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INTERVIEW • PART 1



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When you add to all this Polyphonic Portamento, assignable Pitchbend and Mod Wheels, a full 44-note Keyboard plus extensive interfacing capabilities you'll see why the features, sound, ease of operation and price of the new Mono Poly truly make it "the only game in town." Play it at your Korg dealer today. For name of nearest Korg dealer call toll-free: (800) 545-3188. In N.Y. (516) 333-9100.



KORG

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They told us if we made
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Polyphonic Synthesizer
with outrageous sounds
for under \$2,000
no one would believe it.

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Polysix

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you can believe in!

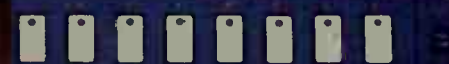


The new Polysix is, admittedly, very low priced. But it's also incredibly high featured, with fat sounds and advanced programming functions. At half the cost of comparable synthesizers.

Six-Voice Polyphonic and Unison Playing Modes—Select either full 6-voice polyphonic or incredibly fat 6-voice soloing playing modes via LED pushbutton switching. Also includes Hold and Chord Memory functions which can create exciting parallel harmonies.



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8-Second Cassette Interface with Verify—Allows stored programs to be rapidly transferred to any tape recorder to form an unlimited number of instantly

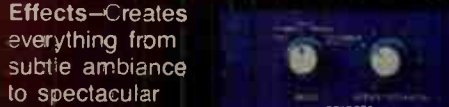


retrievable program libraries. Verify mode ensures accurate recording.

Full Featured Arpeggiator—Creates exciting note sequences in one of 3 patterns, at any speed, covering 1 or 2 octaves of the entire keyboard by simply playing chords. Latch mode memorizes successive chord patterns for automatic hands-off playing.



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Roland

*Understanding
Technology
Series*

*Subject:
The Concept
of Programmable
Performance*

**ProForm
Series**

The new Roland ProForm Series is a group of inter-related products, each providing a specific musical function. Like individual members of a band, each of the ProForm products can sync with others in the series to produce a totally programmable musical performance. The first of the products in the ProForm Series are the TR-606 Drumatix and the TB-303 BassLine.



TR-606 Drumatix

The Drumatix is a totally programmable drum synthesizer sequencer. The Drum sounds available on the TR-606 include: Bass, Snare, Lo and Hi Toms, Cymbal, Open and Closed Hi Hat. Each sound has its own level control for total mix flexibility.

With the Drumatix, you can program 32 different Rhythm Patterns which can be arranged to play up to 8 complete Rhythm Tracks (songs). After the Track has been programmed, the TR-606 can easily sync to other ProForm products, or many other products to play the complete drum track of the composition.

TB-303 BassLine

As the Drumatix is to the drums, the TB-303 is to the Bass, a fully programmable bass synthesizer sequencer. The remarkable stable synthesizer section features full voice flexibility with dual waveforms and controls for: Tuning, VCF Cutoff, Resonance, Envelope Modulation and Decay. The programmable Accent and Slide functions bring true bass technique capabilities to the TB-303.

With the facility to produce up to 64 different Bass Patterns, the TB-303 BassLine allows you to arrange these into 7 different Bass Tracks, which can then be synced with Drum Tracks you've programmed into the Drumatix. The BassLine also can be easily synced with many other products by the DIN Sync jack or the CV and Gate outputs.



**We Want You to
Understand the Future**

The ProForm Series is bound to appeal to any creative person for writing music, practicing, or simply communicating ideas to other musicians. Each of the products (and there

are more to come), is battery operated with AC adapter capability, totally portable, furnished with a carrying case, and also contains a built-in headphone amplifier which lets you plug in a set of phones and write and practice music anywhere.

MUSICIAN

NO. 46, AUGUST, 1982

Squeeze the flexible vehicle for new wave Tin Pan Alley scribes Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook, has been filling the airwaves with pop hooks that recall not only the sound and freshness of Lennon McCartney, but the craftsmanship of the very best songwriters. Geoff Himes visits with babyface and the greaser. Page 34



Warren Zevon the bastard son of California rock, took it to places it feared to tread, cutting his lyrical tenderness with ample amounts of danger and disturbance. Zevon and his ace-in-the-hole guitarist Waddy Wachtel continue their legacy of unpretentiousness with a long-awaited new LP "The Envy." Page 40



Peter Townshend is the songwriter/guitarist for Britain's longest running punk 'n' roll band, the Who, but his best work may be his two recent solo albums, "Empty Glass" and "All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes." Vic Garbarini talks with the ubiquitous Mr. Townshend about commitment and complacency, rage and revolution, and the music of the Who. Page 48



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Cover Photo by Michael Putland

Carla Bley*



W-12

**Musician* has called her "America's Great and Neglected Post-Bop, Pre-Avant, Neo-Modern Female Jazz Composer." Those who already know her music realize, of course, that she's much, much more. Her latest from ECM/WATT: *Carla Bley Live!*, recorded with her band last July in San Francisco.

WATT/ECM

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Co-Publisher/Editor
Sam Holdsworth

Co-Publisher/Ad Director
Gordon Baird

Assoc. Publisher/Advertising
Gary Krasner

Art Director
David Olin

Managing Editor/N.Y.
Vic Garbarini

Promotion Director
Paul Sacksman

Staff Photographer
Deborah Feingold

Associate Editors
Jock Baird Rafi Zabor
David Fricke

Contributing Editors
David Breskin Robert Frapp
J.C. Costa Brian Cullman

Dave Marsh Dan Forte

Sales/Promotion
Scott Southard Richard Ellis

Geoffrey Davis

Advertising Sales
Ross Garnick

Production Manager
Jane Winsor

Production
Laurel Ives
Hartley Ferguson

Typography
Don Russell

Administration

Hyacinth Amero Michelle Nicastro
Mary Ellen Cataneo Thom Carcy

Main Office/Production
31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930

New York Advertising/Editorial
MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.
N.Y., N.Y. 10036 (212) 764-7400

Contributors

Crispin Cioe, J. D. Considine, Chris
Doering, Bill Flanagan, David Fricke,
Peter Giron, Geoffrey Himes, Kristine
McKenna, Jon Pareles, Ebet Roberts.

Chairman And President: W.D. Littleford
Executive Vice Presidents: Gerald S. Hobbs,
Jules Perel **Senior Vice President:** Patrick
Keleher, Art & Design Group **Vice Presidents:**
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board Operations, John B. Babcock, Product
Development, Mary C. McGoldrick, Personnel,
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Lorch **Corporate Manager:** Robert Lewis,
General Manager of Publishers Graphics

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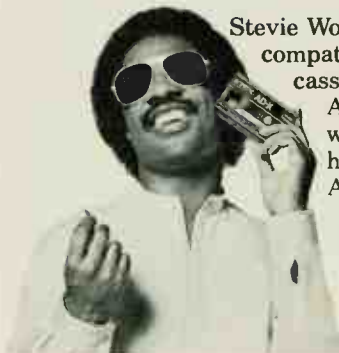


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TDK
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Neil Peart
Rush

Your drums are all over the place, not just at the end of a verse or chorus but between every line, every phrase. Jaw sagging, your limbs are snapping out really fast. You're channeling energy from the audience, directing it through your kit. The music swells around you and the power's flowing through you so strong you can taste it.

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See for yourself how over 200 of the world's most famous performers taste the power of their Zildjians. In our new Cymbal Set-Up Book, the most comprehensive reference guide for drummers ever published. For your copy, see your Zildjian dealer or send us \$4 to cover postage and handling.

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LETTERS

NICK KNOCKS

I'm sorry, but who the hell does Nick Lowe think he is? In five pages he finds it his divine right to cut apart, complain about and criticize every musician his pure pop heart desires, not to mention anything else people may or may not care about (including himself).

PLEASE don't get me wrong, I think old Nick is really good. I think he's very clever and I think he must be a very pressurized man as well, I have a pile of respect for him. But I think it's a shame when people miss the point of this music thing. Music—rock, whatever—is *not* disposable, is *not* trash. It's important and it matters, and I'm sick of being told it doesn't. Nick's problem is that he knows this but he won't admit it. And it annoys me to think that he'll rape the music of a great band like Creedence and then justify it by saying that everybody else does it.

Fortunately, we find that Nick is really human by the end of the interview—rather ironic that he didn't want it in. Must have been from the Boston session.

Karen Schoemer
New Canaan, CT

MAIL LIBERATION

Today I picked up the July issue on my way to the post office; among my letters to be mailed was an admiring letter to you requesting that you cover John McLaughlin—I couldn't believe you ignored him for so long.

Well, that letter didn't make the box but this one will. Robert Fripp's article/interview was certainly worth the wait—an intelligent, very human piece on a man who never ceases to amaze. His faith in the power of music and his relentless following of the inner voice put him in a class by himself in contemporary music. I do regret that no mention was made of his recent tour with his current, excellent French band, his best since the original Mahavishnu Orchestra.

Liam Fitzgerald
Chicago, IL

RICH BITCH

Regarding the article by Chris Doering on "Wood and the Secret of Sound" in your June issue, I believe the article should have only been about types of woods used in manufacturing musical instruments and not about Mr. Doering's personal preferences. He claims that "some of the B.C. Rich guitars have a thin, tinny, dry sound," while he later refers favorably to a guitar with "a more transparent high end." What's the difference? It seems entirely one of individual prejudice and such opinions should have been omitted from the article.

To draw a conclusion based on sam-

pling one or two individually crafted, hand-made guitars and then characterize the rest of the line of thirty-eight different guitars on the basis of that one experience is more than unfair. Next time, Mr. Doering, write about your infatuation with the Les Paul and leave the guitar building to us.

Mal Stich
Vice-President, B.C. Rich
Los Angeles, CA

GEE WHIZ, DAVE

I couldn't help feel bittersweet over the recognition you gave Dave Edmunds with the release of *D.E. 7th*. As a member of his "avid cult" I had taken the opportunity to see his show the night before. Imagine my disappointment when Edmunds left the stage after only one hour and did not come back for a second encore. Standing afterwards among a throng of autograph-seeking fans outside his tour bus, I felt cheated—not only financially, but as if he had violated the hell-raising, give-it-all-you've-got spirit that is an essential part of rock 'n' roll. Making my way to the door, I asked, "Dave, why no second encore?" With a sheepish gee-whiz-I-dunno look he shrugged his shoulders. Full of disdain, I replied, "A rock 'n' roller would've," and walked away. I don't know if he's got a good shot at becoming a "legend" or not, but that night left a bad taste in my mouth. Maybe he should have closed with "I'm Only Human."

I loved your interviews with Nick Lowe and Graham Parker.

Paul Higgins
St. Louis, MO

A FABLE FOR OUR TIMES

Once upon a fine musical morning there thrived a mere handful of truly creative innovators, who called themselves Yes, ELP, King Crimson and Genesis. The musical crops they planted within the then-open minds of the listening public gave great delight.

But then it came to pass that a darkness fell upon the creators' audience as it fell sway to the evil forces of disco-mania and regression. Great charlatans appeared and borrowed mercilessly from the succulent bouquets of Yes, etc. and put them to use under names of Styx, Foreigner and Journey.

The magazine oracles huddled in repulsive dismay from the travesties wrought by these foul giants as the creatures seduced many a brainless disophile. "Back to the roots!" cried the oracles, whose eyes were, alas, also glazed over with regressive impulses as they sought out safer and simpler pastures of the late 50s in the form of new wave hucksters.

But then a new cry was heard. From the midst of the Car-Clashes and Uriah Heeps, yea, from the very depths of the

Stygian fog, came a new force, a Phoenix embracing the strengths of the lost creators, rising in the name of Asia. "And from the wreckage, I will arise—to cast the ashes back in their eyes," triumphantly proclaimed this sole survivor. On that second new day, there was a new light—and it was damned good.

Bob Vandiver
Sioux Falls, SD

CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION

Excuse me! My mistake! For some reason, I thought your magazine was a publication for and about musicians. All your interviews are mildly interesting; I swear you could put "The Midnite Star" or "People" on the cover and no one would know the diff.

And what about your letters column? Is this "pat yourself on the back" space or what? To quote letters in your April issue: "I take my flower pot hat off to you..." and "exposing myself to every inch of your beautiful magazine gives me more joy and fulfillment..." I mean, COME ON! Do you people write these letters yourself? Are these people real, or should your whole magazine be put on *That's Incredible*?

You had better get those Campbell's Soup and laxative ads in your magazine and quit trying to pass yourself off as another *Modern Recording* or *Guitar Player*.

Rick Smith
Lansing, MI

A FABLE FOR OUR MAG

I can't tell you well enough how nice I think your magazine is, but I can try. Here is a story I heard—though in a different tongue—a couple days ago. Just change the word "magician" to "musician."

When I was living in Africa, these two Japanese magicians came to town. There were two magicians—actually one only took tickets and made train reservations and cleaned up after his friend's final act, which was to fly around the crowd like a hummingbird and give all the men a haircut and a shave. They were very popular wherever they went, even if word of their magic had not preceded them. I met them at their campfire late after their last show in this town, and they invited me to join them for as long as I wished. I started learning some of their tricks and was surprised to find out that the guy who took tickets was actually the teacher of the other. When I asked the teacher why he didn't fly around like a hummingbird too, he said, "Oh, I can do all that stuff, but I can also *not* do it."

And one of my favorite parts of your magazine is the letters where people tell how bad you screwed up. Seriously.

Marty Wisckol
Somewhere between Ireland and Rio



Donald Fagen doesn't believe in endorsements.

Every serious musician knows who Donald Fagen is. Over the last decade, he's been one of the major creative forces in music.

Like other serious musicians, Mr. Fagen has made Synergy one of the foundations of his sound. It's no wonder, when you examine the galaxy of instruments and tonal expressions Synergy puts at your fingertips. From the breath on the mouthpiece of a flute, to the bite of a guitar, to Cathedral voices raised in song, Synergy gives life to electronic music.

Experience the digital wizardry of the keyboard Omni Magazine called 'the Philharmonic of the future'. At only \$5295, Synergy turns science fiction into fact.



He believes in

SYNERGY



Information on Synergy is available as follows: full color brochure \$3; audio cassette \$10; 80 page Owners Manual \$15. Digital Keyboards, Inc., 105 Fifth Ave., Garden City Park, N.Y. 11040

music

industry

news

By Jock Baird

There are clouds on the horizon for AOR rock stations. New ratings confirm large listener losses for some of the nation's flagship chainsaw rock broadcasters. WCOZ in Boston saw their ratings plummet from a 12.6 market share to 4.7 in a year, while less spectacular but equally grim statistics greeted WLLZ in Detroit, WMET in Chicago, KBPI in Denver and KOME in San Jose. The hottest demographic is now the 24-54 age group, as the 12-24 age group now serviced by AOR stations continues its post-baby-boom decline. Heavy rock's lack of affinity with women and older listeners is having palpable effects. This has divided the AOR programmers into hard-liners who want to circle the wagons and expansionists who want to broaden the format.

The wave of self-examination has included frank discussions about the effect of format consultants like **Lee Abrams**, originator of the SuperStars format now standard for eighty U.S. AOR stations. Even Abrams himself has seen the writing on the wall: "Consultants have taken away the spontaneity and magic of AOR. There's such consistency, such homogeneity from market to market that it's gotten out of hand." Abrams plans an "antidote" to too much standardization, a new format called SuperStars 2, but feels there is no irony in that; he sees his formats as "blueprints to decorate and make livable, but a lot of stations painted with dumb colors." When the premier programmer calls AOR "unbelievably boring," something's gotta give.

New currents of radio resistance are springing up spontaneously. Shrimp Records, a record store chain in Tucson, Arizona is calling for a boycott of the city's three AOR stations and led a smashathon in which 200 radios met their makers.

Following **Barry Manilow's** use of string synthesizers on his British tour, the central London branch of the Musician's Union passed a motion *banning* the use of synthesizers. Since half the records on the British charts now use them extensively, the move might make things very sticky for the new synth-poppers, but because the motion must also be approved by the London District Council and then by the Executive Committee of the union in August before it takes effect, no mass emigrations are presently planned.

Legal activity: **Diana Ross** and **Rod Stewart** are being sued by former management.... **Jimi Hendrix's** dad claimed a Los Angeles videocassette maker hasn't paid for rights to "In Concert" and "Popcorn, 1969," two Hendrix video-concerts.

The Jam's **Paul Weller** has written a chapter on the Mod era in a collection of essays on rock fashion, *Cool Cats*.... **Bill Wyman** went to Japan and made a good impression; says manager Eric Gardner, "They saw how undemonic Bill was and that may pave the way for a Stones visit." **Todd Rundgren** is producing the new **Psychedelic Furs** LP, after which he'll finish up the new **Utopia** and get on with his last Bearsville solo album.... **Joan Armatrading** sold out her tour of Australia.... Vibist **Cal Tjader**, one of the pioneers of West Coast jazz, died at the age of sixty-five.... Cause of **Lester Bangs's** death is now tentatively listed as a heart attack.

There has always been an unspoken barrier in the industry between the equipment makers and the record makers, but there has been a hopeful element of unification: a group of disparate musicians linked *only* by their endorsement of Ibanez

products. Led by **Bob Weir** of the Dead and including fusion greats **Billy Cobham** and **Alphonso Johnson** as well as rock 'n' rollers **Bobby Cochran** and **Dave Garland**, **Bobby & the Midnights** failed to break apart from all that centrifugal force, but delivered a disciplined and sophisticated performance at NAMM in Atlanta on the occasion of Ibanez parent company Hoshino's ten-year anniversary. Their first Arista album may have a followup.

Chart Action

The clean sweep prophesied in these pages two months ago is now complete, as Paul McCartney's *Tug Of War* is the top LP and "Ebony & Ivory" is in its sixth week at #1. The old hangers-on are well out the door as Asia, Van Halen's *Diver Down*, Stevie's *Original Musiquarium* and Rick Springfield own the top five. The Human League, prototype of the new synth-pop, have put *Dare* into #6 and the single, "Don't You Want Me," into #3. Willie Nelson's *Always On My Mind* and its title cut were both top tenners, as was Toto's convincing comeback LP, *Toto IV* and its leadoff, "Rosanna." Aldo Nova, Loverboy and the Scorpions whet heavy metal appetites while Ray Parker, Jr. yearns for *The Other Woman*. Chart watchers braced for the next wave, spear-headed by Blondie's *The Hunter*, Elton John's *Jump Up*, Queen's *Hot Space* and Rick James's *Throwin' Down*. Jane Fonda and Richard Simmons are making people think twice about the potential of exercise discs. Squeeze's *Sweets From A Stranger* jumped thirty points in a week to #56. Interestingly, the Clash's *Combat Rock* debuted at #99, a sign that commercial success may finally be at their door.

Other singles developments include a swift kick to Charlene's atrocious "I've Never Been To Me" and good steady boosts to Joan Jett's remake of the Shondells' "Crimson And Clover" and Queen's "Body Language." A new Roberta Flack ballad, "Making Love," and DeNiece Williams's "Gonna Take A Miracle" gently rise to the door of the top ten, but hold your breath; the bad news is that REO Speedwagon's new "Keep The Fire Burning" and the Stones' "tribute" to the Miracles' epic "Goin' To A Go Go" will probably soon be everywhere.

Stevie owns the soul charts, naturally (even *Tug Of War* is #11) and *Musiquarium* has been #1 two of its first three weeks. The Dazz Band's *Keep It Live* has given the Temps' *Reunion* a fight for second spot, while Patrice Rushen and Atlantic Starr look strong. The new *Gap Band IV* promises to be a factor, as does Ashford & Simpson's *Street Opera*.

PERFORMER 500 SERIES

The DOD Performer 500 Series employs the latest technology and brings together many innovative and previously unavailable features.

Our constant research allows us to incorporate new ideas, materials and techniques in producing the best performance and finest products available.

Each Performer has a solid die cast metal case, modular design with plug-in circuit card, AC adapter included (USA models), heavy duty power connector, active switching, exceptionally long battery life and newly designed circuitry.

All Performer 500 Series effects are backed with a three-year limited factory warranty.

PHASOR 595

The DOD 595 Phasor is a six stage regeneration phase unit with up to 1080° degrees of phase shift. The DOD 595 produces all the classic phase shift effects, along with a broad spectrum of regeneration phase shifting. Three controls are provided on the DOD 595 Phasor allowing a wide range of colorful sounds.

WAH FILTER 545

The DOD Wah Filter 545 is a bandpass filter that can be swept across a portion of the audio range. The peak frequency of the 545 is determined by the level of the input, the stronger or louder the signal, the higher the wah effect. By varying playing techniques the 545 will act as a touch-controlled wah—wah adding expression to all types of instruments.

DISTORTION 555

The DOD Distortion 555 delivers a wide range of useful effects from a warm tube type overdrive effect to a hard driving distortion or fuzz sound with a long sustain. The 555 can give the presence of a powerful sound without loud volumes, making the 555 a useful effect for all types of performances.



DELAY 585

The DOD Delay 585 uses the latest bucket brigade technology to electronically simulate echo and reverberation. The Delay 585 is completely electronic and requires no mechanical or moving parts, making it totally maintenance free. The Delay 585 provides continuous delay times from 60 to 300 ms (milliseconds) with a dynamic range greater than 90 db.

DOD ELECTRONICS
CORPORATION
2953 South 300 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115
Telephone (801) 485-8534

STEREO CHORUS 565

The DOD Stereo Chorus 565 is a time delay effect. The chorus effect of the 565 is accomplished by mixing the original voice with a delayed voice whose pitch varies slightly from the original. The DOD 565 also includes a synthesized stereo output allowing the use of two amplifiers to produce a realistic stereo presence. Because of the tonal characteristics produced by the 565, its applications are many.

FLANGER 575

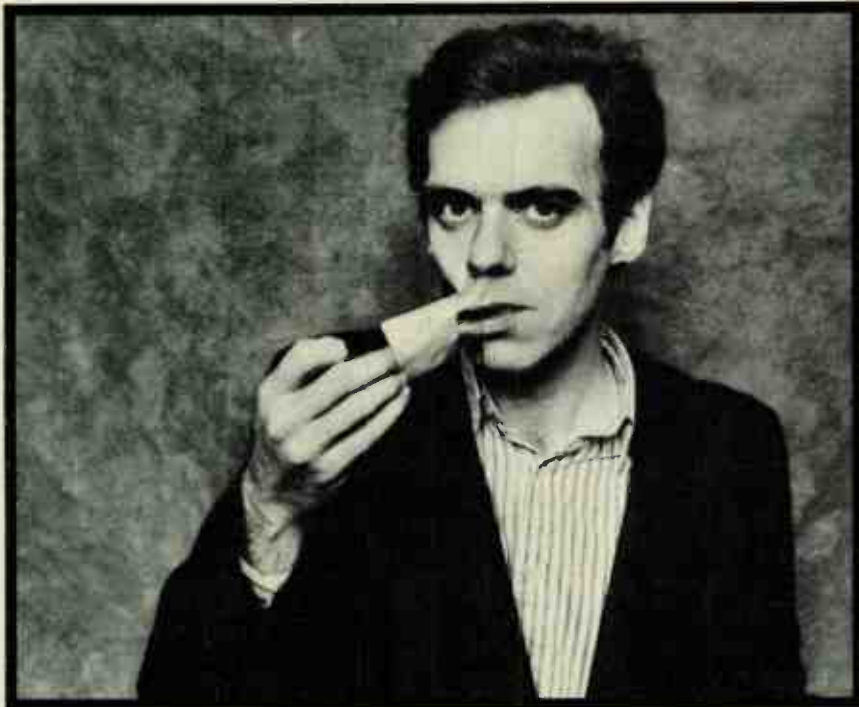
The DOD Flanger 575 produces its comb filter type of effects through the use of time delay circuitry. Using short delay times, the 575 can produce a wide range of effects from regeneration flanging and chorus to quivering vibrato, and many melodic effects in between. The 575 has a dynamic range greater than 90 db with a very wide frequency response, making the 575 a natural for studio or stage.

COMPRESSOR LIMITER 525

The DOD 525 Compressor Limiter makes all signals which pass through it have the same average output level, regardless of the original input level. In other words, the 525 squeezes a wide dynamic range into a much smaller one. This gives an instrument more sustain by increasing the gain as a note decays, adding a more even, unbroken professional sound.

JOHN HIATT: HAVING SOME FUN NOW

John Hiatt has done almost everything as a songwriter and performer, but *All Of A Sudden* he feels like he's getting somewhere.



HOWARD ROSENBERG

Hiatt's voice drips with anger and irony, an oddball island in a sea of pablum.

BY DAN FORTE

"Ricky Nelson.... How many people can say that? He's one of my favorites."

John Hiatt is perusing a sheet his publishers, Bug Music, have printed up listing artists who have recorded versions of his songs. It includes the names Dave Edmunds, Rosanne Cash, Three Dog Night, the Neville Brothers, Maria Muldaur, the Searchers and numerous others, as well as the soundtracks to the films *American Gigolo*, *Cruising* and *The Border*.

Up until this year Hiatt has received as much or more notoriety for his demos of original songs (covered by artists ranging all styles) as for his own albums, which is ironic because Hiatt is a truly magnetic performer. Onstage, he doesn't just play his songs, he acts them out; and he sings like a man possessed.

"I've always believed in and written pop songs," declares Hiatt. Pop his work may be, but only that word could summon the variety of Hiatt's best work. On 1979's *Slug Line*, for example, he ranges effortlessly from the chunky reggae of

"Madonna Road" and the Little Feat-Bo Diddleyesque hoodoo of "The Negroes Were Dancing" to the flat-out Chuck Berry surf 'n' roll of "The Night That Kenny Died" and the new wave doink-doink doubletime of "You're My Love Interest." Hiatt's eclectic writing style and wiry, angular voice recall Elvis Costello and Graham Parker, a comparison not altogether accurate to Hiatt: "I was flattered initially, but I don't think it's justified, really. There's quite a difference, particularly between the three of us. But I'm a fan of both of them."

All Of A Sudden, Hiatt's new LP on Geffen Records, also amply illustrates John's talents as tunesmith but not at the expense of Hiatt the performer. Whereas his two MCA albums, *Slug Line* and *Two Bit Monsters*, received reams of critical praise but suffered from a "rough-edged, trash can sound," Hiatt's Geffen debut, produced by Tony Visconti, sounds like a project fully realized.

The best example of Visconti's influence on the album is in the production of the LP's opening cut and first single, "I Look For Love," which Hiatt describes as "a curious combination of old and

new. The chorus is real straight R&B and the verses are a little peculiar." The clipped, herky-jerky vocal on the verses, over a majestic wall of synthesizers, recalls Visconti's most successful associate, David Bowie. If there are drawbacks to *All Of A Sudden*, it is a decline in song variety and a more homogenized, boomy consistency to the sound that forces Hiatt to reach for vocal effects that may not be entirely natural for him. But this is compensated for by the sheer presence and power of the tracks, and the commercial possibilities that the Geffen organization no doubt envisions for Hiatt's new format. (One wonders if this is not the Geffen modus operandi; distill out one clear genre and unrelentingly expound on it.)

John Hiatt was born in Indianapolis, Indiana thirty years ago, and took up guitar at age eleven. Almost immediately he was writing songs. At sixteen he left high school and by eighteen he had moved to Nashville and got a job as staff writer for Tree Music Publishing at \$25 a week. One of his early compositions, "Heavy Tears," was recorded by Conway Twitty and became a number one country hit.

In 1974 Hiatt released two albums on Epic, *Hangin' Around The Observatory* and *Overcoats*, and toured the coffee house circuit as a solo for the next four years. "I was never a folk singer," he points out, "but I was on that circuit. You write for the situation. The songs I was writing then were essentially designed to survive as a solo guy with a guitar. But it always sounded like rock 'n' roll to me; I just couldn't afford a band. It was pretty rocky; none of that reflective, introspective stuff.

"The mid-70s was the age of the singer/songwriter, which for my money really screwed things up. There's a lot of singer/songwriters who shouldn't be making albums, and I was one at that time. I had no business making records then, and wouldn't have except for the tenor of the times."

By the time of John's MCA albums, with the new wave movement already at full throttle, Hiatt's already aggressive style had no trouble fitting in. "I approach it with gusto," he says. "About 1976 or so, starting with the Ramones, some things were obviously happening



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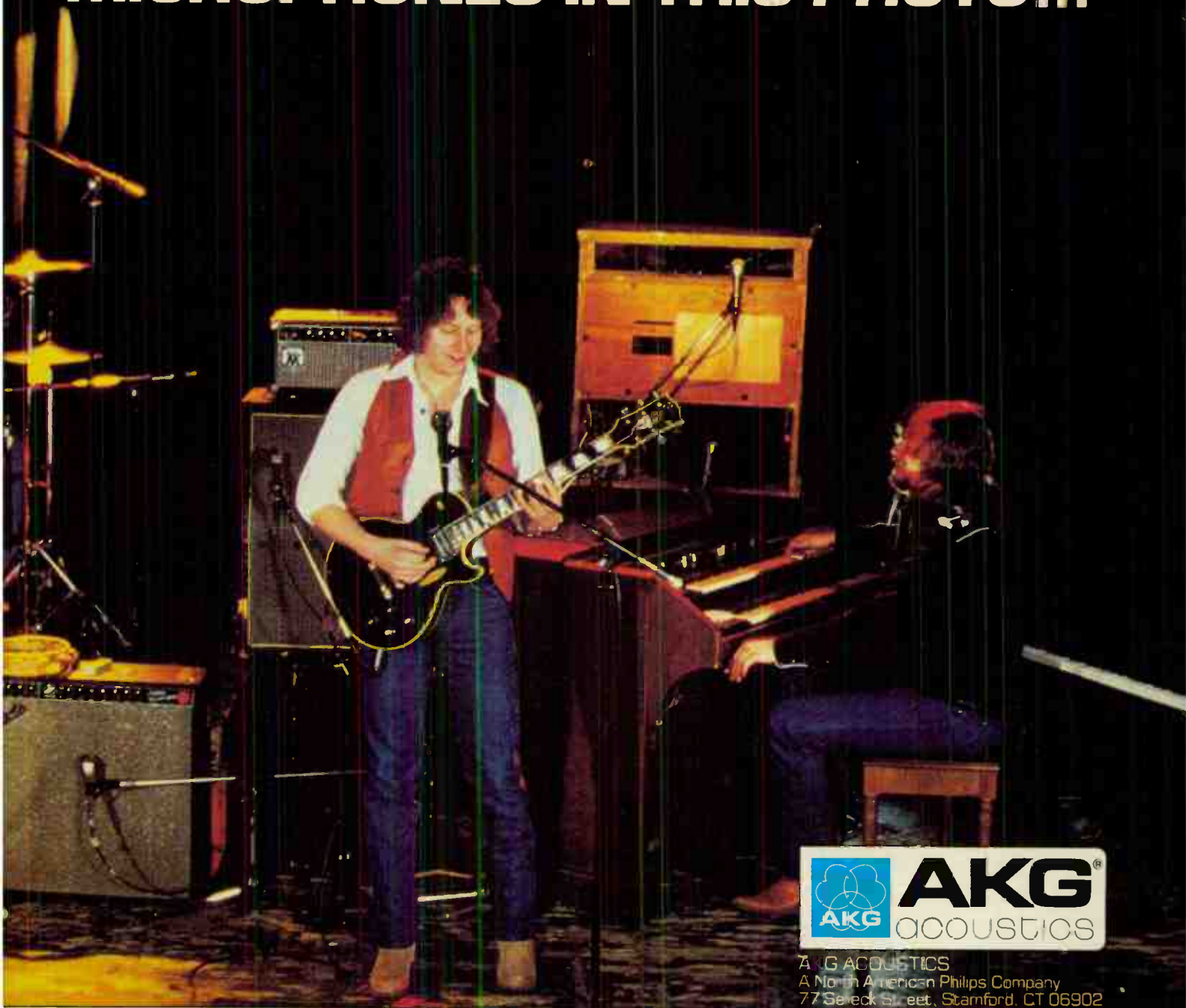
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all of a sudden. Well, to a guy like me, who was always on the periphery of things anyway, I saw it as a little bit of daylight; some oddball things actually were getting signed."

One aspect of Hiatt's music that has struck some as oddball is his singing voice. It is deep, thick, heavy, passionate, sometimes almost strangled—not exactly what one is used to hearing on the radio. "Yeah, I've been told that," he admits. "It's funny, you know...I've always liked curious-sounding singers, with character. But that doesn't seem to be the way it goes. It's like there's less and less room for that, whereas even into the early 70s there was David Bowie, who couldn't be considered conventional as a singer, but who has a beautiful voice. Carlene Carter has a certain thing in her voice that just kills me sometimes. I like peculiarities. But the radio is set up now so that when one sound goes out they want another that sounds just like it to pick up the slack. Bad Company goes, Babys come in. Babys go, Loverboy comes in (laughs). It's pretty cut-and-dried. Well, unfortunately, I don't fit into that scheme."

In 1980 Hiatt found himself in the role of accompanist for the first time, playing second guitar behind Ry Cooder. After Cooder recorded John's "It Hasn't Happened Yet" on his *Borderline* LP (which Hiatt appears on), the bottleneck guitar ace hired the songwriter's entire band for a subsequent tour. "It was great," exclaims Hiatt. "I'll tell you something, it really struck me how easy a gig it is to be a sideman. I don't know why these guys bitch all the time. It's the simplest gig I've ever done. Just get up and play the damn guitar for an hour and ten minutes. No pressure, the heat's off. I had a great time.

"It was a real treat for the band," he continues, "because we essentially became another band for that period of time. And how many bands get to work under two leaders in their lifetime?"

Of their contrasting musical approaches, John explains, "There's a lot more air in Ry's approach than in mine. As a band, we're a lot heavier, more heavy-handed, a little more aggressive. We learned how to listen to each other and get that sort of spinning thing going amongst ourselves, rather than just four or five guys bashing out parts. It helped immensely. Ry's something else. He's the most musical person I've ever met. He has the best ears for music."

Cooder and Hiatt also had a chance to collaborate on the soundtrack to *The Border*, the Tex-Mex-based film starring Jack Nicholson. John describes writing in tandem with another person as tough but interesting. "I'd like to do more of it," he offers, "because you have somebody else's outlook to chip away at."

At thirty, Hiatt sees his work of the past two years, especially *All Of A Sudden*, as

continued on page 112

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ROCK FASHION: LACE FOP TO COSTUME BALL CHIC

An informal survey of the great movements in rock fashion, those cyclical variations on the theme of outraging mom and dad.

BY JOHN MENDELSSOHN



JIM MARSHALL

Brian Jones sheds Classic Stones for carefree Henry VIII.

Don't tell me that a rock 'n' roll act's looks are immaterial, 'cause I'm from Los Angeles, and over the past six months or so I've seen Motley Crue, who sound exactly like every other heavy metal mob in town, overtake any number of critically-raved-about new wave outfits and rise to the status of local superstars solely on the basis of their look.

One presumes that the hundreds of teenagers who squish into their every gig might be surprised to find out that the New York Dolls' Johnny Thunders was wearing his hair precisely as the Crue do and that David Bowie was prancing around on stiletto-heeled boots just like

bassist Nikki Sixx's (and your neighborhood dominatrix's) fully a decade ago, and that Gene Vincent was already oozing menace and perversity in head-to-toe black leather before any of the Crue was so much as a tingling in his papa's loins.

Today, more than ever before, it's clear that the more the looks of our rock heroes have changed, the more they've remained the same. Over its three-decade history, only a handful of genuinely new wrinkles have been added to the fundamental notion of rock dress—namely, that which is most cool is that which raises Pop's blood pressure the highest and inspires Mom to whimper, "Where did we go wrong?" most piteously.

In the epoch of early Elvis, those ends were easily achieved—one had only to let his crewcut grow out, pile the result-



Early British Lace Fop variations by the Who; the Strawberry Alarm Clock don beatific smirks for the I've Got a Guru Look.



Ersel Hickey demonstrates 50s Ducktail Look (note nifty jellyroll).

ing tresses high with grease, and combine colors as only natty hoodlums had heretofore. Still, one was likely to look no more otherworldly than one's wild dropout uncle, the baby and bad apple of his mother's family.

Give the Beatles credit for looking like nobody's uncle, save perhaps the nephews of the Three Stooges' Moe. But far from a symbol of the emergence of rock's second generation, the Fab Four themselves are said to have thought of their hair as a gimmick on a par with the neat dancesteps the Shadows did while backing up Cliff Richard.

If it hadn't been for the Rolling Stones, the trillions who adored the Beatles might have gone back to crewcuts or ducktails within a year of "She Loves You." Credit the Stones' Svengali, the underpraised Andrew Loog Oldham, for discovering something novel 'neath the rock 'n' roll sun—that calculated ugliness sold like hotcakes. But don't forget that even while Jagger was looking like some toad with a lymph gland problem on the back of the group's first LP and Richards like the poster boy for some Rid Britain of the Pimples Blight on the covers of both *12x5* and *Out Of Our Heads*, Brian Jones was defining rock glamor through the 60s.

Hardly had the world recovered from his charges' studied grossness than the



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ingenious Oldham emboldened them to invent yet another novel wrinkle—British Camp Chic.

A true visionary, the intrepid Oldham nonetheless exhorted Jagger to "flounce and flit" onstage "like a gym-suited schoolgirl," in the words of Nik Cohn, who, in his indispensable *Pop from the Beginning*, reveals why every group in Blighty soon seemed to comprise at least a couple of heavy fairies—the most influential managers of the day were all gay, and "dressed their singers in things that previously would have been worn only by exhibitionistic queens." After these outrageous styles were widely imitated, "private sexual fantasy turned into public cult."

By the end of the 60s, affected androgyny was second nature to even the

most voraciously heterosexual British groups. Good old boys in any small town in America would have felt it their sacred duty to try to beat the crap out of Robert Plant, later the heavy metal stud of the 70s, if he'd dared to stroll their streets got up as he is on the back of the first Led Zeppelin LP.

Meanwhile in America, where camp is generally denied the theatrical immunity it enjoys in Britain, the most widely-imitated groups of the *Sgt. Pepper* era—that is, those from San Francisco—took to dressing up as though every night were Halloween, in the process inventing what might be called Costume Ball Chic, from which the New Romantic look would derive fifteen years later.

Finding themselves chronically air-sick from too many flights of fancy by



New Romantic Look pirated by Adam Ant; the more things change....

late 1968, many rock people renounced psychedelia, got heavily into the least fanciful sort of music around—the blues—and took to dressing like the politicians who were some of the year's biggest pop stars. In these grim and grimy days, even Pete Townshend, heretofore resplendent in gold sequins, started coming onstage in a T-shirt.

It took nothing less than Rod Stewart, with his astonishing pineapple hairdo and his armada of velvet suits, to reinvent rock glamor. (In view of the calumny that's heaped on him nowadays for his love of spandex and leopard skin prints, it's interesting to recall that he was hardly less tarty while with the Jeff Beck Group, when he favored women's see-through blouses and floppy dollybird hats.) Of course, if Stewart hadn't brought glamor back to rock, David Bowie surely would have, even though his Bi-Guy from Space look was really little more than the latest and most lurid variation on British Camp Chic.

Following the retirement of Bowie's flame-haired Ziggy Stardust persona at mid-decade, little of even negligible sartorial interest happened for ages. Which was only fitting, in view of the fact that less great music was made during this woeful period than at any juncture since the days of the heinous, crooning FrankieBobbies of fifteen years before. In London's King's Road, though, Malcolm McLaren, a tailor-turned-Svengali with a delicious sense of outrage, was encouraging four kids who hung around his boutique looking for trouble to hack off their very long hair and form the group that would make manifest the arrival of rock's third generation.

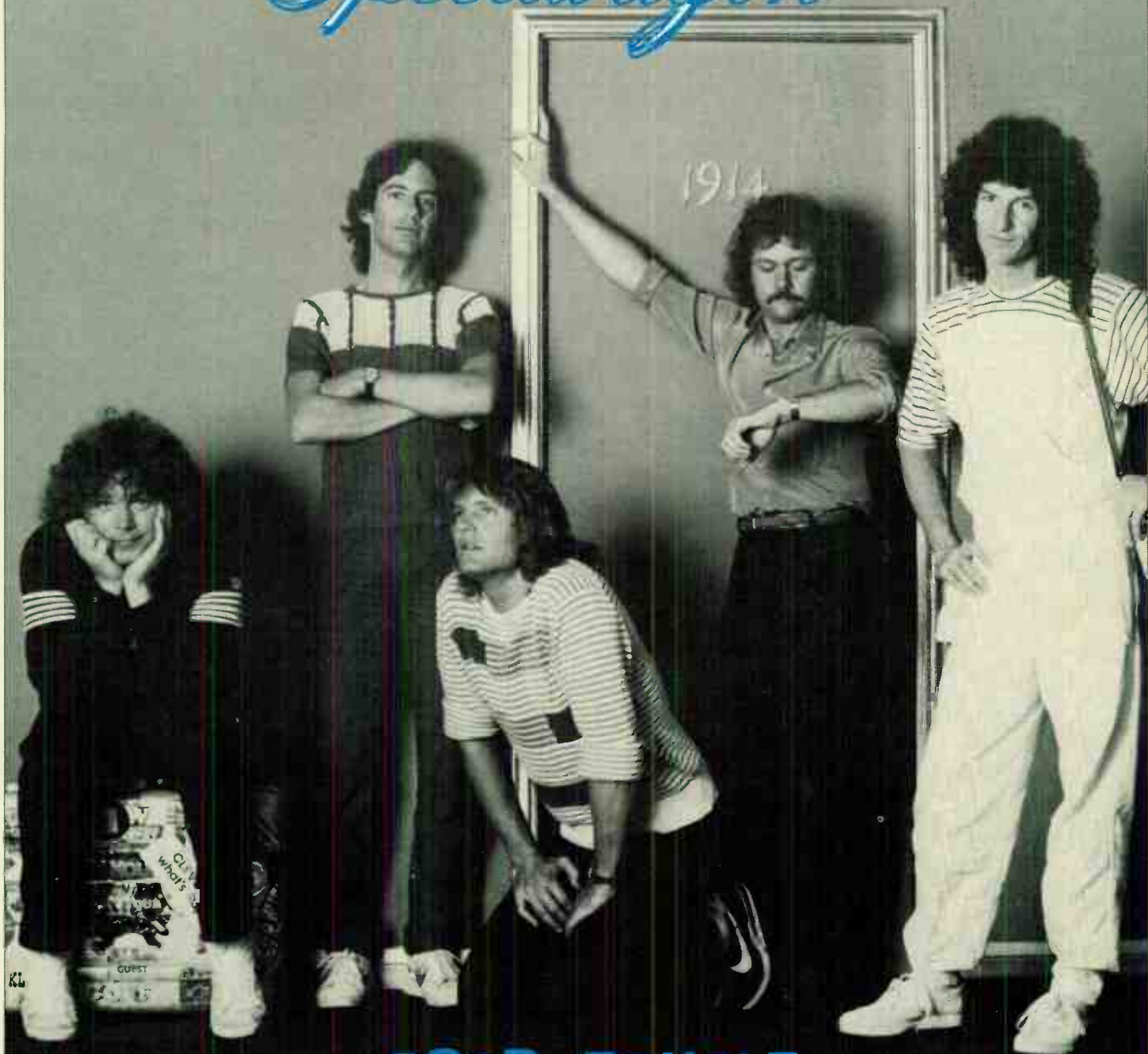
The problem for rock's close-cropped third generation was that, while it cer-

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tainly earned the disdain of older siblings who were into arena rock, short hair *per se* was hardly enough to raise Pop's blood pressure, or make Mom whimper. Ah, but if it were dyed blue, or reduced to a hedge down the center of the skull....

Naturally, only a very few committed themselves to the perverse new chic to the point of disfigurement—beneath their black vinyl bondage trousers and handcuffs and chains and swastika armbands and electrocution-victim coiffures, in fact, few punksters were more committed to anarchy than the children of the 60s who'd flocked to see Her- man's Hermits.



Rod Stewart's tarty glamor revived British Camp Chic in zebra-skin and spandex.

Whether its practitioners really meant it, man, or not, one of punk's prime benefits was that it served to reawaken the rock audience's long-dormant every-day-can-be-Halloween spirit. After they grew bored with decking themselves out as their parents' nightmares, lots of punks rediscovered the styles of eras now long enough past to seem cool again. One group—the Romantics—got into the spirit of the mid-60s so heavily that they wore uniforms. Unfortunately, the uniforms were red vinyl, and it was noted that, when the boys stood side-by-side in dim light, they looked less like a rock 'n' roll band than a banquet in a family-style pizzeria.

Tolerance was rampant. If, in the era of Do Your Own Thing, your thing had been to wear a crewcut, you'd have been snubbed and reviled, assumed to be a narc, a Young Republican, or something equally unconscionable. After punk, though, you were celebrated for your droll sense of retro chic. Indeed, if you were a woman, you were revered as a veritable paradigm of chicness.

The news isn't all good, not by a long shot. In punk's wake, though, the various

factions have frequently seemed just as intent on alienating one another as Mom and Pop. But these things are certain: never have so many different looks enjoyed nearly equal voguishness, nor has nostalgia been so rampant.

What's next? Well, when I pontificated on this subject for a great metropolitan newspaper two years ago, stylelessness was so much the rage that even Roxy Music, once Bowie's co-kings of British glam-rock, were looking like accountants in some particularly dreary suburb in the north of England. Keeping in mind that, throughout rock's history, periods during which the prevailing credo was, "We dress plain so as not to distract from the music, man," have invariably given way to periods of rampant flamboyance, and vice versa, I suggested that something very colorful and very outrageous was about to happen. The New Romance happened. And might be happening still if the likes of the Village People hadn't hurled themselves atop the bandwagon.

Before the next act to make Pop's blood pressure soar and Mom's tone profoundly piteous as she muses, "Where did we go wrong?" emerges, we're probably going to have to weather a longish stretch of Tom Verlainishness. But, boy, will we all be in for a surprise then.

Now let's have a look at some of the more colorful and influential looks that have gotten the most looks over the years.

J.D. in Ducktail: pegged trousers and short-sleeved sportshirts with the sleeves rolled up in very thin cuffs for maximum bicep exposure were very big among the seminal rockers of the 50s, for whom black and pink were the cool colors in everything but suede shoes, which were blue and not to be stepped on. The hair was greased into a protuberant plume—or jellyroll—in the front, and arranged in the back in such a way as to evoke that part of itself on which a duck would sit if ducks sat.

The Classic Stones Look (to which modern favorites as Tom Petty occasionally pay homage) is big on vests and sportcoats over white shirts buttoned to the collar, but without a tie. Curlers and other humiliating ploys were resorted to to make the hair curl under on the bottom like Brian Jones's. As interpreted by some young American groups of 1965-1966, in whose hands it might have been called **American Department Store Mod**, the look featured lots of turtlenecks and low-slung wide-wale corduroy trousers held up by two-inch-wide black leather belts. Later, after *High Tide And Green Grass*, the Stones' first greatest hits compilation, plaid and striped trousers (often juxtaposed with paisley and other prints by the likes of the original Knack, who tended to get carried away) became all the rage, driving homophobes nearer an early grave.

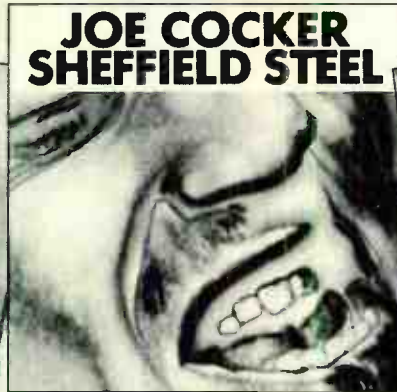
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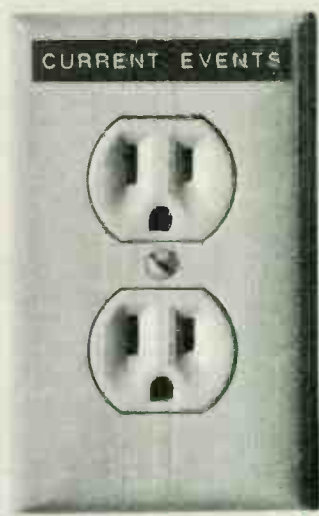
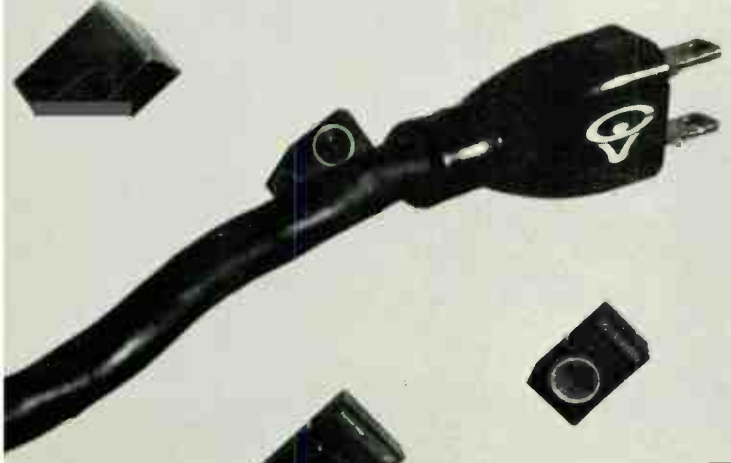


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☛ "... A phantasmagorical expedition into the heart of darkness—a trip worth taking, but not a trip to be taken lightly" (*New York Times*). A two-record set documenting the brilliant Munich performance of Lester Bowie, Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell, Malachi Favors Maghostut and Famoudou Don Moye.

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Lester Bowie*



The Great Pretender ECM 1-1209

☛ Yes, that's Lester Bowie, celebrated trumpeter of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and, yes, that's a remake of the classic Platters hit, "The Great Pretender." And everything else you might and might not expect from "the boss of the modern trumpet" (*Boston Phoenix*). With Philip Wilson (drums), Donald Smith (piano), Fred Williams (bass), Hamiet Bluiett (baritone saxophone), Fontella Bass (vocals) and David Peaston (vocals).

1982 down beat International Critics Poll Winner, Trumpet

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The Folk-Rock Look, which was very big in front of Ben Frank's Sunset Strip coffee shop—where all of the era's heaviest hanging out took place—called for jeans that appeared to have been spraypainted on the wearer's legs—a la those on the cover of the Byrds' first album. Jim McGuinn's peculiarly-shaped sunglasses, which put many in mind of Benjamin Franklin's pince-nez, were also widely imitated (Elvis Costello's organist, Steve Nave, continues to wear his to this day).

The basic Brian Jones hairdo was changed slightly, with the addition of

Buffalo Bill in Captivity: the young good old boys of the guitar armies that followed the Allman Brothers Band out of Dixie in the early 70s discovered that the longer their hair grew, the more nearly apoplectic the local rednecks became, and the happier it made them. At the same time, though, they wanted to leave no doubt about their being virile downhome studs, and so let their whiskers sprout, too. The result was the popular Buffalo Bill in Captivity look, which the likes of the Outlaws and Molly Hatchet continue to favor to this day. Special mention should be made in this



The Allman Brothers Band, quintessential Buffalo Bill in Captivity.

bangs that no longer stopped at the eyebrows' southernmost edge, but rested atop the actual eyelid. Sex-blurring was very chic, and facilitated by the wearing of David Crosby-inspired capes and ponchos and knee-high suede boots by male and female alike. Milady ironed her very long hair if it weren't naturally straight (oh, the pain of it!), and wore enormous false eyelashes and floral-print bellbottoms like Cher's.

The British Lace Fop Look prescribed floral-print brocade coats with as much lace and as many ruffles spilling out the sleeves and collar as possible, the idea being to resemble an effete interior decorator of the eighteenth century.

The Naz, featuring Todd Rundgren, were the best-known American proponents of this quintessentially fatuous look, although these old eyes have never seen more ruffles and frills and backcombed hair than the night an Italian-American lot from Long Island called the Image played the Whisky in 1970. Vestiges of the look survived until only recently in the stage apparel of those implacable guardians of the British Camp Chic tradition, Angel.

vicinity of Black Oak Arkansas, who looked like Al Capp cartoons of hippies come to life, complete with flies circling their heads.

The White Sharecropper with Ponytail Look (the opposite of the British Lace Fop look) introduced by Canned Heat's Bob "the Bear" Hite in the woeful epoch of rampant Caucasian boogie, was a big hit among fat fellows who fancied themselves blues howlers, manufacturers of ponytail bands, and the proprietors of army/navy surplus stores that stocked Can't-Bust-'Em overalls.

Bob Dylan returned from his 1965 tour of England sporting **The Medusa-Haired Mod Troubador on Speed Look**, which featured polka-dot or other print shirt buttoned to the collar beneath a leather jacket, spray-painted-on-looking trousers, a harmonica holder around the neck, and flamenco dancer boots with stacked heels, the better to wait only for one's bootheels to be wanderin'. Sunglasses were worn indoors as well as out, presumably either to evoke Roy Orbison or to prevent people seeing that the pupils of the eyes were usually the size of decimal points made with

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newly-sharpened pencils. The hair was worn in such a way as to suggest that the person beneath it had recently inserted his or her finger into a live AC/DC outlet.

Interestingly, Dylan's nearly god-like stature notwithstanding, curly hair was generally regarded as God's way of telling you that he liked you a lot less than he liked Brian Jones, at least until Cream's Eric Clapton and the Jimi Hendrix Experience all submitted to perms in the Summer of Love.

An offshoot of Costume Ball Chic, **The I've Got a Guru Look** of the same period found normally sensible people donning kaftans, beatific smirks, and as many bead necklaces as they could get around their necks and remain able to eat.

The fundamental precept of **The Former Jock Country Rocker Look** featured by Stephen Stills, Jimmy Thudpucker and assorted Eagles is that the wearer is laid back to the point at which he doesn't bother to change out of his old high school football jersey, not even to sing for 17,505 fans who've paid an average of \$12.50 to come see him.

The hair appears to have been cut by one's...lady, and never to have been within field goal range of a blowdryer. Faded non-designer jeans are the regulation trousers, Frye boots or jogged-in-looking jogging shoes the prescribed footwear.

The Arena-Rock Look of the late 70s

featured very long, usually shagged hair, elephant bellbottoms and platform shoes—all long after they'd become dreadfully unhip. Lead singers inserted short garden hoses, rolled-up washcloths, or even lead pipes down the front



Stephen Stills epitomized the Former Jock Country Rocker Look.

of their pants, that their extraordinary virility might be manifest even from the cheap seats. The bolder practitioners of the look have since traded their platforms for white Capezio dance slippers, and their bellbottoms for cigarette legs.

But they will never give up their garden hoses.

If it hadn't been for his funny **50s Filling Station Attendant on a Mascara Jag Look**, it's difficult to imagine Gary Numan having become an idol of dozens, let alone of hundreds of thousands, for he's surely the worst pop singer England has ever produced. It was his good fortune to come along at a time when stylelessness was so vogueish that his countrymen would have gone for anybody with a heavy visual image.

Semi-Finalist at the High School Science Fair, in which they look like the smug eggheads whom the tough boys pantsed on principle at least twice a week in their freshman and sophomore years, is but one of several related looks sported over the years by Devo, whose *modus operandi* is to try to look as unlike traditional pop stars as it is humanly possible to look. But it would be playing right into their hands to discuss their inverted flowerpot helmets or molded plastic hairpieces.

How could anyone not love **The New Romantic Look**, melding, as it did, British Lace Fop with Costume Ball Chic, and stirring in great armfuls of wit, as in Steve Strange's perfectly marvelous Little Lord Fauntleroy schtick? Leave it to the English to have fallen hard for an image originally inspired by one of the worst major motion pictures of the 80s—*The Island*, with Michael Caine—as Adam & the Ants' look certainly was. **M**

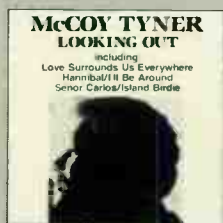
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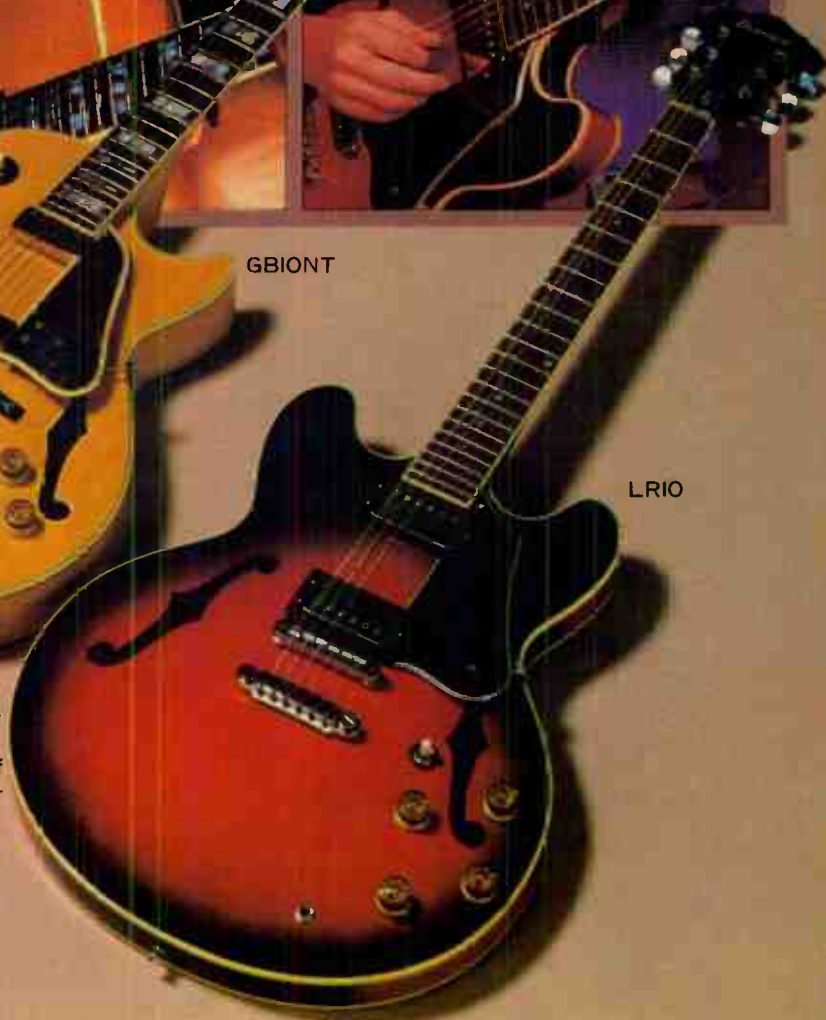
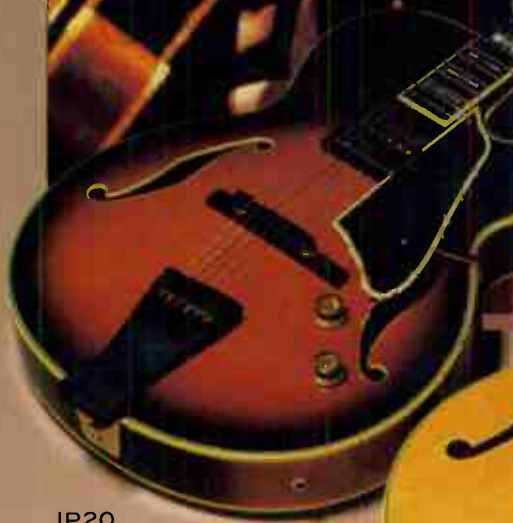
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FACES



Brave Combo

THE CLASH

An organ fugue blared, red lights flashed and a packed house thundered its welcome as the Clash seized the stage at Atlanta's 3,900-seat Fox Theater. But before the band ignited "London Calling" and detonated its own thunder, camouflage-gearred singer/guitarist Joe Strummer, resembling a guerilla wandering into camp after a grueling foray behind enemy lines, strode the platform extending into the Fox's orchestra pit and quietly surveyed the crowd.

This strange moment of private communication between Strummer and the audience repeated itself later in the show, just after guitarist Mick Jones completed his tender-voiced, ringing lead rendition of "Somebody Got Murdered." At that point Strummer took a seat on the edge of the orchestra platform and tentatively picked out a guitar line as the rest of the band looked on, bemused. Back at his center-stage mike a few seconds and an emotional world later, Strummer announced, "This one's 'In The Mood'

by Glenn Miller," and unleashed a Rasta-rebel yell to kick off the identity-restoring "This Is Radio Clash."

The Clash's American tour, with Atlanta as its second stop, was imperiled until about a week before its start by Strummer's speculation-ridden disappearance. These concert incidents and the band's limited interaction onstage suggest that the newly Mohawked and uncharacteristically portly Strummer is struggling to redefine both his sense of himself and his mission as point man in rock's most insurgent and perhaps greatest band.

As for the show itself, what did we get? Magnificence. The four-man guitar and drum battalion combat-rocked with authority and ease through a twenty-three-song set spanning all the band's styles. Agit-prop slides lent visual resonance and montage effect to "Guns Of Brixton" and "The Magnificent Seven," and the Section 8 dancers from local rock club 688 joined in on an activist art interpretation of "Know Your Rights." Bassist Paul Simonon and drummer Terry Chimes (back on board after Topper

Headon split in late May) powered rockers like "Clampdown" and "I Fought The Law," swung with cohesive fervor on "Jimmy Jazz" and "Rock The Casbah," and evoked a thick, throbbing atmosphere of dread and hope on mesmerizing versions of "Ghetto Defendant," "Armageddon Time" and "Straight To Hell."

The Clash's inspiring force and range reminded me of the loss we would suffer if this awesome band failed to surmount the myriad pressures afflicting its every move. The surly right-wing punks demonstrating outside the Fox hammered home how much more than musical our loss would be. — Anthony DeCurtis

BRAVE COMBO

After the leaden rhetoric of Adam Ant ("Sex Music For Ant People, Ani Music For Sex People"), and Bow Wow Wow ("See Jungle, See Jungle, Go Join Your etc."), "Polka, You Polkaolics," the rallying cry of a band of Texas eccentrics called Brave Combo, comes on like a whoosh of fresh air.

At the drop of drummer Dave Cameron's high-hat, these loons can play anything from high energy polka versions of Doors and Hendrix songs to an inspired cover of Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" in perfect waltz time. In some respect Brave Combo is the ultimate General Business band. You name the tune and the tempo, and they probably can play it. Despite their incredible repertoire though, it's unlikely that mom and dad would want to see them at sis' wedding reception.

Onstage, Brave Combo's irrepressible front man, Carl Finch, looks a lot like the inmate who's about to take over the asylum. Teetering on the edge, and threatening to fall over, Finch spends the evening switching off between accordian, guitar and keyboards, pausing only long enough to give apocryphal intros to the group's selections.

"Very few people know this," Finch explains from the stage of Providence's Living Room, "but before he died, Jim Morrison got heavily into POLKAAH! We'd like to do one of his last compositions for you now, it's

called 'People Are Strange, Let's Do The Polka.'" What follows is just what's promised, a full-blown version of the Morrison classic, complete with burping sax and the familiar floppy 2/4 cadence of polka. On top of that, Brave Combo attacks the tune with unabashed beer-tent fervor. Look out Myron Floren, stand aside Champagne Music Makers....

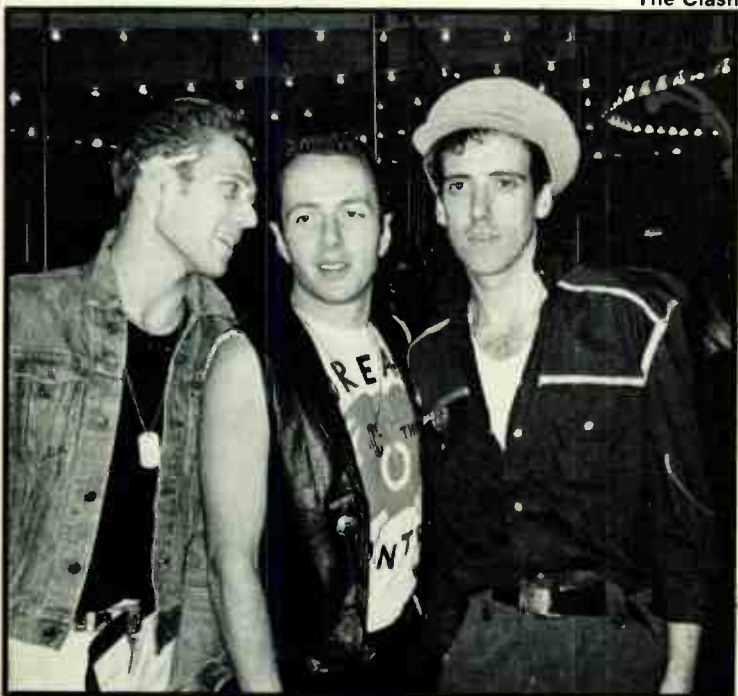
At an average of three nights a week for the last three years, Finch, reed man Tim Walsh, bass player Lyle Atkinson and drummer Dave Cameron have been spreading the word (POLKAAH!) to audiences all over the country. Their independently produced LP, *Music For Squares*, on their own Four Dots label, has lived a life of its own since it was released early last year. According to the Combo, every time the band gets ready to retire the LP, and get on to their next recording project, *Music For Squares*, like some vinyl Lazarus, rises up from the vault to demand another pressing. The word is spreading.

All this might beg the question of Brave Combo's intent. Do they honestly expect POLKAAH! to take hold of vast numbers of rock 'n' roll fans? Well, yes and no. "I can't imagine anything weirder than a bunch of hip musicians getting together to swap polka licks," jokes Lyle Atkinson, "That could get old pretty fast."

But Brave Combo is building an audience outside the borders of their native Southwest where they headline in lots of clubs, or share dates with fellow Texans like Joe Ely and kindred spirit Joe "King" Carrasco. "Polka is coming back," insists Finch, "because of the new-found emphasis on the upbeat. Look at the popularity of reggae and salsa; change the beat of polka around a bit, and you've got ska."

All four members of Brave Combo are crazy about polka and the work of local musicians like Tex/Mex star Flaco Jimenez, "the prince of the accordian," and Steve Jordan, whom the band enthusiastically describes as "the Jimi Hendrix" of that instrument.

A legend in his own right, Jordan is a psychedelic-eating exponent of *nor-tena* style dance music, which is popular in the border towns between



The Clash

EBET ROBERTS

northern Mexico and Texas. The Latin-charged *cumbia* beat, for example, is a big favorite in the Combo and figures largely in their sound.

It's all there on *Music For Squares*, one of the most brilliantly eclectic albums in recent pop history. Gems like Jacki DeShannon's "When You Walk In The Room," the hot *cumbia* of "Jugo De Pina," the borscht-belt humor of "Julida," along with standout originals like the frantic "Neo-Limbo" make *Music For Squares* a collector's item.

New Brave Combo numbers like the slap-happy polka of "I Love Saturdays" "You Pull My Tongue Out" and the ridiculous medley of "Little Brown Jug" and "Tubular Bells (Tubular Jugs)" raise the band's comic moxie to a whole new level.

Whether polkamanía will reach the epidemic proportions it did in Victorian England during the middle part of the last century remains to be seen. But after hearing the mad Yiddish reggae polka of Peggy Lee's "Fever," this reporter is ready to ask the same question similarly afflicted Brits asked each other some 120 years ago, "Can you dance the POLKAAH!" — Wayne Cresser

PANTHER BURNS

The Panther Burns are that rarity, a new rockabilly group from Memphis. Although it's fitting that the city where rockabilly was conceived from the unholy wedlock of rhythm & blues and country would produce a group true to the original impulses of the music, it's also ironic that this very fidelity to the iconoclastic spirit of rock's wild Southern relation would bring them precious little recognition.

The group formed out of a loose aggregation of Memphis musicians including drummer Ross Johnson, bass fiddler Ron Miller and famed guitarist: Alex Chilton, whose '79 LP *Like Flies On Sherbet* sports a rockabilly-meets-Velvet-Underground tribute to Elvis Presley. Instead of reviving rockabilly, Chilton and company would revitalize it by adding jazzy atonality and nearly Beefheartian rhythmic distension to their Warren Smith and Roy Orbison covers. They hooked up with Tav Falco, a singer from Gurdon, Arkansas and began playing to sometimes puzzled audiences around the Southeast.

Falco, for all his quasi-matinee-idol looks and pro forma hiccups, turned out to be more comedian than singer; his timing was a little off. So the Panther Burns concept crystallized: back an, er, eccentric singer by anticipating and caricaturing his every misstep with a purposely twisted instrumental phrase.

Which is exactly what the Burns did, and brilliantly, in their performance at Nashville's Vanderbilt University. Alex Chilton's superb guitar embellished oldies like "Stranded On A Dateless Night" and "Mona Lisa" with dark tone and thick chromatic chordal runs, his style some unlikely hybrid of Scotty Moore and Lou Reed. Johnson,

tongue lolling out as if in imitation of a still-drumming lobotomy victim, kicked over his minimal kit and played from various prone positions. Along with bassist Ron Miller, he shifted emphasis from four-to-the-bar to outlandish syncopation, yet always finding the one. Reckless, but effective, even if the yowling Falco could barely keep up on rhythm guitar. "We'll wait until Tav tunes his guitar!" Chilton had occasion to shout.

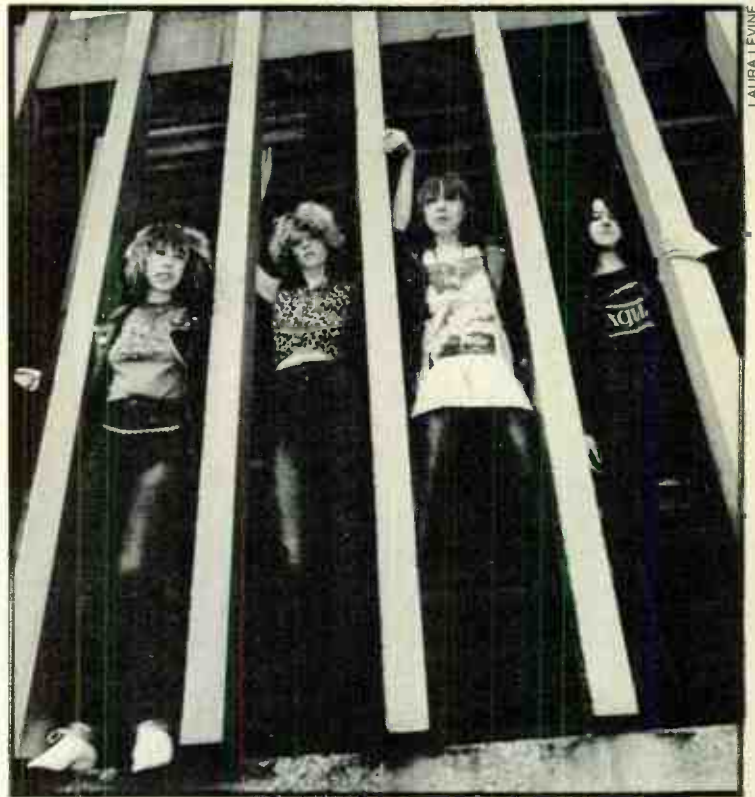
It was great fun—notoriously difficult to transfer to vinyl. Rough Trade has released an LP, *Behind The Magnolia Curtain*, which has its moments, mostly when Chilton cuts loose. Both Chilton and Johnson have since departed, replaced by drummer/guitarist Jim Duckworth. Can Falco maintain the inspired lunacy? Stay tuned. — Edd Hurt

GIRLSCHOOL

From a distance, Girlschool looks pretty much like any other heavy rock group—long hair, Marshall stacks, denim and leathers. But it doesn't take long for even the most slow-witted concertgoer to notice that some of that leather is in the form of skirts, for the members of Girlschool are all women.

By now, that should be no big deal. The recent chart success of the Go-Go's and Joan Jett has made quite a case for rock 'n' roll as an equal opportunity employer, and performers like Suzi Quatro and Heart ought to have been proof enough that hard rock wasn't a strictly male enclave. A lot of male heavy rock bands adopt a macho pose for fear of seeming wimpoid, and a number of lady rockers have embraced the role of supervixen for much the same reason. Girlschool, however, has made the happy discovery that because they're women, it doesn't matter that they look like ninety-eight-pound weaklings; furthermore, their gut-level approach to rock is so bluntly to the point that sexual posturing of any kind would seem superfluous.

Which means that when Girlschool clambers onstage at the Coast to Coast club in Baltimore to taped end-



Girlschool

of-the-world noises, the rave-up they unleash hardly comes as a surprise. Like a slightly downsized Motorhead, who lent a hand early in Girlschool's career by taking them along on tour and producing their first EP, Girlschool trades in crunching power riffs driven by an amphetaminated beat, so that each song attains maximum velocity. Although Motorhead packs more sonic punch, Girlschool has the distinct advantage of being able to carry a tune. Kim McAuliffe doesn't have a particularly strong voice or a flashy delivery, but her steady pitch and unaffected style cut through the wall of guitars without forcing her to resort to screams. Contrasted against Kelly Johnson's feedback-drenched guitar leads, her singing gives the band a sense of proportion and balance often lacking in heavy rock.

Girlschool's American debut on the Panther Burns



HUGH BROWN

"Lock Up Your Sons" tour was not without its problems, though Because Baltimore rock radio is still in the Stone Age, the show didn't draw very well, and even though most of the crowd were Motorhead cultists, the sheer lack of numbers prevented Girlschool from getting the intensity of response their music needed to gather momentum. Furthermore, this date marked the public debut of bassist Gil Weston, giving the proceedings the nervous edge of an out-of-town tryout.

For all that, the band showed itself to be a real contender for the arena circuit, and fell of surprises. The originals are tough and anthemic, with "Turn Your Head Around" in particular standing out as a potential AOR hit. Because Girlschool can approximate Motorhead's vigor without carrying the burden of its eccentricities the band seems a natural to win over the heartland audience that has embraced AC/DC and Joan Jett.

Best of all was the r choice of covers. While Joan Jett plays on the ambiguities of the glitter era and the Raincoats turn "Lola" into transexual farce, Girlschool opts for the unlikely combination of the Stones' "Live With Me" and Z.Z. Top's "Tush" served straight up. Was this some sort of inverted hyper-feminism on the band's part? "Oh, no," explained Johnson after the show. "Kim always wanted to do 'Live With Me,' and we finally go: around to doing it." As for "Tush," Johnson laughs, "it can't be what the song says, because the lyrics from 'Tush' would be totally strange for a girl band to do. It's always been a good live number, so we keep it in."

With instincts like that, Girlschool will definitely be going places. — J.D. Considine

A

TTENTION!

Linda Ronstadt and Willie Nelson! Attention Bonnie Raitt and Judy Collins! Attention Aretha Franklin and Frank Sinatra! Attention all you interpretive pop singers who are constantly looking for the songs that will become tomorrow's standards. Have we got a songwriting team for you! London's Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook are now writing the most intelligent and best-crafted pop songs of the day.

Difford (lyrics) and Tilbrook (music) lead a quintet called

Squeeze that's most often described as a new wave band. But Tilbrook himself says, "Labels are okay when something fits within well-defined boundaries, but when you have something that transcends boundaries, it gets difficult. That's why I think it's silly to call us a rock 'n' roll band, because we encompass so many influences. Pop is the definition I can

live with, because pop has no discernible sound. I'd just say Squeeze is a pop band."

Difford and Tilbrook run a pop band and write pop songs. They are the near end of a long tradition of craftsmanship that stretches back through their acknowledged heroes, from Elvis Costello to Brian Wilson to Cole Porter. All you singers would do well to draw from the rich Squeeze catalog (950 songs and counting).



BY GEOFFREY HIMES

Like you, Linda. You've covered several songs by Elvis Costello, who has been producer, backing vocalist and a good friend to the Squeeze team. You might try Squeeze's "Goodbye Girl," a 1979 British hit single but unknown here. There's a compelling fatefulness to Dufford's lyrics about "waking up to find she's gone." Moreover, Tilbrook's melody hooks

once, reassembles, hooks again, transforms itself for the chorus and hooks again. Replace the quirky, tricky rhythm with simple L.A. snap and let the restless melody challenge your quite potent (but overly cautious) voice.

Bonnie Raitt, you could sink your teeth into "Tempted" from the 1981 *East Side Story* and Squeeze's best-known song in America. Tilbrook's melody percolates up and down through the verses until it spurts out in an irresistible blue-eyed soul

chorus. Your big, ringing voice could build this melody to an even bigger climax nailed home by slide guitars. Or you could force the pace even more on the driving rocker, "I've Returned," from the new album.

Aretha Franklin, you don't have to tolerate the mechanical writing of Carol Bayer

Sager and Michael Masser. You could tackle something more worthy of your talents, like "Another Nail In The Heart" from the 1980 Squeeze album, *Argybargy*. Replace their breathless, staccato version with a slower, funkier arrangement. Simmer those verses so they build to the killer chorus; just as Tilbrook does, toy with that melody so every improvised variation becomes another angle, another nail in your heart.



EBET ROBERTS

The Fine Art Of Pop Songwriting

Left to right: Chris Dufford, Don Snow, Glenn Tilbrook, Gilson Lavis and John Bentley.

Frank Sinatra, Glenn Tilbrook wants nothing more than to have you record one of his songs. Tilbrook even recorded "When The Hangover Strikes" from *Sweets From A Stranger* with drum brushes, stand-up bass and Nelson Riddle-like string arrangements to make it sound as much like you as possible. "I don't care what shape his voice is in," Tilbrook maintains, "Sinatra still has great phrasing."

Difford and Tilbrook write from every corner of the pop room. Squeeze has strung together an impressive series of top ten singles in England, though the critics have panned them (for sounding so much like the Beatles). Despite eleven American tours, Squeeze has only managed one minor radio hit here ("Tempted"), but American critics have ecstatically praised them (for sounding so much like the Beatles).

As befits any songwriting team, Difford and Tilbrook are a study in contrasts. Difford's black hair is greased down and combed straight back from his round, jowly face and dark, bushy eyebrows. Tilbrook's sandy tousles spill over his forehead above his soft features and light blue eyes. Difford wears a black jacket, vest and tie over a bright yellow shirt, while Tilbrook wears a pink polo jacket above loud green checkered pants. Difford has a deep baritone voice that sometimes stutters but breaks into big rumbling guffaws when he cracks a joke, as he often does. Tilbrook has a lighter, softer voice and a drier, wrier sense of humor; he just gives a slight smile after his quips. As we talk in a restaurant, they both decline dinner. Instead, they each down a series of whiskeys with beer chasers.

"At one point," says Difford, "we had fantasies of being another Leiber & Stoller, churning out the hits for other people. We sort of had a mock Brill Building when we lived in the same house. But those places don't exist anymore; there doesn't seem to be any call for them, because there's not much call for craft in songwriting anymore. If somebody like Sheena Easton wants a song, a certain level of craftsmanship will do, and that's it. The song could be twenty times better than it already

is, but it will do for her. A lethargic approach to doing songs has set in now. There's only a few people like Dolly Parton who still manage to do great covers of other people's songs."

"When the Beatles came along," picks up Tilbrook, "people suddenly discovered they could write their own songs, and everyone was doing it. Now, when a group is just beginning, so much of their money comes from publishing that they're almost forced to do their own songs whether they're good at it or not. It comes down to that. But if you look at the Brill Building situation realistically, a lot of singers were being told to do songs—they had no choice. They were grabbed from the streets, put in a recording studio and told, 'You're going to do this!' So it's almost by coincidence that some of the records turned out great. But there were thousands that weren't so great. But a return to some balance between outside writers writing for bands and bands doing their own material would definitely be in order. We'd like to do both—write for ourselves and for other people."

So far Squeeze has had songs covered by their British pub-rock friends Rockpile, the Rumour, the Inmates and Dr. Feelgood, as well as American pop singers Patti Austin and Tim Curry. "What we'd really like," says Tilbrook, "is for people to approach us and ask us to write a song with them specifically in mind. We've done that a couple of times, and I think we're very good at it. We just did one for that girl singer from Abba, Frida (Lyngstad-Fredriksson), who's doing a solo album with Phil Collins of Genesis producing."

In 1973, an eighteen-year-old Chris Difford taped a card in a tobacconist's shop window in South London where it was spotted by fifteen-year-old Glenn Tilbrook. The card said that a band influenced by Glenn Miller, Lou Reed and the Kinks needed a guitarist for a forthcoming recording session. "I was attracted by the drastically varied combination of artists," recalls Tilbrook, "because I was into a lot of different styles of music." "It was all bluff, though," Difford admits. "I didn't have



a recording contract. I didn't even have a band." "I said I was attracted," Tilbrook drily quips, "but actually I was just vaguely interested. I had a pushy girlfriend though, and she demanded that I answer the advert."

After six months of playing Beatles, Hollies and Kinks songs, Difford and Tilbrook tried writing their own songs. Difford had always wanted to be a novelist (still does) and wrote madly at night while working days at the docks. By 1974, he had moved into an apartment with Tilbrook and the pushy girlfriend. "I'd write all night," Difford recalls, "and in the morning I'd leave a stack of papers on the breakfast table. Glenn's girlfriend would take them to him. He'd go off by himself and write the music."

Thus they developed the process of writing in isolation from each other that they still use today. They always work from words to music. "I think it works easier that way," claims Tilbrook. "I like to work with the words to inspire some sort of feeling, and I get the music from that feeling."

"When I write," adds Difford, "I very rarely have any melody in mind, not one that would make any sense. I don't hum or tap. I write in silence as you would write an essay or take an exam. I write the words out longhand and cross things out and scribble things in. I do think having a certain meter is important, because it's the first structure of the song. But I don't write a verse, then a chorus, a verse, then a chorus. It's more interesting to write down verses and not say any of them is the chorus and just see which one Glenn picks as the chorus." How much does he explain when he gives his partner the lyrics? "Nothing. I just like to get up a good collection of six or seven lyrics and slip them under the door. And expect the worst."

"I read through all the lyrics when I first get them," Tilbrook continues. "I sit at the piano or strum a guitar or bang drums or just sing into a tape recorder. What I'm saying is there are about 350 ways of approaching writing a tune, but all of them involve being alone and not being bothered. It's really feeding on the emotion in the lyrics. Depending on how I feel about it, I

might go for the obvious course, or I might go for something not so obvious. There's no set way of doing it. Like a love song would be in a minor key and be very sad. But sometimes I write against the lyric because you can complement the lyric by giving it a different feel. If a lyric's a bit aggressive towards someone, a softer melody can counter that aggression."

They wrote a ton of songs. "There was nothing else to do," explains Tilbrook. "No one else was interested in us, so we had all the time in the world on our hands. We did write an awful lot of songs. I still like those early songs as much as I do the ones we're writing now. They're a lot younger; they're more naive, but I think that's half their charm. At some point I'd like to do something with them. We haven't had time to sit down and demo the earlier ones, but I could sit down and play them on guitar if you gave me a bit of time to remember them. They're all up there." He taps his forehead.

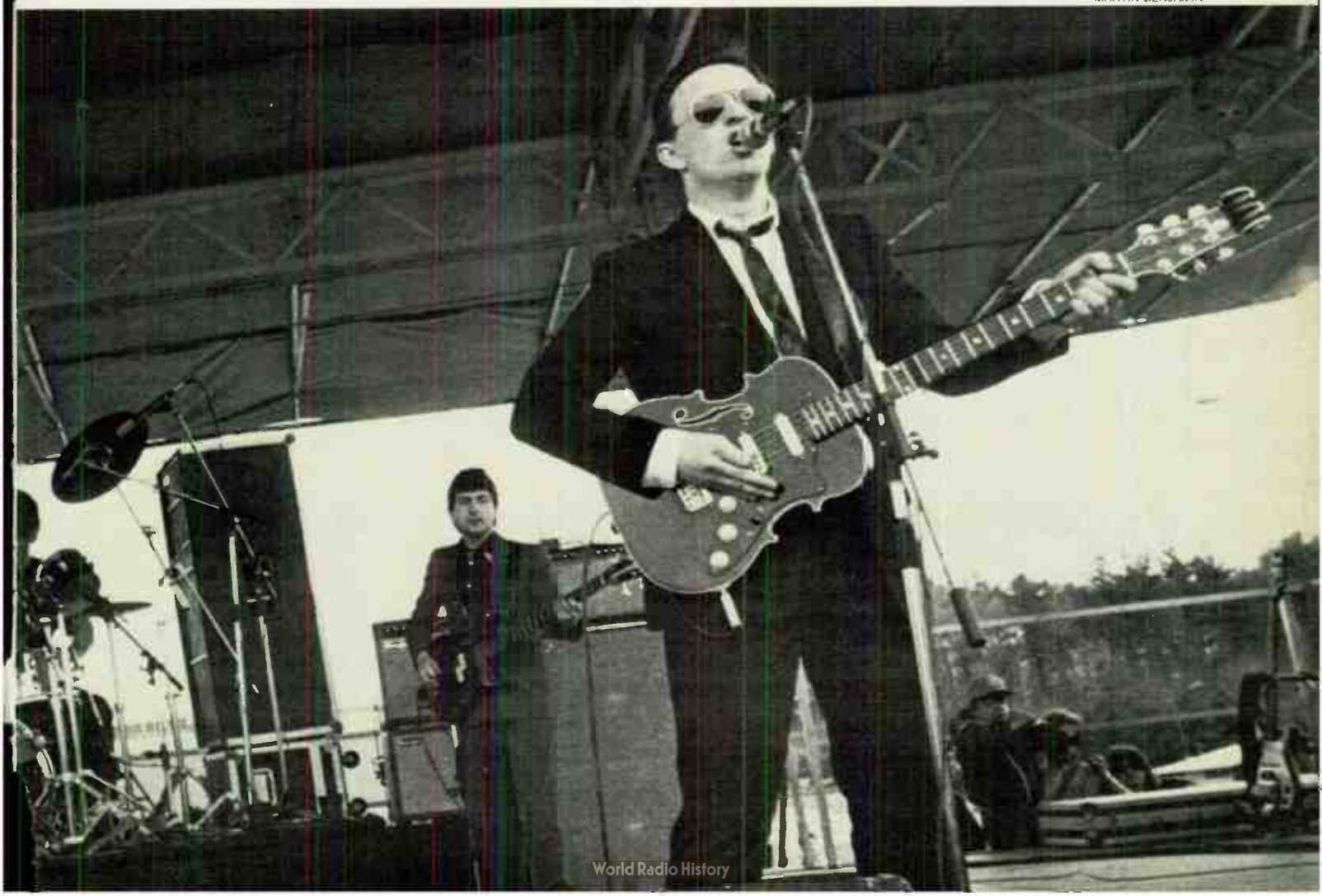
"Around this time in 1975," Difford continues, "people like Dr. Feelgood, Ducks Deluxe and Brinsley Schwarz were in the

Tilbrook & Difford; babyface and the greaser.

pubs, even though we weren't old enough to play in the pubs. But being a bit older than Glenn, I used to see them. Every time I went to a Brinsley gig or a Ducks Deluxe gig or even a Flamin' Groovies show, there was a certain thrill to being with a band, even if you weren't playing or anything, even if you were just having a drink while they were playing. That's when I first started thinking this is the sort of thing I should be doing."

"When I heard the Sex Pistols' first single," Tilbrook relates, "I thought it was a real horrible bunch of crap. I felt outraged by

MARTIN BENJAMIN



it for a couple weeks till I could calm down and listen to it and discover what a great record it was. It was very important, because basically it gave a band like us and a lot of other bands the chance to record. It also gave people a revision of opinions as what was accepted musically. When we started, we were only playing three-minute songs and people didn't know what to make of it; it was pretty odd. Suddenly people were prepared to look at younger bands again and take into account that they weren't as professional as Emerson, Lake & Palmer, but could have a lot of excitement. The punk thing also influenced us to be more energetic, which is always a good thing for a band."

By 1974, rhythm guitarist Chris Difford and lead guitarist Glenn Tilbrook had been joined by keyboardist Julian "Jools" Holland and bassist Harry Kakoulli. "In 1976," Tilbrook recounts, "we put an advert in the paper for a drummer. That's how we all found each other, through adverts. Gilson Lavis turned up and just walked over the other drummers. He was spectacularly brilliant amongst a bunch of incompetents. We

walked the plank," suggests Difford. Squeeze stuck with John Wood as their coproducer for the 1980 album, *Argybargy*, their first consistently satisfying work. Everything sounded fresher, more confident. Tilbrook's lead vocals now had the charm and charge of Paul McCartney's. Moreover, songs like "Pulling Mussels (From The Shell)," "Separate Beds" and "There At The Top" have that elusive essence of pop music: unforgettable melodies.

Onstage, Jools Holland, a cigar-chomping, fast-talking cross between Victor Borge and Jerry Lee Lewis, served as the band's front man. He was the wise-cracking MC who kept the shows hopping. At the end of 1980, though, Holland announced without warning that he was leaving the band. "Jools came to my house at eight o'clock on a Monday morning," relates Difford, "to tell me he was going to leave the group. It was more of a shock to get up so early than anything else, but I smacked him on the head and told him he was making a big mistake. I still think it wasn't very wise of him to go. He could have made solo albums and stayed in the group.

You have to say, 'I'm not coming back out to the fridge for a beer until I've written a song.'

thought obviously he's not going to want to join, because he had heard us play. He knocked us out when he said he was going to join. He taught the whole band a lot about arranging, because he had played with Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis on British tours. He was three years older than Chris and five years older than I. He was a professional drummer, and we'd only seen the inside of pubs."

In 1978, their manager Miles Copeland (manager of the Police and founder of I.R.S. Records) landed them a contract with A&M Records. With underground darling John Cale producing, Squeeze released a three-song EP, *Packet Of Three*, and an eleven-song LP, *U.K. Squeeze*, that year. "Miles thought we should have someone with new wave credibility," Tilbrook explained, "so we got John Cale. As it happened, he was a very good chap for the job on the EP and not so good for the album. He's sort of an erratic genius; it all depends on his state of mind that day as to how well he works. The EP captured the spontaneity of the band live at the time and it still does for me. Cale tried to make the album into a concept. I still don't know what the concept was, which was part of the problem. He wanted songs in a certain style; he'd tell us to write them all again. This was after we'd already gone into the studio, so most of the album was written in an extreme hurry."

Two singles from the album charted in England, and they were the only two songs that Squeeze produced themselves: "Take Me, I'm Yours" and "Bang Bang." After the experience with Cale, they decided they wanted a producer who would act primarily as an engineer to get the sound right and leave the arrangements to them. So they hired the engineer from the first album, John Wood, who had produced folk-rock albums by Fairport Convention, John Martyn and Richard & Linda Thompson. The result, released in 1979, was *Cool For Cats*.

The title track was a British number one single, the best-selling single in the history of U.K. A&M. But the single presented problems. It was a wacky send-up of old movies with a sing-song melody, Difford's croaking vocal and sweet female harmonies. The twelve- and fourteen-year-olds who showed up at Squeeze concerts expecting more novelty tunes were puzzled by songs like "Touching Me, Touching You," a masturbation tale over Chuck Berry chords, or the followup single, "Up The Junction," an art-song story about romance, marriage, divorce and drink. British critics, however, blasted Squeeze as another Freddie & the Dreamers.

Bassist Harry Kakoulli was replaced by John Bentley soon after *Cool For Cats*. "He either jumped the ship or he was pushed," Tilbrook says evasively, "I can't remember." "He

But we're all chums now; we go out and have a drink." After sixty-five auditions and no luck, the band was ready to go on the road as a quartet. At the last minute, mutual friends in Rockpile suggested Paul Carrack, the keyboardist and lead singer on Ace's "How Long (Has This Been Going On)." Carrack joined up.

The original plan for their next album was to release it as two 10-inch records with Paul McCartney, Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds and Elvis Costello each producing one of the four sides. "It got to the stage," Tilbrook reveals, "that McCartney expressed an interest in it, but he wasn't available for four or five months. The plan for four producers fell through anyway, so it never got any further."

They finally recorded *East Side Story* with Elvis Costello and Roger Bechirian (who helped Nick Lowe produce Costello's *Trust*). Tilbrook sang a duet with Costello on "From A Whisper To A Scream" on *Trust*. Costello returned the favor on several songs on *East Side Story* (and on *Sweets From A Stranger*). Costello invited Squeeze along as an opening act on his 1981 American tour. As a result of the exposure, Squeeze is now headlining at many of the same halls on its current tour. Costello's influence on *East Side Story* showed up both in quantity (fourteen songs) and quality (the songs seemed more urgent). It was also reflected in the diversity of material. Tilbrook composed a country tearjerker ("Labeled With Love"), a string-wrapped show tune ("Vanity Fair"), a soul shouter ("Tempted") and several rockabilly romps. He paid explicit homage to the Beatles by quoting "Because" for the intro of "There's No Tomorrow" and by quoting "Glass Onion" for the intro of "Someone Else's Bell."

"First of all," Tilbrook hastens to say, "I should point out it was very much a coproduction between Elvis and Roger. They balanced each other out. Elvis has a lot of good and very unusual ideas, but if he went too far out, Roger would just quietly say, 'I don't think we actually want to do that....' But we wanted someone else to take responsibility for the decision-making, which is what I think production is all about. Which take do you keep? What sort of sound do you go for? Discussions between the band and the producer are vital—it can't be do this, do that—but the final decision should rest with the producer. Some songs it doesn't affect at all, but with 'Tempted,' for example, we tried it with one style and it didn't work. Then we came up with the idea of doing it like Al Green, and Elvis came up with the vocal arrangement. His input into that song was quite significant. It was so much fun to work with someone you respect and whose musical tastes are in agree-

ment with your own and yet substantially different enough to merit working with him."

"It's funny," adds Difford, "all this stuff about Elvis's 'anger' and all. Elvis is the most humble person I've ever met. I've never found him angry at all. I've never even heard him shout. Elvis was definitely a big inspiration in turning me on to records and singers that I never normally would have listened to; he broadened my horizons. He turned me on to country music in particular. I had always regarded country music as bland for the most part. We listened for a whole tour to Willie Nelson, and we got to know where these guys were coming from. Most of the songs sounded alike to me; what was different was the lyrics. They'd write about their own marriages and let everyone in the world hear about it, which I thought was really weird. They'd write about their kids, what little bastards and brats they were, and how hard it was bringing them up without much money. I'd never been used to that, I used to balk at it. But when I heard Loretta Lynn sing about her family life with such emotion, it turned me on to a wider spectrum of music."

Squeeze was hit with another personnel defection last year. New keyboardist Paul Carrack got an offer from Nick Lowe that he couldn't refuse: he could play half the year with Lowe's band, play half the year with Carlene (Mrs. Lowe) Carter's band and Lowe would produce Carrack's solo album on off-days. After another round of auditions, Squeeze finally hired R&B-oriented keyboardist Don Snow of the Sinceros who had backed up Lene Lovich and had recorded on their own. For their new album, Squeeze went back to its formula of co-producing with an engineering-oriented producer. Phil McDonald proved perfect for their Beatlesque sound; he had engineered *Abbey Road*, *Wings Over America* and *Imagine*.

The resulting album, *Sweets From A Stranger*, is Squeeze's most ambitious yet. Difford's lyrics are punchier and more personal. Where he often wrote in the third-person or assumed-persona style of Randy Newman and Tom Waits in the past, his new songs are more often first person confessionals. He's also writing shorter lines. "I found it easier writing longer lines," he admits. "I've got a big mouth as far as writing with a pen. More and more I'm discovering that shorter lines can make sharper comments. I think I can say a lot more in three words than I can with twelve simply by picking out the best combination of three words and just stabbing someone in the back with it. It sounds like warfare, doesn't it?"

Tilbrook's composing and arranging, by contrast, have become more elaborate. Several songs have the cracked rhythm and heavy echo of Nick Lowe's quirkier records. The romantic meeting of "The Very First Dance" is given ghostly vocal surges and distancing echo. A herky-jerky nervous rhythm track provides a very unsettling feel to "Out Of Touch" and "Onto The Dance Floor." On the other hand, "When The Hangover Strikes" and "Tongue Like A Knife" are recorded like 40s ballroom tunes with lush orchestral arrangements by Del Newman.

"A lot of craftsmanship went into writing like Cole Porter's or Richard Rodgers's," claims Tilbrook, "that I don't see being duplicated today. You can hear all the intelligence, wit and work that went into composing those songs, whereas the same couldn't be said for a great deal of what you hear today. I think some musicians reach a point where they start digging backwards to hear what else they've missed. Good music doesn't start or stop with a certain time. It's a question of someone playing you an album. Someone played me some Frank Sinatra, and I'd always associated his music with something my mother would listen to. There's some defensive barrier that springs up when you think of music that way. When I actually sat down and listened to it, I realized here's a bloke like anyone else singing at the end of a mike, and in fact singing great songs very emotionally. And I got hooked.

"The definitive test of anything," he went on, "is whether it sends a shiver down your spine." What songs have done that for him? "Several Beatles songs. 'Jailhouse Rock.' The Human League's 'Don't You Want Me' did it to me the first time I heard that. 'The Lady Is A Tramp' by Frank Sinatra did it to me

Squeeze Boxes

Glenn Tilbrook: I have a Fender Strat that's three years old and a Gibson E1-25 that I bought in Nashville. The Gibson is a good guitar for Chuck Berry kind of rock 'n' roll. But I mostly use the Strat onstage and for recording. It has the greatest variety of sound; you can attack the Strat without it getting too heavy. I don't like a heavy sound.

Chris Difford: I have a black custom-made guitar that Danny Farrington in L.A. made for me. I designed it. I wanted one that looked like a violin and sounded like a Strat.

Gilson Lavis: When I started playing, Ludwig was the best kind of drum made, and I've played them ever since.

John Bentley: I use a Kramer, an American bass with an aluminum neck, onstage. It's very solid; you can crunch it around, and it doesn't go out of tune. It's a very good road guitar. In the studio, though, I use a Fender Precision and a Jazz bass. They record better.

Don Snow: I use three different keyboards. The Yamaha CP-80 electric grand piano is the closest thing I've found to a real grand piano. It's basically an acoustic piano with pickups. The Korg electric organ is the closest you can get to a large Hammond without the weight. The OBX-A Oberheim synthesizer is one of the newest synthesizers. It has a lovely range of tones and a great variety of sounds. It gives me all the sounds I need for the band.

as well." What about Chris Difford? "Randy Newman's 'Sail Away,'" he responds. "The Rolling Stones' 'Street Fighting Man.' It's hard to make a list of songs that sent shivers down my spine, for there are far too many of them. The most amazing one ever was Elvis's song, 'Just A Memory.' I was shocked, shocked that I hadn't discovered what a good songwriter he was before. That was the turning point for me."

But isn't there a difference between the spontaneous, impulsive outpouring of rock 'n' roll and the careful craftsmanship of show standards? Isn't there a danger in becoming too clever for your own good? "You mean like Steely Dan," muses Tilbrook. "I don't think in those terms really. What you got to do is go on instincts as to what you think is good and what's bad. Just the same, it's highly improbable that songwriting on any consistent basis can be spontaneous if you have a continuing career in music. Spontaneity decreases the more times you sit down to write, the more time you spend in a band touring. Having gone through that process, I've found that the discipline of saying to myself, 'Okay, I'm going to sit down and write,' regardless of whether I feel inspired or whether I feel lousy. I feel discipline is healthy. It can still be very emotional, but you can also plan when you do it."

"I try to put aside a day when there's time off," Difford elaborates. "You just throw yourself into the state of writing. I think you have to be very regimented with yourself. You have to say, 'Okay, I'm going in that room, and I'm not coming back out to the fridge for a beer until I've written a song.' You get very frustrated." "When we were writing the last album," Tilbrook jumps in, "we'd bump into each other at the same pub banging our heads against the walls." ■



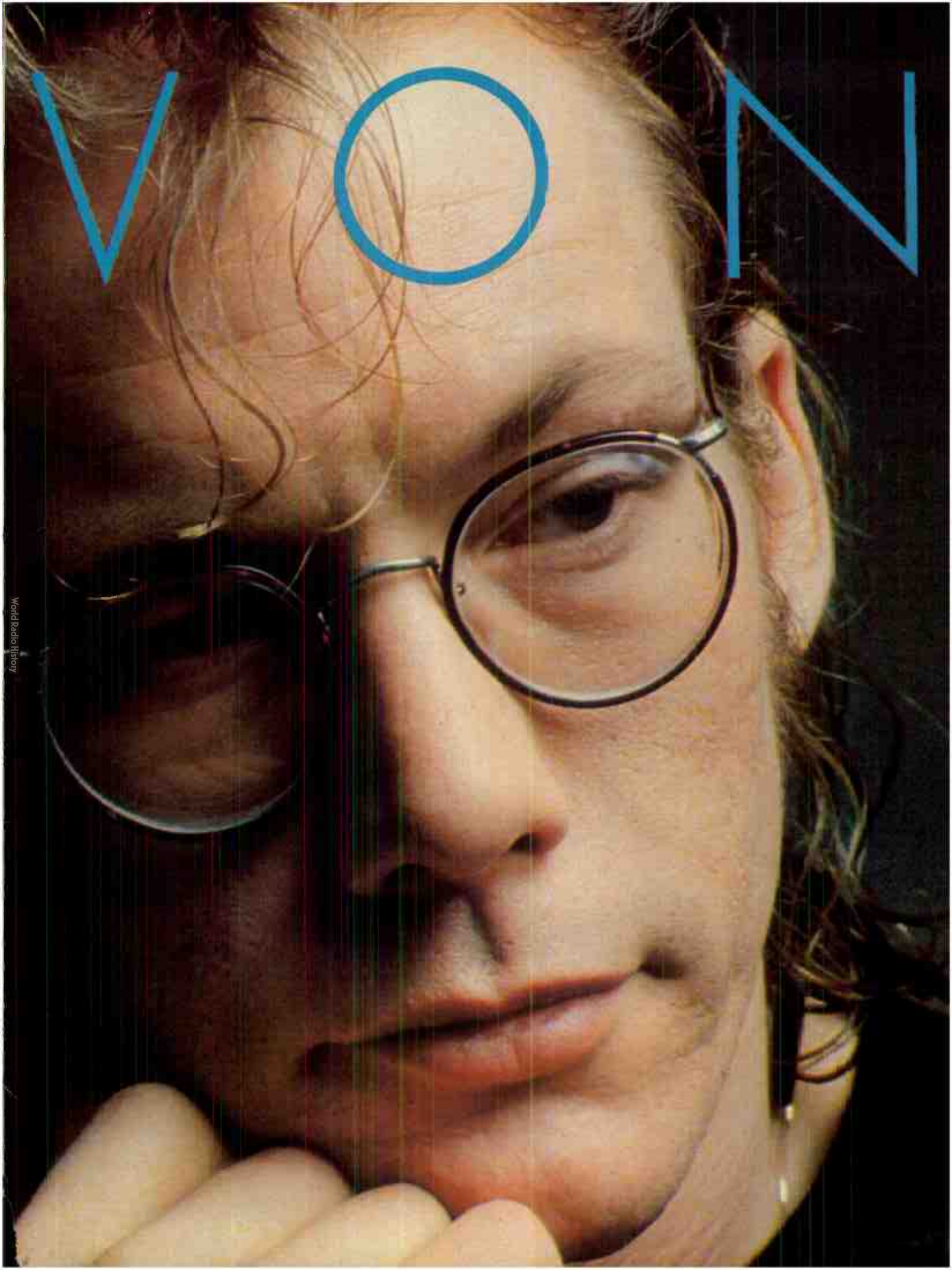
LAURA LEVINE



WARREN ZEE

The humid, sultry smells of a Guatemala City side street wafted into the cafe. A Flamenco guitarist in the corner vainly attempted to calm a noisy uneasiness while a quiet bespectacled young man drummed his fingers nervously on the bar next to me.

BY DAN FORTE





The humor is part of everything, no matter how grim.

Suddenly a large man in a double-knit suit appeared behind us. He stared warily at the young man for a few moments, then nodded vigorously and barked a series of orders in Russian to a shadowy group of figures in the street. As we watched, stunned, one of the waitresses drew an Uzi submachine gun from behind a potted palm and launched a fusillade at the startled Russian's double-knits. He crumpled to the floor, his Smith & Wesson still in its shoulder holster. The guitarist began again and the patrons' curious babble obscured the waitress' escape. The dark figures outside the door were gone.

The young man quietly turned back to the bar and finished his shot, but a not altogether reassuring smile slowly crept across his features. Finally the smile became a hearty, slightly maniacal laugh, followed by an order for another shot.

The realization came upon me slowly, like the ash moving up a Lucky Strike. I had wandered into a Warren Zevon song.

The carefully refined concept of the singer/songwriter has come to evoke images of vulnerable, doe-eyed pretty-guys, lyrically lamenting their bad luck with lost lovers and the curse of being misunderstood. Members of L.A.'s mellow mafia like Dan Fogelberg, James Taylor and Jackson Browne have lost their innocence several times over on their way to the bank. It is paradoxical that Warren Zevon, an excitable boy whose bizarre lyrics about murderers and mercenaries couldn't be less mellow, should emerge from the inner circles of El-Lay royalty, but paradoxes are no stranger to Zevon.

Here's a guy that has to get sober to really cut loose onstage, a guy who doesn't shrink from weapons and war but thinks *Marcus Welby* is pornographic, a guy who is the working definition of prolific but still can't seem to avoid severe deadline anxiety, a guy who thinks greatness is funny but that humor alone is worthless. Despite these paradoxes, or quite possibly because of them, Zevon has exhibited a unique understanding of what rock 'n' roll is about and a growing confidence in his abilities as a writer and performer.

The caliber of Zevon's recorded output has been incredibly high—especially considering that at the time much of the material was written and/or recorded, Warren was suffering from alcoholism, a disease he has since brought under control. The best of his compositions—"Poor Poor Pitiful Me," "Hasten Down The Wind," "Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner," "Play It All Night Long"—have power as well as sensitivity and usually a humorous element. And his songs that are purely for fun—"Werewolves Of London," "Jungle Work," "Gorilla, You're A Desperado"—are far from average novelty items. As he sings in the title tune from his second LP, *Excitable Boy*: "He took little Suzie to the junior prom/Excitable boy, they all said/And he raped and killed her, then he took her home/Excitable boy, they all said." Eschewing the predictable themes of unrequited love and adolescent angst, Zevon instead sets his mini-screenplays about mercenaries, junkies, and various degrees of perverse behavior to robust two-fisted rock usually centered around his piano playing.

Zevon's first musical love was modern classical—Stravinsky, Webern, Boulez, Varese. In junior high he played classical piano and wrote his own serial scores. At thirteen he was befriended by writer/conductor Robert Craft, who introduced Warren to Igor Stravinsky. In his teens, Zevon took up guitar and became interested in folk music. By the late 60s his passion was the blues-rock of Paul Butterfield, the Bluesbreakers, and, most of all, John Hammond. "I was gone for five years," he recalls; "I didn't do anything but play blues."

After a half-assed attempt at commercial songwriting—writing for publishing companies and ad agencies—Warren was hired as pianist/bandleader by the Everly Brothers in 1970, at the twilight of their career and partnership. It was there that Zevon met guitarist Waddy Wachtel, who has also since become an integral cog in the L.A. rock scene.

Warren Zevon, his debut album for Asylum, was released in 1976, and was produced by Jackson Browne, who helped Zevon land his recording contract. With backing from the best of the best that L.A. has to offer—David Lindley, Bob Glaub, Bonnie Raitt, Waddy Wachtel, Carl Wilson, various Eagles, two-fifths of Fleetwood Mac (Buckingham and Nicks), and even Phil Everly—there wasn't a bad cut on the album. Linda Ronstadt seemed to be the first to notice this, and has recorded four Zevon tunes to date, all from this LP—"Carmelita," "Mohammed's Radio," "Poor Poor Pitiful Me" and "Hasten Down The Wind."

The 1978 release, *Excitable Boy*, produced by Browne and Wachtel, was nearly as consistent as *Warren Zevon*, with equally star-studded personnel (including Ronstadt herself on the title track) and such gems as "Lawyers, Guns And Money," "Johnny Strikes Up The Band," and Zevon's only AM radio hit thus far, "Werewolves Of London," which featured backing from two more members of Fleetwood Mac, Mick Fleetwood and John McVie.

Zevon's live performances during this period were often as sloppy as his albums were focused, and Warren's reputation as a violent drunk nearly eclipsed his reputation as a tune-smith. In the fall of 1978, and again in '79, he committed himself to an alcohol rehabilitation hospital in Santa Barbara, California and finally got off, and stayed off, booze.

Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School and the live *Stand In The Fire* were released at the beginning and end of 1980, respectively, and both were coproduced by Zevon and engineer Greg Ladanyi. *Bad Luck Streak* revealed another aspect of Zevon's composing in its classical interludes. *Stand In The Fire*, on the other hand, is Zevon's rawest, most raucous effort by far. While *Bad Luck Streak* seems a little shaky in spots, *Stand In The Fire* is about as wishy-washy as a freight train, with Zevon singing and playing with more joy and conviction than ever—as though he were trying to make up for every shoddy performance he'd ever given.

Though it's been a year and a half since the live album, Zevon's creative energy hasn't leveled off much, judging by his fifth LP, *The Envoy*, produced jointly by Zevon, Wachtel and Ladanyi. The album is not so much a departure from what Zevon has done before, but an affirmation. There's the quirky and powerful tune "The Overdraft," written in collaboration with novelist Tom McGuane and featuring harmonies by Lindsey Buckingham; the tender, R&B-flavored "Let Nothing Come Between You" about being engaged; and the humorous "Ain't That Pretty At All," written with Warren's collaborator from "Excitable Boy" and "Werewolves Of London," Roy Marinell.

*I've been to Paris, and it ain't that pretty at all
I've been to Rome. Guess what.*

*I'd like to go back to Paris someday and visit the
Louvre museum.*

Get a good running start and hurl myself at the wall.

There's even a Zevon tribute to Elvis, called "Jesus Mentioned" ("It's about how he's dead and all"). Zevon describes the song as "a little weird but not irreverent." Which may be the best way to describe its composer.

MUSICIAN: *When your first album came out on Asylum, one thing that seemed to set you apart from the so-called mellow mafia, many of whom backed you on that record, was that you didn't sing about relationships and unrequited love as much as about characters, often from different periods. Did you have any resistance to being lumped into that L.A. singer/songwriter crowd?*

ZEVON: No, not at all. I was glad to be thrown in with any lot. I was such an international low-life (laughs). It wasn't any resistance, except that I don't think I did it well. And there are a couple of love songs that are about my life, and I guess I have to be honest and say that I worry, I wonder if people find anything that they've ever liked about me to be heard in those songs. But I assume they like my being honest, which is something I thought was essential, even if it was a fantasy I was writing. And I also just felt that the songs like "Carmelita," for example, were just better than the unrequited love songs that I wrote, which seemed to belong to that period when I tried to be a professional songwriter. The Jim Webb thing. And Jim Webb is still a big idol of mine; I think he's incredible. But I can't do that. It was so obvious; every time I was signed to a songwriter's contract like that, I didn't produce anything till the contract was up.

MUSICIAN: *Why do you think your music for the most part hasn't made it to AM radio?*

ZEVON: My music may not fulfill a certain real healthy function of being just reliably pleasant. And there's a lot of music that's both pleasant and real intelligent, like the Eagles. I just read somebody saying that art's not supposed to be entertaining, it's supposed to be disturbing or something. I certainly don't believe that. It's just that mine seems to be. But if there's something about my music that makes it not ideal for that medium, I'm genuinely grateful that there are still a lot of people who enjoy it.

MUSICIAN: *Are your tastes very eclectic in terms of what music you enjoy listening to?*

ZEVON: No, I don't think so. I listen to a lot less when I'm working on an album, and it seems like I've been working on this one forever. I just don't want to hear something real good that will make me feel bad. Springsteen I listen to a lot, just because I really like listening to him. The biggest surprise was when I started listening to bop again—Charlie Parker, Bud Powell. That was interesting, because I was listening the way I used to listen, without analyzing, without the kind of inevitable comparisons of, "How did Neil Young think of that? Will it occur to him if I steal it?" But just listening for pure pleasure. I listen to classical music, to jazz, to blues. I've listened again to a lot more classical music in the past year, because I don't feel guilty about it, and I do enjoy it.

MUSICIAN: *Is there a period in your career, in your life, where a few years are just sort of a fog, because of the alcohol?*

ZEVON: Oh yeah! Definitely (laughs). A lot of years.

MUSICIAN: *Maybe you could have been more productive during that period, but the work that did come out was real high-quality stuff. The resultant albums from those years are anything but sloppy. How did you do it? Is there that big a contrast between your work sober as compared to drunk?*

ZEVON: Yes, in terms of output, because I had a lifetime to get the material ready for the first album. Had a lot of co-writers on the second. On the first couple of albums I leaned so heavily on Jackson and Waddy that what you hear is what they might have had to go through to get a sober performance in the studio from me. Because what you're hearing isn't drunken composing, it isn't drunken performing; it's maybe the patience of Jackson or Waddy to keep cutting something, or the patience of (Elektra/Asylum president) Joe Smith to keep shelling out till I delivered a reasonably healthy performance. When you have people of that caliber involved, and the mythology going at the same time, being real self-serving like it was, then it's easy to say, "Well, he's drunk but great." And harder to say, "He's great in spite of being drunk." At this age I think I learned that some things are supposed to be easy and some things are supposed to be hard. And maybe what I'd done in the past was make the hard things easy and the easy

Zevon In the fire: "I was real abandoned live because I couldn't help it. When I stopped drinking, it became controlled abandon."



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things hard. And I had just about everything going short of the traditional 40s jazz musician vices. I took valium every day for ten or fifteen years. Then I stopped taking it and was dancing as fast as I could for a while, and then I found out that the only anxiety I had that the valium took care of was the anxiety of scoring valium—it was just a toxic syndrome. I mean, if you don't feel nervous to start with, it's pretty silly to take a drug that will make you feel nervous. And most addictions are like that. You just have to get the highs a different way. That's what you have to work at. There's no trick to it, you know. There is a latent talent, for sure, but it's also a talent of being dedicated, and not minding it being hard.

MUSICIAN: *Violence has been a theme in much of your material. Do you find that you have a violent streak yourself, even when you're sober?*

ZEVEON: Yeah, I'm afraid so, kind of. But it's not uncontrolled. Somewhere I read where someone suggested that I wrote about all these werewolves and monsters and sociopaths because I was afraid that I was going to become these characters. I thought about that the other day while I was throwing something through a window. I thought, damn, as scary as that is, there might be a lot of truth in it. It's something that still scares me about myself not to make light of it. I for one find it a lot easier to deal with the violence of weapons and war than with the kind of violence that occurred in my childhood, which was illness. When I see *Marcus Welby*, and everybody's dying, and everyone's waiting to see this guy tell you you're going to die in three days and then sell you some coffee—that's pornographic to me. Because I watched members of my family who fed on that and who had those kinds of illnesses, and I couldn't tell which came first, the fascination or the physical problems. I thought that was real sick, you know; my mother was an invalid who raced out to see these movies where Ingrid Bergman is in the wheelchair and Cary Grant sits in front of the open window and gets pneumonia and all that crap. That's violent to me.

MUSICIAN: *When I first read the lyrics to "Play It All Night Long" ("Sweet Home Alabama, play that dead band's song/Turn those speakers up full blast/Play it all night long"), without hearing the song itself, I thought it was another funny Zeveon song. Then when I heard the lyrics in the context of the song, I began to think maybe I'd missed the point.*

ZEVEON: I think it's all half and half. If people thought it was only funny, then they were missing the point. But I think the people who don't think it's funny at all are missing the point, too. To me, everything good is funny. Clint Eastwood thinks *Dirty Harry* is funny—to an extent that his fans may not be quite ready for yet. And it is funny. And Van Morrison is funny. I've wondered for a good decade if he knew it. I realize it's none of my goddamn business whether or not he knows it, and I'd be the last one to want to tell him whether it was or wasn't—it's just great. Greatest stuff in the world. You know, he may be the greatest rock singer, or was for a while, to my mind. And he's funny, too. Sometimes it's a little painful, because one wonders if it's when he's the most serious that he's really funny. But I think art that doesn't make you laugh, what are you supposed to do with that? Study it, analyze it? I don't know. But I think the humor is part of everything, no matter how grim.

MUSICIAN: *Although you seem to be a prolific songwriter, you've talked in other interviews about writer's block. Your problems sound like mine: I'll do anything to avoid putting that first piece of paper in the typewriter, watch Laverne & Shirley reruns, telephone every friend I know, drive out several miles to try out the new hamburger stand, clean the house....*

ZEVEON: Yeah, I do the same things. And then what seems to happen is somehow a song's time comes. If your deadline is Friday and on Monday you start calling through your Rolodex and staying up all night, then Thursday you write the story, maybe Thursday morning you saw something on the five a.m. news that formed an intrinsic part of the story. Like in the interview I did with *Songwriter* magazine, I think the profundity I left them with was, "You can't force a song." "Then how do you write?" "Well, you force songs. What do you think?" (laughs) Your habits don't sound much different than mine, because I'll stay up days and days looking at a deadline I may have made

for myself. Maybe you believe and I believe to some extent that creating that anxiety makes it hard, and it should be hard. Man's work. Should be tough. Nothin' comes easy.

There wasn't any ninth song for *The Envoy* until the eleventh hour. And I don't know whether I had that ninth song in me all along and just had to go through the am-I-gonna-have-a-nervous-breakdown-tomorrow, or whether the desperation forced that song to come out. I think there's a commitment, no matter how wrongheaded it is, to say, "I'm going to make it even harder," and then there's just an element of time. But that happens to me all the time, and it's scary. I'll mount desperation on desperation.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever come up with a studio cut that you're afraid you won't be able to recreate live?*

ZEVEON: No, because I tell them to listen to the record once and then play whatever they want to. And it usually comes out much better than if I told them to emulate; in fact, sometimes guys will emulate more than I expect or even desire, because a lot of musicians learn that way. Like I tell them to listen to Linda's version of "Poor Pitiful Me," don't even listen to mine, because hers is closer, hers has the right bass part. I don't think you should make any attempt to recreate a record. From my experience as a sideman, I could sure make a better contribution to "Bird Dog" by playing it as well as I could, whether that was informed by the Bluesbreakers and the Small Faces or something at the time more so than Floyd Cramer. I just felt like Floyd Cramer would play like Floyd Cramer, and they'd worked with him already.

MUSICIAN: *What sort of gigs did you play with the Everly Brothers?*

ZEVEON: Well, that was what was real strange. They played a sold-out gig in Albert Hall, and it'd be just like *A Hard Day's Night*. They'd send us out one exit to be trampled, so they could get out to their limo through another exit. And then a week later we'd be in an oyster bar in North Carolina playing to three people. And the best thing that I learned from them, and always admired them for, was that they always sang the same, which was as well as they could, which was incredibly good. We had chills all the time; I'm sure Waddy would tell you the same thing. We were real proud to play those songs every night. Because they're great oldies, and they sang them as well as they could. That was real impressive. They didn't get along with each other, and that was real understandable. And I stopped feeling bad about not having made it before I was twenty, from seeing that you didn't really have anywhere to go. The saddest part is that individually they still sing better than anyone else, except maybe dead Elvis—they really do, each individually—but, I don't know, their name is *Everly Brothers*. People are used to the cake with the frosting, and they're reluctant to give an ear to half the recipe. The other great but sad part is that they're the kind of guys who would do the set and then go back to their rooms and play their guitars all night.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever try to write a song in the mold of another artist?*

ZEVEON: No. There was a time when I did. Like when Bones Howe signed me to a Please-Be-Jim-Webb-When-You-Grow-Up contract. But it never came to anything; I've never been able to do that. I think the biggest lesson to me has been the songs that Linda has done, the most important covers, the ones I like the best. They're the last things in the world I would have expected her to do. I thought it was real brave of her to do them. If I was going to make a serious attempt to write for someone it would probably be for her, naturally, but clearly she's gonna do what she's gonna do. The only game I'll play is sometimes I'll try to play an instrument that I'm not familiar with, where I don't know where the cadences are going, because I've never liked to know what I was doing too much—although I may have gone a little far in my youth, keeping myself in condition like that (laughs). I write least on the piano. I wrote "Poor Pitiful Me" on a borrowed fiddle—which, I don't have to tell you, I can't play at all.

MUSICIAN: *On the song "The Envoy" from the new album, you play lead guitar. Why did you wait until your fifth LP to take a solo?*

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5-6 COLUMBIA, MD
Memweather Post Pavilion

7 HAMPTON, VA
Hampton Rhodes Coliseum

Aug 9 PITTSBURGH, PA
Pittsburgh Civic Arena

10 HERSHEY, PA
Hershey Park Stadium

11 PHILADELPHIA, PA
Spectrum

13 EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ
Byrne Arena

14 UNIONDALE, NY
Nassau Coliseum

16-17 CLARKSTON, MI
Pine Knob Music Center

Aug 18 CHARLESTON, WV
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Market Square Arena

21 HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL
Poplar Creek

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25 KANSAS CITY, MO
Kemper Arena

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ZEVON: Well, I've always kind of resisted. I don't know whether it's a rare streak of modesty—I doubt it. It's probably just my boneheadedness, but the idea that I'm a singer seems kind of vain. Which is not to say that I'm not vain, but I'm a little uncomfortable with the idea. I've always thought of myself as a musician, first and last.

MUSICIAN: *Even before thinking of yourself as a songwriter?*

ZEVON: I thought of myself as a composer first. But, yeah, I've always been coming up with kind of circuitous arguments about being a songwriter. "No, I'm not a songwriter, I'm a composer who occasionally writes lyrics and sets his liner notes to music"—which is all bullshit too, I realized. And I realize now that I really am a front man, and that Waddy is a much better bandleader. And that kind of happened from the first time Waddy and I worked together in the Everly Brothers. I was the bandleader, but when the four of us started working together it was evident that Waddy was so gifted at it that, hell, they didn't need a piano player.

MUSICIAN: *Stand In The Fire is probably one of the best live rock albums of all time.*

ZEVON: I'm glad I put out that album, because I went through a period of more hysteria than usual, saying to my girlfriend, "Bruce hasn't got a live album—what the hell am I thinkin'? Jackson just cut a live album, his sixth album, what the hell am I doin'?" And she said, "Well, isn't this your idea, your existential approach? Mightn't this be your best album?" "Oh, heck. Maybe so." I guess I felt like it wasn't something I was going to be doing day in and day out, year in and year out, and I didn't want to lose the excitement. And I think it came out pretty good, pretty wild.

MUSICIAN: *It captured a raw energy that the studio albums never could. But was that element always there?*

ZEVON: Well, it grew a lot after I quit drinking. I think it was always there to an extent, and I was real careful in the studio because I needed to be, and I was real abandoned live because I couldn't help it. But when I stopped drinking, I enjoyed performing and it became more of a controlled abandon.

MUSICIAN: *So the next time you go out on tour who will be in the band?*

ZEVON: I'll leave it up to Waddy (laughs). There you go. The most important thing is I'll be going out with Waddy.

MUSICIAN: *When you're in the studio and Waddy Wachtel is going to take a solo in a song, do you instruct him at all on what to play, give suggestions as to what you have in mind?*

ZEVON: Oh, no. I'm trying to think of an example, but I'm sure there isn't one, where I said, "Play like this, or play up here." I don't need to say that, because he knows. I could, I may have long ago when I was too saturated to belong in a recording studio. I don't try to second-guess him, because I know that if I did, it would take a lot of the joy out of it. When I hire Waddy, I know I'll get Waddy, and that's usually as far as I need to see.

MUSICIAN: *How do you decide what players to use where?*

ZEVON: I think it's a combination of intuitive decisions that are thought out and still seem reasonable. My earliest self-training being classical composing, I could never understand composers who wrote, like, a two-handed piano arrangement and then orchestrated it. There are two schools of thought. There are composers who did that, and there are composers like Stravinsky, who thought of the instruments as they thought of the parts. If I wrote more, I'm confident that when I thought of a passage, I'd immediately think of the sound of an English horn or the sound of a harp or four flutes. To me, it's the same as thinking of something that's obviously Waddy, and things that are obviously Russ Kunkel or Jeff Porcaro or Rick Marotta. To me, it's like orchestrating, but leaving a lot to the musicianship of those people. David Lindley's a good example of orchestrating by personality, because I wrote "Play It All Night Long" with just a synthesizer figure, and I knew that the arrangement was going to be that figure, whatever Marotta would play and a cloud of Lindley. And, indeed, he came in and played a bunch of bizarre instruments and interlaced all those parts and invented that real Irish thing, that drone. It's all pure

Lindley. My inspiration was just to say, "That's the arrangement—just David Lindley." And that's one of my favorite tracks of all.

MUSICIAN: *When you were a teenager you actually knew Igor Stravinsky. Were you aware then of the magnitude of the man, who he was?*

ZEVON: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, at fourteen I was thinking, how do I top this one? It was unbelievable, an overwhelming experience.

MUSICIAN: *What was he like as a person?*

ZEVON: Couldn't have been nicer. He was about eighty then, and I was about fourteen. My relationship was with Robert Craft, his associate, his aide through the last twenty-five years of his life, who lived next door to him. I was interested in composing and in serial music, and there might not have been that many kids that age with those interests. That must have interested Craft sufficiently enough to be real hospitable to me. And looking back, I'm still struck by what a generous person Craft was. He would look at scores and explain what I didn't know and make suggestions—just simple, important advice. So, during the course of that, I met Stravinsky and talked to him and sat around and listened to new music that came from Germany with Craft and Stravinsky. But I didn't know Stravinsky, and it's easy for me to exaggerate, and hard for me to discourage people from exaggerating my relationship with him. But suffice to say, being able to hang around in Picasso's studio is pretty awesome.

MUSICIAN: *Was it ever frustrating that you couldn't run back and impress your friends at school as much as if you'd met, say, Mickey Mantle?*

ZEVON: It was extremely frustrating, and I began to think that there was something naturally wrong about it—that reading and understanding and enjoying scores of Webern and Boulez was like jacking off. That was the other thing I did that I liked when I was thirteen, so I figured it was *all* wrong, you know. I'm a Mormon Jew; I mean, you want to talk about guilt, forget it. Yeah, there was no commerce between those two lives; it was real schizophrenic. I could say that I may have started drinking even out of the frustration of having an interior life that was so rich but that made no sense and didn't seem to indicate any kind of future in the world I was growing up in. But I think the reasons for drinking go even deeper, and there's even less excuse for it. It was a tremendous conflict. Initially, I think I probably started playing guitar because of this hopeless dichotomy between music as I felt it and loved it and what music I could relate to other people.

MUSICIAN: *Were you interested in rock 'n' roll then?*

ZEVON: No. It was a bad period of time in rock 'n' roll; it was that idol-maker period. I'm a little too young—like I was thirty when I bought *The Sun Sessions* by Elvis. "Hey, this is old rock 'n' roll. This is it!" But I definitely went backwards through it. The Beach Boys was the first rock 'n' roll I noticed, and that was more of an anthem or a social awareness than a musical one—until *Pet Sounds*, which was after the British Invasion. I'm one of those people who really didn't know from rock 'n' roll until the Beatles. The make-out music at that time was like Annette. And *that* being the music of people my age, the kids, and the music of older people being Lawrence Welk, and this private music I loved being too private...it was the hardest conflict.

MUSICIAN: *In your quest to fit in, did you start playing rock before you actually liked it?*

ZEVON: No, I don't think so, because I did what I liked. I liked folk music—Chad Mitchell, the Kingston Trio, the Clancy Brothers—and then John Hammond was one of the most overwhelming things to me. No, I don't think I ever played anything I flat-out didn't like for approval—and it didn't work anyway. Because you don't get approval for seeking it; you get approval for doing what you do, for being yourself. That's why it was really stupid—I was a stupid kid—because I didn't have enough faith in myself to do what I wanted to do. Because they *really* hated my Dylan stuff (laughs). They hated that worse than the classical, you kiddin'? 📻

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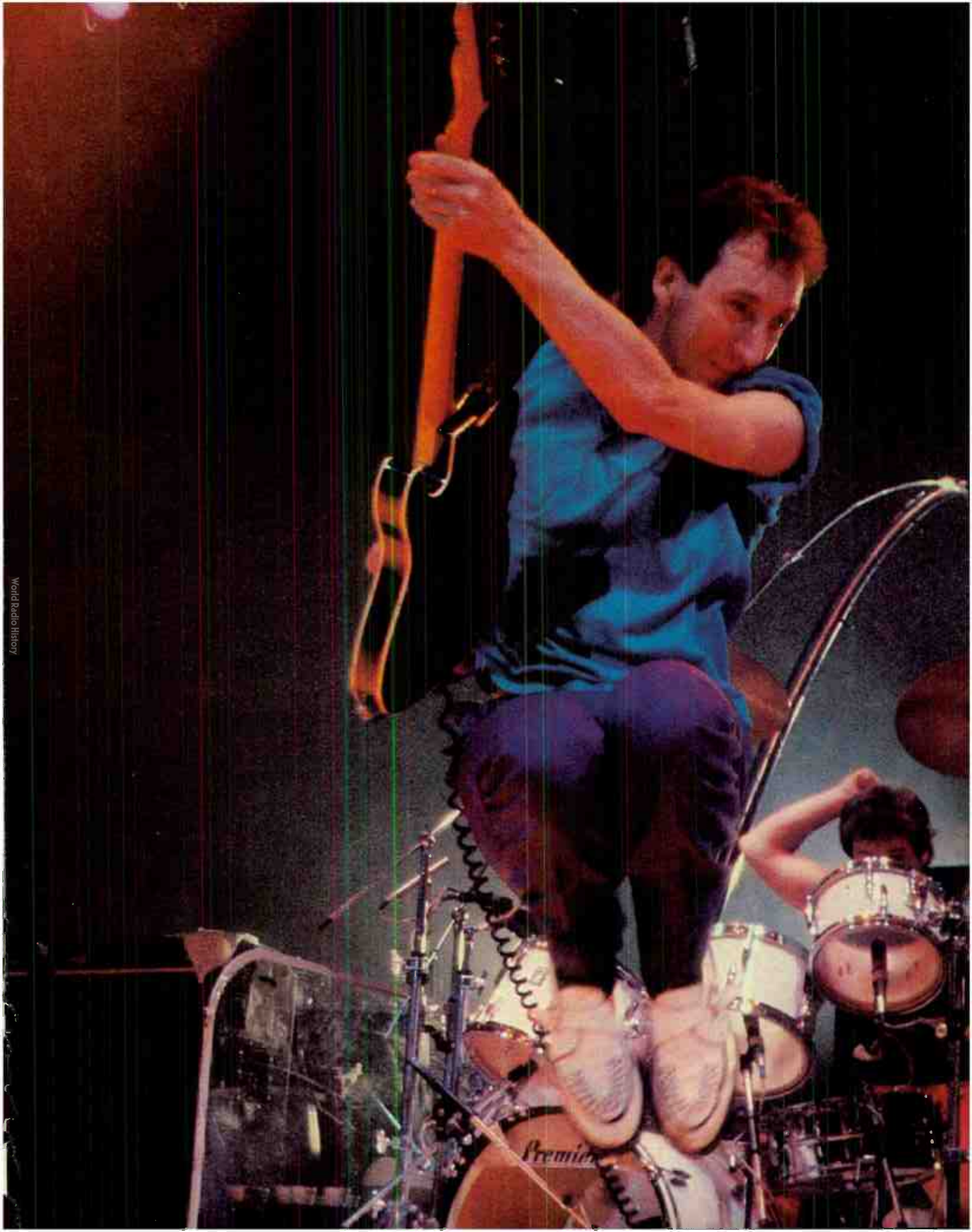
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PETER TOWNSHEND THE WHO AND BEYOND

INTERVIEW • PART 1 / BY VIC GARBARINI

Pete Townshend says I look familiar. Well, think I, we did meet face to face once before—kind of. It was a rainy April night in London last year at the Venue, one of that city's more chic rock showcases. I spotted Townshend moments after I entered, standing with his arms looped behind the high railing, his considerable frame sagging forward as if in mock crucifixion. Ah, yes. Good ol' St. Pete, the Patron







A danger of middle age in rock is that it's too simple to take the easy way out. You have to be very angry to stay honest.

Saint of Rock 'N' Roll, dying for its sins. With his million mile stare and sorrowful countenance he looked like pure hell that night. When a mutual friend offered to introduce me, I declined. I mean, what do you say to somebody in that state, what gesture is appropriate? A sponge dipped in vinegar?

Pete Townshend didn't fulfill his wish to die before he got old. He did, however, come close over the last year or two. Damn close. In fact, Pete Townshend almost pulled a Moonie on us, indulging in an alcoholic binge of epic proportions, deserting wife and family, finally winding up addicted to the tranquilizer Ativan. But in the end Townshend rallied his considerable inner resources, and with the help of de-tox expert Meg Patterson, he kicked his nasty habits and reconciled with his wife, his band, and seemingly, with himself.

Sitting before me over a year later in the sunlit offices of his Twickenham studio, Pete Townshend is still a somewhat uncomfortable and complicated man, but a man who has clearly emerged from his dark night of the soul with a new lease on life and a renewed commitment to his art, family, band, wife, and more recently, political activism. But the reborn Pete Townshend still thrives on contradictions: he is the original Brit Rebel—doesn't believe in revolution, the angry young artist excoriating the establishment—then hangs out with aristocracy and claims the only way to change things is by joining the infrastructure. He is the loyal band member for whom "The Who Came First"—yet who admits his solo albums are his best work...and has recommitted himself completely to his band...but plans to dismantle it by this time next year. Confusion? Not exactly. It's just that Pete Towns-

hend is one of those cursed/blessed souls condemned to always recognize the merit of the other guy's point of view, and who can see equal truth and urgency in seemingly irreconcilable opposites. That kind of insight would paralyze most humans, but Townshend seems to draw strength, as well as confusion, from the ensuing dynamic tension. His Taurian bullheadedness and fiery temper induce him to gleefully play chicken with conceptual vehicles—with himself at the wheel of both machines. Little wonder his favorite group is called the *Clash*.

Townshend's professed passion of the moment is for politics—specifically, his voice is raised in anger and bitterness as he speaks of his responsibility as a public figure to speak out against the nuclear arms race. As much as one agrees with him and his stance, there is something oddly disconcerting about the vehemence and breast-beating that frame his declamation. Is all this *sturm und drang* really necessary? Or are the heated affirmations and denunciations to some extent motivated by something else? Guilt over his extended lost weekend, perhaps? A need to reestablish his political credentials? It's not that one doubts Townshend's sincerity when he speaks of politics. It's the sense that he feels that his political stance is what he will or should be judged on, rather than his art, that disturbs me. Because Peter Townshend is an artist of extraordinary courage, a courage not born of rhetoric, but of the willingness to play out the great moral, social, and even political questions of our time in the crucible of his own soul; to make art out of his passions, doubts, contradictions and epiphanies. (And here we're not talking of



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

art as a purely subjective melange of impressions, but of an act, that, in the words of mythologist Joseph Campbell, can "bring the ineffable into time and space.") In all rock 'n' roll, only Bruce Springsteen can match his capacity for reaching the universal through plumbing the depths of the personal.

Townshend is the first to admit that the Who have been a relatively ineffective medium over the last few years. Instead, it's been through his solo work on *Empty Glass* and *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* that he's found his voice recently. The former, a near perfect blend of power, passion and grace, utilizes references to the alchemical transformation of water and wine to depict an inner ascension, a glimpse of the goal; while the latter, with its tangled imagery of mud, streams and rivers documents the painful but necessary struggle to separate the fine from the coarse—and forms a therapeutic chronicle of Townshend's recent dark night. It's interesting to note the change in P.T.'s voice and appearance as he speaks of these albums. He is visibly more relaxed, more secure, his voice resonant with confidence—as if he's speaking from a different part of himself. Is *this* the real Peter Townshend?

Perhaps a clue can be found in the lyrics of *Empty Glass*'s "I Am An Animal," easily Townshend's most dramatic personal statement to date. Amid the typically Townshendian turmoil and clamor, a voice emerges in the repeating chorus, a voice that speaks with the calm authority and grace of his higher creative nature. The voice points the way to a place in Townshend beyond the dualities of anger and self-doubt, a place where the paradoxes are resolved. It's the source of his artistic inspiration and integrity, that which transforms, for example, "I Can See For Miles" from merely a song about a jealous rage into an anthem of hope and possibility.

*I was always here in the silence
But I was never under your eye
Gather up your love in some wiseness
And you will see me.*

MUSICIAN: *It seems as if rock values are centered around youth, vitality, innocence.... What kind of line do you have to walk to grow old in rock and still be creative and contemporary, as you've managed to be?*

TOWNSHEND: I think as a society, we're mistrustful of the establishment; we don't want anything to do with it. It's rendered us impotent. We have nothing to do with control of the world and our desires are completely ignored. But people who are interested in changing the world don't understand that it's not possible overnight. They don't understand how difficult it is and they reject anybody who appears to be part of the establishment. But it's only by becoming part of the establishment that you can actually do anything. That's why you find a lot of older musicians moving into the establishment infrastructure.

From my point of view, I like to be like a reed. You get blown backwards and forwards by the ebbs and flows of what is happening in the world. But you don't break—and I have never broken and I will never break. I will be just as angry and embittered and frustrated and desperate to do something about this planet as I ever was, but the methods I use, outwardly, are gonna look like they change.

There's a certain number of things I can't just give away, because I've become like a politician. The only way that I can actually prove that the things I said as a young man were not just blabbermouthing and hypocrisy, is to do what I set out to do. And that's what I'm in the process of doing. This is not to say that the music becomes secondary, far from it. Rock 'n' roll remains the central, maintaining lifeblood for me. It's still the thing which I turn to, which raises me up when I feel down.

But behind that, I'm trying to deal with my life and trying to face up to my responsibilities as a human being. That's boring to seventeen- and eighteen-year-old kids. They don't want to know how miserable their lives are going to be, how much hard work they're gonna have to do when they're thirty or forty years old. They just want to believe that they can stand onstage with a guitar and change the world. Great. But it's not possible

overnight...not to say you shouldn't try.

MUSICIAN: *Your solo albums jump right into the middle of all those contradictions. Empty Glass seemed to be about hope, and the new album, All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes, seems to be about struggle. Do you think that's true?*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, but it's also about the determination to survive....

MUSICIAN: *Well, that's what I meant by struggle.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, when I started *Empty Glass*, I mean, that's exactly what I was doing—I was hoping. I was hoping that I was going to pursue two careers at once, not realizing that they're irrevocably knotted together. I hadn't quite realized how much what I did as an individual would affect the Who, and vice versa. The new album was a big difference, in the approach to it and with the ruthlessness with which I had to deal with the Who, with everything around me, in order to get it made. It's actually a recognition of that essence of *commitment*, a commitment to a set of principles which I've debated over the last ten years: the importance of a family, the importance of my role with my peers and the band, the importance of my freedom of self-expression, and lastly but not at all least, the importance of becoming actively immersed again, for only the second time in my life (and the last time was when I was seventeen) in politics. I really do feel that I can't sit and watch any longer. I don't want to turn into Jane Fonda, but there's a kind of selfishness in people who sit back and watch when they do have a unique position to get respect and attention. I just think it's too good an opportunity to say something I feel is in everybody's bones.

MUSICIAN: *Listening to Empty Glass—especially in comparison to the last few Who albums—I thought to myself that if this man can produce a work of this magnitude, he doesn't really need the Who in any way I can see. And yet he may want to continue the band for other reasons.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, well, I...it's difficult for me to agree or disagree, because if I disagree with the fact that that album is the best work I've done in a long time, I would be fooling you. But the Who provide me with a platform and a set of restrictions, constraints and limitations that are important. The things I've done on my own have been fun and interesting, but incredibly un-effective. And so I don't get that very real, celebratory affirmative feedback you get when you go onstage with a band. As part of the Who I can enjoy the experience, and as a writer I can also stand back and see what lines in the song turn people on or make them throw their hands in the air with joy. See it! Not have to wait for a letter to come through the mail and wade through sixteen pages of adolescent rambling to find out whether somebody actually understands what I write.

The album that the Who are working on now is probably the most self-conscious and probably the most dangerous record we've ever set out on, and I think one of the reasons it's like that is because of the effectiveness and the purity of the communication contained in the solo albums. Perhaps the new one will open up a new door. It's really just illustrating what's possible. I can't always convince the band that they're capable of some of the things I believe they're capable of—and they often can't convince me that I'm capable of some of the things that they believe I'm capable of!

Working in a band is a strange kind of democracy, a democracy of total negativity. Whether it's actually been what has enabled the Who to sustain, I don't know; but our average meeting goes something like this: I'll say, "Right, I think for the next tour what we should do is small stadiums; what do you think?" And the other three guys in the band all go "NO!" (laughs) So I say, "Well, my other idea is that we should all go onstage wearing dark suits and bow ties." "NO!" say the other three. So in frustration you say, "Okay, what are your bloody ideas then?" So somebody says, "Well, I've been sitting at home ruminating, and what I've decided we should do is all go onstage wearing flowery crepe frocks." (laughs) "NO!" go the rest of the band. So the only way I can get anything done is if I say, "LISTEN YOU BASTARDS, THIS IS THE WAY IT'S GOING TO BE DONE—THANK YOU AND GOODNIGHT!"—

and then walk out of the room.

Now, I do *that* all the time; and Roger (Daltrey) does it all the time; and John (Entwistle), in his quiet way, gets his way as well. It means that, in a sense, you're getting three solo careers contained within a framework. There's no watering down of individual responses. On the other hand, mutual respect for one another's ideas can mean that you'll accept compromise when you shouldn't. And I think within the Who, it's very easy to be compromised, because we do love each other so much. You know, you don't go around hitting people in the head to get what you want anymore.

MUSICIAN: *Isn't there something useful in the kind of tensions you're talking about, tensions within a band?*

TOWNSHEND: I think it's an absolutely vital thing...and it's something that I'm going to have to face up to at the moment because the Who is not going to go on forever. For the first time in our lives, we're actually talking about rounding off our current state of live appearances, the way that we work at the moment, and to force ourselves into a position where we have to rethink things. It's too easy for the people around us, too easy for the record company, the manager. It's too easy for the Bill Grammys of this world. Now Bill Graham is a great, great friend of mine and a fundamental in the Who's success story. I'm not criticizing him as a man, but if he thinks he did anything creative on the Stones tour, he's completely wrong! It was totally exploited. It's like saying the Stones are one of the only bands who can go out and earn \$60 million on the road—let's do it! The Who have that problem, too. You get a phone call from a guy in Toronto and he says, "Listen, you know the Who sold a million seats in Toronto last time, let's go for two million! And we can do it, we can do it!" Who is this "we"? The "we" are the two million people who work all day and shell out ten bucks for the ticket! The Stones could fold tomorrow, and it would *not* change rock 'n' roll.

I think that *review* would help the Who greatly. The Who have stopped and regrouped several times in their career, at one point for two whole years. And those times were vitally important for the band. So what we're talking about at the moment is a year of exploitation, *but under our own control*, of live performances of the album which we're about to do. And then we're gonna stop. What happens then is an open book.

MUSICIAN: *A fellow critic said to me recently that he felt "Townshend is being direct in his solo work, but that the recent work with the Who seemed condescending." Do you feel when you're addressing a mass market via the Who that you have to use bigger, broader images and simpler forms?*

TOWNSHEND: I think there's an element of that, yeah, and there's no way a critic is going to be able to relate to that. I mean, the New York critics voted *Sandinista!* the best album of last year, but it didn't sell. It doesn't matter what critics think, I'm sorry! What really matters is what critics are able to communicate to people who read newspapers and magazines, and as a rule it's NOT VERY GODDAMN MUCH! The frustration a lot of critics feel, and which so often manifests as vindictiveness and bitterness—a frustration with bands they know have tremendous potential and whom they see going the wrong way; with the insipidness of manufactured music and production values; with the misuse of power in the record companies; with the ebbs and flows of the world economic crises affecting music, which it shouldn't do; and everything else—is a frustration felt alike by the audience out on the street and by the musicians themselves. It's not unique to critics!

The difference is that out there somewhere, is somebody with a baton, with nobody to hand it to. And that's the position that the Who are in.

In Britain we live in this incredibly volatile, fascinating, explosive...it's the closest thing to art college I've ever come across, the way the music business is in this country. Bands come and go overnight; no sooner do they become established than they break themselves up and go off into splinter groups. There must be about twenty different outfits who I wait upon eagerly for their next productions: the Jam, the Clash, and from there on down through UB 40, Echo & the Bunny-

men, Teardrop Explodes, Bow Wow Wow, Fun Boy Three... I even get into Pigbag. When are those records played in America, apart from the occasional Clash record played in New York? Instead, you get "Start Me Up" played every fifteen minutes. People out there aren't hearing everything, so who's going to be condescending first, the critic or the artist?

What I'm saying is that you have to condescend to an audience that hasn't been educated. I was gonna say that I think the Who are in a unique position in that we're capable of exactly the same kind of tense and desperate expression the Clash make, but with a far, far larger audience. I'm saying that we have a responsibility to the fans who've grown up with us, and don't want us to change too fast, because they're worried about literally losing their grasp on what's going on; the responsibility to not change suddenly in mid-stream, to evolve slowly.

MUSICIAN: *Do you sometimes feel that there's a whole generation of kids growing up since the early 70s that have no idea what rock 'n' roll is all about?*

TOWNSHEND: Absolutely.

MUSICIAN: *How did this come to pass?*

TOWNSHEND: I think the Who are probably as responsible as anyone else. Basically, it came about because of the opportunities to make large amounts of money and the Western obsession with achievement as measured by quantity rather than by...quality is not the right word, because the Foreigner albums are incredibly high quality: the musicianship is superb, the production is superb, the actual motives behind the musicians...if you sit down and talk to those guys, they're not assholes, they're good people. I suppose what's lacking is the...the....

MUSICIAN: *...depth?*

TOWNSHEND: The depth, that's it. And the commitment to the depth you put in. You know, if you put in too much, people become almost embarrassed! I don't know how it is over in the States, but over here if you try to get in a conversation about arms buildup or nuclear weapons, people turn away and order another pint of Guinness, and they want to talk about bloody

The thing about rock 'n' roll is that there are no bleedin' leaders.
We're an observation platform in a sense.



Arsenal! (English soccer team) They're gonna be dead tomorrow if they don't start thinking about it... but they're embarrassed; "It's annoying—oh, don't talk about *that!* We're impotent, we're neuter." Now *that* is what's happened to rock 'n' roll. People have actually started to say, "What's the point of trying to make a really great record, when we know that just a well-constructed, well-produced piece of crap is gonna sell six million copies, and everybody's gonna think we're great." And to be brutal for a second, I think one of the dangers of middle age in rock 'n' roll is that it's very easy to take the easy way out. You have to be very angry, in a sense, to stay honest.

But I don't think the Who have ever condescended, to the extent where we've said, "Ah well, we'll just chuck something out." I mean *Face Dances*, for example, which is a very ineffective album—I don't think anybody that worked on it will argue with that. It didn't work. But for us... we know what we put into it.

The positive part of the compromises that are part of the Who, the big positive to me, anyway, is that the wall that you have to smash through is that much bigger and thicker. Do you know the Dylan Thomas line—"Rage, rage against the dying of the light"? That's really the epitome. Our manager is really well-read, and last year, when I was getting a bit frustrated and just generally down about the slowness with which the record was going together, he wrote to me and closed his letter with it: "Rage, rage against the dying of the light." That was quite interesting, because it's really what you have to do. Just as years ago, when I used to smash guitars because I just couldn't play them the way I wanted to... now I smash words. Because I can't... I don't actually use what I'm best at.

MUSICIAN: *It's like you're punching through walls in each one of the songs on Chinese Eyes.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, well, that's... on the song "Communication," for example, I deliberately take the word communication and break it up into bits. I mean I literally hurl the letters of the word at the listener. And then I show a literal example of how not to communicate, which is with flowery, meaningless

prose. You know, "briolette tears drip from frozen masks, the back of the whale cracks through the ice floe," blahblahblah—who needs it?


MUSICIAN: *What you said about well-constructed crap reminds me of the Asia concert I saw the other night. It was so contrived...*

TOWNSHEND: Well, this will maintain as long as we buckle to the needs and desires of the industry. They are musicians who have evolved, each one of them, in a particularly sterile area of the biz. None of them have come from rock 'n' roll bands. They're not rock 'n' roll musicians. Uh, that might be a bit sweeping... I'm thinking of Carl Palmer... Steve Howe... they're not a rock 'n' roll band. They're musicians. They're striving for something else. And I don't think any of them would object to my saying that. I don't know... maybe they would.

MUSICIAN: *The distinction you draw between musicians and rock 'n' roll recalls the 60s. Was there a social energy then that is no longer as universal? Did rock lose its powers of communication and become just entertainment?*

TOWNSHEND: I don't think entertainment is... is that bad. I still think it's one of the greatest services a person can perform for another man—to entertain him, to make him happy. Even if it's only temporarily. Let's face it, you turn to the greatest teachers to try to make you bloody happy for the rest of your life, and none of them can do it. Not even the greatest, not even Jesus Christ can make people happy for their whole lives. He doesn't even claim to. Jesus was an entertainer in some respects. I think that it's important to realize the dark side of life, that the suffering and the indecision are a fundamental, valuable part. Without them there'd be nothing to write about. "Entertainment" is, in a sense, a diminutive for a much larger phenomenon; it needs a much bigger word. And that word to me is "rock," which embraces and encompasses entertainment but also does other things as well.

MUSICIAN: *But rock once had the power to literally change your consciousness, and I don't mean just change your mind and opinions. Where is music that is doing that now?*



You can't say, at seventeen, "I want to be a star" and then say, "Old it a minute. I want to be alone."

TOWNSHEND: I don't think it's doing it on the scale that it's done it in the past, but rock has never done what people are still waiting for it to do! It's not...no, I'm sorry, I don't accept the position that it *used* to do something which it doesn't do now. *It started a job which it hasn't finished.* That's the way I look at it.

MUSICIAN: *But how do you go about finishing that job?*

TOWNSHEND: I'm more worried about Paul Weller, in the of a large mass of people is the easy part. Let's face it—Hitler managed to rally the biggest European country, within about eighteen months. You know—he just—he just spouted. *Talk is cheap.* It's easy to stand up and say, "We're gonna do this! We're gonna do that! Let's get together! Let's march!" And suddenly everybody is all massed together, as we were in the 60s, going "Yeah! Woodstock! Yeah! Let's take on the world!" Right, what do we do now? Who are the leaders? And—of course, the thing about rock 'n' roll is, is that there are no bleedin' leaders. We haven't got any—we're an observation platform, in a sense.

MUSICIAN: *But given the the lack of so-called leaders, do you fear for a guy like Joe Strummer of the Clash?*

TOWNSHEND: I'm more worried about Paul Weber, in the Jam, than I am about Joe Strummer. I think Joe Strummer has got a lot of problems, I mean it's obvious how they've affected him at the moment, when he should actually be strutting around London like a peacock on the back of what is the most superb rock album to come out in two years, the new album (*Combat Rock*). He's actually in hiding somewhere—ruminating over God-knows-what. I've got no worries about him. But I *am* worried about people like Paul Weller—who has fantastic drive and potential—accepting the establishment's status quo as being too large a wall to crack. The way that he looks at America...it's as if it's not even worth trying to communicate, because they're so caught up in their own garbage. That's why I'm worried—because it's shortsighted. And one of the things that you find out about America, if you go there, is that people passionately care about the quality of life and the things that are wrong with society, and are actually trying to change it from within the infrastructure that has been laid down, the American Constitution.

I get worried about people who, right now more than ever, believe they are impotent, that they are powerless, that the circumstances of hierarchical control, of apparent control of our planet, are irrevocably destined to fail. I think that is a mistake, because if the individual feels he can't change anything, then what is the point of being alive?

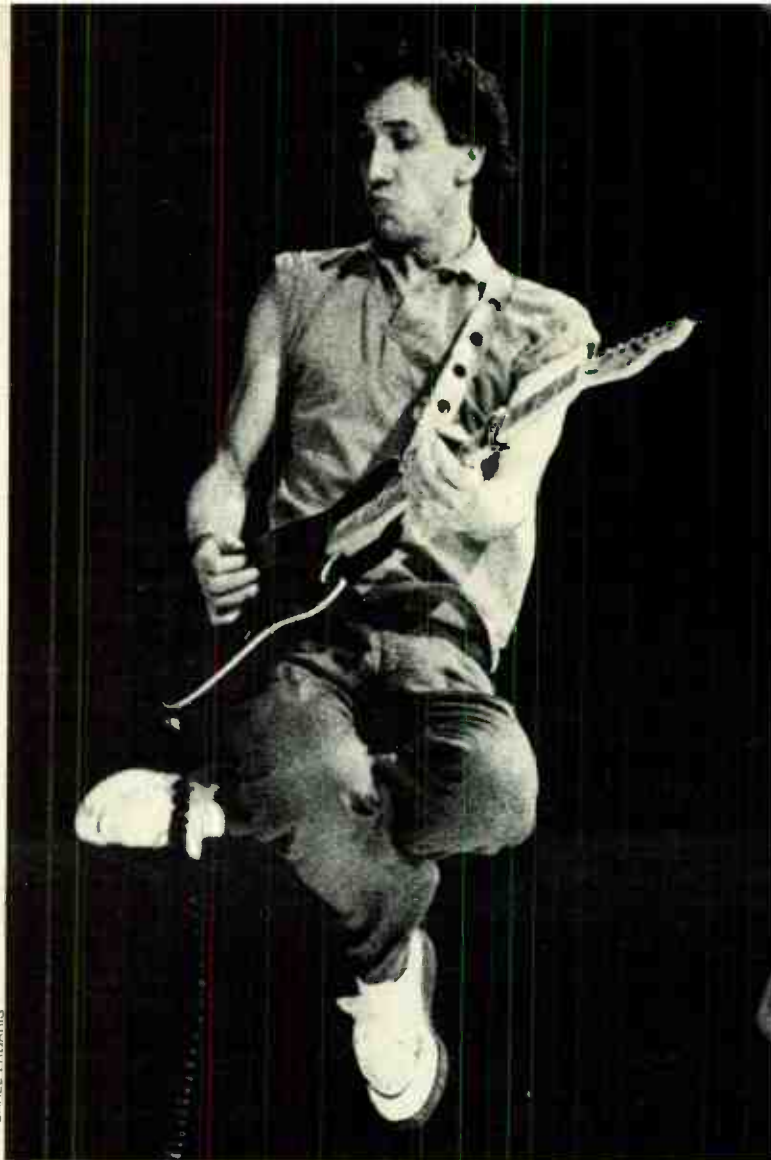
MUSICIAN: *A continuing theme in your music is that the individual has to make changes within, must struggle, fight in his or her own life, not just outside. So now you're raising the banner, but how are people who are still unsure, people like yourself, going to change the world?*

TOWNSHEND: I understand your question, but how long do you sit there saying, "I'm immature, I'm not ready yet. I need to go through a bit more experience. I need to study for a few more years with my guru, another fifty lifetimes, a million lifetimes." Of course. You can be a RAT—that's what my new album is about—you can be a rat and still change the world. That's where you come down to the principles that you're talking about, which is that the individual is the pillar, you know.

MUSICIAN: *I'm agreeing with you, but if someone's being hasn't grown, what's the point of getting that person on the barricades? That seemed to be the point of "We Won't Get Fooled Again," jumping prematurely, wasn't it?*

TOWNSHEND: No, "We Won't Get Fooled Again" was a refutation of the value of revolution. I don't believe in revolution and war. Revolution is the ultimate betrayal...every revolution even the necessary revolutions, or the Russian or Chinese revolutions; they are betrayals because they equalize, without recognizing other people's aspirations.

MUSICIAN: *That's kind of what I mean; if we jump in and immediately change everything without changing ourselves, we'll wind up with the same thing in the end. If you build a house out of bricks that are half-baked, no matter what shape it is, they're only half-baked bricks.*



MICHAEL ZAGARIS

TOWNSHEND: But who's talking about heaven? I'm not trying to turn this planet into heaven, into a perfect world. We all know there's only one way to that and that's through God, through Jesus Christ, through this one and that. For me, it's through Meher Baba. That's the only way to heaven. I'm trying to get this planet to become the *functional*, you know...Battlestar Galactica that it's capable of being. One of the fundamental mistakes I feel is being made is that America doesn't realize that it embodies our planet's ambitions to colonize space. Everyone's pissed off to see millions and billions of dollars coming out of the space program to go back into making bleedin' cruise missiles.

Nuclear weapons are sterilizing the whole world into inactivity. People don't talk about it. People are even bored with ecology now: "Oh, ecology, that's old hat." What's old hat about it? You go to India and there's people that can't even keep their sixteen kids they've already got alive, having children at the rate of one a year.

All I'm talking about is attempting to use the communal consciousness that we all have, which we know has come about through music and through affirmation and celebration of the higher qualities in life, and deal with some of the darker sides, deal with frustration and desperation, which has also been embodied in rock 'n' roll. In other words, to say, "We did it in rock, at least we all recognized one another, realized we all think and feel roughly the same way, but that we recognize we've got our same cross-section of assholes, mafiosi, good people, gurus, bad people, lazy people, hard-working people as any other part of society has, but at least we share something." What we're looking for is the *common denominator* in

individuals, not the difference.

That's why I took a degree of exception to the idea that communicating with a lower common denominator of the rock audience was *condescending*. I'm probably just swinging back into the mainstream again and getting excited about an aspect of the potential of rock. I'm just gonna push it again, whether it'll do it or not, I don't know. I just feel at the moment—and you obviously have gotten the message by now—that whether or not it's gonna change your behavior, I do think it's good to be *conscious*—whether or not you can do anything about it doesn't matter. I don't think it's hypocritical to stand up and say things aren't right and then sit down again.

MUSICIAN: *I'm still troubled by that contradiction between an individual and the society.*

TOWNSHEND: I am too. I see a society, or a race which I feel lucky to be a part of, and lucky to be a little bit unique, and in my own arena of activity, obviously, especially unique, and I really enjoy that. But at the same time, I don't want to face up to the inevitable fact that if life is as I see it, as I'd like it to be, then *I am no better than anybody else* (laughs). And that occasionally

throws me into a bit of a turmoil, and that's where I'm at odds to a great extent. I don't quite know how to deal with it all the time. Sometimes I've got it in control, and then sometimes it gets out of control.

MUSICIAN: *Given that uncertainty, how were you able to write such a masterpiece as "We Won't Get Fooled Again"? Did you know exactly what you wanted to say?*

TOWNSHEND: No, it's grace, I'm afraid. It's almost like you have to almost not be there for it to work, so when it does work, it takes you by surprise. Like that song, for example, which was so powerful a statement and such an obvious affirmation of what so many people were feeling at the time about the pressure that was being put on them by political spearheads, the Chicago Seven or Eleven or Twelve, or whatever they were, trying to make us feel *guilty* because we weren't doing this or that. It sort of happens out of the sky, because when I was working on that song, I didn't actually realize that it was gonna be... a universally accepted warning signal as it turned out to be. And I think you have to be fairly unconscious, you have to be naive, to some extent.

I think Cincinnati needed to happen, as an example to all of us within rock 'n' roll that it's not perfect, that we've got lessons to learn. We shouldn't be *complacent*.



RETNA

MUSICIAN: *Can you think of any other songs you've written that came about that way, that turned out to be different and greater than your original idea?*

TOWNSHEND: I think "I Can See For Miles," because it was written about jealousy and actually turned out to be about... the immense power of aspiration. In other words, you often see what it is you want to reach, and you know that you can't get at it, but you can see it and say, "I'm gonna try." And those words start to move you in a direction—as long as you say, "I can see what I want, but there's no way that I can get it."

MUSICIAN: *Are there any more songs like that that come to mind?*

TOWNSHEND: "Behind Blue Eyes." I wrote that for a film script, *The Lifehouse*; it was written about somebody else. It was written about a man who actually was a villain, and he seemed to be a villain; he's accused of being a liar and a cheat, when in fact his motives are absolutely pure.

So I tried to capture this character that I'd written and then realized it was me afterwards, and about a part of me that I hadn't considered: the inability to be taken literally because of

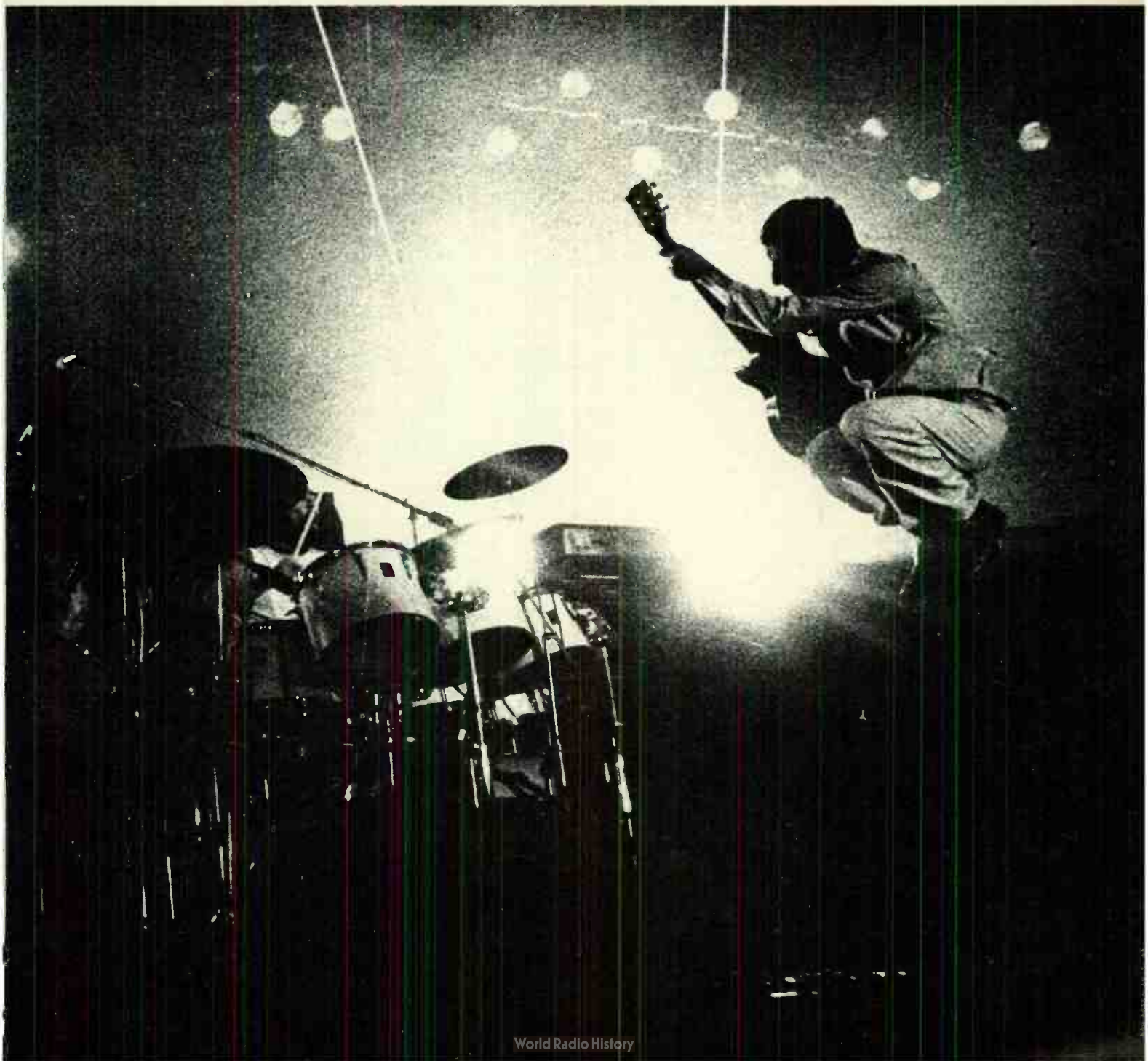
the way people take you to be. You can never define, you can never control how people react to you, however much of a star you think you are. You can never hide what you really are.

MUSICIAN: *Does that ever happen in the music itself, are there times when the music, as opposed to the words, can come together in a way that makes you feel the music is a perfect expression of what the song is about?*

TOWNSHEND: No. I feel really inadequate on that level. I don't know... I'll stumble on things musically, but they're often borrowed or in some ways derivative.

MUSICIAN: *When I interviewed Paul McCartney, he said, "We used to steal from everybody." He even said that he was inspired by reading an interview with you in which you said that the Who had just done "the loudest, raunchiest thing they'd ever done." He got so intimidated by that that he sat down and wrote "Helter Skelter."*

TOWNSHEND: Well, as you probably know, I've dedicated my life to making Paul McCartney as uncomfortable as possible, creating as much tension in him as I possibly can.... No, I really like him. And I like his family. I'm a good friend of his wife.



I'm probably the only person in the world who would *much* prefer to hear a Linda McCartney album than a Paul McCartney one...no...I...I think McCartney is a very valuable part of the industry because he is somebody that is in pursuit of balance on a very diplomatic, polite, or courteous, or whatever level—it's part of his pursuit of *balance*. But he works *damn* hard.

MUSICIAN: *It seems as if John Lennon's death has done a little of what you want to do to Paul—it challenged him, the song "Here Today" on the new album for example. Did Lennon's death have some value that way, did the old network that used to connect us through rock, but which had become atrophied suddenly come alive again?*

TOWNSHEND: Well, I must admit... I do think Lennon's death had tremendous value, and I don't think that however poetic and languorously indulgent Yoko gets on the subject, that she can actually express it too deeply. Lennon had actually been through that period of *review*, he'd actually defied all the machinery of rock, and everything else, and defied all of us, in a sense, in just not wanting to keep churning out records, until we said to stop. He stopped, reviewed, built up a relationship with his children; probably he watched his son—his older son, Julian—wandering about London's nightlife like a lost soul. You know, John could obviously look at him and say, "I'm not gonna let *that* happen again." And dealt with his new family in the way that he wanted to deal with it. Then when he was ready, when he thought the time was right, he came back out. Of course, you had the incredible dichotomy, a built-in anachronism of stardom, that you can *not* do things the way Greta Garbo did. You can't say, as a seventeen-year-old, "I wanna be a star, I want everybody to love me," and then say, "Old in a minute—I want to be alone." You can't do that.

In a sense, Lennon's tragic death was most tragic of all because we felt it as deeply as a family member. And it wasn't Lennon of the Beatles we were mourning or that we felt bad about what had happened, because he'd already gone, he'd already left this place. It was that man that we were just starting to get to know. He had sat down and decided, "The next time I appear, they're gonna get to know the real me." And he was *just* poised to do that and was just starting to reveal things about himself in that album, and I'm sitting here thinking, you know, Lennon's next five or six records and interviews are gonna be *fascinating*. Because he was starting to talk, in a way that you know you're never, ever gonna get close to Dylan, however much you want to. He always wants to be this mysterious and enigmatic figure and wants to go down in history as James Joyce or Proust.

MUSICIAN: *What in rock today gives you hope? Who is going to supply the same magic we lost in Lennon?*

TOWNSHEND: It's interesting you say magic, because I felt a very undefinable magic at the first Bruce Springsteen show I ever saw, which was in Brighton. The sound wasn't particularly marvelous and the show wasn't particularly sensational, but there was that definite magic in the air. I went backstage and there was an amazing atmosphere of sterility, complete, total sterility. Bruce would always come to Who concerts, but I went to meet him for the first time on his ground. And it was like meeting nobody. He could've been one of the lighting men. And I realized then all of the disciplines that were exerted—and a lot of them were imposed against insuperable odds by Springsteen: no drugs, no booze, only beer, no spirits, no girls backstage, none of that stuff. Security people under a very tight rein and things like that. All those things really focus a hell of a lot of the energy which is dissipated in normal circumstances backstage for a very exclusive elite. Bruce focuses that energy outward and up onto the stage. I think that's where rock 'n' roll needs a lot of discipline.

MUSICIAN: *It may be hard to convince a young musician of that. We seem to want to learn by experience rather than by handed-down wisdom.*

TOWNSHEND: Of course. If I say that to a young musician, he's gonna say right back, "Well, it's okay for you! You've had your good times, you've screwed all your groupies, snorted all

your coke, tried your free-basing and heroin, you've done your spiritual master, you've got your family, you've crashed your cars, and now you say, "That's not the way to do it!" I want to go through it. I want to have the fun of doing all that, go through all the experience."

Listen, I've had more opportunities than you have for extremes in experience, and I can assure you that none of them are futile. They're all worth doing! They're all valuable. I'm *not* saying, "Stick to the chosen path, wait until I tell you." That's not the way of the West. I really believe in the value of demonstrated experience—as long as you react to it, you know.

The West, as it's structured, is just starting to understand the value of wisdom handed on. We're more interested in accelerating the experience to get the gist of it ourselves. I think ultimately, in desperation, we all turn into the same face. But I think rock is about that. It's not aspiring to be the new Sufi path with the new gurus, Bruce Springsteen or Peter Townshend, or whomever. It's aspiring to be what it has served so well as for such a long time, a reflective surface in which you melt down your own experiences, subjective, objective experiences, things that you've seen other people go through, lifestyles of one type of rock musician against another, from the groupies right on through to the other fanatics, and everybody that's been touched by it. It gives you a microscope, a barometer, a viewing screen through which you can see life. And I think that it always comes back to the fact that what has happened for centuries in the East is passing. Those ancient wisdoms and things, they're going, they're gone practically. The way the West operates is now really the norm. I mean, you could even regard Russia as being a Western nation in that respect.

MUSICIAN: *One experience I would imagine you would hesitate to call worthwhile was the tragedy in Cincinnati. I was at Altamont and I was also at Monterey, and at Monterey there was a feeling of expansion and sharing, while at Altamont, literally as soon as you went in, there was a feeling that there was something wrong in the atmosphere, a selfishness. It was everybody out for themselves. Could you feel that at Cincinnati?*

TOWNSHEND: I think what's really ironic about Cincinnati was the fact that it was such a beautiful concert and such a beautiful crowd, such a wonderful atmosphere inside. And I think the shock that not only the band experienced, but that the audience shared, was finding out what tragedy had happened outside, which a lot of people didn't realize.

I think Cincinnati needed to happen. And I'm not saying this just to comfort the relatives of the people that were lost and try to give it a meaning where it has none. It did need to happen, in the same way that John Lennon's death has a purpose. It has started us thinking. And I think it could only have happened to the Who. I think only the Who could have survived it, and have survived the investigation and the self-examination that obviously went on afterwards.

And you know, in the past, I have said that there were elements of responsibility that we adopted. Asshole lawyers threw that responsibility back into my face, and tried to turn that into a device that merits me working for the rest of my life to pay for some relative's grief. That's the lousy part of it, to be quite honest. I think it's a really weird American attribute, the fact that human life is valued in money. Sick, really sick.

If you take those two incidents, Altamont and Cincinnati, and measure them up against Woodstock or Monterey, I'm afraid we would come up with the same answer both times.

At Monterey, somebody stole the money, and we let them get away with it. At Woodstock, the fences were broken down and LSD was put in the water supply. It was put in the coffee. I saw a man fall off a telegraph pole and break his back before my very eyes. That was the first big incident that I saw at Woodstock. And he's been in a wheelchair ever since. I followed that story, because he fell off a telegraph pole holding a Meher Baba image.

And the Cincinnati tragedy is still an obvious example, although, as you suggested, the responsibility is spread. It's



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still an obvious example. I think the thing about it is that we take a *superficial* stance on all of them. I don't think that anything truly investigative has really been done in rock 'n' roll. I think it's very interesting, for example, to look at *Rolling Stone* magazine—now I'm treading on dangerous ground, maybe, because Jann Wenner is a good friend of mine, and so are a lot of the writers. But I think they do incredible investigations of some political things. They'll go in and get the real smut, interview people who used to work for so and so and all that. Yet when it comes to rock 'n' roll, they stop short. It's like *opinions* and reactions are spouted off ad hoc, but very few *facts* are ever revealed. And I think it's those facts behind the rock business that are the most fascinating.

For example, in the Cincinnati hearings, what I found most fascinating about the line of questioning by the appointed attorney was that the guy was questioning me as though I was a rock star like the rock stars he had read about. Whether or not he was assuming that role, or whether he was intelligent enough to know that what you read in the papers ain't true, I don't really know.

But I thought that was quite remarkable. I thought, here we are, justice is being seen to be done. And the guy is treating me like I was a combination of Keith Moon, Ozzie Osborne, Ted Nugent, Mick Jagger and, you know, every other sort of apparent degenerate in the music business. And I just found it kind of weird. And I thought, well, you know, what does this guy *really* want to know about me? Does he really want to know how I feel? Does he really want to know how I live my life? Does he want to know that I've got two little girls? Does he know what kind of schools they go to, that I run them to school every day, that I do half the cooking? Does he want to know how much I give to charity?

MUSICIAN: Yeah, but whose fault is all that? Whose fault is it that that's why he's got that image? It's the fault of a lot of people you're talking about.

TOWNSHEND: If you're talking about the individuals con-

cerned that are guilty of hypocrisy, then I won't argue with that. But I do think that anybody that lumps people together, it's going to... I think what rock has attempted to realize is the shared experience of struggle and the determination to overcome the unimportance of the individual, the transitory quality of heroes, their disposability, and yet their absolute vitality. And in all these things, what I'm saying is that nobody looks deeper than the *surface*. That's a pretty good indication that if that really is what rock 'n' roll is about, then we've got a fairly good working model of society.

The problem is, in a sense, that you don't often see people in rock acknowledging that. People in rock see bad things happen, see people indulge themselves, see people being opportunists, see people doing bad things when they should be doing good things, or see people misusing power or position, see them being subject to the machinations of materialist monopolies and things like this. They lose sight of what is apparent on the outside, what *should* be apparent on the outside.

And that's something that I've never done. I've always seen rock from both the inside and from the outside. And I think that when you make any serious investigation of what rock 'n' roll is all about, or the significance of events like Cincinnati, you have to look at it from the inside and from the outside. In other words, you have to have a global response to rock 'n' roll, to be able to say it was important that those eleven kids died.

And somebody is going to say, "Why should eleven kids die for something as dumb and stupid and transitory as rock 'n' roll? So you can screw fourteen-year-olds? So you can snort coke when you fancy it? So you can go through with some machination?" Of course not. It's not for me, or for my freedom or my indulgence, or for my bank balance that eleven kids died, but as an example to all of us within the rock 'n' roll framework that it's *not* perfect, that we're not perfect, that we've got lessons to learn, that we shouldn't sit on our laurels. We shouldn't be *complacent*.

Continued Next Month, Part II: The Who, The Music, The Future

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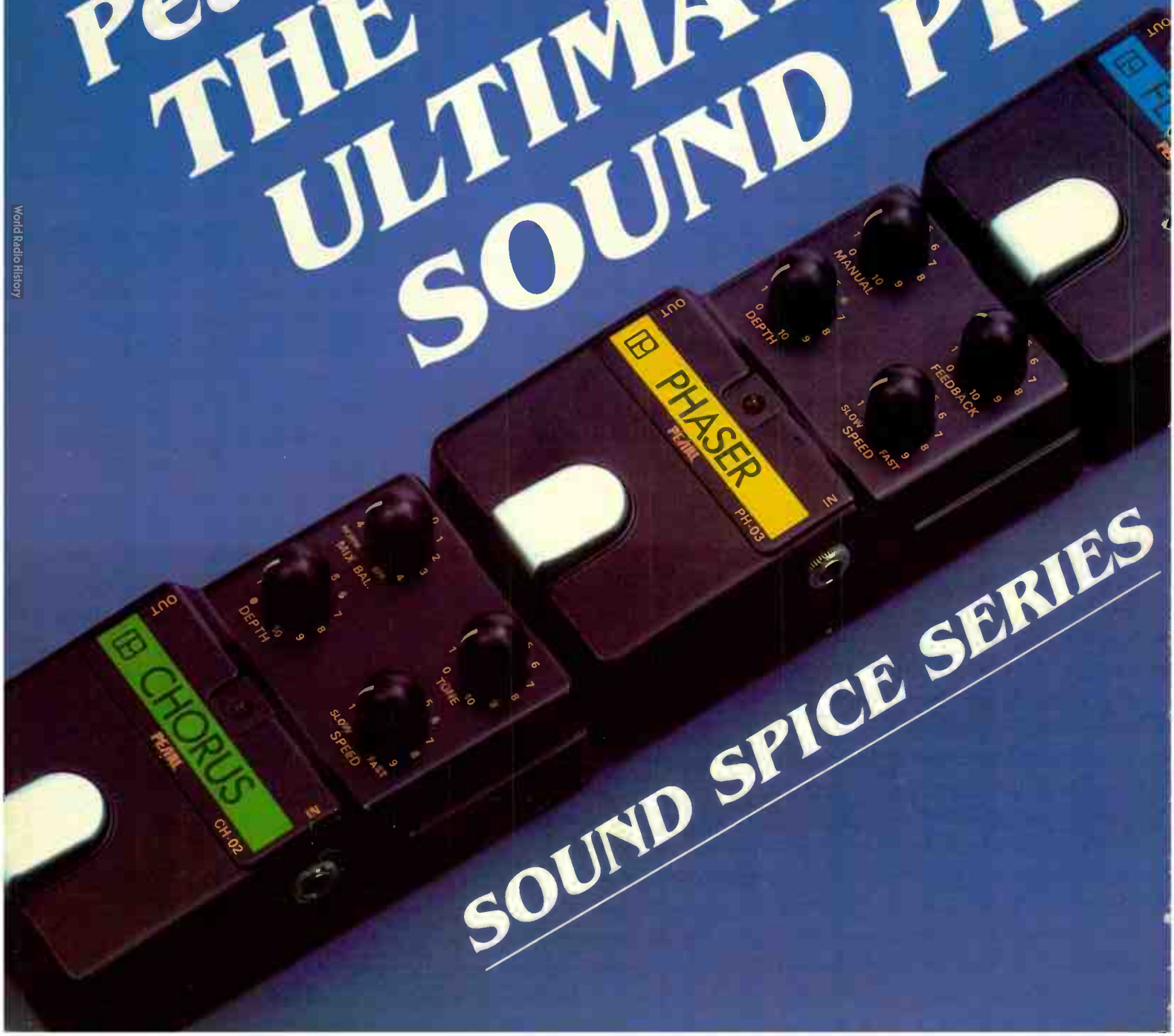
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BY CLIFF TINDER

Anthony Davis

FORMAL FREEDOM IN THE NEW JAZZ



If Anthony Davis were to pass away tomorrow, the epitaph on his tombstone would probably read, "The Best New Pianist to

Come Along in Years." A piano virtuoso he is, but more importantly, Davis is by nature a formalist, a composer. It is the mathematical puzzles of rhythm and harmony, the variations of motifs, the sculpturing of jagged textures, that serve as sustenance for his searching mind, not the endless string of press clips raving about his prodigious piano talent. Davis's real artistic purpose is to redefine the musical ground plans that house his creative imagination, yet to retain all the emotional grandeur that he finds so important in the art of his mentor, Duke Ellington.

Davis approaches his intellectual activities systematically, with the uninhibited inquisitiveness of a child. In his conversation, as in his music, Davis bubbles with energy and the tantalizing possibilities of the new. But at the same time, it is exactly this fascination with new compositional landscapes that has sent Davis journeying back "with Ellington to Nippon, with Sun Ra to Saturn, on a wobbly rail with Cecil Taylor," with Stravinsky to the Urals, with Balinese gamelan masters to shadow puppet theater and with Monk to Brilliant Corners.

Speaking to Davis in the sunny atmosphere of a New York City outdoor cafe over cups of caffeine (his Coke, my cappuccino), it became obvious that Davis likes to juggle more than one idea simultaneously, darting from one theme to another. Yet ultimately, he pulls the whole squirming mass neatly together with a thread of continuity that only a structuralist could envision.

"My approach to music has always been that composition is paramount. And I feel that my big achievements have been as a composer rather than as a pianist. As a pianist, I'm mainly concerned with adapting the piano to

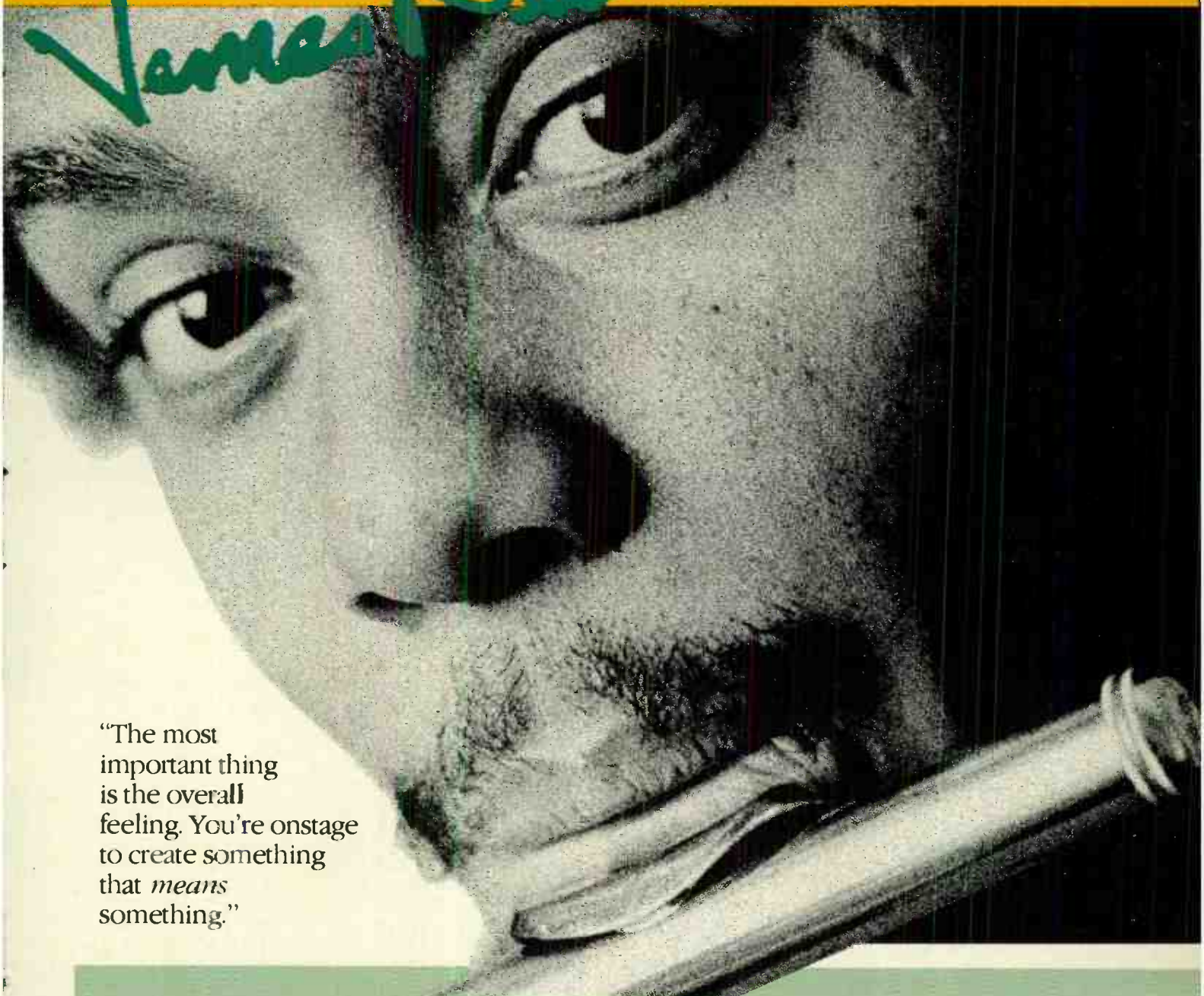
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"The idea of using heads and open-ended improvisations has reached a dead end. The only way to get at real freedom anymore is to work within very strict structures."

BY JOE BLUM & JOCK BAIRD

MYSTERY ROOTS AND THE SOLO FLUTE

James Newton



“The most important thing is the overall feeling. You’re onstage to create something that *means* something.”

The sound of the solo flute flutters upward, dancing in the pastel Ethiopian sunset with echoes of empire and ancient mystery. It touches a gentle moment of melodic certainty, a faint familiarity of some long forgotten song, then picks up a delicate overtone, a breathy companion for its slide down to the velvety bottom of the instrument’s register. Two more flute voices enter to combine in rich, subtle chords, provocative in their tensions, sublime in their release.

The player is James Newton, designated by the *New York Times* as “the most accomplished and original flutist now playing jazz.” The album is *Axum*, Newton’s very

personal, almost anecdotal, ode to the mystic past. Both as keeper of the flame of jazz flute, passed from Sidney Bechet to Buddy Collette to Yusef Lateef, Eric Dolphy, Rashan Roland Kirk and Frank Wess, and as exponent of new music compositional barrier-busting, Newton has brought to the instrument a discipline, a spiritual context, a tonal variety and a technical mastery that none of his predecessors have attained.

One reason for Newton’s primacy on the flute is his unwillingness to double on reeds, as all the above-mentioned jazz flute pioneers had. For the last five years, Newton has turned down lucrative job offers to maintain
continued on next page

this single-minded devotion to his instrument. Another reason is his inability to be content with superficial accomplishment; Newton is his own toughest critic: "One of the real pitfalls in being an artist is that you might develop a phenomenal prowess in a certain area, and then get limited to that. I don't want that to happen to me. I keep enlarging my scope, adding more coals to the fire. Right now I'm studying orchestral composition. I don't want to be one of those people who write inappropriate music for a certain instrument because he doesn't know the instrument, hasn't played it." Rather than getting a quick-fix course in African flute to pass off on the American audience consumed by curiosity for ethnic musics, Newton will pass: "I wouldn't study African flute any more than I'd study Japanese *shakuhachi*, because I have so much respect for their concept that I believe it would be very arrogant on my part to think I could spend a few months with someone in Africa, let's say, then bring his stuff back and put it onstage. There are things which I might learn conceptually, things which might influence and affect my music at some later point. Ellington spoke of how he waited after his Far East trip so the ideas had time to affect him; he didn't want to put down first impressions. I would expect a trip like this to affect me over a long period of time. No fast studies with local flutists."

"This music has the image of being austere, too artsy to understand. That can change. When most people hear the music, it opens them up."

Such sentiments are typical of a man who sequestered himself in a Swiss chalet and practiced sixteen hours a day to make *Axum*, of a man who refused to perform his flute concerto composed with a National Endowment grant because it just wasn't ready, of a man whose credo is "I don't think you should get too comfortable in what you do. Then you risk losing what's essential. It's necessary to constantly challenge your artistic temperament in order to keep growing. Coals are turned to diamonds under pressure."

From Arkansas to Ethiopia

Should James Newton appear to be a severe Puritan, coldly cloistered in a formalist's straightjacket, his playing and personal presence would allay the suspicion. He is a large man of great warmth and gentleness, who maintains motion without agitation. Born nearly thirty years ago in Los Angeles, Newton still makes his home on the West Coast. His earliest memories were of music in the black church, of gospel groups in rural Arkansas and of country blues sung by visitors to his grandfather's farm. Newton began playing electric bass in high school, then picked up alto sax and bass clarinet and gigged with local R&B bands. One of his strongest early influences was Jimi Hendrix:

"For years I studied the work of Jimi Hendrix daily. You could hear a strong jazz and blues influence in his music. Certain of Hendrix's pieces pointed me in a certain musical direction, just as Eric Dolphy's flute playing did later in my life."

Newton found the flute in college and became involved with classical music, performing with orchestras and chamber groups. (Newton still performs in a classical woodwind quintet and enjoys Ravel and Bartok.) Throughout his adolescence, Newton also kept close to the church: "There is a certain faith I have which does shape my life. I'm not a saint, by any means, but I'm a religious person. There are a lot of people in my family who have an important spiritual influence in my life, who have shaped my approach to people. At the church I go to in California, they don't use a piano. Someone, usually an older woman, just starts singing and then the rest join in. There's

such a closeness between rural gospel and rural blues, the type we hear in Robert Johnson. These nuances, these things have never left me. This is the tradition I'm trying to honor, this is the music which is greater than any one person. To be considered part of a tradition which includes Art Tatum, Johnny Hodges, Eubie Blake, Billy Strayhorn: this is a great honor, and also a hell of a goal to strive for.

"Of course, people bring their own hang-ups into church, which leads to a lot of the fallacies you find in religious teaching. There are people in the black church that look down on jazz, for instance. I look for the positive things I can find and apply it to my own life."

Newton's Afro-American heritage is an important source for his music: "You can hear a lot of things in African folk music which parallel rural gospel and rural blues. Now that's the bridge I need to walk across, spiritually and knowledge-wise, so when my son gets older, I can sit down and tell him what it is so he can carry it on. There are cultural nuances in people that go back a hundred or even a thousand years, things in the blood, so to speak, that I've been trying to come to grips with."

Both of Newton's albums lean heavily on the black experience, but in different ways. *The Mystery School* (India Navigation) uses a wind quintet and looks toward the American side, while *Axum* (ECM) is a purely solo LP (with a few overdubs) that goes all the way back to Africa. "There is a thread which runs through both *Axum* and *The Mystery School* and unites these albums conceptually even though they are very different. What I was really trying to deal with in *The Mystery School* is the use of a lot of the very basic Afro-American traditions, like the dirge. But I was also reaching way beyond that, to certain things that are African, mystical implications, things that are part of my spirit. That's what *Axum* is about.

"The Mystery School was a school in Egypt, a body of knowledge that existed mainly through oral tradition. In this School, medicine, all the arts, architecture and science were taught. For hundreds of years, only Egyptians and some Ethiopians were allowed to enter the school. Legend has it that when a candidate was ready to graduate, he would stand in the center of a circle surrounded by the other members who were holding hands. He had to get out of the circle without touching anyone, so he levitated. *Axum* was an ancient Ethiopian empire. Ethiopia is a very interesting study because it was so physically separate and consequently maintained a lot of ancient traditions in very pure form."

The Growl and the Form

It is undoubtedly Newton's expansive size that gives him the wind to get sounds from the flute that few have ever gotten. He not only uses Roland Kirk's old crowd-pleasing device of simultaneously singing and playing in a fully mature and far more developed way, but he also employs the overtone series, special fingerings and microtonal slides as tasteful, musical elements, not special effects.

"Certain things that I do on the flute, people think I do electronically, but they are really things I do acoustically on the instrument, ways of organizing sounds, things that are part of my conception. There are a lot of things I try to transfer from the 'growl' tradition of trombone and trumpet, things from Bubber Miley, Ray Nance, Cootie Williams and Tricky Sam Nanton. That's why I like to listen to Olu Dara and Craig Harris: they haven't lost touch with this, with what can be done with a mute. It's such an art. Benny Bailey is a master of that, too. That's what I think of when I use my voice, that whole approach. Rehearsing and practicing without a microphone has also helped me to project."

Newton's abilities as an instrumentalist have not succeeded in obscuring his skills as a composer. His writing for the wind quintet on *The Mystery School*, his collaborations with pianist Anthony Davis (particularly on their duo LP *Crystal Texts* (Moers) and his contributions to a new flute quartet featuring Newton, Henry Threadgill, James Wess and Lloyd McNeill all showcase Newton's keen sense of structure: "I am always thinking of form. You don't have composition and then



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improvisation for no reason—one works for the other. The improvisation is a continuation of ideas which are introduced in the composition. The musicians I work with have an understanding of this and can think thematically. When chord changes are dropped, then melodic elements can be used as an organizing principle; it depends upon the piece, but the most important thing is the overall feeling. You're onstage to create something which *means* something, which has form.

"The musicians I use know how to organize. In 'The Wake' (from *The Mystery School*), different players were assigned different emotional things to portray—I've also asked musicians to portray different cultural attitudes."

Newton particularly enjoys working with Anthony Davis, who has the fluency and shared vision to echo or anticipate what Newton is doing. The two are also excited about working with cellist Abdul Wadud in a trio, which promises an album soon. Although a partnership with Davis involves some trans-continental travel, since Davis and Wadud live in New York, Newton feels the music is worth the flying.

"Anthony Davis and I write very differently, yet for some reason it works well together. This trio will give me a lot of freedom to write, because I know that whatever I write these musicians can perform; they're on that high a level. The trio is three equal parts. The sound is very orchestral: cello, piano and flute. Abdul, who's been a phenomenal inspiration to me, and Anthony have worked a lot together, and Abdul and I are together on a new India Navigation recording, *Portraits*. Cecil McBee is also on that record—what a master! He played a bass solo on Pharoah Sanders's *Thembi* in the early 70s, and that solo impressed me so much that I wrote a piece which we are now doing on this record all these years later. Strange how things go.

"The flute quartet is another one of the real joys in my life right now. These are players I highly admire. Everyone will be contributing to the group's literature. Henry Threadgill writes so well, and has done such a lot of research into the early phases of the music—ragtime, Scott Joplin, his work with Air. So far we've only been playing in New York, but before the year's out we're gonna try to get some work around the country and in Europe. We might take a little while and let the conception grow a little bit before we put anything on wax.

"I also like to do a certain number of solo appearances each year. It's sort of like putting myself in the frying pan; it's so difficult! Each time I do it I learn more about myself as a human being. You stretch your imagination to the furthest when there's no one else to lean on; you get to the real depths of yourself. Also you have to be in top form technically to get on stage all by yourself."

Anthony Davis continued from page 64

a compositional concept. That really comes from Ellington, I always try to compose at the piano, to make my improvisations an integral part of my overall compositions, as Ellington would.


"I feel that the post-Ornette Coleman era has reached a dead end. I don't mean Ornette Coleman himself, because he's moved on, but the idea of using heads and open-ended improvisations has reached a dead end, has become a cliché. It seems that the only way to get at a real sense of freedom anymore is to work within very strict structures and extended forms. It's very important for me to work to evolve something new within the realm of notated structures. I like to systematically reuse material that I've already established and rework it in different ways. That's what I do as an improviser all the time. But you just can't expect other improvisers to do it the same way, so I felt it was my responsibility as a composer to supply those variations I was looking for rather than leaving it up to chance. I want the musicians playing my music to really focus in on the composition. And if there is so much notated music for them to deal with, it puts them in a state of mind where, when they do improvise, the piece really looms over them. When we were recording *Episteme*, for example, I actually had written in more room for improvisation than we actually played.

Reflections on the Business of Art

"When statements are made which are subtle, like *The Mystery School*, people tend to say it's European. They don't associate subtlety with black people, who are generally presented as entertainers rather than artists. This image is low-risk and makes people more comfortable. The media are looking to hit you over the head with some new product; if someone says something soft or really gentle, it's hard for people to deal with that. So the finer things sometimes get swept under the rug, or they say, 'James Newton is going European,' which bugs me. Then they have the star system, which you can't apply to jazz because it's art, but they have it anyway. Imagine having a poll picking the greatest painter! It's silly; no one person creates this music, there is no 'best.'

"I'm lucky because I've been working, but there should be more work out there for people who are doing this music. I don't want to stop doing clubs, because I think the music needs to be accessible to those who can't afford high-priced concert tickets. You really need a personal manager, somebody who is aware of the music and sensitive to the jazz community and the concert promoters. That's hard to find. Another thing is the image this music gets as being austere, off-the-wall, too artsy to understand. That can change. Most people who hear the music, it opens them up. I remember playing a concert in a small town in southern Italy where most people had never even seen a black man, and they loved it. When the wind quintet performs, the reaction is ninety percent positive. Yet if I go to book a standard quartet, I can get twice the bookings. It's public relations. The media prefer to push entertainment, what people commonly recognize. It's easier for them, but it's not necessarily what audiences prefer.

"Everyone's fighting to be one of the chosen few and we're really at the mercy of the record companies. It's a very doggy business, and I'm constantly surprised by the contrast between the spirituality of the music and the pettiness of the business world that surrounds it. The conditions that some people have to live in to play this music are very tragic. I consider myself fortunate to be living as well as I am, playing what I want to play. I don't see myself as the member of some elite, I try to relate to the needs of the everyday person. That's why clubs are important, it's not an elite phenomenon, although the pianos in clubs are terrible sometimes....

"It's endless, boundless what can be achieved artistically. I want to work very hard, to keep my artistic principles strong, but at the same time to grow as a human being. The real goal is to have your art *and* your persona strong. When I look ahead to the future, let's say twenty years from now, it's hard for me to even imagine what I can achieve. I'm just beginning." 

Cats in the studio would come to me and say, 'I really don't hear playing anything in this section because it sounds so great without improvisation, so I'll just lay out....'

"I really don't believe in atonality in music at all. I'm interested in tonality as one of the very fundamental tools of music. Harmonically, I think in terms of juxtaposing modes and tonalities on top of each other. So, my music is really polytonal or pantonal.

"Something I've found very limiting in a lot of the repetition music I hear nowadays is that it's harmonically and tonally very boring compared to the sources like Balinese, West African and Indonesian musics. What these minimalist composers have done is become very naive in terms of harmony and counterpoint, and the complexity that is inherent in the musics of their sources.

"When I work with repetition forms, I always feel it necessary to use not only contrasting rhythms and meters but contrasting harmonic, melodic and tonal structures.

"A lot of cats have been working with less interesting pentatonic structures, which to me is kind of false naiveté about repetition. I feel that it's absolutely necessary to bring with you all the harmonic knowledge you have.

"What I hear is music with varying textures, but the textures

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themselves are all angular. It's part of the legacy of Monk in the sense that you can't take that angularity out of the music.

"I've always been inclined toward math. That's something that really attracts me to Indian music, Balinese music and ancient Western music, like isorhythmic motets. I've always felt a beauty in numbers and mathematical subdivisions of rhythm and meter. I love music that has hidden games with numbers.

"That's why the recent trends toward contrapuntal verticalization are very healthy signs for me. And it's interesting that this is something Ellington and Strayhorn were doing all along. I think we're just coming back to where they were in 1940. It's really funny. Just listen to 'Diminuendo & Crescendo In Blue' from 1937 and you'll hear what I mean.

"Ellington really is my biggest inspiration, and like him, I'm very concerned about my music being rhythmically articulate. But that doesn't mean only playing in 4/4 or some kind of steady groove forever. That's why in many ways my music does groove, but a different kind of groove. I like to juxtapose contrasting rhythmic textures on top of each other and have each rhythmic element swing like crazy in its own way."

Black Expectations & Other Jazz Fallacies

Like many of his contemporaries, Davis sees his music going beyond stylistic classification. He views himself as part

"We're trying to create new music without losing any of the warmth and power of Ellington and Mingus or the romance of Beethoven."

of a long line of Afro-American pianist/composers—Jelly Roll Morton, J.P. Johnson, Joplin, Waller, Ellington, Monk, Taylor, to mention a few—who have never been afraid to utilize all the musical resources available to them. Having studied "classical" music, the traditions of Africa, India and Indonesia, as well as his own rich Afro-American heritage, Davis draws inspiration and knowledge from wherever he sees fit.

As Davis points out in the Duke Ellington course he teaches at Yale University, Ellington became very dissatisfied with the narrow classifications put on his art by others. Terms like "jazz" and even "Negro music" were much too restrictive. And like Ellington, Davis is comfortable with simply the word "music" to describe his art.

"I don't really use the word jazz because it distorts the way people look at my music. For me, jazz is a term applicable only up until 1940; it applies only to a very specific period of what we call 'creative music.' Now, when you use the word jazz, you put pressure on the artist to be something he might not be as a musician. It misrepresents our music to audiences.

"Of course, I've been greatly influenced by black music. Ellington, Monk and Mingus have always had a profound influence on me and I don't want to separate myself from that tradition. But on the other hand I don't want to be locked into certain rigid expectations. Black music is a far broader entity than some people would have you believe. We are dealing with a very perverse form of racism when, as soon as a black musician tries to do something a little different, like using extended structures or strings, he's immediately accused of selling out his race and heritage, or accused of moving toward European music. That's totally ridiculous.

"I've got a lot of flak from certain people because they don't feel that my music swings in the prescribed fashion for a black musician. Attitudes like that are very limited, short-sighted, conservative views that are actually very racist. It's those kinds of narrowly defined definitions of blackness that help

prevent art from moving forward.

"Another problem with the word jazz is that it's often defined to exclude ragtime as part of the tradition. Just look at Gunther Schuller's book (*Early Jazz*); ragtime doesn't even really appear as part of the continuing tradition of the music. It's viewed as some kind of aberration—black musicians looking toward Europe. But in fact, it's definitely part of our music's continuity. Look at how Duke Ellington developed; it would have been impossible without ragtime.

"For me, our music is a composer's art and has been since Jelly Roll Morton and Duke Ellington. The important thing about them is that they were able to make a synthesis of improvisation and compositional form, and make something really new out of it. One of the beauties of the piano/composer tradition is that the greats have been able to approach both composition and the piano in an orchestral sense. It's really a question of orchestration. The improviser fills in and fleshes out what the composer has established. Actually, in these terms, bebop and the Ornette Coleman revolution can really be seen as reactionary movements.

"Right now, people seem really apprehensive about new music. In many ways I think it has a lot to do with this return to the tradition movement. It seems a kind of escape from moving the music forward. There needs to be a balance. I personally love to play all kinds of music, but in order to perfect my own music, it's necessary to concentrate almost solely on it. If you get sidetracked constantly doing something like Ellington or Monk concerts, it makes it that much harder to get the opportunity to perform your own works.

"There really needs to be an expanded notion of what new music is. New music is not just white musicians from SoHo. It's a music from all over the world, coming from people with all kinds of musical backgrounds. What makes it new music is that it's the music of the moment, an attempt to have music progress.

"What (Anthony) Braxton and the rest of us are trying to do is to win the battle to get our music accepted as art music. We're not trying to create European art music, we're creating American art music or world art music. And we'd like to be taken as seriously as someone like Stockhausen."

Monk, Tatum & Yale

Born into the family of Charles T. Davis, professor of English and Afro-American studies at Yale until his death last year, Anthony was exposed to music at a very early age. "There was always music of all kinds on in our house and it was just without question that I would start playing the piano. So, I started taking classical lessons when I was six. My father was extremely interested in music and he played the violin and piano. He really loved Art Tatum. For him, Art Tatum was the ultimate in music, and he used to know Tatum personally."

While attending Yale University in the early 70s, Davis met trumpeter/composer Leo Smith in New Haven. Davis soon joined Smith's New Delta Ahkri and appeared on such important Smith albums as *Reflectivity* and *Song Of Humanity*. It was here that the critics first got a glimpse of Davis's young talent and began praising his stylistic debts to Ellington, Monk and Taylor, thus dubbing him "the best new pianist to come along in years"—the phrase still follows Davis's name around like a lost puppy.

But it wasn't until Davis began consistently recording his own compositions in the late 70s that his overwhelming concern with form became apparent. Even with a move to New York City in 1977, Davis still found it more difficult to present his own music than to work as a sideman with almost every important figure of the avant-garde. Davis became such a common sight at the Public Theater New Jazz Series that they started introducing him as the "house pianist." His uncommon ability to function comfortably in most any context and style didn't help him shake the piano virtuoso image any, neither did his appearance on recordings with such hot traditional rhythm sections, like *Song For The Old World*, *Hidden Voices* and Barry Altschul's *Another Time / Another Place*. But at the same

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time, these recordings revealed a powerful composer at the helm. The highlight of Altschul's album was Davis's recomposition of three Monk classics into a very insightful and cogent suite, "Crepescale: Suite For Monk." Joined by Arthur Blythe, Ray Anderson, Bill DeArango, Brian Smith and Altschul, Davis ran the ensemble through one of the hottest and most interesting tributes to Monk ever recorded. Davis's own *Song For The Old World* again swung in the shadow of Monk and "the generation that died."

Romantics in the Pocket

Forming a working partnership with another young heavyweight, flutist James Newton, Davis got a chance to further explore his composing and piano work in the context of an Afro-American chamber setting. The two complemented each other amazingly. Together they spun a very delicate, romantic, often abstract aesthetic with just enough bite to insure vitality. But unfortunately, they only recorded one complete duet album, *Crystal Texts*, a gorgeous and complex venture. *Hidden Voices*, released one year later, featured Davis and Newton with a quartet—including Rick Rozie and Pheeroan Ak Laff—and a special guest appearance by trombonist/composer George Lewis. The result was a stunning amalgam of traditional propulsive power and exploratory Ellington-like ensemble writing.

Davis waxes enthusiastic about all these players: "James Newton is one of my favorite musicians. Our musical concepts are very compatible. One of our real similarities is that we're both very romantic players. We're trying to create new music without losing any of the warmth and power that Ellington and Mingus's music had. We haven't lost sight of the grandeur and strength found in the tradition of great romantic music like Beethoven's. Pheeroan Ak Laff is one of the most underrated players around today. He's always been brilliant. I've never heard him play anything that's cluttered; he always complements what's going on. He has an amazing way of putting things in the pocket, things you'd never think could be in the pocket; Pheeroan will figure out some way to make it have an uncanny swing about it. That's really important to my music, because it's so far from the traditional concept of groove. I need someone especially adept at finding the groove. As for George Lewis, well, he's one of the most innovative composers in the music and his work will clearly have a lasting influence. At the same time, he's probably the best musician I've worked with."

A pivotal recording, *Of Blues And Dreams* was a series of compositions inspired by the writing of his wife, author Deborah Atherton, and set the stage for a new direction in Davis's career. This album allowed Davis to get away from traditional instrumentations and to explore the potentials of creative composition for strings (Abdul Wadud and Leroy Jenkins).

Davis's affinity for strings leads him to a hot defense of cellist Abdul Wadud: "Now we have a cellist like Wadud who's one of the greatest musicians of this period, but who just doesn't get the credit he deserves. And this is probably a result of the fact he plays the cello and not the saxophone or something. Actually, I'm sick of hearing the sound of saxophones all the time. But here's this cellist who's a beautiful combination of a profound interpreter of written music and an incredible improviser, but a very disciplined improviser. People get so hung up on the instrument being played. They keep looking for a next new saxophonist, or whatever, rather than looking for very profound musicians on other instruments, like Abdul.

Now solidly aligning himself with the Afro-American pianist/composer tradition, Davis strove for a more perfect balance between composition and improvisation. With the release of his most successful recordings—the solo masterpiece *Lady Of The Mirrors* and the large ensemble outing *Episteme*—Davis has realized some of the most important compositions to be found anywhere in contemporary music. Obviously, "the best new composer to come along in years" has arrived.


Evolution Under the Double Moon

Perhaps the most often performed composition in Davis's repertoire, "Wayang No. IV (Under The Double Moon)," dramatically illustrates Davis's creative process. Composed in 1978, the piece is one of his Wayang series inspired by the gamelan music that accompanies Balinese shadow puppet theater.

First appearing on Davis's Grammy-nominated solo piano album (*Lady Of The Mirrors*) and then as a duet with vibraphonist Jay Hoggard (*Under The Double Moon*), the composition initially existed as a rather sketchy outline for the controlled improvisational elaboration on its highly rhythmic themes. It was already clear that Davis wasn't interested in having the listener fixated on determining where the composition ended and the improvisation began. In its next incarnation, as part of a 1981 concert at the Kitchen devoted to the Wayang Series, the piece lived as an extended work for septet of woodwinds, horn, violin, cello, vibes and marimba, piano and drums. Although it was very successfully performed, Davis still found too much "random noise and confusion." Wanting yet more control, he placed further restrictions on improvisation by notating almost everything, only allowing for it within very prescribed boundaries, adding another marimba, and expanding the piece into three distinct movements. This became the centerpiece for his current and most profound recording to date, *Episteme*. "It'll be a long time before I top that performance," Davis muses.

Polyrhythmically, polymetrically, polytonally and contrapuntally conceived, the revised work incisively explores dense textures and moods, utilizing very sophisticated techniques of manipulating tension and release. With the vertical rhythmic structures of Balinese and African musics, and the formal and harmonic sophistication of an Ellington and other Western composers, Davis produces an awesome work of both intellectual and emotional gravity.

As with most of Davis's more recent compositions, "Wayang No. IV" neither swings in the traditional concept of the word, nor does it contain the open-ended soloing we call jazz. Yet it brims with forward-propelling motion and the emotional expressiveness associated with Afro-American music. Through composition Davis creates the same spontaneity and power that has traditionally been the birthright of the improviser. And he does this in such a unique fashion that although he's utilizing some very ancient aesthetics, his music clearly has the mark of a modernist.

Only recently has Davis reached the point in his career where he seems totally unafraid to consistently break new ground without the obligatory nods to the often rigid dictates of the jazz community. He has weathered a good deal of criticism for his departures from tradition, but his music has benefited greatly from his ability to listen to his own instincts. There is a real sense of strength and focus in his music that didn't quite shine through as radiantly in earlier efforts. You now come away from an encounter with Davis with a distinct impression that he knows exactly where he's headed and how to get there. There has never been any question of his talent being there in abundance, but now Davis has the kind of confidence that fleshes him out as an artist. At the rate he's developing, he's sure to be one of the leading conceptualists in American music of the 80s, one of the fertile estuaries where inspiration and intellect meet. 

Anthony Davis: Recommended Discography

As a leader:

Episteme — (Gramavision)
Lady Of The Mirrors — (India Navigation)
Song For The Old World — (India Navigation)
Of Blues And Dreams — (Sackville)

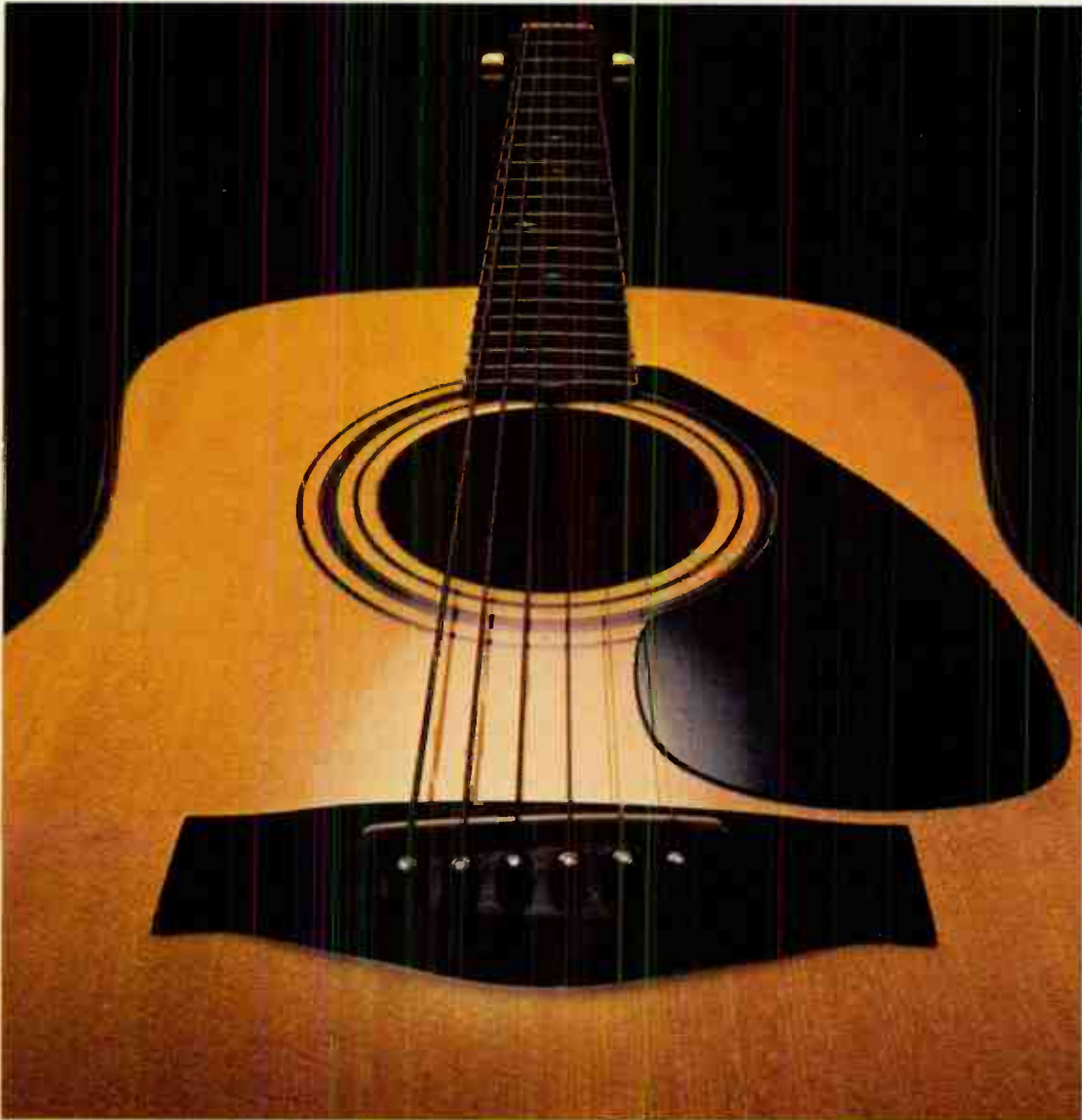
With James Newton:

Hidden Voices — (India Navigation)
Crystal Texts — (Moers Music)

With Barry Altschul:

Another Time/Another Place — (Muse)

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The Instruments, The People, The Process

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A new instrument technology frees a new generation of imaginative non-musicians from their technical limitations.



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SYNTH-POP

Music Without Musicians...But Not Without Craftsmanship and Great Songs

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

Phil Oakey was not the least bit embarrassed to admit it. In fact, he seemed rather proud when he said it. Fielding questions backstage before a show at Philadelphia's Tower Theater, the singer with

current British synthesizer rage, the Human League, blanched when I introduced myself as a writer for *Musician*. "You're in the wrong dressing room," he laughed. Gesturing around the cramped dressing room at the other assembled Leaguers, he announced, "We're not musicians."

True, sort of. Despite a working knowledge of synthesizers, Oakey is no technician. Backup vocal dolls Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sully just sing, and they only started doing that little over a year ago. "Visual director" Adrian Wright handles the League's live slide show. Only bassist Ian Burden and ex-Rezillos guitarist Jo Callis, who now play

most of the League's synths, have prior knowledge of musical instruments.

But neither are Oakey and the League—currently riding very high on the strength of all-synth pop soufuffle *Dare* and its hit single "Don't You Want Me"—tight-lipped technocrats and soulless automatons programmed for the top of the pops. The same goes for their equally successful contemporaries like *Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark*, *Soft Cell*, *Depeche Mode* and *Japan*. All of these groups are rooted in the early 70s experiments of *Kraftwerk* and *Eno*-period *Roxy Music*, with hints of *Giorgio Moroder's* transistorized disco and the sweeping grandeur of recent poppier

Ultravox. Musically, however, they all have their distinguishing marks. On *O.M.D.* and *Architecture And Morality*, their two U.S. LPs, *Orchestral Manoeuvres* play attractive but harmonically stunted art-pop pieces with *Pink Floyd* pretensions. *Depeche Mode* and *Soft Cell* (whose lurid cover of the 60s nugget "Tainted Love" is a preview of Motown in the twenty-first century) specialize in tight, spare dance-floor pop.

Yet if their equipment is all descended from *Robert Moog*, their attitude is strictly *Johnny Rotten*. The message of punk was anybody can play. The message of the new British synth-pop is anybody with a tune and a portable keyboard can hit the charts.

"We were never musically trained and the synthesizer was the easiest instrument to use because you didn't have to spend a year or two teaching your hands how to manipulate the instrument," explains *Paul Humphreys*, one-half of *Liverpool's OMD* with *Andy McCluskey* and who did, in fact, study electronics for a couple of years. "You can just turn a few knobs and play it with one finger if you want."

"We started out as rank amateurs," echoes *Human League's Phil Oakey*, "with a belief that you could use technology to make up for the fact that you hadn't acquired any skill, that you could use computers to make up for the fact



MARTIN RUSHENT

The Producer and Techno-wizard Behind the New Synth-pop Rage

BY DAVID FRICKE

Every successful record producer has to start somewhere. But *Fate* played one of its better tricks when it fingered *Martin Rushent*—the 33-year-old Englishman who's on a convincing electro-pop hit streak with the *Human League*, ex-*Buzzcock* *Pete Shelley*, and Scottish pop puffs *Altered Images*—to start with *Keith Emerson*.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

The Human League: Phil Oakey with boots.



that you hadn't any keyboard players, that you could use sequencers to do rhythms rather than employ a drummer. But it's quite notable that the only success we've had"—meaning *Dare*, their third U.K. LP—"came hot on the heels of getting two guys"—meaning Callis and Burden, who, with the girls, joined when the original League split in late 1980—who knew their instruments pretty well."

"We always said, right from the start, that our experiment was to see if we could have a hit record, a top ten hit, without using anything apart from synthesizers. And we did that."

Indeed they did. Produced by British superstar producer and tireless synth-pop advocate Martin Rushent [see neighboring story], *Dare* was performed entirely on a battery of synthesizers and drum machines including the Roland MC8, System 700, and JP4, the Casio portable synths VLT1 and M-10, a Korg 770, and a Yamaha CS-15, not to mention Rushent's own Roland Microcomposer and Linn Drum Computer.

"Martin normally puts down any old sound," says Oakey. "He doesn't work on the sounds ever for more than twenty minutes. We used the Roland System 700, which makes it a lot easier, but Martin believes it's all in the song, that you can get away with the sound." Oakey, on the other hand, takes the notion of "syn-

continued on next page

"Recording Emerson playing the Moog synthesizer was not much different from recording Emerson playing the piano," deadpans Rushent, who has engineering credits on several early ELP albums as well as a few other weighty art-rock platters by Yes and Supertramp on his conscience. "Moogs were rather rudimentary in the early 70s. Parts of them, I believe, were still valves and its capability was no more and maybe less than a Mini Moog today. There were no programmable elements, so it was purely human playing. And Emerson was using it mostly for sound effects. you know, the amazing Emerson somersault through eight keys in three jumps. He'd get that sound and we'd treat it like we would a piano."

Rushent tugs absentmindedly at his elfish sandy brown beard, snickering to himself over a late morning cup of tea during a brief New York business jaunt. "When we were recording people like Emerson and Rick Wakeman, no one envisaged the possibilities we're recording today."

Rushent, however, envisaged them sooner than most. He was already tangling in the studio as a producer with neo-bikers the Stranglers and chainsaw punk kings the Buzzcocks—discreetly coating their raw guitar shriek and vocal rage with a light commercial gloss that yielded a succession of top ten U.K.

hits—when four years ago he bought a Pet home computer to help him with his accounting. The ease and accuracy with which it balanced his checkbook led him to suspect a computer could do much the same for record production, storing musical ideas, eliminating technical playing error, and assuming other petty details that otherwise interfere with the creative process. And unlike musicians a computer-controlled synthesizer wouldn't talk back or have to do its guitar solo fifteen times.

Shortly after that, Rushent purchased an early model Roland Microcomposer at a British music trade fair with which he started work in late 1980 on some Pete Shelley demos (originally intended for the Buzzcocks) that resulted in Shelley's solo debut and dance club smash "Homosapien." By last fall, when Rushent finished the Human League's *Dare* (with its worldwide hit "Don't You Want Me"), his 24-track Genetic Studios deep in English farm country were cluttered with a variety of Roland synthesizers, a Synclavier, a Fairlight computerized synth and a Linn Drum Computer.

"The synthesizer," he declares with the mock-comic air of a prophet in a wilderness of music biz dolts, "is the great leveler. I object strongly to virtuoso musicianship, particularly when linked not to artistic concept but to musical gymnastics. And when you meet a guy

with great ideas but whose fingers don't sit too well on guitar strings, who'll never be regarded as a great musician, the computerized synthesizer gives him the opportunity to make himself heard. There will be only one thing that counts in the future—the quality of your ideas and how you fit them together."

The articulate and engaging songwriting on both *Dare* and the *Homosapien* album and Rushent's hook-conscious synth manipulation of the League and Shelley's individual strengths (the League's slick top forty Abba-esque flourishes, Shelley's propulsive disco thrust off-colored by his poisoned romanticism) suggest that future is now. And as the game is changing, so are the rules. Rushent notes, for example, there was next to no pre-production done for *Dare*. The League simply brought to Rushent skeleton demos recorded in their home studio in Sheffield—usually a simple pattern on drum machine ("the old boom-tish type"), a Korg bass synth line, a Prophet 5 playing chords and a working vocal by singer Phil Oakey.

"From that point on, it's really follow your nose. The great thing about working with synthesizers and computer control is you can always come back and redo. If you pick a drum pattern that towards the end of the record is obviously not quite right, you can go back and redo it without affecting the

rest of the track. You can't do that with real drums; the drummer might not keep the same exact time again, there's bleed....

"This way, your options are always open to improve on what you've got. So the necessity for pre-production, which is to make decisions ahead of time which make recording economical, is rather redundant because those decisions are made now while we go along."

Dare are, in particular, "Don't You Want Me," with its seductive liquid-synth curves, compound hooks and corny Paul-and-Paula vocal trade-off (Oakey and backup singer Joanne Catherall), succeeds because Rushent and the League have accented the Human in the band's name, giving living color to the tick-tock-beep-beep of the machines. The album's centerpiece synth, the Roland System 700 is responsible for the imitation brass lines in "Don't You Want Me" and there is also an uncredited guitar somewhere in the song, never actually heard but instead used to trigger a synthesizer via a vocoder.

Guitars figure more prominently on Pete Shelley's "Homosapien" single and its parent album, now out in the U.S. on Arista. Both the electric guitars and

a *dance* record, would be pretty wild, the opposite of the usual punk Buzzcock guitar," Rushent explains. "So I flanged it and processed it to enhance the resonance of it. The synthesizer bass line on the record was originally a guide bass line, but it worked so well that we kept it. Then Peter multi-tracked his acoustic guitar and suddenly we had this incredible swirl of sound. From then on, 'Homosapien' basically finished itself."

That electronic approach to acoustic sound—science imitating, nay, improving life—suits Shelley, who briefly worked as an apprentice computer programmer prior to forming the Buzzcocks. "I'm a guitarist," he says through a pudding-thick Manchester accent in a separate interview a few days before his New York solo concert debut. "I was never a keyboard player, which always used to disadvantage me with using synthesizers. So now I don't use synths that much—or at least as much as some other groups use them—because I'm not that into playing keyboards. At the same time, I'm not a brilliant lead guitarist of the old school, so I'm not into all the guitar synths either."

"The whole electronic part just makes it easier for me to do my songs the way they should sound, the way I hear them. I can hear each song and elaborate on the feel, something that is very hard in a group when you're doing it in real time." (Interesting aside: on their 1980 swansong *A Different Kind Of Tension*, the Buzzcocks never actually played in "real" time. Rushent and Shelley would take the bass and drum backing tracks, decide which sections of a song were close enough to the song's correct time, and make copies of those sections, which were then spliced into five or six choruses.)

Just as Rushent acted as player-coach on the *Dare* album, contributing arrangement ideas as well as programming the Roland Microcomposer and Linn Drum Computer used on the LP, *Homosapien* is very much a duet record. Shelley writes and sings the songs, Shelley and Rushent hash out the arrangement and Rushent translates the music into digital form and types it into the computer terminal. But Rushent is quick to defend both Shelley and the League's grasp of the hardware and its potential.

"Some of the details of computer programming are not totally known to them," he admits, "but they learn very quickly. The League's grasp of synthesized sound is greater than Keith Emerson's grasp of the early Moog. The League and Peter understand how the sound is being created, not just which knobs to turn."

"Look, there is a *big* difference between those bands riding the crest of a fashion wave and those bands actu-

ally trying to push electronic music forward," a snide aside at the carbon synth-pop copies which have suddenly appeared in the wake of the League/Soft Cell/Depeche Mode/Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's British chart success. "Because we're reaching a stage—and 'Don't You Want Me' is on the verge of it—where you can make records that don't *sound* electronic but are good full-sounding records that are put together electronically. Phil Oakey said on the radio the other day that there were two kinds of electronic groups, the Human League and everybody else. And there is some truth in that."

As one of British punk's founding fathers, Shelley sees no spiritual difference between the bamalama of '77 and the beep-whoosh of '82. "Punk was a reassertion that it all starts with people, that you didn't have to be a great musician. The electronic computer stuff has the same thrust, that anyone can do it given the hardware. It is the feeling that ideas come first and all these machines do is store the information you put in." Shelley, by the way, has the hardware; he tinkers with a Sinclair X81 computer at home.

What Martin Rushent needs now is a computer that will stamp out enough Martin Rushent clones to handle all the production work he is being offered these days. Two years ago as a staff producer at Radar Records, he was being laughed out of the head WEA offices for wanting to sign and produce then-unknown bands like Joy Division and Spandau Ballet. Now every band and label exec in Britain wants a piece of his action.

"Record companies," he sighs, "obviously don't understand the relationship between producer and artist. I'm being offered acts that are utterly unsuitable for me because of this ridiculous notion that I can get 'hits' every time I go into the studio, truly ridiculous offers."

For instance?

"Well"—Rushent grins like a cat who's just had a tasty canary dinner—"I was offered Emerson the other day." ■

SYNTH-POP

thesizers only" as an intellectual challenge and is eager to go into arcane discussions over whether or not guitar strum can be duplicated by special filterings on a pulse generator.

Where the League originally thought technology could make up for a lack of musical technique, Orchestral Manoeuvres seem content to make noise on synthesizers they can easily and fully control. "Even though we can afford big computers," Paul Humphreys says, a reference to the duo's British singles



Though primarily a guitarist, Pete Shelley adapted quickly to sculpting synth sounds.

the multi-tracked 12-string acoustic fortifying "Homosapien"'s steam-engine rhythm were phased by phasers actually under computer control so they would be phased in time with the rhythm of the track. The 12-string was also heavily compressed in order to give it a continuous level.

"Peter had written this song 'Homosapien' some time ago (actually 1974, according to Shelley) and when he played it for me on a 12-string guitar, I thought using an acoustic on the record,

success with "Enola Gay" and "Souvenir," "we're not interested in the technology. We're more interested in the sounds and we can get good, versatile instruments cheaply, so we tend to use the smaller, simpler synths."

In OMD's live shows, that leads to synthesizers littering the stage—simple synthesizers have a limited number of presets, so OMD employs duplicates instead of pausing to reset them as they would in the studio. Other synth-pop groups prefer to have their cake and eat it, too. Soft Cell's David Ball usually relies on a minimal set-up of a Korg DV-800 and SD-100 with a Yamaha CS-5, although the Soft Cell LP *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* also features a Synclavier in spots.

The priority of music over machine has also weaned OMD away from an all-electronic stance. Humphreys takes pains to point out that *Architecture And Morality* uses a real drum kit and real violins and cellos. "We even used a guitar," he says triumphantly.

Japan, whose recent Epic LP *Japan* offers an evocative, often-danceable blend of musical Eastern mysticism and future shock a la Roxy Music's *For Your Pleasure*, takes a more sharply focused approach to its use of synthesizers, seeing them as an easy means of sculpting the sounds they want. To that end, they discreetly employ a Prophet 5, an Oberheim OB-X, and like the Human League, a Roland System 700. Keyboard specialist Richard Barbieri also uses tapes and found sounds much like Eno in his Roxy days.

"What we're working towards are acoustic sounds," says singer David Sylvain, who also doubles on keyboards and tapes with Barbieri (bassist Mick Karn and drummer Steve Jansen complete the group), "imitating certain instruments, like Chinese and Japanese, instead of using the actual instruments themselves. The drums and a lot of percussion are done on keyboards as well. Everything we've done has been building on sound, using layers of different types of sound to build atmosphere."

How does that work? Take "Visions Of China," the single from the new album. The basic drum track, Sylvain says, was recorded with real drums, "but the percussion at the end of the track, the 'traditional' drums, they were all done on a synth, on the Oberheim OB-X. We started off with the drum track and then we added on all these rhythms, all done on the synth.

"What you're doing is just arranging a song, and instead of getting the actual instruments, you create the sound you need on a synth because it's much more accurate. Instead of working for hours in the studio to get the right sound on an

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CASIOTONES: INSTANT SYNTH

Fun at the Musical Candy Store

BY PETER STAMPFEL



RANDY MATUSOW

Author Peter Stampfel, once of the Fugs and the Holy Modal Rounders, got hooked.

I first made its acquaintance when Mark Bingham of the Social Climbers asked me to play a couple of songs with them at a party. We were running one of the songs down in Mark's studio when my attention was seized by an odd, scrappy synthesizer sound coming from A. Leroy's keyboard.

"It's a Casiotone MT-31," he explained, "going through an old Electric Mistress flanger. See, it's up here." He pointed at what looked like a kiddie keyboard with some extra knobs on it. It was mounted to the right of his regular keyboard and reminded me of the toy organ Ed Sanders used to play in the Fugs. "Looks like more than two octaves," I ventured. "Three," he answered. There were the names of twenty-two instruments and sounds (including "funny fuzz") written over the white keys.

"Those are the sounds it makes. Watch." He played a hot, simple figure repeatedly with his right hand and moved a 4-position knob back and forth with his left. The figure alternated between haunting flutes, a synthesizer-plus-wah sound (the funny fuzz, it turned out), shimmering bells and one sound I couldn't place. He also played the figure with a flanger, which left it rather cold—no overtones or harmonics.

"Here," he offered, "you try it out. You can play as many as eight notes at once

and you can pick four of these sounds at a time." Now I don't play keyboards, but it was a joy to fool with. A strange feeling came over me, an old feeling... that feeling of pathological desire for an object. Coveting thy neighbor's goods. And best of all, it was affordable.

In 1957, the four Kashio brothers (Shigeru, Tadao, Kazuo and Toshio) formed Casio, Inc. in Japan. The company now manufactures electronic calculators (they sell half the pocket calculators sold in the world), computers, digital watches and electronic cash registers—and since 1979, electronic musical instruments.

Of the four brothers, Toshio, besides being an electronics/mathematics/business whiz, was also a gifted musician with an obsession. Not only was he dissatisfied with electronic reproduction of musical instrument sounds on synthesizer keyboards, but he was also interested in adding more unusual sounds like banjo, harp and the Japanese *koto* to the menu. Turning his office into a sound lab, Toshio would record an instrument, plot the sound on an IBM 360 after examining its electrical characteristics, break the sound down into digital info and plot the sound again using mathematical formulas. Then he would feed the formulas into a computer

continued on page 86

STEVE VAI FLASH AND THEORY

Strat Abuse with Frank Zappa

BY DAN FORTE

"My pants are black, my hair is blue, and this Stratocaster tattooed on my shoulder is green and red."

No, there is nothing wrong with your television set. Steve Vai would not be hard to spot in a police lineup. For the past two and a half years, the blue-haired native of Long Island has been opening listeners' eyes and ears as guitarist in Frank Zappa's touring band—where he was preceded by such notables as Denny Walley, Adrian Belew of King Crimson and Warren Cuccurullo of Missing Persons. He also appears on Zappa's latest LP, *Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch*, as well as *Tinsel Town Rebellion* and *You Are What You Is* (where he is listed under "Strat abuse").

Frank Zappa has always had a knack for hiring unknowns with unique talents, and in a 1979 interview I asked him if he'd come across any new discoveries. "I got a tape from a kid named Steve Vai," he said. "It's fantastic. I mean, this kid has got incredible chops. He sent me a cassette of two versions of 'The Black Page #1' on guitar—one at metronome 58, and another at metronome 84. I mean, if you saw it on paper you'd realize what a problem it is to do that at 58. It's a slow metronome tempo, but it's still fast when you get to the fast parts. And he got it going so fast you could just barely discern what the melody was. He also sent me a tape of some original compositions that are real nice. I think he's going to turn into something." The next time I saw Zappa perform, Vai was onstage with him.

Steve Vai, 22, is a one-of-a-kind rock guitarist but represents, perhaps, a new breed of rocker—players who are into the sonic pyrotechnics of Hendrix and Van Halen but have also taken the time to study the theory behind the flash.

"It's true," says Vai, "a lot of people who play rock 'n' roll have no idea what the technicalities behind the notes are. And the rap is, they lose a certain sensitivity if they have to concentrate on theory. Well, I started out with Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Brian May, and then Zappa came along, and I realized you could actually play a rocked-out guitar and be able to emulate the melody lines that go along with it. There's no boundaries."

Before attending Berklee College of

Music in Boston, Steve studied with a guitar teacher named Joe Satriani, who now plays with a San Francisco-based group called the Squares. "Most of all, he got me into learning on my own," says Vai. "And he's one of my favorite guitarists of all time." Prior to his Berklee studies, Steve was, in his words, "a loud, Mongolian rock 'n' roll player. One day I heard the *Woodstock* album with Hendrix doing 'The Star Spangled Banner,' and from that day I've been a different guy."

While at Berklee, Steve began corresponding with Zappa by sending Frank xeroxes of some Edgar Varese scores along with a transcription of "The Black Page #1" and a tape of some original tunes. Soon he was working as Zappa's transcriber (which he still does between tours). "I feel any musician should really get a good idea of what transcribing is," he declares, "because it's very educational. When you first listen to a piece, it can attack the part of you that knows

nothing about music. Then once you take it and write it down, you can look at it and learn a lot. There are things that you can see on paper that you can't really hear."

Eventually Vai made it to Los Angeles and Zappa's studio, where his first assignment was to transcribe, and then double, one of Frank's guitar solos, titled "Persona Non Grata," which became the third movement in the ballet *Sinister Footwear*, included on *You Are What You Is*.

"I'm not a real good sight reader," admits Steve. "With Frank's stuff I don't know anybody who can sight-read it flawlessly. It can't be done with Frank's music—because of the intervals on the guitar, the speed, the preciseness you have to have as far as beat-by-beat subdivisions. A lot of times Frank doesn't write on the guitar, so it doesn't fit the guitar as far as fingerings. You have to figure out how to finger it and get every note to sound like it should. So I developed some kind of chops for doing those kinds of things. But if you can find somebody who can take a piece of music like that and look at it and sight-read it flawlessly, my hat's off to them; they can come to my house and take my gig."

Vai's usual instrument onstage is a highly modified Fender Stratocaster with two Seymour Duncan Strat humbuckers

A part of Steve Vai's transcription of Frank Zappa's "He Used To Cut The Grass."



MARK DAUGHNEY

and one DiMarzio Super Distortion pickup in the lead position. It also contains: an Alembic preamp, and a card customized by Midget Sloatman with an overdrive, a ring modulator, a 6K boost and a 500 Hz boost. (The Strat's tone knobs now control the 6K and 500 Hz, so the pickups' tones are always full-out.) Another essential item on the guitar is the Floyd Rose tremolo bar. "There's nothing bad I can say about that device," Vai enthuses. "If you're a whammy bar fanatic, that's the thing to have on your axe."

In the context of Zappa's band, Vai's role is primarily to play the music that Frank writes to the satisfaction of the composer. Steve doesn't find this crea-

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tively stifling at all—quite the converse: “One way of looking at it is, you play the notes. Another way of looking at it is, playing the exact right notes and trying to make it speak, using the right articulation. The notes and the rhythms are just one aspect of it. I use my own sensitivity in the realm that he wants; it’s up to the player to put his emotion into the piece to make it sound like Frank wants. You’re his device, but not a machine.”

As far as his future plans and eventually setting out on his own, Vai says, “The only way I think I could be happy is if I was playing Frank’s music or my own. I like playing with Frank a lot, and as long as I’m of value to him I’d like to stay with him. But eventually, when somebody comes along and blows my stuff away, I’m going to sit at home and practice for about a year before I try to start a band and do some real playing.”

S T U D I O S

EDDY OFFORD STUDIOS

An Old Theater Answers Acoustical Prayers

BY DAVID FRICKE



RICK DIAMOND

Front row seat; Eddy Offord watches Steve Morse of the Dregs.

Just as young married couples are always looking for their dream home, record producers and engineers always seem to be searching for that “perfect” studio. British producer/engineer Eddy Offord was lucky enough to find his in Atlanta, Georgia—an old concert, drama and movie house called the East Point Theater.

“Finding it,” admits Offord, “was a real fluke.” He first moved to America in 1977 after making his name doing concert sound and coproducing seven albums for art-rock musos Yes. Setting up studio shop in Woodstock, New York, he worked with artists like Levon Helm, jazz-rock keyman David Sancious and Paul Butterfield before relocating last year in Atlanta at the suggestion of good friend and radio consultant king Lee

Abrams. While scouting out possible studio sites, he heard about and promptly bought the forty-two-year-old East Point.

The theater, he brags quite rightly, is the answer to every producer/engineer’s acoustic prayers. “There are no two parallel walls in the theater. The side walls slope out towards the stage and the floor slopes down, so you don’t get that boxing effect.” The room was so perfect that after he purchased the building he made no structural changes. He simply unpacked his 24-track Neotek Series 3 board (“I broke it up into three pieces and built it into flight cases so it’s totally portable”) and went to work.

“There is no control room,” he explains, running through his unusual

“studio” layout. “The board is set up just in front of the band on stage. That way I can talk to each member without a talk-back. The guitars, bass and keyboards all have their (amplifier) heads onstage and the speakers are spread out in other rooms around the building. So when I’m cutting tracks, the only thing you hear in the room is the drums. That enables me to mike the drums from twenty feet away and still get perfect separation as well as great ambient sound.” The same principle applies to the other instruments; Offord can mike a guitar amp from ten feet away in one of the rest rooms if he likes. He also has a unique headphone system, designed by his engineer and operations manager Chuck Allen, that allows each musician to mix his own sound during a take.

So far, Offord has cut albums by the Dregs (*Industry Standard*), a remarkable avant-rock act called the Late Bronze Age, and Detroit newcomers Art in America, a progressive rock-style band that includes a genuine acoustic harp. “The harp is all overdubbed on that record. I would record it with a nice pair of stereo mikes and usually double-track it. Then having gotten it on tape, in some of the rock songs, I would feed the track through a Marshall amp to get a little distortion or maybe try a Roland Chorus to get a nice boost.”

Eddy Offord Studios—as he renamed the theater—features in its equipment arsenal two MCI tape machines (one 24-track with Dolby, one 2-track) and a Stellamaster. Also included are NTP limiters; Barth Equalizers; Lexicon Digital Reverb; and a digital flanger delay, harmonizer and phaser by Eventide. For microphones, Offord employs Schoeps for most acoustic instruments (including the harp), pressure zone mikes for ambience, and “fairly cheap” mikes for drum recording “because I find condensed drum sounds don’t really work for me.” The theater also comes complete with an authentic pipe organ Offord is refurbishing for future use.

Future Offord clients include the new band formed by ex-Yes bassist Chris Squire—including other former Yesmen Alan White and Tony Kaye with guitarist Trevor Rabin—and Offord is already expanding into video and live concert broadcasts. He admits his studio is not for everybody, but he claims everyone who has seen it and heard recordings made there agrees that Offord is on to something.

“I made one friend down here who works with a lot of Southern rock bands. He visited the studio and I played him some tapes. Then I heard him on the phone a little later talking to someone and he said, ‘I can’t believe how weird this place is. It sounds great, but I don’t know how he does it.’”

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S O N G W R I T I N G

THE SPEAKEASY CO-OP

A Magazine/Album for Singer/Songwriters

BY DAVID FRICKE



The new Village folk force; Jack Hardy of the Song Project, editor of *The Coop*.

On any one night, the competition between smells and sounds in New York's Greenwich Village is pretty stiff. The mongrel growl of punk takes on the sophisticated tinkling in the jazz clubs and the chamber music noodling in the chic French restaurants. Pizza and foot-long heroes go up against the hot sting of Szechuan and Indian curry.

But there is one block of MacDougal Street where the combination of song and grub is particularly beguiling. Inside the Speakeasy, an unlikely combination falafel restaurant and night club, the exotic whiff and socko aroma of Mediterranean eats mingles with the earnest acoustic strains of young folk singers and songwriters in the classic Village tradition. One night, a venerable growler like grizzly Dave Van Ronk may occupy the tiny club's claustrophobic stage. On another, the room's rather inappropriate mirrored walls might reflect the fresh young faces of the Song Project, a local singing group who—like Peter, Paul & Mary once championed the songs of

Bob Dylan—promote works by the best of the scene's new bards. Or, on the Monday Open Mike nights, you can see a parade of would-be Dylans and Baezes testing their tunes and their nerve in front of the Speakeasy's attentive, discerning audience, most of them songwriters, too.

Tiny folk clubs and hootenannies are nothing new. But the Song Project, despite numerous personnel changes now going on five years old, is. So is the Musicians' Cooperative, a loose Village folk alliance that books and operates the Speakeasy club (the owner, a pint-sized old gent named Joseph, runs the bar and the falafel take-away). So is *The Coop*, an ingenious newsletter-and-record album published monthly by the Speakeasy cooperative and sold at the club. Subtitled "The Fast Folk Musical Magazine," *The Coop* adapts the new wave do-it-yourself philosophy to the cause of the modern folk songwriter by combining stories on the scene in the 22-page black-and-white offset magazine with songs by the scenemakers on the home-recorded album. And at \$2.00 for a current issue, it is not just a giant step for folkdom; it's one of the New Depression's best record bargains.

"We're talking about another underground here," declares Jack Hardy, *The Coop* editor, a founding member of the Song Project, and a solo recording artist with four LPs on his own Great Divide label. "Folk people have always said, 'Here we are, here's the public, and here's the record companies in the middle.'" He draws an imaginary line across the kitchen table in his small Village apartment. "All we're doing with things like *The Coop* is making an end run around the record companies direct to the public."

It is not as hard as you might think. Hardy and associate editor Brian Rose do not have to look far for the ten-to-twelve artists appearing on each record. Performances so far range from the mock-comic Delta slide of veteran Erik Frandsen's "Howard Hughes' Blughes" and Dave Van Ronk's crusty hobo croon in "Jersey State Stomp" on the February '82 flagship issue to organic guitar-and-voice serenades by newcomers Suzanne Vega and Rod McDonald and, on

the April LP, David Massengill's ambitious ten-minute Studs Terkel *Working-style* folk opera "The Great American Dream." All tracks are recorded in engineer/bassist Mark Dann's Brooklyn bedroom on a 4-track TEAC 3340S using a handful of Shure SM58 and 57 mikes (58 for the vocals, 57 for the acoustic guitars), a Shure mike mixer, and a Roland Boss stereo chorus to discreetly fortify the sound of the guitars.

"Mark is donating his time, the artists donate their songs, everybody is really donating something," Hardy explains. "One of our co-op members is a lawyer and he drew up a legal form so we could use the songs without paying royalties but also to protect the songwriters if they want to use them at a later date. The recording costs are basically the cost of the tape and even that we get at a discount because another co-op member works at a local recording studio."

Pressing the albums comes to \$400, half for the mastering and half for the stampers, and about \$.63 per record pressed. Hardy estimates the total cost of the second issue at \$1200 for 800 copies. At \$2.00 a copy when bought at the Speakeasy, that makes the break-even point 600 copies, with any profit going back into *The Coop*.

"People ask me if this is an original idea," notes Hardy, 34, who came to New York from Aspen, Colorado in 1973 to try his luck as a Village troubadour. "Well, it has been done before but never on a regular basis, on a monthly basis. And to me, that's the power of this. We're not saying this is the best of what is. We're saying this is part of what is."

Hardy and the Speakeasy co-op have even bigger plans. These include a weekly live radio broadcast from the club to further spread word of this urban folk renewal. They want to eventually incorporate bluegrass, string bands and ethnic folk music into the fabric of *The Coop*. Hardy would also like to feature writers and performers from across the country on the albums, that is if similar scenes and projects in other cities don't beat him to it.

"We'll branch out, but this is all part of folk music. My definition of folk is when the song is more important than the singer. And even if you're dealing with a traditional song, the thing purists keep forgetting is someone somewhere wrote that song. However it may have changed over the years, somebody came up with that melody and that set of words. And it was someone like us."

(*The Coop* is available by mail for \$6.00 an issue. Subscriptions are \$48.00 for twelve issues, postpaid. Write *The Coop*, c/o The Speakeasy, 107 MacDougal Street, New York, NY 10012.)

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Casio from pg. 79

and listen to the results—over and over again until he was satisfied. This went on for seven years, his brothers barely tolerating what they considered unbusinesslike behavior.

His behavior payed off in spades. In 1979, the first Casiotone keyboard, the 29-sound CT-201 was introduced in Japan and then in the States in April 1980. The next month, the M-10 model (predecessor to the MT-31 I discovered at rehearsal) came out. Selling for \$149, it reproduced four musical sounds, played eight notes at a time, and had a 2½-octave range. Industry cynics thought they had a musical Edsel on their hands. But in no time Casio was shipping M-10s to the U.S. at the rate of 10,000 a month. Within eighteen months, the electronics music division of Casio, Inc. was in the black. Sales went from \$3 million in 1980 to \$19 million in 1981. The projected figure for 1982 is an astonishing \$40 million. And they call this a recession?

The Casio model I have since fallen for is the 49-key CT-202, the updated version of the original CT-201. Although it has no automatic bass, rhythm or chord features, the choice of sounds—abetted by three vibrato settings and a sustain control—is what dazzles me. There are, for example, three varieties of koto alone. Add to that three different harp sounds. I never dreamed I'd be able to create the sound of sweeping harp runs just by running my knuckle up and down a keyboard, but life is full of surprises. Like the bagpipe sound. I heard about one guy in Philadelphia who plays Irish and Scottish folk tunes on an MT-31 after wedging a "drone" key or keys down with a folded matchbook. Quite simply, what you get for a \$649 list price is a musical candy store.

You won't find a Casiotone *in* a candy store, but they seem to be on sale everywhere else—gift shops, electronic hobby stores, department stores. In fact, keyboard player Greg Hawkes of the Cars bought his first Casiotone in Bloomingdale's in New York. "It seemed like the perfect thing to take on tour as a practice keyboard," he notes. "But it sounded so good that it didn't make sense to leave it in the hotel room." Hawkes has since used his various Casiotones in concert. His whole keyboard setup for the Cars' last appearance on the *Tom Snyder Show* was an M-10 and MT-30 and he recently set up a wireless remote for the M-10 to use onstage so, he says, "I could get away from the main keyboards for a change. I may use a little tape echo on it, but mainly it goes straight into the board."

Jon Tiven, rock critic and currently keyboard man with the Jim Carroll Band,

has recorded with Casiotones and also uses them on tour. "On the last tour, I took a CT-202 but this time I've got my MT-40 (actually an MT-31 with six automatic rhythms, extra bass notes and an auto-bass function). It's lighter and has two useful sounds—the synth fuzz and the funny fuzz—that the CT-202 does not have." Tiven puts his MT-40, which weighs less than five pounds counting batteries (good news for roadies), through a Roland Boss chorus because "it sounds flat without it." The small Casiotones are no longer alone; Yamaha has three models comparable to the MT-31 and MT-40, the PS-1, 2 and 3 (\$150 to \$250), all with rhythms and the latter two with automatic bass lines.

There are currently nine Casiotones available, costing up to \$1,000 and capable of doing a remarkable range of tricks that are best heard in person. I finally decided on the MT-40 and CT-202. The hard thing to figure out was what sound-altering device to use on what sound. I asked the two guys in my own band (the Bottle Caps) with the most boxes to bring them over so we could start doing some research. They brought a couple of distortion units, a chorus, a phaser, a flanger and an analog delay box. It took two distortion boxes to get a good earnest fuzz going,



Casiotone MT-40: rhythms, bass & amp!

then we decided to hitch up everything at once.

Things deteriorated quickly from that point. The next two hours were basically a romp in an electric playpen. A Casiotone, or better, two or three of them, and a couple of boxes are more fun than a video arcade. We took turns running the keyboard and the boxes, hitched up a microphone, and did some Laurie Anderson parodies. Nothing was accomplished in practical terms; we were having too much fun. But a process is starting to emerge. We have been recording our fooling around, making notes of what we've done. And boy is it fun!

Despite the fact that everyone loves a good tune and probably wishes he or she could play one, most people lack the time and diligence to master a musical instrument. Casiotones and comparable models like the Yamahas are changing this. At the very least, *anyone* can play them. And they can sound good doing it. Kraftwerk, look out.

THE YAMAHA PORTASOUND

And this one even plays itself.



It's not enough that these Casio and Yamaha portable electronic keyboards, selling like hotcakes at Macy's as well as on New York's music row, are battery-powered, have the instrument capacity of a small symphony, and are absurdly easy to play. Now Yamaha has the nerve to introduce a carry-all keyboard that actually plays itself.

The PortaSound PC-100, the latest model in Yamaha's PortaSound keyboard line, is a 44-note, 10-voice, 10-rhythm polyphonic synthesizer that comes with specially designed 9-inch by 5-inch sheet music cards, called Playcards, which feature a strip of magnetic tape along the bottom. When inserted in the special slot at the top of the keyboard, the tape triggers the synth to play the tune automatically—everything from melody and chords to drum fills, obbligato and special instrument voices. The idea, of course, is for you to play along, following the cues of the

light-emitting diodes (Melody Lamps) positioned just above the individual keys. Music readers and other advanced virtuosos can cancel out selective Playcard information (lamps, melody, rhythm) in order to add their own creative flourishes. There is also a key transposer for those who want to jam along on say, a sousaphone.

The "family fun" orientation of the exploding portable keyboard market is evident by the initial choice of selections available on the Playcards—"When The Saints Go Marchin' In" and "Green-sleeves," for example. But a Yamaha spokesperson noted that the company intends to cater to moderate jazz and pop tastes with upcoming releases of "Take The A Train," *Best Of The Beatles* and *Best Of Abba* sets, and a series of *Screen Themes*.

With a retail tag of \$495 the PC-100 may mean the end of music lessons as we know them. **M**

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The DSX also syncs up with the DMX for sound you wouldn't believe could come out of a box. Program your drum beats, combine the individual parts into a complete song, then let the whole SYSTEM loose with the touch of a single button! THE SYSTEM has cassette interface and battery backup too, so you don't lose your recordings when you lose power.

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G I G G I N G

WHO NEEDS LEGAL ADVICE?

When and How to Find a Lawyer

BY STAN SOOCHER

One bright spring afternoon, veteran music business attorney Martin Silfen is sitting in his midtown Manhattan office, a pair of glasses dangling out of one corner of his mouth, his ear pressed against a phone.

"You won't believe this," he whispers out of the other side of his mouth. "It's Larkin Collins, the personal representative of the Rossington-Collins band. They just broke up. Rock 'n' roll," he sighs "what a way to make a living. I'm glad they don't owe me any money."

As counsel for clients as varied as Blondie, Sha Na Na, Chrysalis Records and the one-time manager of Tommy James and the Cars, Silfen has seen it all in his fourteen years as an entertainment attorney. His reaction to the breakup of the Rossington-Collins band might seem to place him squarely in the camp of the stereotypical money-is-my-god attorney. But Silfen's concern for his role in educating his clients is anything but typical and before his conversation with Larkin Collins has ended, he has cemented an ongoing arrangement to help the band chart the troubled seas ahead.

"More often than not, creative people sign whatever's placed in front of them," Silfen says, slicing the air with his glasses. "Trust, fragility, naiveté and ignorance are all factors. If you are new to the business, the problems you will be confronted with will seem as important as those facing the most successful acts. That's why there's so many horror stories about first-time deals ending up in litigation."

New York attorney Jim Charnie, a former marketing and promotion executive for CBS Records now specializing in representing up-and-coming acts, firmly agrees with Silfen. "Any agreement you enter into in the music business is a legal relationship," Charnie explains. "Whether it's a management contract, publishing contract, recording contract or partnership agreement with the other members of the band, it's generally true that the fairer the contract is, the more likely it is that a lawyer has represented the musician. Anyone who enters a legal negotiation without a lawyer is begging for trouble."

There are currently less than a hundred firms nationwide practicing

entertainment law full-time, but the number of attorneys overall is at an all-time high, estimated at 500,000. As a result, there has never been a better opportunity to obtain competent legal counsel, so shop around.

Most musicians find attorneys by word-of-mouth referrals. Local bar associations can also steer you in the right direction. An increasing number of organizations offering free or low cost legal advice to struggling artists have sprung up throughout the United States in recent years. These groups include Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts in New York City, Lawyers for the Creative Arts in Chicago, the Bay Area Lawyers for the Arts in San Francisco and the Los Angeles Lawyers for the Arts.

Acclaimed L.A. punkers X met their attorney at a writing workshop in Venice, California. "X was my first client," recalls Jay Jenkins, who also serves as the band's manager. "I was in law school when we met and after I got out and passed the bar exam the band walked up to me and said, 'Hey, we've got a legal problem. You're a lawyer now, so help us out.'"

Jenkins's legal acumen came in handy when the band signed to independent Slash Records. "In signing with them, we had agreed that the circumstances were unique because they were an independent label and we were an alternative band," explains X bassist/singer John Doe. Nevertheless, Slash handed the group, in Doe's words, "a standard recording contract that had been belched out of a computer. As a result, the contract bounced back and forth between us and Slash and probably cost the record company a lot of money in legal fees. But we finally got pretty much what we wanted."

Martin Silfen paired up with the Rossington-Collins band in an equally volatile setting. "A potential litigation situation developed into a representation situation," Silfen remembers. "The band had just finished touring on their first album and they had questions concerning prior contractual commitments," Silfen remembers. "I set up a series of new arrangements for them and, as my role grew more advice-oriented, I took a back seat."

continued on page 116



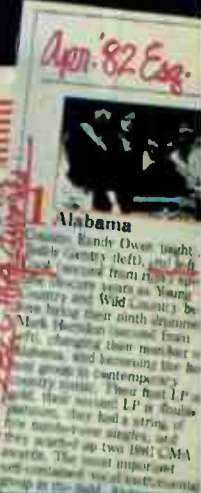
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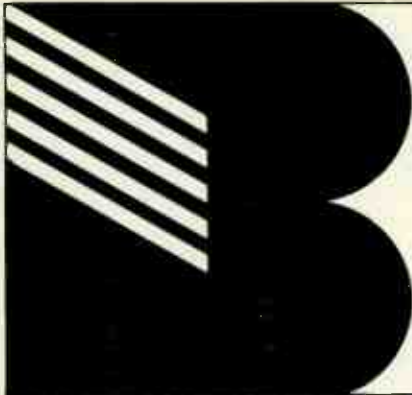
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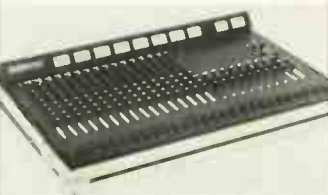


GHS Strings is introducing its latest offering, Vintage Bronze professional grade acoustic guitar strings, which GHS describes as "a great combination of the old with the new." The old is a type of bronze alloy once used extensively for acoustic strings prior to World War II. GHS is bringing back this rich, warm, vibrant-sounding alloy and combining it with up-to-date manufacturing techniques and modern gauging to create new Vintage Bronze—a different sounding string of 80/20 bronze and phosphor bronze. Five sets are offered: ultra light, extra light, light, bluegrass and medium. GHS Strings, 2813 Wilber Avenue, Battle Creek, MI 49015. (616) 968-3351.

Rickenbacker introduces the new Model TR-50GT amplifier. Compact and lightweight, and rated at 50-watt RMS, Rickenbacker's TR-50GT is the lead guitarist's dream come true. Standard features include external speaker jack, effects channel, distortion, reverb, and solid state dependability with completely modular circuitry. Speaker options include two 10" custom designed speakers, one 12" custom, or one 12" JBL speaker. The wide choice of speakers available, coupled with the highly sensitive tone controls, make the TR-50GT amplifier ideal for today's guitarist. Rickenbacker, Box 2275, Santa Ana, CA 92707, (714) 545-5574.



Audiotrack, a new low cost console line for road/stage use, 8-track recording or mobile broadcast production, has been introduced by European Audio Distributors. This new console features sixteen input channels, eight monitor sections which can be used for 8-track monitoring or as sub-groups, and a stereo master output. Three band eq is standard on all input channels which have electronically balanced mike inputs. Three effects sends are included for each input—two pre-fade, one post-fade. Output is typically +21 dB. European Audio Distributors, 20610 Manhattan Place, Torrance, CA 90501, (213) 328-2595.



The ATC820 and ATC1220 (shown) by **Audio-Technica** are 8- and 12-channel stereo consoles designed to be equally at home in the mix-down of live performances and in recording studio use. Both units feature phantom-power availability through all microphone channels. Each channel has its own high, mid and low frequency equalization, and the program output is equipped with a dual-channel graphic equalizer, while the monitor output has a monographic equalizer. An important feature in the new consoles is the provision of transformer-balanced inputs and outputs that reduce the possibility of extraneous noise pickup. Additional features offered by both models include filters to eliminate popping, a talkback system which allows the board operator to provide directions or musical fill-in through the stage monitor, accurate, easily read peak level meters, line as well as microphone inputs, direct outputs, effects and monitor buses, built-in headphone amplification and stacking inputs. Audio-Technica, 1221 Commerce Drive, Stow, OH 44224. (216) 686-2600.



A new generation of **dbx's** model 160 compressor/limiter features switchable Over Easy and hard-knee operation regardless of compression ratio selected. The model 160X also features an exclusive monitoring of gain reduction as well as input or output levels. The dbx 160X compressor/limiter will provide recording studios, broadcasters and sound reinforcement specialists with outstanding performance and operational flexibility in a 1 3/4" high rack mount package. It incorporates Infinity Plus compression to provide negative gain control for "dynamic reversal" effects. The two units can be strapped for dual-channel tracking compression, with switchable slave/master modes. dbx, 71 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02195. (617) 964-3210.

Yamaha Combo Products introduces a high-performance portable and battery-operated Micro Monophonic Synthesizer. The CS01 is one of four products in Yamaha's new Producer series line of miniaturized sound reinforcement components. The 32-key keyboard is just 1 9/16" wide by 6 3/8" deep and features: pitch and modulation wheels; low frequency oscillator; a variable glissando, control pitch and wave-form controls; a foot selector for changing keyboard range; pulse width modulation; full VCF, VCA and envelope generator controls; and a unique breath controller interface for modulating both VCF and VCA functions with your breath. The compact CS01 also includes a built-in amplifier and speaker system and can operate on an optional AC adapter. It's shown here with Portable Mixer and open-air stereo headphones. Yamaha, Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. (714) 522-9011.



Nady Systems announces the debut of the Nady PRO-2 series, three styles of low price, high quality tunable wireless microphone and instrument transmitters. The GT-2 musical instrument transmitter replaces the cord on any guitar, bass or instrument with a Hi-Z pickup and can be used with any effects. The LT-2 Body Pak transmitter has a Lo-Z input for lavalier microphone and is ideal for lecturers, singers, theater performers, etc. The HT-2 is a hand-held transmitter that attaches to any professional vocal mike (not provided), thereby allowing the performer to use the microphone of his choice. All three PRO-2 series transmitters operate on clear channels within the virtually interference-proof FM radio band and can be used with any FM tuner or with the Toshiba ST335 MKII with Nady Systems supplies. And each PRO-2 transmitter offers audio as good as FM stations with a full 250-foot range. Nady Systems, 1145 65th Street, Oakland, CA 94608, (415) 652-2411.



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RECORD REVIEWS

The Clash

Combat Rock (Epic)

THE CLASH • COMBAT ROCK •



triple-record set's flaws and strengths in miniature—all those open-ended dualities which cause the Clash to hit and miss while they cling to their singular muse.

Typically, the album's title can be read more than one way, just as its blurred, off-handed cover picture shows the band planted at a crossroads. At least part of the Clash's directive is to combat the rockist attitude so many accuse them of perpetuating, the kind of close-mindedness that marred the band's N.Y. shows last year, when its legions of denimed admirers boomed opening acts like Grandmaster Flash. The rappers inspire the LP's very first cut, "Know Your Rights," which lays down the law with an insistent bass drum, punctuated by slashing, metallic guitars on the beat, as Joe Strummer paints a bleak picture of diminishing returns on human freedoms. "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?" neatly predicts Joe's recent identity crisis with a singsong, "Train In Vain"—styled pop tune in which the tempo shifts abruptly from a plodding march to a raveup rockabilly and back again as Mick Jones voices his partner's dilemma.

"Rock The Casbah" is the LP's first (and only) certified classic, a dance-floor stomper about the Middle East that lambastes the Ayatollah for banning music in Iran at the same time as it admits he may well have been right all along. In like manner, "Red Angle Dragnet," featuring a Paul Simonon cockney dub-rap in praise of N.Y.'s Guardian Angels, doesn't hesitate to air its own misgivings about turning vigilantes into heroes, complete with a chunk of Paul Schrader's *Taxi Driver* script verbatim for proof. Throughout the record, the Clash compare real life to the way it's depicted in Hollywood and find it

wanting. "Straight To Hell" travels from a steady 4/4 into a splintered rhythm track backed by a lilting, peek-a-boo synth-line, seemingly influenced by the group's recent tour of Japan. The subject, a dialectical view of the East's inevitable (and fatal) appropriation of Western technology and culture, is handled with surprisingly acute irony.

Side two includes guest appearances by such cultural icons as graffiti artist Futura 2000 ("Overpowered By Funk") and poet Allen Ginsberg ("Ghetto Defendant"), placed in sly juxtaposition by the Clash, fully aware of their power to foist their own (and others') beliefs onto an adoring public. The Ginsberg ditty is the second standout on the record, a lilting reggae number that brings to mind Patti Smith's homage to Tapper Zukie, "Ain't It Strange," as the seminal beatnik's anti-drug verse perfectly complements the Clash's grim urban landscape of addiction and decay.

On this, their fifth album, the Clash's double-edged vision has attained razor-sharp clarity, even as the music continues to grow ever more frustratingly diffuse. The black-and-white, right-or-wrong polemics of the group's punk past have been replaced by sober resignation and nagging uncertainty, even as their political commitment refuses to surrender to utter despair. Once again, this results in a very mixed bag, precisely what the band themselves seem to want. Except they'd probably call it a melting pot. The Clash are becoming true internationalists. Which might just be another word for nowhere left to live.

— Roy Trakin

Stevie Wonder *Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I* (Tamla)



of his records from Motown comes as something of a disappointment just

now. First, there was the release a couple of months ago of "That Girl," a hard slow slink of a single only now retreating from number one chart positions everywhere, an intellectualized explanation of falling in love that makes the whole experience sound brand-new and faintly, reassuringly obscure. Then came "Try Jah Love," co-written and produced by Wonder for Third World, a triumphant aggressive pop collage building to a blinding reggae epiphany. Then there was "What's That You're Doing" on Paul McCartney's *Tug Of War*, with the sturdy House of Wonder synthesizer cracking out structure as powerful and bright as anything on that exceptionally powerful and bright record. All this set up a real eagerness for a new Stevie Wonder record over and above the evidence of his awesome past achievements—the man was obviously on a particularly hot streak.

Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I (with artwork that could be someone's bad idea of musical shower curtains) can't, of course, render such anticipation foolhardy, but it can't satisfy it either. After all, of the records Wonder has made since 1972's *Music Of My Mind*, at least three of them—1972's *Talking Book*, 1973's *Innervisions*, and 1976's *Songs In The Key Of Life*—are essential works for anyone interested in any kind of pop in English. The compilation, essentially a singles anthology, is governed by style, not chronology. This can be instructive. Side one's sequence of "Superstition," "Living For The City," and "You Haven't Done Nothin'" makes an impressive argument for Wonder as a rocker who needn't answer to anyone. But this strategy can be oppressive as on sides two and four where, respectively, ballads and expansive multi-genre struts lose something collectively as a result of the rigid stylistic grouping and some of the freshest, most audacious music of the 70s is served up in far too predictable sets. Despite the admirable precision with which the new songs have been integrated into such classic surroundings, they seem to fit in a touch too cleverly.

Apart from "That Girl," the new songs here are pleasing if not extraordinary. "Do I Do," a concatenation of various dance rhythms and moods with a bout of

amateur rapping at the end, eases in and out of spat-out verses and soothing choruses and features Dizzy Gillespie blowing midway through. Fashioned around killer riffs reminiscent of "Superstition," "Front Line" is a tough narrative from a legless Vietnam vet whose hooker niece and junkie nephew disdain him for fighting that war. And "Ribbon In The Sky," a gorgeous ballad with a surrealistic motif, again proves that Wonder knows exactly the right vocal approaches to put over his biggest ballads.

Sort of makes you eager for a new Stevie Wonder album. — James Hunter

The Rolling Stones Still Life (American Concert 1981) (Rolling Stones Records)



On their fourth live album, the world's oldest (sorry, greatest) rock 'n' roll band reinforces the truth of certain classic adages. Among them:

"Nothing succeeds like success," "You can't go home again," and the sharpest cut of all, "You can't fool all of the people all of the time." For the Rolling Stones, America is indeed the land of opportunity, and *Still Life* illustrates the intent of Jagger & Co. to link coast to coast, skyscraper to prairie, sea to shimmering sea into one republic that will part with a few more million bucks.

The insistence of rock's former outlaws on entertaining obedient masses begins with the LP's cover. Kazuhide Yamazaki's primary-colored gatefold portrays a typical outdoor stadium, each fan no more individually distinct than any of an thousand grains of sand on a beach. The band, far above the crowd, arrives by helicopter. A massive stars and stripes, unfurled to the heavens, imbues the landscape with a patriotic glow.

After the concert begins with a "mature" version of "Under My Thumb" (Jagger bosses around a "woman" instead of a "girl"), Mick welcomes his cable TV audience and exhorts everyone to drink beer and smoke some joints. Well, those who do get so charged might be willing to overlook the unmistakable strain in Jagger's vocals and the get-it-over-with performing attitude that marred both the 1981 tour and this document of it. On disc, one can only imagine Jagger racing back and forth across the mammoth stages, as if to prove he's an animated speck of dust to those in tiers a football field away. Every sharp intake of breath sounds perilously close to a wheeze, particularly on "Let's Spend The Night Together" and "Shattered," two songs that don't include rest periods. Jagger does do a creditable job on Eddie Cochran's witty party piece,

HEAVY METAL



By David Fricke

Friends, Romans, and otherwise; I have come not to bury heavy metal or to praise it but to simply *explain* it. What, snort the snobs, is there to explain? A bunch of macho banana-heads peel off scrap-heap riffs over the idiot boom of some Gorilla Monsoon drummer at Excedrin headache volume. The oldest, sorriest story in rock, right?

Wrong—sometimes. Born the illegitimate buggler of the 60s white electric blues and rock star stadium overkill, heavy metal is every bit as sexist and artistically static as critics and hipsters would have you believe. It was all said over ten years ago on *Led Zeppelin II* and *Deep Purple In Rock* and newcomers like British marauders Iron Maiden and Yankee throat Sammy Hagar are at best competent parrots.

But like punk, its angry young brother, HM fills a very real need in rock 'n' roll, a savage thirst for extreme physical relief to cancel out the nine-to-five grill and future fears of the average teenage fan. The difference is that punk wants you to fight back. Heavy metal has always been the sound of P-A-A-R-T-Y with a generous touch of heroic fantasy, DC Comics-style.

Blue Oyster Cult is so expert at this fusion of guitar brawling and Conan cartoon jollies, dosing the expected HM sound barrage and street gang myths with fortified garage-punk bite and collegiate lyrical brain, that even critics dig them. But on their *third* live album, the new double-pocket *Extraterrestrial Live*, the Cult cruise, not charge, through a sleepy predictable program of their early biker anthems ("Hot Rails To Hell," "The Red And The Black") and recent AOR staples ("Burnin' For You," "Don't Fear The Reaper"). Part of the problem is the LP's quicksand sound quality, which threatens to drown all but Buck Dharma's agile lead guitar in a morass of rhythm section bombast and arena echo. Their bow to Doorsmania, an extended "Roadhouse Blues" rave-up with a hot-dog Dharma/Robbie Krieger guitar duel, certainly loses something in vinyl translation. Then again after such a long career of evil (nearly fifteen years counting the Stalk Forrest and Soft White Underbelly incarnations), BOC don't just sound tired. They really are.

Blackout, by tough German nuts Scorpions, is more like it. Production like a groin punch, guitars with the randy serpentine flash of Jeff Beck and the nuclear fuzz of Black Sab's Tony Iommi, for the most part tight tenacious songs built on axeman Rudolf Schenker's

bullish if somewhat overused core riffs—this is metal with more warrior force than cock-strutting flab. There's still plenty of silly pelvic bluster in the lyrics, like singer Klaus Meine's throaty roar of "Shoot my heat into your body/Give ya all my size" in the steam-rolling "Dynamite." Yet the meaty melodic turns of "No One Like You" and "Can't Live Without You" pack a solid commercial wallop, more than enough to deck AOR pansies like Styx and Journey, that heightens rather than dilutes their *sturm und kerrang*.

Brute force, on the other hand, is all British power trio Motorhead have going for them and it is their uncompromising allegiance to white noise and proto-punk outlaw ethics that has caused the otherwise snooty U.K. press to perversely welcome them as the spiritual sons of Blue Cheer and the "Sister Ray" Velvets. When he first formed Motorhead in the mid-70s bassist/singer Lemmy declared the band would be so offensive "that when we move in next door the grass on your lawn will die."

He wasn't kidding. Lemmy's vigorous rhythm guitar-style attack on bass and hoarse ranting (since departed) guitarist Eddie Clarke's bombing run riffs and frantic leads, and the jackhammer drumming of Philthy Animal Taylor create an awesome din that renders the songs on their most recent LP *Iron Fist* ("Go To Hell," "Sex And Outrage" and "Speedfreak," for starters) almost indistinguishable from one another. But Motorhead play it like the Ramones, ripping through their paces in three minutes and less with a musclebound comic panache—"We scare 'em shitless just by showin' up alive," from "(Don't Let 'Em) Grind Ya Down"—that is highly entertaining if not entirely hummable.

This isn't just the they're-so-bad-they're-great syndrome; Motorhead, like the best metal marauders, transcend the inherent limitations of the genre to create something marginally distinctive, though hardly immortal. Scorpions and young Brits Def Leppard, for example, do it with songs. AC/DC and Terrible Ted Nugent ride on sheer slaphappy super-jock bravado. Blue Oyster Cult, when they're on, cook with sci-fi smarts. Motorhead are the kings of Slag Mountain because they worship extremes and extremes can be fun. After all, heavy metal is basically the art of party and at this party loud 'n' fast always rules. **M**

"Twenty Flight Rock," but when he sings "I'm too tired to rock," you believe him.

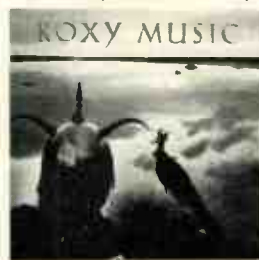
Still Life is dominated by very old (mid-60s) material and cover versions, just as if the band was reliving their first live LP, 1966's *Got Live If You Want It*. I don't think it's coincidental that "Thumb," and "Time Is On My Side" appear on both LPs, or that they each end with "Satisfaction." However, despite monumental advances in live recording that have taken place over sixteen years, *Still Life* broadcasts less of the risks inherent in personal appearances than does its scream-laden predecessor. Jagger's cry to the crowd of "ROCK'N'ROLL!!!", the anticipated throbbing surge of Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts's rhythm tracks, guest saxophonist Ernie Watts's carefully slotted solos, even the invocation of Jimi Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner" as the show ends all seem calculated, included for effect.

Only on "Time Is On My Side" do Jagger and Keith Richards—who with Ron Wood plays reliably these days, if without much imagination—dare to expand the song's established perimeters. Richards's cat-yowl harmonies back up Jagger throughout the number as if they were off-centered echoes, and give an eighteen-year-old ballad new shades of emotional bravado. Maybe if Mick Jagger were less concerned about

keeping his crowds content and more involved with recalling the passions that launched a hungry band, it wouldn't seem like such a waste of effort to start up the Rolling Stones on the turntable. — *Toby Goldstein*

Roxy Music

Avalon (Warner Bros.)



lives with some strange grimace or rictus distorting their countenance; Bryan Ferry's family clearly forgot to tell him about this, and as a result he almost became a slave to a posture and a persona he adopted in the early days of Roxy Music and which he'd clearly outgrown but couldn't break free of. His image as a world-weary rake for whom love was just another high and for whom life was just one more interminable party to be endured (preferably off to one side, where the smoking jacket won't get spotted) was a welcome relief from the overly earnest art rockers of the early

70s, who sounded like they were quoting from the New Testament every time they ordered a beer. But, by the late 70s, Ferry's pose had staled and was serving no one; it had hardened into a smug and tight mask; there was no air or light coming through it and Ferry's songs began sounding smarmy and solipsistic.

Avalon, the new Roxy album, finally cracks through the pose, completing the promise of "Same Old Scene" (from *Flesh & Blood*) with an album that is warm, direct and overtly emotional. *Avalon* is their most melodic record since *Siren* and boasts Ferry's most affecting (and least affected) singing to date, complete with gorgeous falsettos that combine the best of Colin Blunstone, John Cale and Brian Wilson. "More Than This," (already a hit in England and probably Ferry's most memorable melody), is a perfect summer song, cheerful with just the right amount of longing and wistfulness built into it, and "The Main Thing," "To Turn You On" and the title cut are similarly strong. Throughout, Ferry comports himself admirably on keyboards, playing spare and elegant lines that are more than matched by Andy MacKay's reeds. The only caveat is guitarist Phil Manzanera's diminished role; he seems more and more to be a sideman in his own group. — *Brian Cullman*

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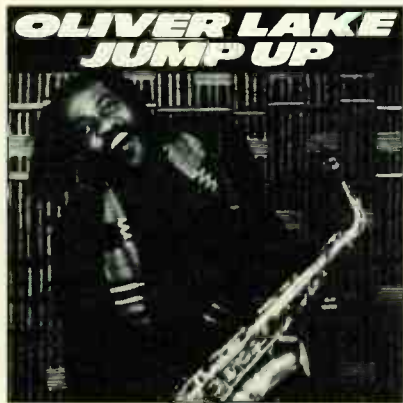
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Gil Evans

Where Flamingos Fly (Artists House)

WHERE FLAMINGOS FLY GIL EVANS



A favorite Gil Evans album? I have many. To start with, there's *Out Of The Cool* (Impulse), second to none in the history of jazz arranging. Or

Gil Evans on Ampex, in which the "new" Evans of open arrangements, heavy duty percussion and younger musicians is introduced. Or the *Svengali* album (Atlantic), where passion and freshness of inspiration are traded for mastery and deeper thought. Each one initially took some getting used to, each radical departure reflecting changes in Evans's sensibilities as well as his adaptation to working with under-rehearsed bands. Now I have another favorite in *Where Flamingos Fly*, and it too has to be heard on its own terms.

Recorded in 1971, when Evans had discovered the uses of complex overlays of rhythm and electricity, his band bursting with talent and character, it nonetheless documents another step in his adjustment to under-financed bands. Some of the pieces are only lightly arranged, if arranged at all; others are edited down from fuller versions. Yet it is all quite wonderful. John Coles, for instance, was still representing Evans's

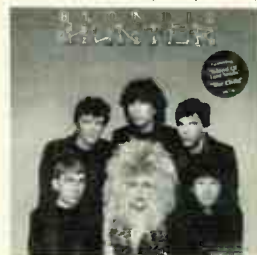
tie with Miles Davis, and throughout there are echoes of *Sketches Of Spain*: Coles recreates his solo on "Hotel Me," an Evans-Davis composition, and on "Zee Zee," a 5/4 blues with Basque flavor, Coles and Billy Harper creditably allude to the 60s Davis quintets.

Billy Harper's tenor is as superb on this recording as it was on every one he made with Evans. "Love Your Love" is a portion of a larger arrangement of a Harper melody, here edited to display only the tenor work. On "Where Flamingos Fly," a personal favorite of mine, Harper plays the solo first performed by trombonist Jimmy Knepper, and the overall effect is curiously less funky and more astringent. Airta and Flora Purim are effectively overdubbed on percussion and vocals on "Nana" and Kenny Dorham's "El Matador," the latter strangely evocative of Mingus's "Isabel's Table Dance."

Evans was beginning to experiment with synthesizers at this point, and Don Preston and Phil Davis perform rather atmospherically here, with less of the bravura which marked Evans's use of them in the later 70s. As I say, it is less arranged and more spontaneous than most Evans albums, but full of the instrumental singing and sweet feelings that one expects from his bands. Strongly recommended. (It can be ordered post-paid for \$8 from Artists House, 40 West 37th Street, New York, NY 10018.) —*John Szwed*

Blondie

The Hunter (Chrysalis)

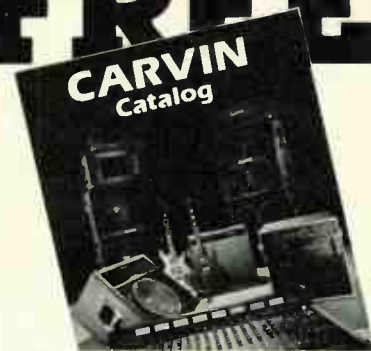


Ah, pity the smug critics who jumped all over Blondie for last year's *Autoamerican*. Now that their *objets d'amour* have come up with a really

silly album, what nabob of negativism is left to natter? Not that it would much matter to the millions of fans for whom Debbie and the gang represent the last word in hipness and musical eclecticism. And certainly not to Blondie itself, whose persistently ironic veneer and canny selection of soulful source material (disco, rap, Motown) allows them the luxury of living on the pop frontier without ever having to cultivate the territory.

Stylistically, *The Hunter's* musical patchwork begs comparison with last year's model; and while Blondie's approach is more jocular and unpretentious this time around, it is the second time around, so the effect is neither fresh nor ingratiating. Whatever its faults, "Rapture" was at least audacious, and, I think, a well-intentioned tribute to the form. But "The Beat," which layers its funk riff with a heavy-metal obbligato, is no excuse for Debbie Harry's scatologi-

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cal musings; nor is "Dragonfly," in which Harry crams together enough high-tech jargon to gag a computer chip. "The Tide Is High," of course, provided last annum's Baedeker tour of Jamaica; now "Island Of Lost Souls," with steel drum ornamentation, goes on to colonize Trinidad. Meanwhile dependable Jimmy Destri pumps his pop-rockers with a hearty Farfisa beat, a reminder to the faithful that even a platinum Blondie has, excuse the expression, roots.

Well, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with playing pop poseur, and Harry does radiate a self-mocking, Jean Harlowe kind of charm (maybe you'd prefer Skafish?). But it's instructive that the LP's lone cover, Smokey Robinson's gorgeous "The Hunter Gets Captured By The Game," is granted its warmest, most decorous arrangement, spiced by a tangy guitar solo and a tender Harry vocal that's (nearly) as seductive as the Marvelettes. She's a lot less convincing when forced to croon her own allusive lyrics, which often seem to borrow their syntax from Alexander Haig. And despite the preponderance of percussive textures and Latin-flavored horn arrangements, tunes like "Orchid Club" and "Little Caesar" never rock nor roll so much as ooze forward, like the campy soundtrack to a Carmen Miranda movie. In the end, *The Hunter* is all hot sauce and no enchilada. — Mark Rowland

Zappa

Ship Arriving Too Late To Save

A Drowning Witch (Barking Pumpkin)

Z Δ P P Δ



So one time like Frank Zappa was gonna go on tour, y'know, like back before he got real big. And his wife Gail was like eight

months pregnant, so she goes, "What do you want to name the baby?" 'Cause he was gonna be gone on tour when it was gonna be born. So he's like walking out the door and goes, "If it's a boy name it Motorhead, if it's a girl name it Moon Unit."

So guess what—it was a girl. And that's what they named it. Guy! I mean, if my parents named *me* Moon Unit I'd be so embarrassed. No way!

So now Moon is like fourteen and she sings on Zappa's new album, only she doesn't really sing, she like, talks. And it's like totally improvised. Totally. This song called "Valley Girl," all about girls from the valley and how they talk and what they're into. Like getting their toenails done and junk.

Moon was on the last album, too, 'cause she sang on "Drafted Again" in this one part. But it like wasn't good, 'cause Dale Bozzio sang like the same part on the single way, way better, y'know. But Moon does this rap on "Val-

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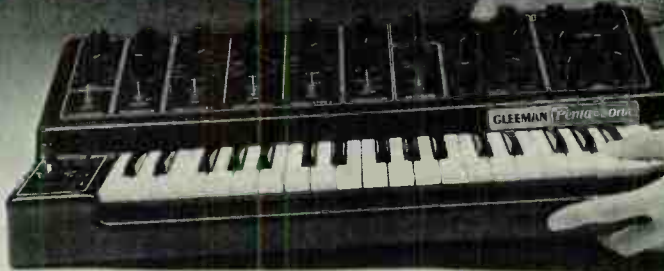
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ley Girl" which is totally amazing. It is like awesome to the max.

And one side of the album is live and one side isn't. Sounds so bitchin'. I was listening to it on the Walkman and I was like freaking out. And the whole band has been with Zappa for like a year and a half or something. Steve Vai plays these impossible guitar parts. And his hair is like blue. Gnarly. I'm sure. Then Tommy Mars, who plays like synthesizers and stuff, is just god-like. Totally. And besides Ray White and Bobby Martin, who like sing in the band, they got Ike Willis and Roy Estrada, who used to be in the band, and Bob Harris, who can sing higher than anyone in the world, for sure. They do these harmonies that are so awesome. Like tubular.

And like FZ is just a genius to the max. I mean totally. He writes all this weird stuff, like this instrumental called "Envelopes" on the live side. Sounds like Conlon Nancarrow. He's so heavy. And Lisa Popeil sings this one, "Teenage Prostitute," which is like an opera or something, with high singing and junk. But the best cut, except for "Valley Girl," is "I Come From Nowhere," 'cause it's really a scream, plus it's got a really good beat.

I heard "Valley Girl" like fifteen times on the radio today. I wish they'd play, y'know, the rest of the album too, but at least it's better than hearing Styx and REO over and over all day. I'm sure. I mean, barf out. Really. Gag me with a spoon. — Dan Forte

King Crimson
Beat (Warner Bros.)



Subtlety has never been the first thing you notice about a King Crimson album. Rhythmic complexity, yes; harmonic and structural ad-

venturousness, sure; instrumental ability, of course; but all of these considerable assets have been traditionally writ large on a King Crimson record, as if Fripp and company seemed worried that the listener might somehow overlook the fact that this was *serious music* he was listening to. *Beat*, however, puts an end to that sort of musical chest-thumping. Although no less complex or challenging than its forebears, this album doesn't try to underscore its technical prowess with thunderous drumming or gut-wrenching guitar solos. It makes its point through understatement and a focused, cooperative approach to group playing that makes *Beat* the most satisfying King Crimson album yet.

The most obvious difference is one of texture. Where in the past each instrument stood out in bold relief, giving the impression of a group of disparate musicians moving in roughly the same direction, here the emphasis is on blending, with each part equally concentrating on

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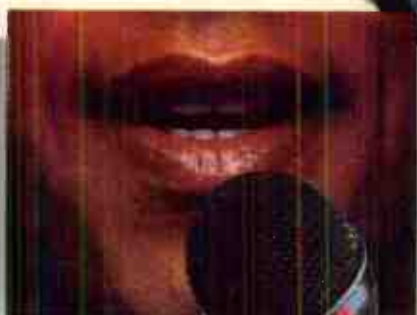
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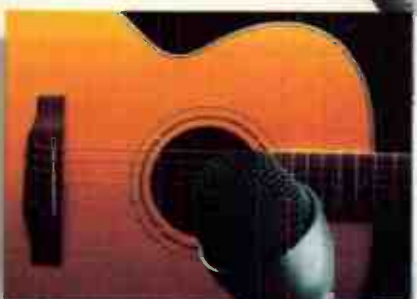
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the shape of the whole. Thanks to the Roland guitar synthesizer, both Robert Fripp and Adrian Belew are able to give their instruments a spaciousness that fills out the sound without overcrowding it. Tony Levin and Bill Bruford make similar use of the instruments available to them to broaden the group's sonic palette, Levin with the Chapman Stick and Bruford with his tuned percussion. Throughout *Beat*, the responsibilities for keeping time, establishing harmonic continuity and maintaining melodic interest shift freely between guitars, bass and drums, giving the music a sense of flexibility and community rarely found in Western music.

The concept isn't new—such interplay was the core of *Discipline's* title track—but the application is. Rather

than simply blurring the ensemble into an indistinguishable mass, King Crimson's members play up their musical commonality in order to better emphasize their individuality. On "Waiting Man," for example, the guitars establish a continuous, percussive ostinato that draws the group together almost like an electronic gamelan orchestra; yet as the piece develops, that same figure provides Bruford with a context to articulate his own personal sense of phrasing and accentuation, and also serves as the perfect counterpoint to a pointedly liquid feedback solo from Belew. Frequently, this sense of community centers on the vocal line, giving us such wonderful moments as "Heartbeat," where the terse, space-oriented pulse and long, supple guitar lines generate enough

push-and-pull to inspire what is unquestionably Adrian Belew's most moving vocal to date.

If anything seems missing from *Beat*, it's a sense of Fripp as the group's cutting edge; yet if his solo work with Frippertronics can be taken as an indicator, this may be Fripp's truest work yet. As with Frippertronics, the best music here pulls atmosphere, emotion and musical content together as one without resorting to flash, calculation or ostentatious bursts of energy. Because it finds Fripp making the most of his intuitive gifts without forsaking the facility or acuity of his traditionally analytic approach, *Beat* stands out as the only King Crimson album that *feels* as good as it sounds.

—J.D. Considine

Thelonious Monk
The Thelonious Monk
Memorial Album (Milestone)



Sometimes I have the image of Thelonious Monk, already fairly sure that he had made himself unforgettable but intent on making himself

still more so, scratching his name more deeply into the world with a savvy, deliberate seriousness. Other times his music seems so akin to African sculpture I can't hear one without seeing the other. He was a factor of irreducible sounds, an integer time will not decrease; I can't conceive of a future world from which his quintessence is absent. He's dead now, but he refuses to be gone. He nailed himself in good.

I like this memorial album, which is Orrin Keepnews's tour through the music, most of which he had a hand in recording for Riverside (1956-60). Since Milestone also has access to the Prestige catalog (1952-54), this twofer manages to cover a lot of Monk's best ground, and I feel very comfortable with the way Keepnews has done it. There is no definitive way of putting an album like this together, but this is probably the best of its kind I've seen. If your Monk collection is slim or nonexistent, start here.

The arrangement, with one intelligent exception, is chronological, and the necessary paths cross the Thelonian amble: Miles, Blakey, Rollins, Coltrane, Thad Jones, Charlie Rouse. The highlights number "Brilliant Corners" especially, and the chronological break: a juxtaposition of the old trio recording of "Little Rootie Tootie" and the orchestration by Hall Overton of Monk's solo that followed seven years later. And I hadn't heard "Jackie-ing" in years. The album's got nothing to prove now, only a story to tell, and listening to it heals and invigorates what used to be called the soul. — Rafi Zabor

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The Jam
The Gift (Polydor)



With success comes responsibility, and the Jam's singer/guitarist/conscience Paul Weller is always one to take his responsibilities

seriously. The Jam have become Mother Britain's top post-'77 band because—more so than ambulance-chasing leftists the Clash—the articulate high-octane anger and no-lead passion at the heart of this flash trio's mod-ified thrash speak directly to the people who feel it most, the disenfranchised youth quickly growing up into that country's broken, dispirited adults. With Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler's Union Jacked-up bass and drums thunder and Weller's Rickenbacker slam, they still can't help sounding like the Who. But it is that sound that has always given Weller's lyrical barrage of apocalyptic prophecy and working class cheerleading—like Daltrey's stouter and Townshend's death-before-thirty-wish in "My Generation"—its explosive force.

Weller is aware that the comfy rock life can reduce the strongest anger and heartiest passion to pretentious fizz, and *The Gift* (a disguised reference to his own good fortune?) is his confrontation not only with the usual foes—racism, economic fascism, apathy—but the possibility of his own failing. Contrast "Happy Together," classic Jam crash 'n' burn with the opening couplet, "Thought that I would forget you?/Heaven knows that's not my style," with the head-banging frustration of "Running On The Spot," a scathing indictment of liberal knee-jerking and a confession of his own ineffectualness. The bleating trumpets, Buckler's gentle tick-tock and Weller's cajoling vocal in "Ghosts" have an air of pleading about them, as if Weller fears beating his audience into submission. The emphasis on relatively stark trio tracks on *The Gift* suggests that, in his uncertainty, Weller is retreating from the expanded arrangements of 1980's *Sound Affects*.

Yet Weller's best work is born of desperation. "Carnation" features a moody, violent guitar-organ figure underscored by the emphatic slam of Buckler and Foxton, epitomizing the song's love yin and hate yang. And if anything, *The Gift* is about dancing—not the snooty ballroom elitism of Spandau Ballet, but the kind that brings people together, joy-jiving in the streets to the emotion-charged funk of "Precious" and the title track's ecstatic pelvic thrust.

He has a tendency to tilt at too many

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windmills and then wonder if he's spread himself too thin. But there's no question Paul Weller's causes have effect. "I could go on for hours and I probably will," he confesses over the lively ("You Can't Hurry Love") gait of "Town Called Malice": "But I'd sooner put some joy back in this town called malice." The revolution could receive no greater gift. — David Fricke

Squeeze Sweets From A Stranger (A&M)



Sweets From A Stranger is an apt title for an album that parcels out pop goodies by the boxcar, but whose relentlessly rococo style tends to

shroud any vestige of personal conviction. Goodies first: Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford do have a way with a hook, and their grasp of pop lexicon is enough to make critics drool (which is why Squeeze's media *éclat* is so far out of sync with their modest commercial success). Sheer precocity, however, does not the new Lennon and McCartney make; indeed, Squeeze is still most effective when (as on *Argybargy*) their textural flourishes are kept to a min-

imum, thus accenting the band's fundamental strengths—fresh confectionery melodies, a frenetic Farfisa beat and Tilbrook's wry social vignettes. Alas, hanging around with Elvis Costello (who produced last season's *East Side Story*) seems to have infected Tilbrook and Co. with a dose of misguided ambition. Instead of honing their natural bent for light, swinging rhythms, for instance, Sweets' musical centerpiece, the six-minute-plus "Black Coffee In Bed," attempts to replicate a Stax-style funk pulse—and the effect is decidedly Cremona. This flirtation with unsuitable genres finds further resonance on "Stranger Than The Stranger On The Shore" (even more preposterous funk) and again on "When The Hangover Strikes," a laconic jazzy torcher with string backdrop less reminiscent of Ray Charles than Enoch Light.

Still, a band so clever and aspiring must occasionally hit the mark. "Out Of Touch," with its audacious Kraftwerk intro, lends a bracing high-tech aura to an otherwise mundane blues thumper. "I Can't Hold On" and "His House Her Home" are vintage Tilbrook trifles, the former a rousing garage anthem, the latter a gauzy *pas de deux* framed by Don Snow's elegant keyboard symmetries and Glenn's bittersweet lament. With his airy timbre and agile phrasing, Tilbrook remains one of pop's most dexterous singers, but his lyricism here is too often vague or listless, lacking the proud edge of romantic melancholy that informed earlier narratives. Perhaps not coincidentally, Squeeze has opted for a deep-focus production, pushing Glenn's vocals further back into the mix, and nearly obliterating Chris Difford's altogether. In any event, their diminished presence helps underline the current Squeeze enigma—a band which seeks everything except its own quintessence. — Mark Rowland

Mike Westbrook The Westbrook Blake/Bright As Fire (Europa)



Tap-a-tap, tap-a-tap, tap-a-tap. Know what I'm doing right now? I'm tap dancing. Why am I tap dancing? Because I don't want you to

pass this review by. I mean, there are so many reasons to pass it by, like, who's William Blake? Or who's Mike Westbrook? Or: I don't like jazz. Or I don't like poetry. But if you pass this review by, you'll never know that I claim that if you like Lou Reed or Van Morrison; if you like folk music and hymns and big band or free jazz; if you like great singing of any sort, and rock 'n' roll and songs, you

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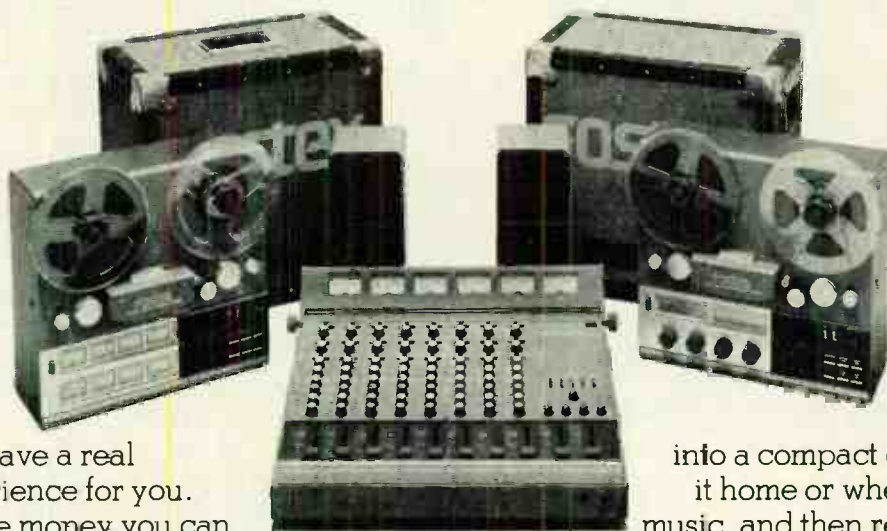


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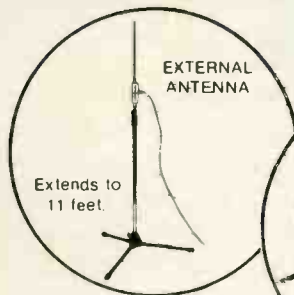
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must listen to this album. Without you, this album will be just another small splash in the vinyl pan. But *with* you, you can hear the magnificent words of Blake say: "The Sun has left his blackness, and has found a fresher morning/ And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear and cloudless night/ For empire is no more, and now the Lion and Wolf shall cease/ For everything that lives is holy."

This is the music that Blake's words were waiting for. You can hear Phil Minton playing trumpet and singing some of the most powerful, straightforward and honest tones I've ever heard. You can hear saxophones, drums, tympani, tubular bells, trombones, piccolos, and the Children's Choir from Gospel Oak Primary School singing, "Wings which like a canopy/ Bends over thy immortal Head in which Eternity dwells." You can hear Mike Westbrook invent a new song-form, with jazz and rock flavors. Specifically: as Lou Reeds seems to speak to the intensely human consciousness, Blake speaks to the divine, perhaps better than anyone in history ever has. The song-form is different because of the combination of easy rhymes and often long lines of words that pulse and breathe with every syllable. The language is poetic and sometimes archaic, but its sentiments are completely contemporary, as are Westbrook's settings. He not only sets the poems to music, but has musical dialogues with the words and feelings, responds to them with anguish or joy, improvises around their internal rhythms.

The record is strongest when Phil Minton is singing. Kate Westbrook also sings, but I don't believe her voice the way I do Minton's. Her singing seems contrived in comparison, as if she were watching the play of emotions instead of giving herself over to them fully, the way Westbrook and Minton do.

Despite the occasional weakness, this record is a masterpiece of emotion and vision. The choice of material is wonderful, too. Besides several "Songs of Experience," Westbrook gives us settings from "Jerusalem," and the seldom quoted "Four Zoas." Alto clarinets squeak out anger and hatred in the "Poison Tree." Cellos and French horns adorn "Holy Thursday."

I guarantee you—I absolutely guarantee you a good time if you listen to this album. It will enrich you and stretch your concepts of what lyrics and music can do. It will let you experience how they can move you and leave you gladdened with "...soft crimson of the ruby, bright as fire...." This is a record of possibility and pain, joy and invocation. It combines the best of this world and the next, and since it's hard to get, I suggest you write directly to Europa Records at 611 Broadway, Suite 214, New York City, NY 10012. Tap-a-tap, tap-a-tap, tap-a-tap.
— Jason Shulman

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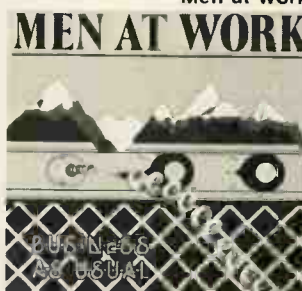
Bow Wow Wow



Cheap Trick



Men at Work



Aswad



Bow Wow Wow — *The Last Of The Mohicans* (RCA) Even though Annabella Lwin's teasing delivery would be enough to turn Ozzie Nelson into a slobbering Humbert Humbert, what really ignites the Wow's version of "I Want Candy" is their pile-driver version of the Bo Diddley beat. Dance-floor dynamite, no question about it, but the other three tracks on this EP are considerably less incendiary, particularly as two of them are slower remakes of previously released import material.

Cheap Trick — *One On One* (Epic) There's a certain justice in the fact that Cheap Trick's best studio album since *Heaven Tonight* is also its most schizoid. Side one is all hard-rocking screamers, driven by raging guitars and decked out with tight, Beatle-style harmonies; side two is all techno-pop angst, buzzing with Rick Nelson's Garpish wit and laced with synthesizers. Neither side is really new, as Nielsen and the boys have been toying with that dichotomy since the underrated *In Color*, but Roy Thomas Baker's sharply-focused production and the band's back-to-basics attack make even the most tenuous ideas work like a charm. It's hard to get all that on first listen though, so stick around—it's worth it.

Men at Work — *Business As Usual* (Columbia) Tough, reggae-tinged, working-class rock from Down Under, Men at Work are everything Jo Jo Zep & the Falcons were supposed to be. What's the difference? For one thing, Men At Work's influences come fully digested, so the cuts don't break down into the reggae song or the rock 'n' roll number. Better, the material captures a melodicism similar to softer Aussie bands like Cold Chisel or even the dread Little River Band, but backs it with a

punchy pub-rock delivery. For me, though, the clincher is Colin Hay, whose straight-from-the-chest vocals sound more like Burning Spear's Winston Rodney than any Australian should sound.

Aswad — *A New Chapter Of Dub* (Mango) Most dub albums use space and echo to emphasize the beat; Aswad simply concentrates on color and texture and takes the pulse for granted. As such, this is more an album for listening than for grooving, making it perhaps the most absorbing domestic dub LP since Burning Spear's *Garvey's Ghost*. Too bad Mango didn't release the original *New Chapter* as well, to show how much the dub has done.

Queen — *Hot Space* (Elektra) This is Queen's "modern" album, which means only that the group's preening, bombastic attack has been pruned to a fashionably lean studio sound replete with obligatory synthesizers and makeshift dancebeat. All in all, the atmosphere is about as convincing as a cheap movie set, and Freddie Mercury sports a falsetto that could single-handedly squelch any doo-wop revival, but Queen's sucker-punch melodies and ear-grabbing hooks still leave me humming against my better judgment. As a special bonus, the Queen/Bowie single "Under Pressure" is included for those who missed the single, *Queen's Greatest Hits and Changes Two*.

Elton John — *Jump Up!* (Geffen) Finally, a new Elton John album that's actually fun to listen to. Although this is hardly the sort of fizz-pop Elton pumped out in his prime, it does feature some stunners, like "Dear John," which is a better Stones cop than "Saturday Night's Alright," and "Where Have All The Good Times Gone," a lost-nostalgia number equal to anything on *Goodbye,*

Yellow Brick Road. Not quite "Yesterday's Hits Today," but as close as he's gotten in a long time.

The Temptations — *Reunion* (Gordy) Who would have thought that the Temptations would get back together to recut "Psychadelic Shack"? Rick James sure did, and unlikely as it may seem, his "Standing On The Top" is easily the strongest song here, even though it recapitulates every punk funk lick in James' repertoire as well as a few that weren't (like the trumpet signature from "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone"). But the closest thing to a good ballad here is the abysmal "I've Never Been To Me," and the vocal arrangements are more showy than functional. Buy the single and wait for the tour.

Tommy Keene — *Strange Alliance* (Avenue) With his buoyant melodies and dramatic sense of texture, Washingtonian Keene sounds almost like U2 gone power-pop—except that Keene's lyrics are much more worldly-wise than Dublin's post-punk innocents, and his musical landscapes rarely succumb to terminal grandiosity. Then again, considering his pouty romanticism and razor-sharp guitar leads, maybe "the Tom Petty of the 80s" would be a better description. Either way, this eight-song sample is definitely one of the standout indies of the year.

Artimus Pyle Band — *APB* (MCA) Listening to this album is like reading a C+ paper on the history of Southern rock; all the clichés are properly identified, but there's no sense of what makes them work, much less that they were ever anything but clichés. Considering that Pyle once drummed with Lynyrd Skynyrd, this is especially appalling.

William "Bootsy" Collins — *The One*
continued on page 122

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JAZZ

By Cliff Tinder

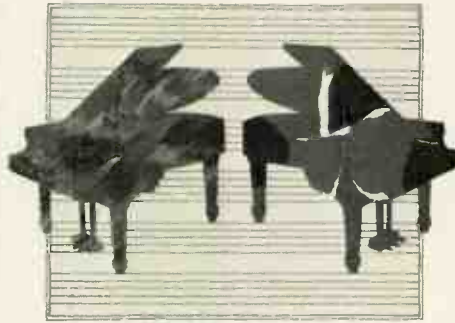
SHORT TAKES

All you have to do is take a quick listen to the albums coming out of the New Music Distribution Service and from labels like Hat Hut and Black Saint/Soul Note to realize that today's avant-garde is not simply rehashing "textures and minimalist techniques left over from European avant-garde," as *Village Voice* jazz critic Stanley Crouch likes to maintain these days. Then, if you like what you hear, look at yourself in a mirror to see if you are really part of that "tiny" group of "the most pretentious Negroes" and/or "worshiper(s) of noble savage pretensions" that Crouch assures us are the only people in the world who like this stuff.

Perennially avant-garde, the mighty **George Russell** has released his best small group recording in recent years, *Trip To Pillarguri* (Soul Note). Along with Russell and Stanton Davis are four Norwegians—Jan Garbarek, Terje Rypdal, Arild Andersen and Jon Cristensen—and what hot, swinging performances they deliver! There goes the neighborhood, Stanley. Not only do you get very fresh and vital readings of Russell's "Stratusphunk" and Coleman's "Man On The Moon" but three thoughtful compositions by Garbarek and some of his most unbridled, smoldering tenor work to date. Garbarek even sounds like an early Archie Shepp at times.

Beaver Harris's *Negcaumongus* (Cadence, via NMDS; 500 Broadway, N.Y.C., NY 10012) is a cathartic live (but poorly recorded) version of his expanded 360° Music Experience, co-led by Don Pullen and featuring a hot horn section of Ricky Ford, Hamiet Bluiett and Ken McIntyre. Ford gets to take things a little further out than usual and we hear more from that amazing bassist Cameron Brown. What a hefty sound he gets!

This month finds **Oliver Lake** in two very different settings. *Clevont Fitzhubert (A Good Friend Of Mine)* (Black Saint) is his usual avant fare, good but not his best, and *Jump Up* (Grania-vision) featuring his new reggae-funk-sax virtuoso band that does exactly what it's supposed to, gets you dancing yet doesn't put your mind on hold. Both albums are boosted by master drummer Pheeroan Ak Laff. Listen, in both contexts, to how much Dolphy is reflected in Lake's airt.



Two of the hottest brave new albums come from the next flowering of the avant-garde. **John Lindberg's** *Dimension 5* (Black Saint) utilizes stretches of improvisational landscape and the freedom—Hugh Ragin, Marty Ehrlich, Billy Bang, Lindberg and Thurman Barker. The ever-accelerating, explosive title tune is the highlight, and Ragin constantly proves why he is one of our best prospects for the future. The biggest and best surprise of the bunch is *Spaces* (INDIBIB, NMDS) by **Doug Hammond**, Steve Coleman and Muneer Abdul Fataah, with guests Byard Lancaster and Kirk Lightsey. Fronted by the very capable drummer Hammond, the album is out of the Hemphill/Lake bag. There's a lot of cello vamping and angular horn lines, and it's invigorating, excellent music. Alto saxophonist Coleman poses one of his sharpest, most intelligent and abstractly soulful new approaches to that instrument, sort of a cross between Hemphill and Lake, with enough personal wisdom and artistry to give those masters a run for their money. Both Coleman and Hammond can write up a storm with really strong, concise, mature statements. Abdul Wadud had better look over his shoulder because Fataah is closing quickly. Absolutely recommended.

The best new release from the hard bop lava pit is *What It Is* (Enja) by **Mal Waldron**, featuring Clifford Jordan, Cecil McBee and Dannie Richmond. Imagine bringing the abstractionist side of the 60s' Blue Note cotillion up to date and you've got *What It Is*. I'm still a bit skeptical of Waldron's overly pentatonic minimalist approach to the piano, but these musicians burn with an intensity,

inspiration and expanded bop horizon that wowed me, and I already thought they were some of the greatest mainstreamers alive. Richmond is a little more relaxed than usual, McBee is as potent as always and Jordan is simply devastating. The unusually exploratory compositions, for the genre, really allow Jordan to open up and extend himself beyond the bop boundaries we usually associate with him. He's simply one of the towering tenors of our time. If only Sonny Rollins would make such smoldering sessions.

One of our master pianists, **Kenny Barron**, fronts another profound hard bop band—John Stubblefield, Steve Nelson, Buster Williams and Ben Riley—on *Golden Lotus* (Muse). Listen to Barron's vast harmonic ingenuity and newcomer Nelson's vibes. But those darn Europeans are at it again. Barron includes a composition based on a 12-tone row. God, you can't even walk in the streets anymore.

The new generation of post-boppers has come up with **Hal Galper** and the **Brecker Brothers' Speak With A Single Voice** (Enja), and **Richie Cole, Alive!** (Muse). Cole is a technically superior saxophonist who learned his Parker/Woods lessons very well. He even breathes some fresh air into the idiom. The Brecker Brothers, caught out on one of the sneak tours with Galper, Dockery and Moses, play better than their fusion audiences probably know, but the band keeps swerving into its mentors' lane too often. Hal and Mike, shake some of those Tyner and Trane pebbles out of your boots once in a while. But, but, but, compare those albums with **Junior Cook's Somethin' Cookin'** (Muse) and you'll hear what a difference a lifetime of breathing hard-bop smoke can make. It would take at least a couple of Minuteman missiles to dislodge Cook, Walton, Higgins and Williams from their funky, tactile, bluesy groove.

Earl Hines—Paris Sessions (Inner City) features vintage solo piano from the man whose horn-like left hand lines and harmonic sophistication helped blaze the way to modern jazz piano. And from perhaps the most perfect mainstream pianist we have, **Tommy Flanagan**, comes a sure-to-be-one-of-the-

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year's-best piano trio recordings, *Confirmation* (Enja). Not only does he serve up tunes that simmer lyrically and ones that burn your house down but most everything in between. With him is the ever-solid George Mraz and an atypically restrained Elvin Jones, who doesn't knock you to the ground, then step on you the way Tony Williams does lately. Finally, two piano duets in the avant-garde vein. **Ran Blake** and **Jaki Byard** team up on *Improvisations* (Soul Note) but don't pull it off with the artistry, beauty and perfect compatibility of **Muhai Richard Abrams** and **Amlina Claudine Myers**, *Duet* (Black Saint). The two move from opaque impressionistics to gutbucket boogie woogie with

complete ease and love. If you didn't know there were two pianists, you'd think God had created a four-handed marvel.

Unexpected delights: **Terry Gibbs/Buddy DeFranco** *Jazz Party—First Time Together* (Palo Alto Jazz) and **Dag Arnesen** *NY Bris* (Odin, c/o Norsk Jazzforbund, Postboks 4354, 5013 Nygardstangen, Norway). What taste, poise and refinement Gibbs and DeFranco exhibit! No wonder clarinetist John Carter told me he recently heard DeFranco and proceeded to steal left and right from him. The Norway band is a very attractive mixture of hot jazz chops, the best fusion has to offer and Carla Bley surrealism. Say good night. ☑

John Hiatt from pg. 17

the beginning of a new stage in his career, but admits, "I'm pretty slow to change. All through my life I've learned things slowly. I mean, I didn't stop wetting my bed till I was fourteen (laughs). It takes me some time to sort things out. So here I am, thirty years old, and I feel like I'm just getting a handle on this whole ball of wax. I'm just getting to understand what records are all about, and working with Tony Visconti had a lot to do with that. I used to almost dread going in to make a record, because I knew I'd come out with something less than I anticipated, but now I'm excited with the whole deal. On this one I think we only scratched the surface of what we could probably pull off with the next record."

Hiatt's creative process for coming up with new songs hasn't changed considerably over the years; if anything he's become less organized as he comes up with more material. "I have a basement that hasn't been cleaned in three years, that no one is allowed into—and probably wouldn't enter if they were allowed. It's a total mess. Fifty zillion cigarette butts, a quadrillion empty beer bottles. And I just have a little ghetto blaster tape deck that I sing through. I have an old piano down there, and I write on acoustic guitar sometimes. Different instruments will get you different sounds, which will get you different ideas. Sometimes I'll have a title or an idea, or sometimes I'll have a piece of music first, I've always got ten or fifteen chunks of riffs or chord changes lying around. There's like a million cassettes on top of this piano (laughs). I don't label any of the goddamn things. You should see me running through these things: 'Where's that one piece that I was just working on the other day?' I'll put fifty cassettes into the machine trying to find it. I could probably use a little organization.

"You know, I didn't even use a tape deck until two years ago," he admits. "This is really weird; when I'd write a song, I'd be so afraid that I'd forget it, I'd spend the next three days singing that one song over and over. Of course, that's a pretty slow way to work, because any little bits just sort of get lost. Then I figured out, 'Well, if you had a tape recorder, you know....' As I say, I'm a slow learner."

Following the release of *All Of A Sudden*, Hiatt and his band (drummer Darrell Verduco, bassist James Rolleston, guitarist Jack Sherman and keyboardist Jesse Harms) hit the stage, not at one of L.A.'s showcase rock palaces like the Roxy or the Country Club, but at the small Chinese restaurant that supported them in leaner times, Madame Wong's West. "Well, what's the diff?" grins the bandleader. "We're packin' it." ☑

Jerry Reed has that something extra



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After a two-year hiatus from the concert stage, Jerry's back, playing and singing his heart out. Already ranked as a top country instrumentalist, Reed continues to strive for perfection. He's hard on himself, and also demands the best from his band—in technical expertise, calibre of musicianship and achieving the right blend for the stage and the recording studio.

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Synth-Pop from pg. 79

African drum or something, you can get just the sound *plus* the effect you would be going after on the synth. It's not important whether you can tell the difference between one and the other, but why not add a depth to it if you can broaden that sound by putting the two together?

"I'm quite happy with the Prophet. Occasionally you get fed up, you get stuck, you find yourself in the corner and can't get anything new from it, but they still are the most useful keyboards. I've just done a single with Ryuichi Sakamoto from Yellow Magic Orchestra, and the whole single was just done on the Prophet. If you can complete a whole track on one instrument, then I think it's very useful, a very good instrument. I think it will be quite hard to improve on that."

While Japan imitates acoustic instruments in order to create an interesting mix of natural and synthetic sounds, the Human League simply goes for a synthetic equivalent of standard instrumentation. "We really imitate instruments and don't do it quite right," Phil Oakey cheerfully admits, "and very occasionally we'll come up with sound where we know we've done something wrong but they're interesting combinations. Like on 'Don't You Want Me,' there's a very interesting sound which is somewhere between a horn, a clarinet and a string sound, which is quite nice. It's not a sound I've ever heard on anything else."

But already, the League are growing somewhat disaffected with their totally synth approach. Ian Burden is using bass guitar in addition to keyboard bass—although, to be fair, it is the Roland GR 33B bass guitar synthesizer, not some boring old Fender—and the band readily admits to sorely missing other instruments. "The very first one that came up, that we decided a long time ago that we couldn't do without was a cymbal. There's no cymbal on *Dare*, and it misses it."

"Well, there's not a bad imitation of one on 'Seconds,'" offers Jo Callis.

"But it's not quite as good," Oakey insists. "There's something really good about a real cymbal. If we've worked at something and it's obvious that the synthesizer can't get it as well as it could, say getting a string section or a proper horn section, we've got to go with the horns now. Especially since there's a lot of competition in Britain suddenly. There are some very good bands and some very good producers around now that we're competing with, and I don't think they were about when we did *Dare*."

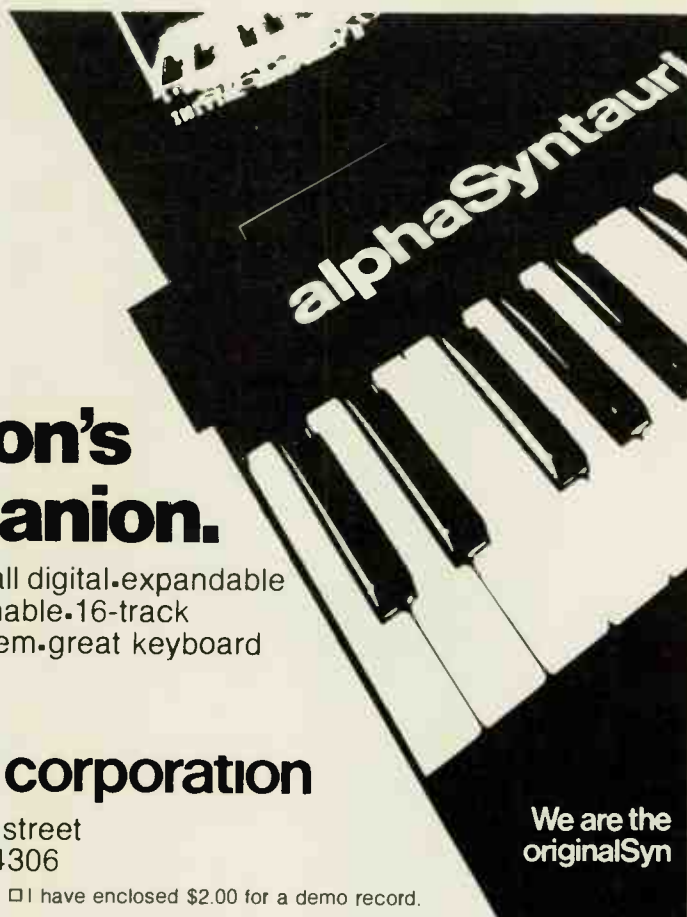
Considering that much of the Human League's effectiveness comes from the ironic distance the synthesizers provide from the music's pop sensibilities, it seems unlikely that the band will abandon its electronics altogether. "I like to

Don Preston's companion.

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think that what we're doing is recognizing the exact area we're working in," says Oakey, "and doing our best to fulfill that correctly. It's more the style of what we're doing than moving music into new areas, and we know we're not moving into new areas at all."

And if that leads to replacing old clichés with new ones? Oakey smiles, and says, "I think if you're going to do clichés, you might as well do your own."

Lawyer from pg. 88

When Sha Na Na approached Silfen with a problem about the foundation of the band, the outspoken attorney again managed to find a solution—but only at

the last minute. "Sha Na Na decided when they formed that they were sophisticated and that democracy would rule so there would be no written agreement. Then three former members brought suit against the rest of the group, demanding future Sha Na Na earnings. Eleven of them were literally lined up on opposite sides of the table. It wasn't until we were in the courthouse on the day of the trial that they finally settled on a written agreement."

Silfen studies the diagonal reflection of Venetian blinds splashing sunlight into his face from the top of his desk. "Even armed with the knowledge, it takes courage and guts for a musician to

confront even his own lawyer and say, 'Nope, the percentage arrangement you are suggesting is not standard,' or to say to a management company on a proposed agreement, 'You can't do this and you can't commission that.'"

"Look," Silfen cautions, "for all your awareness and all your knowledge, in the final analysis you may be at the mercy of the marketplace, which may very well be hard bargains, take it or leave it, and giving in to a certain degree to the system." But access to a good lawyer will at least help you take the hard bargain without getting squashed by it, and at best may help you make your own bargain.

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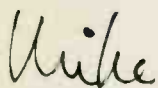
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Rock Shorts from pg. 108

Giveth, The Count Taketh Away (Warner Bros.) As a long-time Loony Toons addict myself, I've always had a soft spot for Collins's cartoonish funk fantasies, yet somehow his albums always seemed too spotty and uneven for regular listening. Not this one, though. The basic riffs may be resolutely off-center but the concept—a pun on "on the one" far too elaborate to explain here—stays on track throughout, so that each groove settles into the next with minimal friction. Pungent horn lines, a resilient pulse and the funniest asides this side of "Popeye" make this Bootsy's best yet.

John Martyn — *Glorious Fool* (Duke)
This album is so ethereal it almost

seems to evaporate as you play it. John Martyn's wispy voice and understated songs have always seemed slightly frail on record, but Phil Collins's frighteningly sensitive production creates settings as delicate and fragile as a spider's web. On a casual listen, this approach seems so unassuming as to be practically inaudible—and that's the point. Because Martyn's strength is his subtlety, Collins's idea is to literally force you to listen carefully. Not a casual record, but quite possibly a great one.

Madness — *Complete Madness* (U.K. Stiff) Madness started out as the white ska equivalent of the Coasters, and has ended up as a sort of skinhead Beatles. Not the likeliest of transitions, but as you

listen to these 'sixteen once-and-future hits the logic becomes so inescapable that you're left wondering why the band is virtually unknown over here. A vibrant mixture of gritty R&B, jumped-up rhythm and pure pop melody, *Complete Madness* is like a one-band jukebox. Get those quarters ready!

The Jim Carroll Band — *Dry Dreams* (Atco) For a guy who doesn't sing, Jim Carroll does a pretty good imitation of a singer/songwriter. The key is not so much his words, which effortlessly illuminate the distance between most rock lyrics and real poetry, but the way those words fit into the riffish melodic structures of his post-punk backing band. When things take a dramatic turn, as on the nearly-symphonic "Lorraine," the effect is far more riveting than any singer could hope to be. The liner makes pretty good reading, too.

Flipper — *Generic Flipper* (Subterranean) Play this loud enough and even your appliances will ask you to take it off. But for all its cacophony it's hard *not* to like a band that plays out of tune on purpose, then adds in a clap track. Flipper's music is pretty dense, and I don't mean just texturally, but with a lightheartedness that puts most hardcore to shame. Be sure to check out "Sex Bomb," a frat-rocker so gloriously dumb it makes "Louie, Louie" sound like Mahler's Ninth.

Split Enz — *Time And Tide* (A&M) Split Enz may yet become the band Roxy Music only dreamed of being—a witty, subversive and totally accessible pop group. Like its immediate predecessors, *Time And Tide* is full of warped hooks and self-parodying flourishes, and even manages to find a workable middle ground between synthesized dance rock and the Enz's usual quirky pulse. Granted, Tim Finn has yet to develop a vocal personality as identifiable as Bryan Ferry's, but then again, that may be the price you pay for melodic consistency.

Nina Hagen — *Nunsexmonkrock* (Columbia) I suppose there's something to be said for a woman who can become a pop sensation in Europe while singing in a voice that sounds like the *Exorcist* soundtrack, but I'll be damned if I know what.

Narada Michael Walden — *Confidence* (Atlantic) There's no irony in the title of this album. Narada Michael Walden takes on funk formulas with such aplomb that even his most obvious moves, like French-speaking "Summer Lady," come off as inspiration instead of the hoary cliché it would have seemed otherwise. Walden's gift is a deft ability to plug in musical flavorings like discrete components, so that fat guitar leads play off heavy-footed funk drumming with maximum impact. In fact, the only thing he can't plug in is substance, which is why the second word of this album should be "job." ☐

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