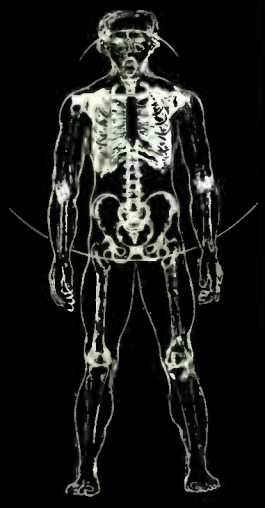

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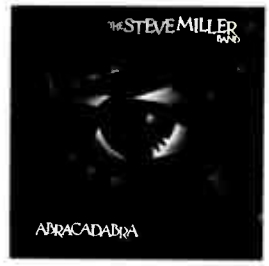
as 1979's *Art Pepper Today*, for example, nor as crisply brilliant as 1957's *Art Pepper Meets The Rhythm Section*), but it pulses with his determination to make it the best, and it suggests the high level of consistency and power he had reached in the last few years of his life. Recorded live in concert at an L.A. nightclub last summer, it finds Pepper in the company of a fluid rhythm section captained by George Cables, the pianist who best complemented him. There are four tracks, each about ten minutes long, and on one of them—the chestnut "When You're Smiling"—Pepper plays clarinet in a shy, pleasant manner reminiscent of Lester Young. But his best moments here come on the blues—the hard-swinging title cut; an edgy waltz; and, in particular, the nakedly honest reading of the ballad "Everything Happens To Me," which *becomes* a blues by twists of Pepper's expressive shadings. In his maturity, Pepper learned what only the greatest improvisers ever learn: that the blues are a sad song you play to make yourself feel better. "Everything Happens" smolders and shines with that deep wisdom.

To have suffered for your art is noble, however needless, because to have suffered for nothing is to have wasted your life. Art Pepper sought confirmation that he had not suffered for nothing in every note he played. He will not soon be forgotten, and he will never be replaced.

— By Francis Davis

Steve Miller Band
Abracadabra (Capitol)



Like a rabbit out of a hat, Steve Miller pulls his platinum chops as a commercial blues-rock stylist out of temporary deep funk with *Abracadabra*, the very likeable followup to last year's lightweight *Circle Of Love*. Having gotten the ninety-eight-pound weakling rap and sound effects noodling of the lazy, overlong "Macho City" out of his system, Miller gets back to the business of constructing tight, smiley pop gems distinguished by the Texas shuffle oomph in the rhythms, the compound rippling and stinging fills of the guitars and those breezy wheatfield-Beach Boy harmonies.

Never mind that Miller only bothered to write two of the ten tracks here (the good life keeping him busy or was he out plowing his Oregon back forty?). Drummer and coproducer Gary Mallaber, who cowrote the rest with various Miller band members, has been playing with the Joker long enough to know all the cues. Hence, while Miller's own

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"Abracadabra" mixes the hushed futurist tones of "Fly Like An Eagle" and the heated strut of "Jet Airliner," "Keeps Me Wondering Why" moves to a similarly brash Mallaber beat punctuated by a thumping fuzz bass synth with an incandescent hook lit by a choir of Millers in harmonic cascade. Decorative synthesizers and spacey production are certainly not enough to disguise the "Swingtown" locomotion of "Something Special" or the hybrid "Take The Money And Run"/"Rock 'N' Me" hump of "Never Say No" with its sunny, slightly pleading chorus and discreet organ wash.

Even when the songs reach a bit outside, the Miller imprint is uneraseable. A frisky Police-like romp and stark guitar-synth arrangement spark "Things I Told You," and "Young Girl's Heart" has all the swirling synths and disco syncopation of Euro-romantic electro-pop. Yet those soaring harmonies and a powerful band attack shoot the former full of top forty charm while the crunching guitars and heavy-breathing sexuality in the chorus bring the latter crashing back to rock 'n' roll earth.

Snobs will dismiss it as summer reruns, but *Abracadabra* is just Steve Miller in typical, sporting commercial form. And if Capitol plays its singles cards right, half of this album could end up on the next greatest hits album. — *David Fricke*

PICK HITS

Pick Hits is a monthly survey of what our learned staff feels to be the cream of the current crop of album releases and concerts. Each critic is allowed up to five "Hot" votes (one of which can be an "oldie" that they've been listening to), and one "Cold" vote—plus one "Live Pick" concert vote.

DAVID FRICKE Hot: **R.E.M.** *Chronic Town* (IRS)—**Pete Townshend** *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* (Atco)—**Men At Work** *Business As Usual* (Columbia)—**Richard Hell & the Voidoids** *Destiny Street* (Red Star)—**Deep Purple** *In Concert* (Portrait)
Cold: **Stray Cats** *Built For Speed* (EMI America)
Live Pick: **Richard and Linda Thompson** at the Bottom Line, New York

RAFI ZABOR Hot: **Mike Westbrook** *The Westbrook Blake/Bright As Fire* (Europa)—**Clifford Brown/Max Roach** *Pure Genius* (Elektra Musician)—**Air** *80 Below 82* (Antilles)—**Miles Davis** *We Want Miles* (CBS)—**Jean Sibelius** *Symphony #4, Ashkenazy/LSO* (London Digital)
Live Pick: **Cecil Taylor Unit**, Lush Life, New York

VIC GARBARINI: Hot: **Steel Pulse** *True Democracy* (Elektra)—**Human League** *Dare* (A&M)—**.38 Special** *Special Forces* (A&M)—**Richard Greene** *Blue Rondo*—**The Rolling Stones** *Still Life* (Rolling Stones)
Live Pick: **Marshall Crenshaw**—Anyday, Anyway, U.S.A.

J.D. CONSIDINE: Hot: **Elvis Costello** *Imperial Bedroom* (CBS)—**Pete Townshend** *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* (Atco)—**David Johansen** *Live It Up* (Blue Sky)—**The Coasters** *Youngblood* (Atlantic Deluxe) **Claudio Abbado** *Mahler Symphony #1* (DG Digital)
Cold: **The Cure** *Pornography* (A&M)
Live Pick: **Squeeze** and **Marshall Crenshaw**, Painters Mill, Baltimore

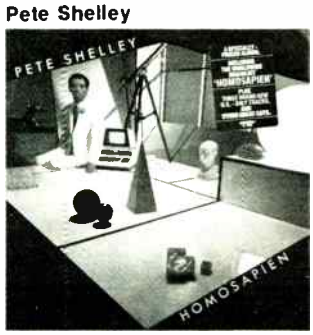
MUSICIAN OFFICE: Hot: (No particular order) **B-52's** *Mesopotamia* (Warners)—**Thomas Leer** *Letter From America* (Jem)—**Peter Townshend** *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* (Atco) **Men At Work** *Business As Usual* (CBS)—**Squeeze** *Sweets For A Stranger* (A&M)—**Talking Heads** *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads* (Sire)—**Shalamar** *Friends* (Solar)
Cold: **The Rolling Stones** *Still Life* (Rolling Stones)
Live Pick: **The Motels** at Hampton Beach

ROCK SHORT TAKES

By J.D. Considine

Gang Of Four

Pete Shelley



Kid Creole & the Coconuts

Rosanne Cash

Gang Of Four — *Songs Of The Free* (Warner Bros.) This is more than just another dose of the dialectic you can dance to—the jagged funk and class-conscious slogans are now aided and abetted by a sturdy sense of melody and even some occasional harmony vocals. Some songs, like the opening "Call Me Up," even smack of Motown. Giving credit where due, it's nice to see singer Jon King and guitarist Andy Gill writing songs instead of just riffs-plus-vocals, but the most telling change is bassist Sara Lee, who simplifies the bottom line to leave more room for Gill's guitar antiheroics, and provides a durable harmony voice. Dialectic was never this listenable.

Pete Shelley — *Homosapien* (Arista) Forget the synthesizers and the sequencer-based pulse that give the title track its trendy gloss, because all the hooks are really left to the guitars and the garage-band din of the mix. Yep, this isn't dance-floor drivel, but an honest-to-God rock record. To be fair, I should mention that Arista has stacked the deck slightly, slipping in three guitar-based songs that weren't on the import, but what the hell! Just because Pete Shelley has left the Buzzcocks doesn't mean we should have to give up the jangly, slightly-warped pop sense that made the 'Cocks such good clean fun.

Glenn Frey — *No Fun Aloud* (Asylum) In which the former Eagle tries to convince us that he's not just another whining wimp from L.A. but a hard rockin' good-time-Charlie, and damn near succeeds. The rockers take a goofy swagger borrowed from Joe Walsh and the crooners all wear their harmonies on their sleeves, both with no complaints. But the covers, in particular "Sea Cruise," are handled with a tidy reverence that leaves me skeptical of just how deep Frey's rock roots run.

Kid Creole & the Coconuts — *Wise Guy* (Sire/Ze) Still further adventures of New York's new wave Ricky Ricardo and his ship of fools. Is it full of droll social commentary and romantic comedy? Of course. Does it pulsate with the vibrancy of salsa and funk? Yowsah, yowsah, yowsah. In short, does it end up sounding more or less exactly like its predecessors? You betcha.

The Odessa Balalaikas — *The Art Of The Balalaika* (Nonesuch digital) Toss away those preconceptions about sentimental Cossacks and smoking samovars—this is the bluegrass that came in from the cold. Although the Odessa Balalaikas are just a quintet, prodigious doubling and the remarkable timbral range of the Russian folk instruments they play gives their music an almost orchestral sweep while maintaining a surprisingly folky sense of dynamics. The material is richly melodic and swings like crazy, while the recording is remarkably deft, giving the music a palpable presence. Also, the album includes the original Russian version of "Those Were The Days."

David Johansen — *Live It Up* (Blue Sky) Even if this didn't feature the hottest live version of "Reach Out, I'll Be There" ever committed to vinyl, this would still be something to rave about. Johansen has never sounded better, from his rich, dark crooning on "We Gotta Get Out Of This Place" to his full-tilt screaming through "Personality Crisis," and his band is sharper than razor blades, combining the energy of the New York Dolls with the finesse of his studio help. Add in a song list where the hits just keep on coming, and you've got an album so exciting you may have to be hosed down after each listening.

Greg Copeland — *Revenge Will Come* (Geffen) A truly auspicious debut. Greg Copeland steps onto vinyl more fully formed than Warren Zevon and with a sharper edge than Jackson Browne (to make a couple of obvious comparisons), bristling with roots and possessed of a startlingly powerful way with words. In fact, Copeland comes on so strong he seemes to overshoot the mainstream, ending up instead in a brutally abstracted version of the L.A. rock dream. Scary, compelling and strangely original, this is an album likely to sound better in five years than it does now.

Rosanne Cash — *Somewhere In the Stars* (Columbia) Another good one from everybody's sweetheart of the rodeo. How's she do it? Maybe it's the way she sings the pop numbers with a straight-from-the-heart country sincerity; then again, maybe it's the obliging pop treatment she gives her lilting country melodies. More likely it's both, particularly when backed by a sense of personality as strong as hers. 'Course, having producer/hubby Rodney Crowell on hand doesn't hurt, nor does the cameo from dear ol' dad, Johnny Cash. Did I mention the tunes are great, too?

Ashford & Simpson — *Street Opera* (Capitol) I suppose if somebody's got to write a "street opera" about ghetto life and love, better Ashford & Simpson than, say, Rick James. But to be honest, the only time the concept adds anything to the music is when the "Working Man" theme kicks in for a glorious reprise; otherwise, it's just more of the same classy, sinuous love-and-dance music from the sexiest couple in R&B, both of whom are singing better than ever.

Richard Hell & the Voidoids — *Destiny*

continued on page 106

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JAZZ

By Don Palmer

SHORT TAKES

After making the last trip to my P.O. parcel pick-up window (for some time I hope), I'm gonna adjust my straw-basket ears, turn over this bushel-basket of records and try to winnow the wheat from the chaff.

Big Jazz, in the guise of Elektra Musician, is on the prowl with a mixed-bag of releases. Pianist **David Sanclous**—*The Bridge*—was given free reign on his solo outing. Initially his gospel, soulful noodlings were engaging. But, the heart turned to cerebral, sacred studies of silence and repetition. No salvation here from the fires of hell or even the tedium of daily life. Praise the Lord but, please, pass the ammunition. **Bud Powell**'s *Inner Fires* and **Clifford Brown** and **Max Roach**'s *Pure Genius* do just that, providing historically significant, not to mention terrific, jazz from the early 50s. **Dexter Gordon** serves up meat and potatoes on *American Classic* but the gravy is corn-starch thick and flavorless. With accompaniment by Shirley Scott, whose organ always made me weak in the knees, and Grover Washington, Jr., whose soprano always made me weak in the head, I thought Gordon would go for the jugular. Instead ne languishes in shopworn cliches and sentiment. Even the dependable drummer Eddie Gladden and underrated pianist Kirk Lightsey are unable to light a spark under this session. I fully expected **Woody Shaw** to offer the most soporific release of the month, but *Master Of The Art* is definitely the sleeper. Bobby Hutcherson is strong and bluesy and keeps Shaw from resting on his laurels, which he is wont to do when leading his own band. The tunes, especially Walter Davis's "400 Years Ago Tomorrow," are melodic and intriguing, as the shifting meters, of which Shaw is so fond, maintain a delicate momentum.

The E/M list goes on with a disappointing debut album by pop/jazz vocalist **Bobby McFerrin**—*Bobby McFerrin*—and some proficient jazz oriented rock by **Billy Cobham**—*Observations &*. For all you aging hipsters who keep a bottle of cheap wine hidden in your sock drawer next to your collected works of early Norman Mailer, **Mose Allison** is back on wax for the first time in five years. *Middle Class White Boy* is the basics—50s-style Mississippi-to-Chicago blues shuffles on drums, funk on bass and straight-ahead mid-range tenor. Surprisingly, Mose plays electric piano. At best it sounds like a muted steel drum or a mandolin, but otherwise it's just tonally dead. Vocally he's still throw-away cool and genuine, but I'll take the early Lou Rawls, thank you.

Alto saxophonist **Phil Woods** delivers more Bird lore with *Birds Of A Feather* (Antilles). I refuse to revive the local debate that found Woods's rhythm section both deplorable and excellent, but I will say Woods plays with an edge and conviction I never knew he had. Ditto for **Anthony Braxton**'s *Six Compositions: Quartet* (Antilles). This is almost bop and it even swings because drummer Eddie Blackwell defines the term. But despite these accolades, Braxton himself is not tuneful, swinging or bluesy. His contrasts of timbre, pitch and meter are like geometric and cyclical dream sequences rather than the startling deep-down-under imagery of the blues.

Happily, **Sweet Honey in the Rock** has a new live album, *Good News* (Flying Fish). These four women compose one of the few political/cultural groups with an awareness that music possesses its own elemental truths, divorced from and more powerful than even the most lucid political commentary. Sweet Honey focuses the life-affirming tradition of *a cappella* spirituals on contemporary issues. *Good News* is laden with the solemn congregational sway of redemption.

The folks at Galaxy were kind enough to release the best **Red Garland**—*Strike Up The Band*—I've heard in years. This quintet won't rival early Miles—nor does it play the Trane/Garland blues I prefer, but it's not romantic tripe either. The tune selection could've been more original—"Straight No Chaser" and "In A Sentimental Mood" are hardly undiscovered gems. However, with George Coleman's harmonics and fluttering flurries of notes, Julian Priester's burr-edged tone and sculpted solos and Ron Carter's uncanny knack for playing appropriately, old tunes quickly acquire new faces. **Johnny Griffin**'s *To The Ladies* (Galaxy) is a bit too suave for my taste. Griff's tone is more complimentary than braggadocious and without his fire the band settles into a smooth groove (i.e., rut). It's only after the suite of "Soft And Furry, Parts 1, 2 & 3," on which chicken-crazy bassist Ray Drummond and pianist Ron Matthews produce fine solos, that the band stops its idle chatter to say, "Let's git down tonight."

There were a handful of worthy blues releases in the past few months. The best is **Magic Sam**'s *Magic Sam Live* (Delmark). This double album features the hard blues, Chicago style, from a club and a festival. Sam's sharp-as-a-rat's-tooth freewheeling guitar is superb whether playing piercing leads or slashing one-chord hitch-and-ride boogies. His vocals are equally intense on what is perhaps the best live blues album ever recorded. **Hound Dog Taylor** provides more roof-raising plum-black blues on *Genuine Houserocking Music* (Alligator). Taylor's sandpaper-rough vocals, distorted, deafening slide guitar and pocket-full of guitar figures are as urgent as always. The problem with *Houserocking* is that the music, not the lyrics, is often interchangeable with that on Taylor's previous albums.

Some late arrivals this month include the excellent *Easy To Love* (Steeplechase) by **Buck Hill**. The stentorian, long-winded, muscular tenorman swoops, spins and batters his way through the rhythm section, without shaking his everpresent drummer, Billy Hart.

There's Good Newton, James that is, from India Navigation (NMDS). On *Portraits*, especially "David Murray," **James Newton** probes into the heart of the riff, displaying its internal character—swing and blues feeling—without the superficial trappings. He plays one or two notes where others would play more. Philip Wilson offers the drummers' equivalent of soft shoe accompaniment and Cecil McBee shadows Newton's every move. Pianist Bob Nelons is a perspicacious yet modest accompanist throughout his duet with Newton. *In Concert* (India Navigation via NMDS) features **Chet Baker** and **Lee Konitz** live at Ornette's Prince Street loft. Needless to say, this is a bop session with a twist of Ornette and a dash of cool.

In closing I'd like to mention a non-jazz, non blues album—*Africa Dances* (Authentic, Original Music, 123 Congress Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201). This anthology, compiled by John Storm Roberts, is better than the recently released *Sound D'Afrique* (Mango) if

continued on next page

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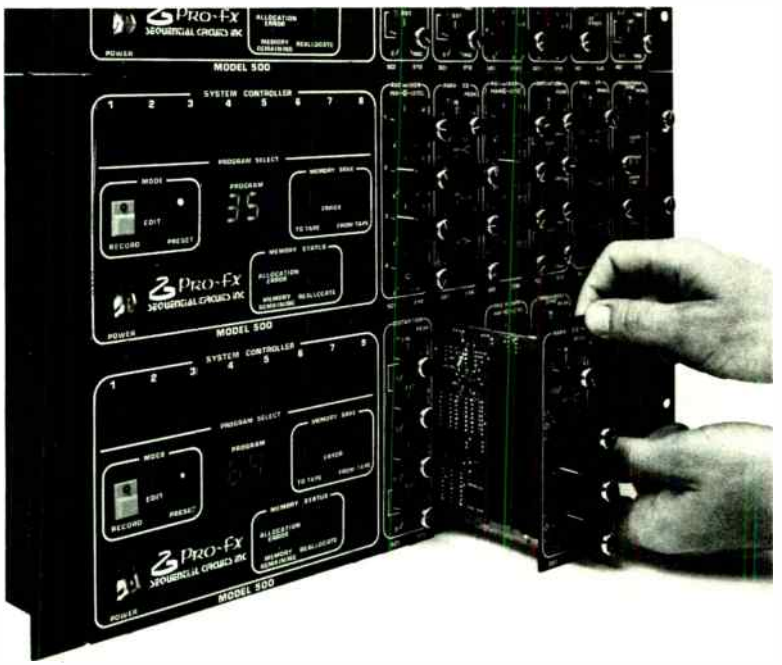

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only for the liner notes. But the music is top-notch African pop on both. *Africa Dances* delineates the diversity of African music from the late 50s to the early 70s and its ability to assimilate Caribbean, jazz, soul and Arab musics. Check out the Ethiopian rock. You may never hear another song like it. Ⓜ

Rock Shorts, *from pg. 102*

Street (Red Star) It sounds a bit excessive to say that somebody's second album in five years is worth the wait, but in this case it is. For one thing, time has given Hell the opportunity to mature, both as a singer and a writer, so that instead of awkwardly energetic riffs and rants what we find on *Destiny Street* are well-articulated melodies and deftly drawn images pulsing to the ebb and flow of punk's last waves. Think of it as a promise well-kept, then turn it up real loud.

Joe Cocker — *Sheffield Steel* (Island) It's nice to hear that Joe Cocker has finally realized that the key to sounding truly soulful has nothing to do with vocal mannerisms or backup singers—it's all in the rhythm section. Here, Cocker uses pretty much the same crew who helped Grace Jones pull up to the bumper, and with generally equivalent results, so the funky ones kick while the slow ones drag. Even that's okay, except for Randy Newman's "Marie" which turns terminally maudlin, because on the whole Cocker can handle empty space better than most. Ⓜ

Tibbetts, *from pg. 84*

When we were finished, I didn't like the album. There was too much tension in the recording session, I was tired, thought I hadn't done that well, I just wanted to leave. When I got the test pressings I understood what we had done, what I was trying to do. Then I heard it on a radio show and I liked it. Now I'm not going to listen to it any more, because I have a very special memory when I hear it. I'm back in the control room, and there are the big monitors, and it's very dark, and we're listening to the playback. It's a good memory now."

At home in Minneapolis, Steve is going back to "layering like a fool," working on new music which he says will take him at least the next six months to complete. But "as soon as the music stops coming, I'll work full-time in a record store and a radio station. Then maybe it'll come again." Whatever the muse dictates, you can be sure it will be recorded with a sound that very few engineers could get from the equipment Tibbetts uses. The components of his home studio include a TASCAM 80-8 recorder, two AKG 501-E Electret microphones (a discontinued model), Bang & Olufsen monitor speakers, a mixer, two sets of headphones, a Lexicon Digital Delay and an EML-101 synthesizer which has been "customized" to stay in tune. Steve says his tools are "not great, but I know what they can do. That's important."

One of Tibbetts's favorite methods for getting a big sound out of a little studio involves subliminal mixing effects, such as extending the sound of a conga synthesizer, or this way to get a big sound on 12-string: "Sometimes I'll play a part with a capo. Then I'll drop the capo two frets, and speed up the tape a bit, so the guitar has more resonance. The combination of the big guitar and the little guitar sounds like an immense guitar."

The hero of the classic American success story needs resourcefulness and inventiveness, both of which Steve Tibbetts has in abundance. Although he's had to take the long way around, he's always been able to turn financial constraints into aesthetic advantages. "If I had a million dollars," he says, "I'd have eq's, flangers, compressors, just toys stacked everywhere. Luckily, because I don't have that money, I have to work at mike placement to get the sound that I want, and that works in my favor now. I don't equalize going in or going out, hardly at all. I mean, the instrument sounds good, you know? All I want it to do is reflect the way it sounds when I play it. I think that's something you'll hear more of as musicians get their own studios. As they start engineering, they will be able to have a sound come out of the speakers that they hear resonating in their cranium." Ⓜ

Van Halen from pg. 64
that's the way it's easiest for me. Why make it hard on yourself? I mean, who is the God of Guitars who says it has to be held this way or that way? If in the end result you get the same noises and the same whatever, do it however you have to do it. Instead of following the book, I just stumble on things. It's not like I'm creating anything—just through mistakes I come up with things, I guess. And then I like it.

Musician: *Much of what you play seems classically derived. Like the guitar stuff reminds me of Bach harmony studies.*

Van Halen: I love classical progressions, like Bach, that kinda stuff, so I guess that's what comes out. Just 'cause that's what I want to hear. I definitely don't know what I'm doing, if that's what you're getting to. (laughs) It's by ear. I always tend to lean towards those types of progressions because that's what I like, I guess. The sound, the mood it sets. I like it.

Musician: *What about the jazzy chords you did on "Big Bad Bill"?*

Van Halen: Those I read. You know, just.... I couldn't play that song right now if you held a gun to my head. (grabs guitar and demonstrates) Something like that. It was so quick moving I couldn't remember it....

It looked so neat, though, I wish I had a picture of it 'cause there was my father and me and Mike, and we're all sitting down with sheet music in front of us in the studio. It looked like an old 40s thing, you know? I wish I had a picture of that.

Musician: *How do you prepare to record? I assume you rehearse the songs first.*

Van Halen: Oh, yeah. We know the basic structure of the song, what we're going to do. Like how many bars will go here, how many choruses we're going to do, whether we're going to fade out. But when it comes to solos, I never work 'em out. I think there's only been one ever, and that was on "Push Comes To Shove," 'cause I wanted it...I liked the solo, too. It doesn't sound worked out, even though it is.

Musician: *Are the fills done off the top of your head?*

Van Halen: Oh, yeah. They're done playing live, except for *Fair Warning*. *Fair Warning* I did most overdubs, as opposed to every other album where I played live. Actually, I prefer it that way more, to play live, because I know the songs, and I'll put in fills where they sound real, as opposed to on top of what's already been done. If that makes sense.

Musician: *Almost all rock guitar solos run the same way—they start out low and end high, and about two thirds of the way through there's all this fast stuff and then they go out on long notes. But your solos....*

Van Halen: ...are just everywhere. I guess maybe 'cause I don't structure 'em.

Musician: *I take it you're fairly unconscious of that sort of thing?*

Van Halen: Uh huh. I'm unconscious of a lot of things (laughs).

Musician: *The reason I ask is that a lot of rock playing is so blunt, but yours is pretty well articulated.*

Van Halen: I like doing that, like muffling with the palm of my hand, for dynamics. As opposed to using a volume pedal or stuff like that.

Musician: *With all the things you do to your strings, are you ever worried about breaking one onstage?*

Van Halen: If I break a string, Dave will just talk a little longer and I'll change it real quick. Dave's very good at talking.

Musician: *I know. He gave me a demonstration last night.*

Van Halen: Oh, you did an interview with him? You actually listened to him? What did he say?

Musician: *He was explaining Van Halen in terms of Bauhaus architecture.*

Van Halen: (laughing) Hoo-kay! Ⓜ

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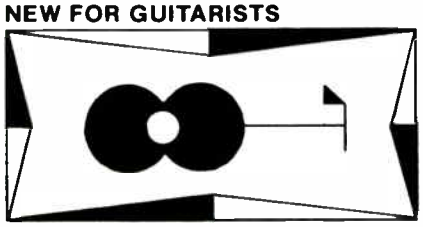

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HOHNER

Clash, *from pg. 44*
mean the end of the Clash?"

"I felt a bit guilty, but...." Joe pauses and looks towards the bartender for one more round. It's already well past closing hour, Strummer and I are the last customers in the bar, but the barkeep shrugs off the rules and obliges. "I felt guilty," Strummer resumes, "but I was also excited, feeling I was bringing everything to a head. I just contrasted all those pressing business commitments with that idea that I used to be a bum—that's why I'd *started* to play music, because I was a bum—and I decided to blow, maybe just for a day or two.

"But once I was in Paris, I was excited by the feeling that I could just walk down the street, go in a bar and play pinball, or sit in a park by myself, unrecognized. It was a way of proving that I existed—that I really existed for once *for me*. This was one trip for me. We make a lot of trips, but that one was for me."

The liquor's run out and so have the bar's good graces. We gather our jackets and get ready to leave. "I'll tell you this," Joe adds as a parting thought, "I really enjoyed *being* a bum again. I wish I could do it every day, really. But I can't disappear anymore. Time to face up to what we're on about."

THE LAST ANTI-HEROES

So, withdrawal from the world as a means towards reclamation?

Well, why not. While punk, and maybe post-punk too, has already fought all the meaningful battles it's ever going to—and won most of them by confounding rock 'n' roll forms and themes, then forfeited a good part of it by reducing cultural rage and aesthetic upheaval to stylized mannerisms—the Clash have gone on to fight more battles on more fronts (cultural, aesthetic, personal, commercial, ideological) than any other American or British band since the 60s and fought them with better inventiveness and tougher idealism.

But we're not really talking about withdrawal here, because, after all, the Clash are still out there, making rock 'n' roll live up to its weight and its liability, and Joe Strummer's still in front, facing up to the hard-earned lesson that saving the world is not quite the same thing as saving your own life—that once you lose hold on your life, you also lose your claim on the world.

Instead, the concern here is whether a band that meant to assault rock 'n' roll can also embody it—give renewal to its greatest meanings—or whether that band is merely out to make a vocation of artful revolt. One friend of mine answers that concern by suggesting that we owe the Clash at least a small share of our loyalty, that they've already given us far more than we can ever return. That seems fair enough, but I also think we owe them at least a small share of hard questions. Because with the Clash, we *do* have to decide if we're buying a statement, or a band. And no matter how good the band is, we have to decide if the statement lives up to its own bombast.

But in the end, the Clash don't necessarily rank according to pat questions about revolt, commodity and bravado. That's because they aren't merely Rock 'n' Roll's *Last* Greatest Band, but just maybe the idiom's last possible culture heroes. That's a romantic and easy enough notion to offer, of course, but the Clash have proven worthy of it in the *un*easiest ways: they've helped create the sensibilities and conditions of a pop culture that, if it proves true to the Clash's ethos of skepticism, could well refuse or disown them as heroes. In other words, the Clash might find themselves the victims of a pop consciousness that would never have been possible without their efforts, but also wouldn't be meaningful if it accepted their heroism at face value.

Yet, where would be the adventure if the Clash weren't willing to risk everything, just to lose it to the fires of victory? And the Clash, after all, are nothing if they are not men fit for adventure. Ⓜ

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