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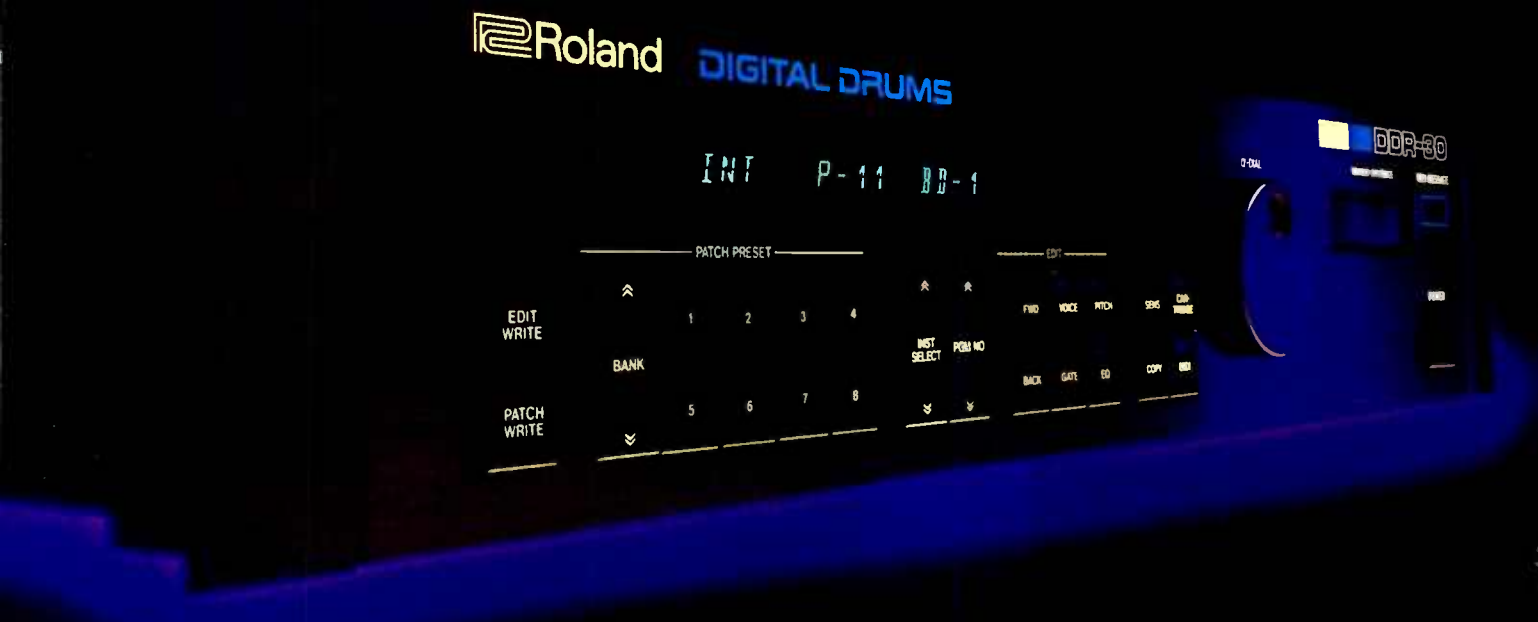

Roland Makes It Happen!

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NO. 88

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LETTERS

This case *is* a mystery

No one I know believes your "Will the Real Neil Young Stand Up" article. Sorry, but you just can't expect us to be that easily misled. We can smell the politics involving Crosby's arrest and political favors. The article was a ridiculous attempt—you should have tried somebody more believable. How about George Bush next issue?

Bernadette Shakeme
El Rio, CA

[*Dear B: You sly dog you. The editors tried to pull it off but couldn't fool you. Of course it wasn't Neil Young—it was Ed Meese! – Ed.*]

Neil Young's decision to switch to country music is not unusual—country radio stations today play a lot of early rock 'n' roll. Commercial rock is invariably hard-driving, repetitive music with little meaning or message. I take my hat off to Neil Young, and wish him unlimited success in the country music industry.

Steve C. Roberts
Mountain Music Guitar Shop
Crossville, TN

Add to the ranks of the 60s generation who flushed their idealism down the toilet... Neil Young.

An ex-Neil Young fan
Richard Kopecky
San Jose, CA

In the Neil Young introduction, Bill Flanagan says that "Young can still rock out like an epileptic in a wind tunnel." Does Flanagan know that Neil actually is an epileptic? Mind those similes, guys; don't let them get wild on ya.

M. Campos
Seattle, WA

[*Sometimes Flanagan's as stupid as an Irishman. – Ed.*]

And I thought I was the only conservative musician who wasn't a Nazi. After weeding through the same old "Socialism is here to save the day!" views espoused by the likes of the Style Council, the Clash, and most others, it's nice to hear some *realism* from a musician, not mindlessly supporting any one side, just a balanced, logical view of music, politics and life.

I've never been a big Neil Young fan, but perhaps I should start paying more attention. If there's any of the insight and common sense in his music that is in the interview, I've got some albums to buy.

Todd Keenan
Nantucket, MA

The one thing that is consistent about Neil Young is his inconsistency, or more specifically his unwillingness to play "what people want/expect." Neil plays what *feels* right to him, and to hell with what critics, record company execs, or consumers want him to play. Obviously country music feels right for now. He must be proud that he can still piss people off by doing what feels good to him. Thank you Neil—keep up the good work.

David Ryan
Wilmington, NC

Talking of Heads

Many thanks to Scott Isler on his insightful treatment of the Talking Heads. With *Stop Making Sense* and *Little Creatures* finally enlightening modern music buyers to the brilliance of David Byrne and colleagues, perhaps the rest of the music publications will see the light (as you did) and devote more copy to the band. Keep it up Scott!

James Hopper
Albuquerque, NM

Sync or Swim

I just completed reading another in your series of articles ("Getting in Sync," Nov. '85) on the computer innovations in recording—very informative. I recently visited a MIDI'd studio and was quite impressed by the speed at which tracks could be edited. There are obviously quite a few pros to this process. However, what I didn't like at all was the sterility of the end product. It was too perfect! Every single beat and note precise. The fourth bar exactly the same as the twelfth or sixteenth. The music though layered still sounded two-dimensional. What I mean is that all the truly human nuances that make music "personal" seemed erased. I do hope that MIDIs don't become the Astroturf of the recording world in the future.

Eric Smith
Bronx, NY

[*I dunno...consult our special issue, "Understanding MIDI," and see. Available Box 701, Gloucester, MA 01931-0701*]

Bone of Contention

Apparently, the fact that Richard Perry still smokes pot is important to author Roy Trakin, as a symbol of how "firmly embedded in 70s lore" Perry is. So what? What's important to me is the music, and how he gets it. If he's a certified, card-carrying "ex-hippie," that doesn't make his work any more genuine to me.

Ben Sherman
Westminster, MD

Scritti Politics

The Marxist rhetoric of Green from Scritti Politti has to be challenged. Socialists reject language because words formulate concepts extracted from reality. Music doesn't communicate in this direct fashion, as its interpretation is dependent upon the listener. This is why lyrics sometimes seem to get in the way. Words are not "arbitrary signifiers," and I suggest that Green has given up his propaganda lyrics because socialism doesn't square with reality.

It's every Marxist's attempt to obliterate the meanings of concepts like reason, freedom and individuality in order to render each person subservient to the nonexistent "collective good." For example, this is how the blatant act of monetary thievery becomes "redistribution of wealth." Capitalism is a moral economic/political system because it is guided by principles which promote the ambitions of the individual.

Jeff Sorise
West Bloomfield, MI

Laurie's Two Cents

Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart are now saturating the media with their views on how clever, totally unique and misunderstood they are, how tough it is to be a rock star. Usually when I read this kind of garbage I just shine it on, but when I read their pronouncements on what constitutes soul music, I had to respond.

I'm sure it's no more pleasant being poor and unemployed in Scotland than it is anywhere else in the world, but growing up black in America is a totally different kind of hell, one that our Annie and Dave have never known. Dave Stewart's remarks indicate an appalling ignorance of and insensitivity to what the blues in rhythm & blues is about, as does Annie Lennox's description of Aretha Franklin's style as "florid" and "decorative."

I'm sure as long as they are rich and successful, these two will be able to work with a lot more black artists, and continue to delude themselves that they're all sharing the same experience. "Money doesn't talk, it screams."

Laurie Stewart
New York, NY

Eratica

Credit is due to Robert Mapplethorpe and George DuBose (inset) for the fine cover shots in November.

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WIRE TRAIN

BY GINA ARNOLD

ROOTS WITHOUT BOOTS: THE PITFALLS OF BEING A CLEAN AMERICAN BAND

Aren't we supposed to be like, 'the best of the bad American bands?'" queries Wire Train bassist Anders Rundblad. Singer Kevin Hunter doesn't find this remark funny at all, and hurls a pair of tube socks across the room at Rundblad. Hunter has strong opinions on the difference between sounding like an American band and joining what he calls "the cult of the badly produced."

"I get really tired of people getting out their Twin Reverbs and Telecasters and thinking that's the way to make American music," kvetches Hunter, who in fact does play a Telecaster. "The equipment's all made in Japan anyway," he shrugs.

If Hunter sounds defensive, it has to do with the low-tech cult status he and his band have only recently escaped. Despite their acceptance of studio smarts, they still belong to the American Music Club, and the combination confuses people. "We're roots without boots," jokes Rundblad, "That's American music without the country influences. We don't wear Western shirts."

What Kevin Hunter wears he is busy packing for a tour while the rest of the band kibitzes in his San Francisco lodgings. By inclination and repute, Hunter has embraced the ideal of Mission District Boheme with a vengeance. His house is a drafty old Victorian, his cigarettes are exports, his boots are carefully repaired with black duct tape, and his hair is cut, oh-so-sloppily, at Super Cuts. Fingering an electric green Qiana shirt he's just purchased at Macy's for the tour, he apologizes for its flash: "If my pants are dirty enough, it'll look okay I guess."

That balance between flash and grunge is a crucial one for Wire Train now that they've cut away from the panorama of chiming guitar bands trying to merge Roxy Music with the Byrds and coming up with AOR in disguise. Wire Train isn't looking so much for a hit as they are artistic credibility, which so far the critical dispensers reserve for the rawer-sounding U.S. outfits. This infuriates Hunter.

"Compared to a Power Station or a Thompson Twins or a Billy Idol dance mix, we sound like Joe Abernathy & the Furious Five," he argues. "There's a lot of records out today that sound as if someone who was toilet trained very violently came in and scrubbed the vinyl free of all dirt. That was not what we were after at all."

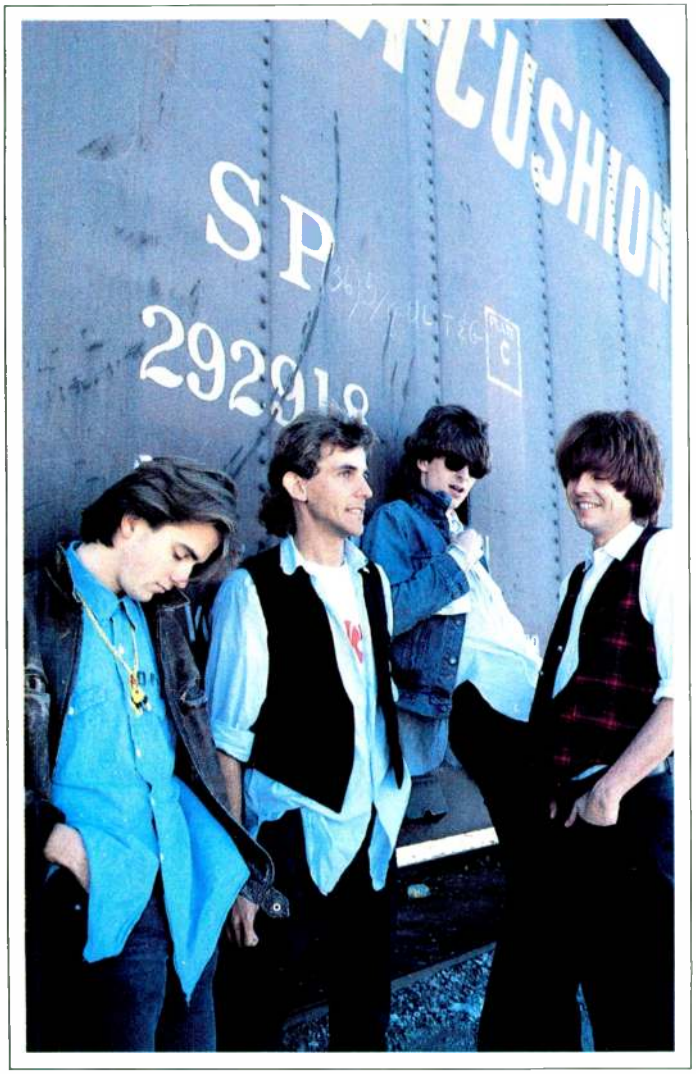
Wire Train recently released its second LP on 415/Columbia, *Between Two Words*. It's a surprisingly strong follow-up to 1983's *In A Chamber*, an exercise in echo-laden harmonies characteristically produced by David Kahne. *Between Two Words* is an album based on simplicity, and reveals a marked improvement in production and songwriting craft. Wire Train has complemented simple three-chord acoustic songs with a rushing sound that Hunter insists is not high-tech. "There's a difference between sounding high-tech and using your imagination," he explains. "Our record has interesting sounds on it, but it's not technologically overboard."

"Too much technology just slows you down," shrugs drummer Brian Macleod. "You'd be all ready to record and then there'd be ground hum in the drum machine you're using as a metronome, or a brilliant speed up that made the song happen, ruined. If you're working with a time limit, you keep striving for the perfect tempo, but if it doesn't happen, you have to say, 'The hell with it.'"

Between Two Words was recorded at Motiva Studios in Vienna, a studio used mostly for classical recording, that boasts cavernous stone rooms with arched ceilings. It was a room producer Peter Maunu knew about and had been wanting to use for a rock 'n' roll record.

"The room we recorded in had stone stairwells laid in with no mortar," Hunter says by way of illustrating a high-tech sound substitute. "Each piece fit with the next by counterbalancing. Well, we took guitar amps and mikes into the hallway, put a mike at two feet, fifteen feet, twenty feet and forty feet up the stairwell, and then we'd try varying the mixes between those positions. We just got amazing sound, and that's not technology, it's not treating the guitar to make it sound fantastic; it's just capturing the sound in the stairwell."

The band's creative control on *Between Two Words* was held in check, of course, by budget considerations. They had seven weeks of studio time in Vienna, which went overtime by exactly one day. Hunter says he wouldn't need more time on another album. "I think of limits as good," he says. "I can think of things I'd have done if we had more money, like use real cellists instead of sampling them with the computer, but bas-



Brian Macleod, Anders Rundblad, Kevin Hunter & Jeff Trott

TRUDY FISHER

ically the time factor is okay, it helps you to organize."

"And we really only sampled things because we had the computer there and we wanted to say we had," Macleod adds sheepishly. "It turned out that we mostly used drums because it was really the most pleasing sound."

Hunter attributes part of the album's freshness to its being the first production by Group 87 guitarist Peter Maunu: "When you get together with a first time producer and a good friend of yours [engineer Ken Kessie] they aren't about to start shutting you up about your ideas," he says. "We weren't the sole contributors, and in fact, their ideas were often the best, but it was a more collaborative process than others I know of. If you imagine while you're making the record that there are six people in the band, then you have a healthy studio attitude."

Wire Train was formed in 1980, by Hunter and guitarist Kurt Herr, who met at San Francisco State, where Beverly Hills native Hunter was learning how to be a poet, an occupation he now denies despite a penchant for red wine and quoting. The Renegades, as they called themselves, carved a niche in San Francisco and were soon signed as Wire Train to 415, home of several other chiming guitar bands like Translator and Red Rockers.

Since 1983's *In A Chamber*, Wire Train's personnel has undergone several changes, the most recent being the dismissal of Herr, who, according to Hunter, "was not a happy person." The current lineup is Rundblad on bass, Hunter on rhythm guitar, drummer Brian Macleod (Sleepers, Group 87), and guitarist Jeff Trott.

At their warm-up shows at San Francisco's Warfield Theater, opening for INXS, new guitarist Trott seems reluctant to step into the limelight, but that doesn't faze the two thousand teenage girls who give Hunter and company's melodic wash a warm reception. Hunter's lurching good looks and the romantic aggression in his intense stare have always drawn the boppers, and a good portion of them tonight are shrieking happily as he covers his face with his hands in horrid anguish during "I'll Do You."

Hunter's teen dream role-playing suits his moody, verbose songwriting style. His reputation as a poet notwithstanding ("I've seen the folly of my ways regarding that little sidelight," he says sheepishly), Wire Train's songs do have a literate edge to them. "I use a lot of figurative imagery. If you asked yourself what's really going on in the songs, a lot of times you just can't tell. Unlike what *Rolling Stone* had to say—that *Between Two Words* sounds interesting but doesn't convey much—I find that the people who write to me *are* getting communicated to."

Still, what's a few critical pans. Compared to most, the Wire Train success story has only a modest amount of career anxiety attached. Gain without pain. It almost seems unfair: "Well, I get unhappy like other people, and the band goes through times when we don't get along, but in general our motivation

continued on page 113

How They're Wired

Kevin Hunter plays a '62 Telecaster and a Yamaha SBG1500, running them through a Boss super distortion pedal and a Roland SDE 3000 echo unit into a Roland JC-120 amplifier. "I run echo out of my guitar on a lot of songs, but it's mainly because when I play guitar, I need all the help I can get. So if there's three of my guitars going, it sounds better."

Jeff Trott plays a Stratocaster and a Les Paul, through a Boss super distortion pedal and Roland JC 120 amp.

Anders Rundblad plays a Fender Precision bass and a Japanese Fender copy called Vintage.

Brian Macleod sold his Simmons Drums five minutes before listing the interview, and now plays a set of Ludwig drums covered in cowhide, which he claims improves the sound, and strung with pretty Christmas tree lights during shows for decorative value.

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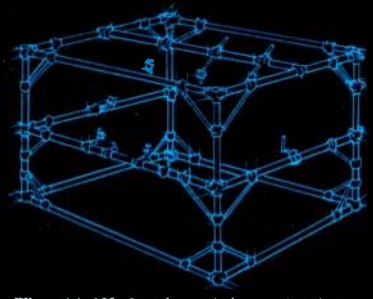

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KIP HANRAHAN

BY MARK ROWLAND

INSPIRED BANDLEADER, WILLING TO TRAVEL, SEEKS BAND

Kip Hanrahan is sitting at a table in a quiet corner of a favored Brazilian eatery near Times Square, downing his second drink of the still middle-aged afternoon. You might say he has dressed to suit his mood, except that Kip is always wearing black. A few nights earlier, his band had opened at Carnegie Hall for Rubén Blades—sellout crowd, heavy musicbiz contingent, advance hoopla—and they hadn't delivered the goods. They had begun raggedly in fact, and Carnegie's acoustics, which tend to reverberate all amplification into murk, weren't much help. True, there were several fine solos, and a fluid rhythmic groove that eventually commandeered the audience's attention. At the end of their set, in fact, Kip's twelve-piece assemblage—which included, among others, Jack Bruce, Steve Swallow, Ignacio Berroa, Mario Rivera and Milton Cardona—had received a warm and prolonged ovation.

But Kip, who had spent the entire concert scurrying among the musicians in a desperate attempt to key members with their parts, rein in his arrangements and otherwise combat the gremlins of anarchy, was having none of it. He took no bows. He stalked backstage, and as wellwishers offered congratulations, he shook them off with anger. He is still angry now just thinking about it.

"I'd really expected a lot out of that concert," he is saying, shaking his head. "I wanted it to be great. It cost me three times what I was paid for it, and the guys...they *knew* how important it was." He turns sadly paternal. "They didn't deliver. Some of the reasons weren't their fault, but some were. So I cursed them and then I fired them, the whole fucking band."

For a moment, his frustration seems spent. He smiles sheepishly and runs his hands through his beard and hair as a waiter sidles to the table. "Well, let's get something different from last time," he suggests. He orders another drink.

TERI BLOOM

Nobody said art was easy.

And who is Kip Hanrahan, you might ask. One response could be, he is a guy with no band hoping for a distribution deal. Or, he is a guy who loves Brazilian food and still entertains fantasies of playing pro soccer. Or, he is a guy who grew up in New York playing percussion, lived in India and in Haiti and in Europe, hung out with Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Paul Sartre, returned to New York, created his own record label and produced, among other things, three of the freshest and most provocative albums of the 80s, music that feels instantly recognizable but defies category; music doused with lyrics painfully intimate yet willfully circumscribed; less a discernible "sound" than a constant flux of rhythms, conceptions and moods, fueled by a horror of cliché and a passion "to always make something different."

Now, each of these descriptions is equally true. But what if there were a way to combine Kip number two, say, with Kip number three, the soccer fan vs. the Godardian? Might they not then concoct a new, unforeseen version of Kip? Now apply this dialectic to groups of musicians, and you can begin to

of musicians, and you have a rough outline of Kip's musical MO.

Kip's musical experiments, from *Coup De Tete* to *Desire Develops An Edge* to this year's *Vertical's Currency*, invariably encompass an esoteric range of musical genres, including Cuban, Haitian, Brazilian, African, no wave, jazz and pop. As a result, Kip points out, "the most obvious and frequent response is that it's a mix of musical ghettoes.

"But that's only the framework," he explains. "For me the real challenge is always, how do I get these musicians to start treating song form in a different way, to phrase differently than before? Well, let's get together people who think differently, from different styles, different classes, and see how that tension will affect us. So some sessions I'll write out all the parts; some I won't write any; sometimes I'll describe the song, another I'll leave for the players to invent. It's a roller coaster, and no one ever knows what to expect. I guess that makes me difficult to work with. I think the musicians must do it because they feel rewarded by what comes out."

They should. Those records (plus *Conjure*, another Hanrahan project featuring texts by Ishmael Reed) have provided glistening forums for a generally undernourished generation of musicians on the cutting edge of pop, jazz and Latin musics (David Murray, Bill Laswell, Elysee Pyronneau, Arto Lindsay, Ricky Ford, Jerry Gonzalez, John Stubblefield, Anton Fier, Puntilla Orlando Rios, plus the aforementioned band members, to name some). The mere act of combining an eclectic batch of musicians and "ethnic" ideas on one record is no big deal, of course. Though Hanrahan's records have surely helped propel the trend, it's been going on for years, and most of them sound, as Ran Blake once described Oregon, "like a luncheon at the U.N."

No, what Kip has done is turn a seeming hodgepodge of ethnicity into a rich, spicy paella, while imbuing each project with his distinct personal vision. *Desire* may be rooted more firmly in the Afro-Cuban tradition of the *guaguancó*, while the more polished *Vertical's Currency* takes cues from Smokey Robinson and Joao Gilberto. But the process, whether knotty narratives or chiaroscuro sambas, percussive dance tracks or enigmatic ballads, is clearly Hanrahan's. He wrote most of the tracks, molded the overall sound, traced through introspective lyrics his questions and his moods. He arranges the music, and even more significantly, he arranges the musicians; in the grand Ellington manner, Hanrahan's band is his true instrument. A band he has just cursed and fired.

So, who is Kip Hanrahan?

He grew up in the Bronx. "My father went to jail when I was six months old. He never paid child support when he got out, so mostly I was raised by my grandparents. My grandfather was a friend of Trotsky's before he came here and got involved with the unions and with the Jewish mafia. I had a funny childhood, though looking back, it seems more romantic than it did at the time." He shrugs good-naturedly. "I knew I could always get a job in the garment district."

Growing up in a mostly Latin neighborhood, it wasn't that surprising for Hanrahan to take up percussion, though he says he didn't learn to truly appreciate the music until he'd moved out into the wider, Waspier world. But he does recall an earlier aversion to conforming with his "role": "There's a license that's assigned to people on how they sell their labor that always seemed claustrophobic. In high school the musician is given license to come late, to be irresponsible, to get the girl—which isn't so bad I guess," he laughs. "But this thing of being assigned a function—I didn't want to be identified that way. Even then I thought it might kill me. Maybe that's why I never 'conduct' my band onstage or even play in it. And

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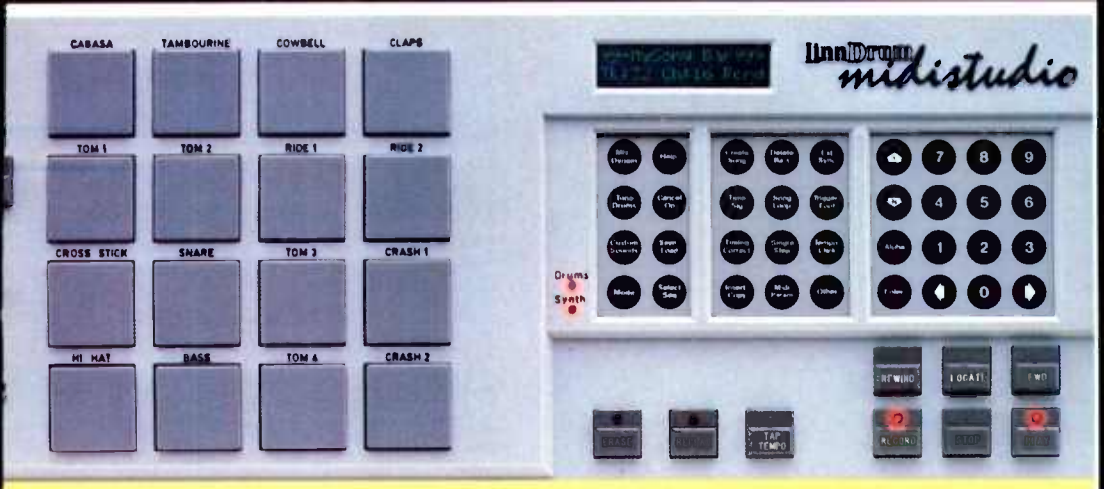
I've turned down jobs in other bands. It's all too seductive—it closes off too many areas where you might grow into something different...."

Kip was decidedly different. He traveled to India and worked with the poet Paul Haines, later followed percussionist Ti Ro Ro to Haiti, and in the course of his travels struck up professional associations with Godard and with Sartre, surrogate "father figures" with exceptional abilities to skewer established cultural and philosophical assumptions, paving the way for new dialectics, new insights. "Though I think Godard's always been impressed by absolute, uncritical faith," Kip observes. "Maybe this new movie [*Hail Mary*] is an example of that. A system in which all questions can be answered within the system, reducing complexities to simple formulas. I think he was envious of the nonturbulence of people who accepted that."

He has often been described as a musical "auteur," in part because he "directs" his projects rather than performs them, and partly because his songs, from "Velasquez" to "Too Heartedly" to "Dark" exude cinematic imagery. He'll admits he first turned to making records hoping he could parlay that success into a filmmaking career, a scenario he also admits appears increasingly absurd. What's perhaps more telling is his choice of artistic inspirations—Ellington, Dylan, Gilberto, Jobim. All make music that is similarly "cinematic," and music which, for all its acuity or sophistication, never loses track of its cultural roots. All are artists of unusual vision and integrity. All became stars.

"Ellington was my father in terms of the band, I think," Kip muses. "I'm not talking technically, but in terms of finding the band in its personalities, or in the way they *can't* combine. Maybe it's an Ellington I'm inventing," he quickly cautions, as if to himself, "but I know I was always impressed by that. Still," he admits, "when I first started I was probably more impressed by the glamour surrounding Miles.

"Someone like Jack Bruce, or Dylan —they *have* to make music, as opposed to making fashion. I think that's why someone like Jack will have trouble making money now, while someone like Dylan is so enviable. Because now there is no music on most records. People who fork over money to buy the Mick Jagger album are not buying music, they are not even wanting to buy music; they are buying a symbol that once meant music and now means money. People spend money to get the symbol of money, money's musical



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sound. And for the forty-five minutes that's on the turntable they're living in that sound and it's wonderful. And they perpetuate that symbol by forking over the eight bucks. So they are not just observers."

Vertical's Currency, he claims, was "a conscious decision to be commercial and at the same time make music that I respected and liked." To a limited extent, he succeeded; too idiosyncratic to threaten the top forty, *Currency* is a warm, coherent and extremely listenable record, one that at least hints at Kip's pop crossover potential. In fact, all of Kip's records save *Conjure* have sold well enough (between twelve and eighteen thousand copies) to turn a profit, at least on paper, while reeling in enough flattering press to insulate the walls of his apartment. For an independent label like American Clavé, with virtually no funds for advertising or promotion, that's an impressive achievement. But so far it hasn't been enough to hook major label distribution, and that, for Hanrahan, has become embittering.

"Maybe *Vertical* could have sold ninety thousand [with major distribution]; certainly forty. But you tell that to the industry and they think, 'Hey, that's chump change. I can make more in real estate. Why waste it on you?'

"I am apprehensive about my financial situation," he admits baldly. "I wish I could see my way clear. If there's money in the bank, I'm happy," he says with a short, ironic laugh. "If not, if I feel the pressure, then I'm unhappy and I curse myself for building this life. Right now I feel like I'm living and breathing self-destructive tension. I've got so many ideas, but without the money or distribution, I can't keep pulling them off. And I'm not sure how to get out. I don't have any simple answers."

So, who is Kip Hanrahan? A guy who has gone around the world and back seeking new vistas, who now feels shackled by the choices he's made. A musician of proven worth and integrity who wishes he knew how to sell out. An artistic spirit whose restless creativity has seen him this far, and will somehow

Continued on page 36

Kip's Trips

Kip's unusual percussive sound is attained by placing two overhead Neumann U47FET microphones above the congas, and one U87FET below. Jack Bruce sings through a special U47FET special. The congas themselves are Juniors, made by Mongo Santamaria's son, and rather hard to find, but well worth the effort. Kip also employs two echoes, and EMT40ST, and an EMT251 digital for voice. His mixing board is a Neve 8108.

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THE DEL FUEGOS

BY JULIE PANEBIANCO

EDGY GUYS WITH HEARTS IN THEIR CAVED-IN BODIES

They were brought to you by Miller, served up in the midst of Live-Aid: "the Del Fuegos from Boston, Massachusetts." A couple of regular types in a band toasting rock 'n' roll—with a beer of course—'cause it's just for folks. The Miller commercial-*cum*-rock vid seen by millions gave America a frothy taste of the Fuegos brew, an earnest replay of simple, roughhouse riffs by guys who want more than anything to be rock 'n' rollers. They're young, impassioned, and carry their piece of the rock with reverence: their LPs on Slash (*The Longest Day* and the new *Boston, Mass.*) rip uproariously but don't rebel. Instead, the Del Fuegos clean the rust off licks that recall Keith Richards' glory days, recharge energy into that rhythm, and bring to their backbeat a wide-eyed belief in the power of the music. After all, it changed *their* lives.

It's funny, not too long ago a case of beer—it didn't have to be Miller—could get the Del Fuegos to play at a loft party, a birthday party, *any* party. Dan Zanes, gravel-voiced and armed with a guitar, a memory, and a mom who loved Bob Dylan, came to Boston four years ago from the wilds of New Hampshire. Tom Lloyd came too, and after much classical training and study at a music conservatory, bagged his cello for the bombast of a bass. A drummer or two followed, and finally Mrs. Zanes shipped younger brother Warren to the big city to join Dan and learn lead guitar. The Del Fuegos played anywhere, everytime, anyplace. The Blasters and X bothered Slash bigwig Bob Biggs to sign these boys, and when a Kansas combo called the Embarrassment broke up, their drummer Woody Giessmann de-camped to the Del Fuegos.

"Those days were really great," rasps Dan Zanes, "and we wouldn't be playing in places like Lordsburg, New Mexico now if we hadn't been at Cantones [a Boston bar] two or three nights a week back then. But I sure don't miss a thing about packing gear into the car at the end of the night, wobbling out of the club with an amp in your arms."

The Slash deal led them to Los Angeles, and producer Mitchell Froom. Froom "is not only a great person and musician," lauds Tom Lloyd, "but a great communicator of ideas to other musicians. The relationship we have with him is very rare." Field Marshal Froom, as he has been called, drilled the Del Fuegos in dynamics, tightness, consistency and songwriting. Then they set out to make an album. "We wanted a hard rockin' sound," Lloyd admits.

They didn't quite manage that with *The Longest Day*, which gave them the ambience of a garage band—rough, raw and rootsy. No cries of sellout from the underground last year. But on *Boston, Mass.* the Fuegos and Froom landed on a tough vibrancy caught between pop and a hard rock place—not a real surprise, as onstage the band had brazenly taken to fastening Tom

"Trying to overcome the party band, garage band thing": Dan Zanes, Woody Giessmann, Tom Lloyd & Warren Zanes

Petty buttons to their leather jackets.

"But a lot of people were pretty shocked," Lloyd concedes, and coming on the heels of the Miller commercial, they realized screams of "sell-out" were inevitable. "I know we lost a bunch of underground fans, but you can't take what people say and go, 'You're right, we'll just do that.'"

"We always wanted a radio album," insists Dan Zanes. "We spent the last year trying to overcome the party band, the garage band, roots band thing. We just wanted to be a rock 'n' roll band. I think we are making the same music we would regardless of a garage trend, a roots trend; we'd be playing note for note the same songs. We are affected by what is goin' on around us, but the Del Fuegos' music is really based on stuff we went through a long time ago, what we were listening to when we were growing up."

Dan remembers looking through his mother's records, and asking for his first guitar when he was eight. "I used to look inside the Band's second album, and there were all kinds of pictures of them sitting around their house, and I thought that was the life, right there." He sighs wistfully. "Then, last month, the same photographer who did those photos came to shoot us for *People* magazine. So it really came around."

A thoughtful twenty-four-year-old who grins and bears a striking resemblance to John Fogerty, another hero, Dan Zanes regards himself and his band with a shoulder-shrugging modesty that co-exists with ferocious ambition. "I'd love it if we were the most famous band in the world," he says unabashedly. "We'd like to be seen as edgy, somewhat tough guys who have hearts somewhere inside their caved-in bodies. Not that we have a God-given talent that pushed us in this direction, it's just that we live for it and it is everything to us."

The boys swear allegiance to each other. "We take care of each other, we learn from each other," Lloyd, twenty-three, states. Dan lives by the axiom, "everything should be for the good of the band," and proved it when he and brother Warren, twenty, stifled their egos and let Froom bring in another guitarist during the recording of *Boston, Mass.*

"The idea of it bothered me at first," confesses Zanes. "It was hardest for Warren, who got his toes stepped on the most by it, but he dealt with it in a great way." Warren gleefully explains

continued on page 36

Fuegos Artificiales

Dan Zanes borrows his brother Warren's Fender Stratocaster, a 1962 reissue, or a 70s Les Paul plugged through a MESA/Boogie Half Stack Series C amplifier. For an effect Zanes uses a Boss analog delay. Strings: Dean Markley Magnum, .010 to .046 gauge. Songs are usually written on an Acoustic Guild F30, or a Danelectro with two pickups. To practice, he's got a little black plastic Sears Solid State, "about as big as a shoebox," and he uses a Rockman to boost it. **Warren Zanes** plays a 1952 Telecaster, refinished with new tuners and a new bridge, rendering it worthless to collectors. He favors a Harmony acoustic that cost him twenty bucks in Wichita. The rest of his gear is the same as his big brother's. **Tom Lloyd** thumps a Fender Jazz bass, 1960 reissue, all stock, "nothin' juiced up at all," outfitted with D'Addario Half-round Series 2 strings, through a MESA/Boogie G160 rack-mounted bass head and an Ampeg eight 10-inch cabinet speaker. What drummer Woody Giessmann is proud of is his 1943 Radio King Slinger by Slingerland snare that the Fuegos gave him when he joined the band. It's 8 inches deep, a single-piece shell. The rest of his kit is an early Slingerland set, a 13-inch rack, 16-inch floor tom and a 22-inch kick—"a basic Buddy Rich setup." His bass pedal is a Speed King; he plays Remo Ambassador white-coated drumheads, and a complete Zildjian cymbal outfit.

They all sing through Shure 58 microphones. And when they're in the mood for a jamboree, the Del Fuegos set up a little Peavey and a little Fender side-kick and blast away in their hotel rooms.

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ROBERT CRAY

BY FRED SCHRUERS

YOUNG BLUESMAN BUSTS DOWN THE BARRIERS

Robert Cray, thirty two, and his partner and bassist of sixteen years, Richard Cousins, are pleased as can be to be complaining about the midtown Manhattan hotel room they're sitting in. "You're telling me your room is worse than this?" Richard says disbelievingly to a friend, Neville Brothers' bassist Daryl TK. Daryl's staying some blocks away at a far fancier Madison Avenue establishment. "Two of my rooms would fit in here," says Daryl, also happy to complain. Cray's band and the Nevilles are used to sharing bills, as they will tonight downtown at the Ritz, and their scoffing at their lodging is strictly *pro forma*, a daily litany, for two bands who have seen as much as three hundred days on the road in one year. They're quick to admit they're gratified to find any welcoming bandstand in Dirtytown. "Richard and I always dreamed about traveling around the world with our guitars," says Cray. "Here we're sitting in New York."

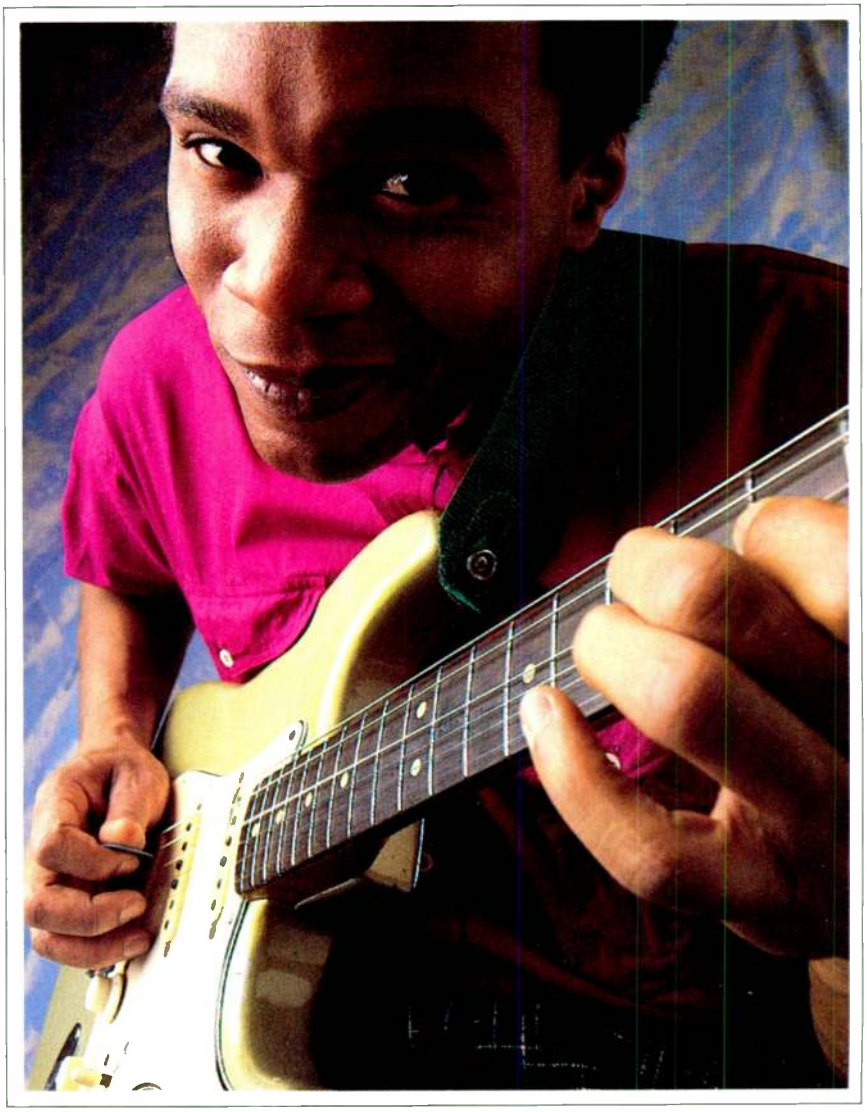
The English critics who have called Cray's work "some of the tightest, earthiest soul music of the 80s (*New Musical Express*) and "the most elegant since the Womack's" (Simon Frith in *The Times*) will clearly have to batter Cray with a few more rounds of superlatives before they make a dent in his humility. With so many "Maybe I am a genius" musicians afoot, one listens to the soft-spoken, self-effacing Cray almost warily; when does the ego kick in?

It turns out his personal manner is inseparable from his strikingly smooth brand of blues—carefully measured, not-without-bite vocals updating the classic blues themes with the punctuation of his economical, *twinging* (B.B. King does seem to be the paramount influence in a happily eclectic style) guitar runs. "Porch Light," from the current *False Accusations* LP, is a song which Cray doesn't mind labeling as "weird": "In a way that backbeat we put in there reminds me of something Howlin' Wolf would do, but there's a slickness that's more like Al Green or some of the Stax soul things. Then the guitars could be—anything." Written by the band's co-producer, Dennis Walker ("Wish I'd written it," says Cray admiringly), the song comes down on the first and third beats, leaving Cray room to pick out crisp, unhurried little guitar fills that underscore its drama. (The band broke out laughing onstage in Japan when an overzealous promoter surprised them by cranking up a smoke machine during the tune.)

The three musicians are a bit restless on this gray New York afternoon. For starters, even with the radiator shut off, the room temperature approximates the core of the sun. Cray turns on the air conditioning. Then Richard volunteers to go for sodas, which the front desk sells over the counter in a cruel parody of room service. He, too, is content to have these kinds of complaints: "We were on the plane to Japan and I said to Robert, 'Remember when we used to hitchhike up and down the freeway, in the Oregon winter, seventy miles each way, to go to band practice? And now somebody's flying us to Japan?'"

The two were about sixteen years old when they met in the Tacoma suburb of Lakewood, Washington in 1969. Cray was in a band called Steakface, but they had a bass player, so Richard would bide his time.

Robert was an army brat who'd lived in Germany and all over the States when the Crays landed in Washington state in '66 long enough for Robert to have a chance to "start hearing all that Stax music and join my first band." After high school Richard's brother did a stint on drums with Robert's band. Then Richard and Robert moved to Eugene, Oregon to live on food stamps and rehearse. They got twelve songs down



STEVE MARSEL

Touch, tone and phrasing: "Hit one right note and say it all."

cold, auditioned at a bar named Duffy's, and did so well the proprietor brought them out for a second set their first night—the same twelve songs.

Among the blues masters they revered was Albert Collins (he'd actually played the graduation dance at Robert's high school in 1971) and when he came to town needing a band, in September of 1977, they took the gig and ended up hitting the road with him. At the San Francisco Blues Festival later that year (playing with Albert, as well as their own set fronted by current Roomful of Blues vocalist Curtis Delgado), they were noticed by producer Bruce Bromberg. A few months later he invited them into the studio to cut the tracks that would become their debut LP on Tomato, *Who's Been Talking?*. The song of the same name, recalls Richard, "Was the first time we'd ever been in the studio, first take, totally live—like, 'Hi, I'm Bruce, okay, title track—next?'"

Although they got a bit of notice from Robert's cameo as the bassist in the fictional Otis Day & the Knights band in two scenes of *Animal House* (John Belushi had chanced upon a Cray band gig in Eugene), it was two years before the album they'd cut with Bromberg was released. But they were hitting the club circuit hard, and drew the notice of local entrepreneur Larry Sloven. Tomato had folded, and they were isolated from most independent labels—so Sloven formed Hightone Records to release their second LP, *Bad Influence*, which cost about $5,000 to make. The LP rose to number two on England's independent album chart (the title cut was recently recorded by Nick Lowe, and they're distributed in that country by Elvis Costello's Demon records), and their foothold overseas was established. With the release of *False Accusations*, which cost $15,000 to produce, they're edging towards 100,000 copies in worldwide sales and quietly shopping for a major label affiliation for Hightone.

Cray's music is happily glutted with influences, from T-Bone Walker's jazzy, sizzling guitar style to B.B. King's more melodic and stately approach. Such early influences as the Chicago-based Magic Sam have given way to the band's ripe eclecticism. "When I was first getting into blues, I was hardnosed, nobody could tell me anything else even existed," says Cray, "Now I see there's good music everywhere. I just go song by song.

"I think a lot of the smoothness I like to play with comes from B.B., 'cause he's very melodic. If you listen to his older things, on the Kent label, some of that stuff is the toughest he ever laid down. What you hear in his playing is touch, tone and phrasing. With him and all my favorite blues cats, they can hit just one right note, the right way, and say it all."

Cray recently was one-third of the *Showdown* LP, a friendly cutting match with mentor Collins and Texas bluesmaster Johnny Copeland. Robert's arrangement of "T-Bone Shuffle" gives them all a showcase and swings with a vengeance—a knack he partly developed by going to school on bop jazzmen. Cray band keyboardist Peter Boe, as a matter of fact, is essentially a bop player. Cray likes the juncture of influences: "We let everybody have

continued on page 112

Blues Machines

Robert Cray plays a '64 Fender Strat: "I've had it for seven years and I love it. Onstage I'll go back and tune it up rather than change guitars. But I also have a Japanese Fender Strat I bought on our recent trip there." His amp is a Fender Super Reverb. **Richard Cousins** plays a stock 1962 Fender Jazz bass, a stock 1964 Fender Precision bass, and a 1985 Japanese Squire Jazz bass. These go through "a little tiny Peavey amp." Keyboard player **Peter Boe** has a Yamaha DX7 and Yamaha electric grand piano. He used to have a Prophet synthesizer, until it was stolen. **Peter Boe** has a Pearl drum kit and Zildjian cymbals.

In the early morning hours of November 15, 1984 tragedy struck the Bethany Lutheran Church of Cherry Hills, Colorado. A faulty electric organ was blamed for a multiple alarm fire that claimed much of the structure. Thankfully no one was injured in the blaze that caused over one million dollars in damage.

In the ensuing clean-up operation a Crown amplifier was discovered under charred timbers. Owing to the intense heat of the fire the chassis had warped and the AC cord was a puddle of wire and rubber.

The amplifier found its way to John Sego at Listen Up, Inc. of Denver. Armed with insatiable curiosity and a knowledge of Crown dependability John installed a new AC cord and proceeded to verify operation on the test bench. The amplifier met factory specifications in all functions.

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CAROLINE GREYSHOCK

FULL FORCE

The Princes of Flatbush

"I just woke up one night at two in the morning," remembers Full Force drummer Brian "B-Fine" George, "and I told my mother, 'A great title for a rap song would be something like "Roxanne."' She said, 'Why Roxanne?' I said, 'Because the name isn't common.'" Aw c'mon, Bri. But he claims that thus was born the first of Full Force's monster teen hit productions, "Roxanne, Roxanne," by UTFO.

A year ago, Full Force—brothers Brian, Lou, and Paul Anthony George, and their cousins Gerry Charles, Junior "Shy Shy" Clark, and Curt Bedeau—couldn't get their fingers on a tenner, let alone the pulse of young urban America. Then "Roxanne, Roxanne" hit; suddenly, fifteen years after the George kids debuted at the Apollo, the record's co-writers and producers metamorphosed into Brooklyn's answer to Prince. They created a foil for the Untouchable Force, named her the Real Roxanne, and wrote and produced the second best answer rap of 1985. Scouring Brooklyn for an innocent young female voice, they found Lisa Velez; as Lisa Lisa, her recording of "I Wonder If I Take You Home," written and produced by Full Force, crossed over to the top forty on its way to selling 300,000 copies. Full Force's own answer to Lisa Lisa, "Girl, If You Take Me Home," found them on Columbia Records. The group also helped Kurtis Blow by cowriting "Basketball," and launched Warren Mills by writing "Sunshine." And they got to beat the shit out of Blair Underwood in the hip hop film, *Krush Groove*. They're writers, producers, performers, and even co-managers of Full Force's One Big Family: Full Force, the Real Roxanne, UTFO and Lisa Lisa. If you're sixteen or one of their stockholders, you probably dream about them at night. But what the hell do these guys *do*?

"People are just now beginning to realize that we're the creative force on all of our groups," says singer Bowlegged Lou George. "Those records are our records, the same as if we recorded them under our own name." The group's secret, according to B-Fine, is that they "understand what kids want, and try to stay in touch with that. When we sampled sounds to make the big beat of UTFO, the engineer said, 'It sounds distorted, it's not a quality recording.' And we'd go, 'Great, that's what we want.'

"We feel, the cheesier the better. A lot of people out there think they're fresh and they're really not. I think we really are." – *John Leland*

Tape Tax: No News Is Good News

Now that the "record ratings" controversy has rumbled off into the sunset [*Faces*, January], you're probably wondering what's going on with the subtly related issue of a tax on blank audio recording tape. The answer: not much.

Both houses of congress have separate bills pending on the subject. Proposed legislation in the House of Representatives would tax tape recorders at ten percent of wholesale price, and blank tape at a penny a minute playing time. The Senate bill calls for a five percent (of wholesale) recorder tax, and the same tape levy. The two acts have attracted a cluster of co-sponsors each, including two husbands of women involved with the infamous Parents' Music Resource Center, the force behind last year's song lyrics furor.

But a Senate subcommittee hearing October 30 left some doubt whether such legislation is viable. The record industry, which cries about how much money home taping is siphoning off, has apparently been profiting in spite of it all. The problem of equitable royalty distribution is still unsolved. And the Senate bill's sponsor, Sen. Charles Mathias, retires at the end of this year. The situation is even less promising in the House of Representatives: The chairperson of the House subcommittee that deals with copyright matters, Rep. Robert Kastenmeier, has come out against the bill.

GEORGE HOWARD

Some Call It Jazz

"It got to the point where I was expecting a 'no' everywhere I went," soprano saxophonist George Howard laughs, recalling the thirty-eight record companies that rejected his first demo tape. "I would point the finger at everybody but myself for my own lack of progress: the record companies were holding me back, the government had a plot with CBS to keep me in Philly....Then I went one on one with myself. To call yourself an asshole and know that you're telling the truth is a heavy statement."

Such introspection resulted in *Dancing In The Sun*, Howard's third album, which stayed at number one on *Billboard*'s jazz chart for over a month last fall. The record is the first chart-topper for California-based Palo Alto, the one label that finally said yes.

SAM EMERSON

The former Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes sideman favors R&B and pop to the extent that most jazz fans would be loath to call his music jazz. "I don't call it jazz," he stresses. "I call it good music. Being categorized used to bother me, but [radio programmers and record companies] have to put you some place and if you are instrumental, the first place they put you is jazz."

John Coltrane fans might scoff at the notion, but the twenty-nine-year-old Howard claims that "by the so-called commercial standards of the 1980s, I might be considered somewhat of a purist because I don't put scratches on my records. What makes someone a jazz artist is his level of dexterity, execution and clarity, not necessarily his style. There may not always be a jazz sound as we know it. Things evolve and take other forms and shapes."

For Howard, that evolution includes synthesizers and drum machines. "I used to run out on that responsibility by saying, 'I'm not going to have that in my music,'" he muses. "I used to suffer from latent Wyntonism."

Now he just suffers from relative anonymity. Although *Dancing In The Sun* has sold over 200,000 copies, Howard is in no danger of overexposure. "I'm still new to a lot of people. That means one of two things: Either I've reached my potential in terms of people I can communicate with, or there are millions of people for me still to reach. Being an optimist, I, of course, choose the latter." – *Melinda Newman*

ELIZABETH McCOLLOUGH

FETCHIN BONES

Southern Multi-Cultural Stew

While the South may be a hotbed of new musical activity, North Carolina's Fetchin Bones wants no part of the scene. Based in Charlotte (far removed from the media triangle of Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill), Fetchin Bones thrives in its somewhat insular environment. "We just sit down here and watch the trucks go by," vocalist **Hope Nichols** says with a lazy chuckle. "There's nothing to do in Charlotte, but we love it. We can keep from being influenced by every band around and we don't have to put up with all that pseudo-cultural junk."

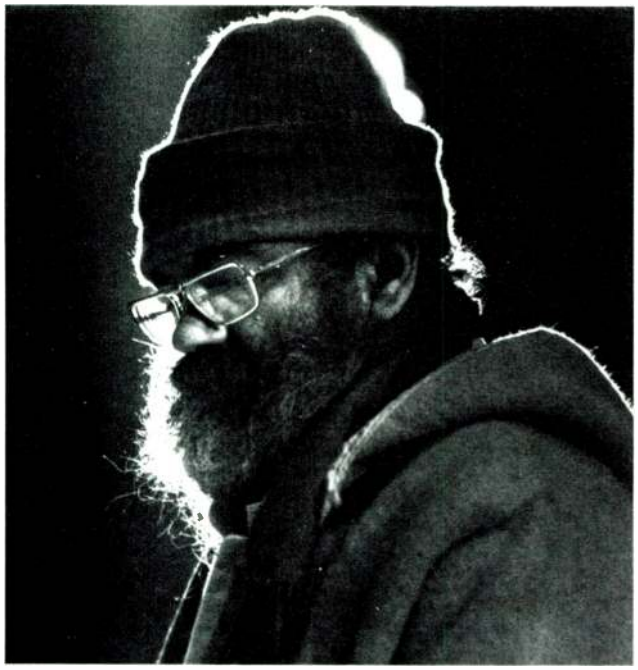
Avoiding the starkly structured popisms that have made country cousins R.E.M. and Guadalcanal Diary cult faves, Fetchin Bones produces a frazzled thrift-shop sound that takes in the most frantic elements of country, soul, rock and blues. What should be a sonic mess becomes a high-energy hoedown.

Guitarist **Aaron Pitkin** attributes the quintet's eclectic success to members' individual tastes and a tolerance for all kinds of music. "Anything that one person hates somebody else loves. When we write our songs everybody contributes what they feel and it just comes out that way. For example, I'm a big Bob Dylan fan and everybody in the band likes Led Zeppelin. So when you go from Dylan to Zeppelin, you're bound to end up with something weird."

Fetchin Bones' debut LP, *Cabin Flounder* on DB Records, was recorded in only six days at Drive In Studios, and successfully captures the band's raggedy edge. Its wide range of influences may confuse some; Nichols finds the lack of focus rather entertaining.

"People respond to us so differently," she says. "Some will say, 'Are y'all a punk band?' and others tell us that we sound like the Grateful Dead. There was one preppy who came up to us after a show and said, 'I shouldn't like your band, but I think y'all are great.' Ultimately, though, I really don't care what they think we sound like as long as they enjoy the music."

– *Michael Kaplan*



MICHAEL KOH

LA MONTE YOUNG

Rare Sighting of a Legend!

What becomes a legend most? For avant-garde composer La Monte Young, a low profile. As the acknowledged father of minimalism and guru emeritus to the British art-rock school, his influence is pervasive, his music more "heard of" than heard.

"I always try to let my intuition lead the way," Young says, referring to the evolutionary nature of his music. His tools are deceptively simple: long sustained tones used singly as drones, or layered to create spacious harmonies with overtones. Signal sources are telephone poles (drones) and the wind (variable tones), sounds Young cites as his first musical remembrances when he was growing up in a log cabin in Bern, Idaho.

In the past thirty years Young's cut a wide swath. He pioneered "free jazz" in Los Angeles during the 50s; one of his groups (Young played sax) featured the pre-Ornette talents of Don Cherry and Billy Higgins. His mid-60s Theater of Eternal Music collective in New York included a young Welsh violist named John Cale, who applied Young's drone concepts to the Velvet Underground's early recordings. Then there's his impact on "serious" music. Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Philip Glass owe a debt to Young, who in 1958 presented his *Trio For Strings*, a static work using just four notes in five minutes.

Given the breadth of his achievements and his mystical reputation, Young's appearance at Washington's Kennedy Center on October 16 was a surprise. He was in town for the world premiere of *The Second Dream Of The High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer (Melodic Version)*: four muted trumpets playing four pitches improvised within strict guidelines dictated by the composer. The brass quartet, suspending time for seventy minutes, led the audience through a cosmos of aural delights.

Obviously pleased by the performance and its reception, Young fielded questions afterward. Asked if the piece would sound the same next time, he invoked compositional laws and psychoacoustic principles. It was an intuitive way of saying "not on your life."

– Charles McCardell

ARROW

Taking Soca To The Bridge

Calypso has been around for a long time, and we need some new sounds in it. I'm not saying we should take the music away from the Caribbean, but we have to take our package and prepare it for export."

Alphonsus Cassell of Montserrat, a.k.a. the Mighty Arrow, is doing his bit for the Balance of Musical Trade. His underground club smash from summer '84, "Hot Hot Hot," has sold close to 100,000 copies worldwide: sales of his follow-up "Long Time" are proceeding apace. In the U.K., a major label drive put Arrow on the British charts for a month last summer, and onto the TV show *Top of the Pops*.

Soca, the heated-up party syncopation derived from traditional calypso, has been the sound of the eastern Caribbean for six or seven years. But unlike reggae, that other Carib-beat export, soca has yet to crack the mainstream pop consciousness. "It will take perhaps another two years," muses Arrow, on a short breather between delivering boxes of his latest LP, *Soca Savage*, to West Indian shops in Brooklyn, New York. "What I'm trying to do now is cross the bridge, not just to get on the British charts, but internationally."

One of the biggest obstacles to bridge-crossing, he says, is identity. "A lot of people love the music when they first hear it, because soca has so much excitement. But they don't know what they're hearing. Or *who* they're hearing—there haven't been any new stars since the Mighty Sparrow."

Arrow is working overtime, literally, to change that state of affairs. No laid-back island style here: He's a sharp entrepreneur who manages his own career plus a string of men's boutiques, produces his own records, gets by on four hours of sleep a night, tours all year, and still manages to explode onstage like a Caribbean kissing cousin of James Brown or Mick Jagger. "When you play for Caribbean people," he explains, "they demand fire right through, from beginning to end. So you get used to moving fast."

– Daisann McLane

Roll Over, Guy Lombardo

Every so often somebody decides there should be an institution honoring rock 'n' roll music—and that's about as far as it goes. But Ahmet Ertegun decided to make the dream a reality. Not that Ertegun hasn't already done enough for rock 'n' roll: The co-founder of Atlantic Records made sure Ray Charles, the Drifters, Big Joe Turner, and later Aretha Franklin and Led Zeppelin got into pop history books.

Not too surprisingly, then, Ertegun is also the chairperson and driving force behind the non-profit Rock And Roll Hall of Fame Foundation. On January 23 at New York's Waldorf-Astoria the group honored the first ten artist inductees: Chuck Berry, James Brown, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Fats Domino, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and Elvis Presley. Over one hundred music-industry figures voted on forty-one nominees picked by an all-male nominating committee. The all-male board of directors includes the heads of most major record companies—that is, except Motown Records President Jay Lasker, who declined membership, according to a Motown spokesperson who had no further comment.

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ANDY FREEBERG/RETNA

THE ADVENTURES

Truth in Packaging Be Damned!

Name to the contrary, the Adventures do not make a habit of exploring strange, uncharted musical territories. Instead, their forte is full-bodied pop laced with ringing harmonies in the sunny California tradition of the Eagles, Fleetwood Mac et al.

Nothing odd there, except the majority of the septet hail from Belfast, Northern Ireland. "I used to try to steer the vocals away from sounding like they do," guitarist/songwriter **Pat Gribben** notes, "but finally I had to admit that's the way we are."

During the late 70s Gribben and Adventures lead singer Terry Sharpe served in Starjets, a power-pop combo that released one LP before self-destructing. (Gribben wasn't on the LP, though.) Arriving in London without a place to stay in 1979, Gribben learned from his old pal that a fellow Belfaster named Eileen had an extra bed. "Terry told me that Eileen would put me up as long as I wanted," he laughs, "but he told her I only needed to stay one night." The devious matchmaking worked: the two married.

The Adventures were formed in 1983 around the core of Gribben and singers Sharpe, Eileen Gribben and Spud Murray, the last a former road manager for Stiff Little Fingers and the Boomtown Rats. Assuming the role of pop tunesmith for the first time, Gribben bid farewell to his days as a devotee of such axe heavies as Robert Fripp and John McLaughlin. "I don't know why I started writing so late," Gribben says. "There's no excuse for it. But now I'm learning all the time."

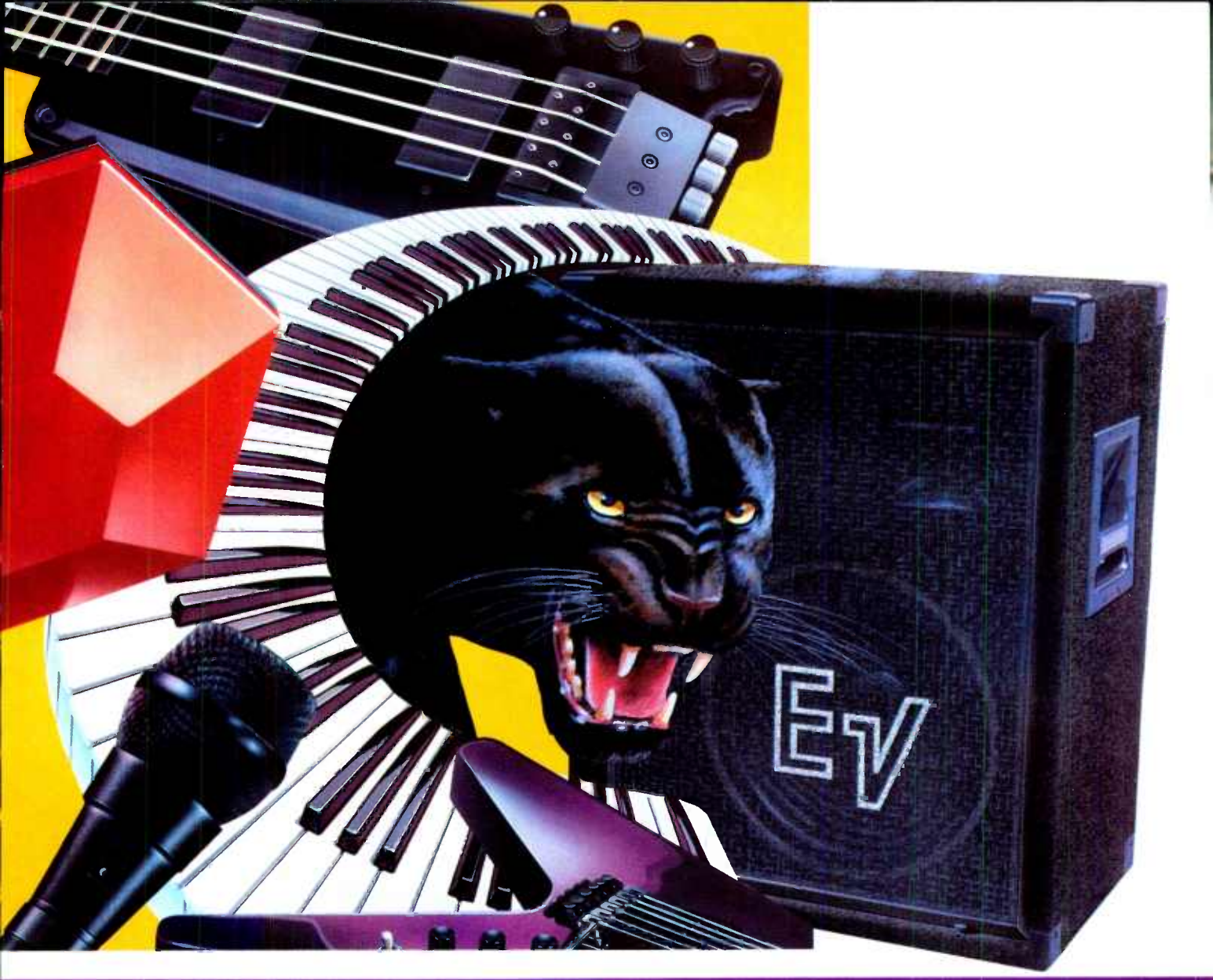
Inexperienced or not, Gribben knows what he likes. He went through three producers for the band's self-titled debut album. Endless mixing finally resulted in acceptable sonics, though Gribben says he's still not really satisfied—he wants a large sound like Tears For Fears' *Songs From The Big Chair*. "One of the things I don't like about our album is the lack of danceability," he adds. "That'll change the next time. We'll still have all the harmonies and melodies—it'll just groove more." – *Jon Young*

Alternate Media

Bitch aptly describes itself as "the women's rock newsletter with bite"—not that we know of any other women's rock newsletters. But you don't have to be female to enjoy it, or even write for it. The third issue is a twenty-eight page magazine covering a range of styles. Women and others should find it a welcome change from male-dominated rock writing. (San Jose Face, Suite 164, 478 W. Hamilton Ave., Campbell, CA 95008.)

"Often in error—never in doubt" is the forthright motto of *The A&R Report*, an idiosyncratic tip sheet—no, newsletter—no, personal sounding board for disgruntled paranoids. The anonymous *Report* views pop music and other cultural ephemera through an infrared filter in essays like "What Is The 'New' Privacy?" and "Loving The Populists: Bruce and Huey Sell 11 Million Burgers." Could this be your cup of acid? (P.O. Box 22113, San Francisco, CA 94122.)

LISA LAARMAN



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Hanrahan from page 20
see him further. A guy who is too uncomfortable with the comfortable to ever stop shaking things up.

During sessions for one album, Kip recalls, "if the band was sounding too comfortable, I'd walk into the lobby of the recording studio and go, 'Uh, can anyone here play guitar?' Of course they'd be terrible," he laughs, a tad demonically, "but it would force the rest of the group into new relationships with each other. Another time I brought a guy in to hypnotize the band. I wanted them to play the opposite of their natural style, like, if a guy played very deliberately, I'd have him ordered to *not* accent the one.

"It didn't work though. I'd snap my fingers, 'Do this,' and Steve Swallow would be sitting there going [*he imitates someone in a trance*], 'Noooooo.' And the music just turned into this terrible drudge. From that point on, whenever I had an idea all the guys in the band would go, 'Oh right, you mean like the hypnotist session?'"

Kip smiles ruefully. "Okay, now you're all fired. And I'll find a band that doesn't remember the hypnotist session." Ⓜ

Del Fuegos from page 24
that "I felt really bad when Jim Ralston came in. We were going, 'We're a band, we don't need anybody else.' But me and Dan ended up learning a ton, learning a lot of licks, and, well, that helps the band I would say."

Songwriting for Dan Zanes is a challenge, and constant touring had the Fuegos winding up in the studio recording *Boston, Mass.* with only five completed tunes. "We didn't know you could set up and play in your hotel room," snickers Dan, "so Mitchell helped me get a songwriter's attitude and overcome blocks, put pieces of music together. I wrote most of it in Los Angeles, so a lot of it is looking at home, missing home while you are far away. I can only write about our little space in the world."

Their little space is getting crowded as the Del Fuegos attract more and more fans, some big stars among them. Bob Dylan has praised them. Robert Plant tells everyone who will listen that the Fuegos are his favorite American band, and he's looking to cover one of their tunes with the Honeydrippers. Then there was the show last spring in North Carolina, when Nils Lofgren and Bruce Springsteen sauntered backstage between sets, and then joined them onstage. What do these older rock guys see in the Del Fuegos?

"I think they hear riffs that they've played," muses Dan. "They hear younger, enthusiastic guys giving them the reverence that they deserve. We try to pick up the classic groove; there's something that has moved us about rock that we try to get into our thing. They appreciate our efforts to keep it alive. So many people that we admire have given us support." He seems stunned. "That's one reason why we could never see quitting. What can you say when Bruce Springsteen shows enthusiasm for your work? You say, 'Wow, I'm gonna keep playin' for a while.'" Dan Zanes' deep-throated laugh resonates.

Much of the Fuegos' charm—especially onstage—is their wonder and bewilderment at being there at all. When Tom Petty, to the Fuegos the man whom all rock rolls around, finally came to see a performance, Warren impetuously stole his brandy glass.

"We are doing our own thing but we want to be part of the chain, you know?" Dan figures. "That's what it is, a chain of like-minded people making this music that is so...necessary."

He contemplates momentarily. "We were talking about this the other day. This is gonna signal to us that we have arrived: Someday, when we are down at our practice space, Tom Petty, Keith Richards and Billy Gibbons will walk down and ask if they can drink a few beers with us. That will be heaven on earth. Until then we'll feel there's more to do and miles to go before we sleep."

The beer will probably be labeled Miller, and Warren will save the cans. Ⓜ

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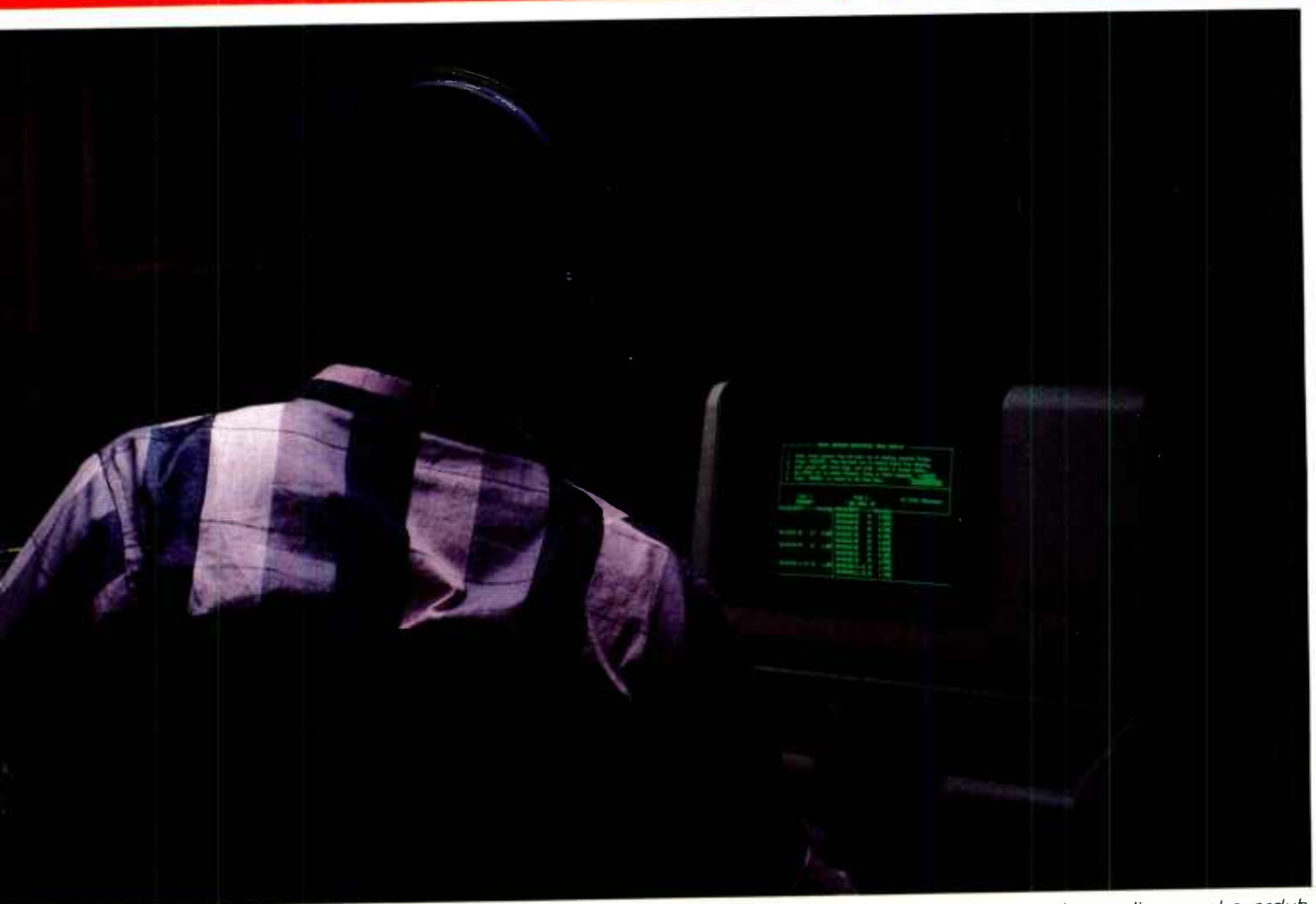

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Men at Work's Exploding Ticket To Stardom

Men At Work was a success phenomenon which comes along once in a decade—in any country. In 1980 these five flippant but talented musicians were lucky to earn fifty dollars a show at the dank Cricketer's Arms pub in a working-class suburb of Melbourne, Australia. Two years later they held down the number one single *and* album spot in both Britain and the United States—a grand slam achieved in the past only by the mega-star likes of Rod Stewart and Barbra Streisand. Men At Work's debut album, *Business As Usual*, became the longest running number one debut LP in American chart history (displacing *The Monkees*). It remained at the summit for a staggering fifteen weeks and sold nearly five million copies. The group's first two U.S. single releases reached number one, as they had done in Australia.

"I could feel it was going so fast that it was almost like someone had to be thrown off with the momentum," says soft-spoken original bassist John Rees. He was right. By 1985—after the band's third album sold about a tenth as well as its debut, and yielded no hit singles—Scottish-born singer/guitarist Colin Hay was the only

By Glenn A. Baker

And then

LAURA LEVINE

Ron Strykert, Greg Ham, Colin Hay, John Rees & Jerry Speiser

there was one

Man still At Work. Aussies, what happened?

Men At Work represented a global breakthrough for Australian music in general. The Bee Gees came close in the 60s, but with Australia just a stepping-stone for the three English-born singers, there was no sense of national pride in their international exploits. The Easybeats, Sherbet, John Paul Young and Little River Band all made their mark, but invariably it was short-lived and not quite cataclysmic.

The Men At Work saga was truly breathtaking. Their second album, *Cargo*, followed *Business As Usual* into the high reaches of the American charts and sold well over two million copies. They won a Grammy, a wallful of other awards and citations, and enormous radio popularity. It was a time when new British rock sounded a little too left-field and even Americans were finding their own mass-appeal AOR rock tame and predictable. Men At Work sailed into the void brandishing a bright, quirky and moderately inventive sound which struck a surprisingly responsive chord with both consumers and radio programmers.

Being Australian was no disadvantage. "Americans don't know much about Australia but they're fascinated by it," observed founding keyboards/reeds player Greg Ham after a North American tour. "There is this mystique, or at least a lack of knowledge, and they have a thing about this being the Last Frontier. I think that a lot of Americans would like to feel that there *is* a last frontier around because they haven't got one of their own anymore."

Certainly no humble ensemble of larrikin rockers from the bottom of the world could have known about MTV. The revolutionary twenty-four-hours-a-day television rock service allowed Men At Work to convey an indelible image of the last frontier visually as well as musically. Just as the Beatles' youthful, cheeky irreverence proved irresistible in the dark post-JFK days of 1964, so the unconcerned self-effacement of another musical unit with compelling accents ensnared a new generation of bored youth in 1982.

The irony of this stateside furor was that, as Hay emphasizes, "Americans were almost the last to be sold on us. They weren't quick off the mark at all." By the end of 1981 Men At Work had notched up number-one singles in Holland and Germany, a number two in France, and had scored a platinum album in Canada. But they were still being passed over by CBS America, the company which later presented them with a plaque for generating $100 million worth of international record business.

"The A&R guy in New York turned the album down twice," Hay recalls wryly, "and the decision was overturned by the vice-president of the company. That was solely because Russell Deppler, our manager, used to sit in their offices from eight-thirty a.m. to six p.m. wanting money. They finally decided to release the LP just to get rid of him, and that's no joke! Even then, at great cost to us, we hired an independent publicist to ring up the radio stations and sell them Men At Work. The first single was quirky and very different from what American radio played. The kids loved it, they thought it was a very cool sound, and it snowballed from there."

As the snowball grew ludicrously huge in the northern hemisphere, all was not well down south. When international success became apparent, the heavily ingrained "tall poppy syndrome" began to emerge in Australia. Traditionally, when the fiercely egalitarian Australians sense their own becoming "too big for their boots" they set about cutting the "tall poppies" down to size. "That's why people leave this country," Hay snarls. "That's why they can't stand to be here any more. They have to go somewhere to just do their work and be appreciated for that, and nothing else. Americans are more positive; they put a priority on someone achieving what they can do. In its cleanest, purest form, it's the essence of 'I can achieve my dreams.' If I went to see a band in a New York club and I stood on the end of the queue, people would think I was a bit dumb because they like their star system. If I was in Melbourne and I pushed my way to the front of the queue, the reaction would be, 'Who the fuck does this bastard think he is?'" Greg Ham concurs: "Every person in America is potentially a star, every cabbie writes songs or has a friend who is in films. I get off on that sort of positive energy."

Air Supply became accustomed to being in the top three in the U.S. and the lower thirties in their native Australia, but for Men At Work the rejection was a cruel blow. Following their first, triumphant U.S. tour they flew home to play a huge outdoor festival alongside such concert champions as Angel City and Dragon. The punters sat back smugly and said, "Okay, big shots, show us your stuff." Tired and possibly intimidated, the Men turned in a lackluster performance which generated derision and led them to be widely considered as wimps. Many arbiters of public taste dismissed the recent heroes as fabricated "popstars," a venomous swear word. "What did upset us," Ham admits, "was other bands who shot their mouths off about how they deserved success more than us. It was incredibly short-sighted because what we did helped every other Australian band trying to make it overseas."

By 1983 the roller coaster ride was beginning to lose its appeal for not only Men At Work but also the American media, who were running out of angles on the rags-to-riches story. Cracks, even if not yet visible, began to rend the once-inviolable unit. By the end of an arduous seventy-city tour, Hay says, "The group became the Men Who Didn't Care If They Ever Worked Again."

Brian Epstein didn't deem it necessary to sign his management contract with the Beatles. Russell Deppler didn't even bother with a contract, according to John Rees: "Until 1983 we didn't have a written agreement." Drummer Jerry Speiser had felt uneasy about business matters for some time and so engaged his own attorney, to the undisguised fury of Hay. It was as if the pin had been pulled from a grenade. Speiser was not the only member who became alarmed at the confusing corporate labyrinth the band was in as a result of their success. But he was the only one prepared to manifest his concern and suffer accordingly.

"One day in Nashville," Rees relates, "Colin called a meeting and almost pulled Jerry to pieces. I was too scared to take notes that day. He was hassling Jerry because he felt he was attacking Russell on management matters. Colin liked a tight ship, like a captain. Jerry was surprised that no one in the room stood up for him. Ron [Strykert, guitarist] almost got thrown out too, at one stage. Colin told him his guitar was out of tune and he didn't look interested onstage." Ham now admits, "It really felt like it was finished in a lot of ways, even before the end of the 1983 tour. There wasn't much being said about it but it was kind of obvious that it was irreconcilable at that point."

From day one there was never any doubt who was the unassailable leader of Men At Work. Colin Hay wrote and sang the lion's share of the songs, and delivered most of the deadpan stage lines. Like a benevolent dictator, he scorned the very concept of democracy within the ranks. But Hay's granite dedication and relentless drive resulted in five starving musicians becoming financially comfortable for the remainder of their mortal days. "I've always been afraid of Colin, in awe of him," Rees says. "Every time I look at things in my house, I feel very grateful. I wouldn't have all these belongings if it wasn't for Colin's music. I can't repay the man except by loving him from a distance."

"When the 1983 tour finished," Hay explains, "for all intents and purposes it wasn't really a band then. We all just ran away. Basically the original line-up did not have a common goal, and we were never a cohesive unit, socially, philosophically or musically. We'd played together for five years and it was just clear that the band had to reform if it was going to

Colin Hay reacquaints himself with the public on the new Men at Work's Australian pub tour.

survive. When you've worked with people for that long it's like being married to five different people at the same time. There's bound to be a couple of divorces along the way."

Back in Australia for what would become an eighteen-month respite, Hay set out reassembling his band with all the subtlety of a fart in an elevator. The five members and their manager were equal participants in the enterprise; when the friction—which would eventually lead to an attempt to secure a Supreme Court injunction on a finances meeting—became too much for Hay to bear, a majority vote jettisoned Rees and Speiser from the band. "Jerry rang up and said, 'Have you got a letter yet?'" Rees recalls. "I said no and he said, 'You'll get one any minute.' Sure enough, there was a knock on the door and I got a four-page letter. As friends, they could have told me personally. It was, 'Sorry, see you later.' It still hurts. But I could see the frustration in the band, Colin's frustration. I could see it happening around me and I thought, this is going to explode."

Just days before, Rees and Ham did a radio interview in which they talked optimistically about the band's future. Rees' loyalty was without question; there is an element of pathos to his insistence that "I really didn't want to leave the band. We had another ten albums in us, we had just started. Two albums is nothing in a band's career. Men At Work was five individuals with tons of potential, which has now been smashed.... I still love them."

Before and after the lawsuits were being settled, the remaining members pursued diversionary interests. Hay married, honeymooned in the south of France and produced a solid album for Melbourne band Le Club Foote. Strykert, becoming more shadowy than ever, drifted off to Greece. Ham goofed about with his girlfriend's band Relax With Max. "After a while," Hay says, "Greg, Ron and I drifted back together and started playing each other's tunes. It was then that we realized we should really keep going as Men At Work. We tossed around the idea of changing the name but then we thought that'd be really stupid because for the next two years everybody would be asking us why we changed the name. Members of bands change all the time."

The break gave Hay the precious opportunity to craft an album slowly. "We recorded the first album in three weeks. I just had one and a half days to do my guitar bits. We didn't have a clue how things were done. Looking back, that LP has a charm for me. *Cargo* had just three songs that I liked." American producer Peter Mclan, despite his magnificent success, was dispensed with. Rhett Davies said no to a trip to Australia, so Jimmy Iovine flew in for a week. "We needed somebody to pull a bit of soul from us," Hay says. "Jimmy just didn't work. You couldn't just say that we had no common ground. It was more a case of two different planets going *whoosh*!, completely missing each other." Agreed on the perilous path of self-production, Hay and Ham (with undetermined input from the seemingly disinterested Strykert), set about recording *Two Hearts*. "There were no artistic restrictions," Hay says. "Greg would produce my vocals and I'd produce his sax. It was very exciting to work like that."

Unfortunately the excitement did not rub off on the paying public. At a glittering Sydney launch party, CBS executives read a cable from the head office enthusing over the album and predicting another mega-million sales performance. But when it hit the shops in America last June, purchasers stayed away in droves. The album lurched to number fifty in *Billboard* and then faded away gracelessly. Hay's reaction to this debacle differed according to his mood. To one interviewer he snapped, "*Cargo* was supposed to have flopped because it only got to number three in America! And with this one, people say, 'Ooh, it's a stiff, isn't it?' And I say, 'Yeah, I guess it is, it's only sold 750,000 copies.' Any other band that sells that much would be over the moon." In a less defensive mood he conceded his disappointment: "I went into a deep and lasting depression about that. I take it to heart, I make no bones about that. When a two-month American tour gets pulled out from under you, you feel distress. We could have done that American tour, but we couldn't do it on the level we planned on.... I think it's the best album. I don't feel it deserves to be forgotten."

Strykert handed in his notice as soon as the first, ill-chosen single, "Everything I Need," almost failed to break into the

U.S. top forty. Ham at least waited until "Maria" and "Hard Luck Story" were given a chance. Inevitably, he too shuffled off, muttering something about working on film and television scores. Both musicians, with exceptionally healthy bank balances, no doubt viewed with some distaste the prospect of hauling themselves around the world trying to rekindle a flame that had quite obviously flickered and died.

But Hay would have none of it. His own inner furnace was far from extinguished. He railed against headlines proclaiming "Men At Work Split" following the announcement of Ham's departure. "We are not going away," he warned one reporter. "There are a lot of people who want to kill the band off. A lot of people felt our success wasn't warranted; they didn't realize how much work we put into it and how many things we did right. It offended people who had been trying for so long and doing things wrong for so long." To another writer the resilient Scotsman thundered, "Listen, I don't care, I don't give a fuck what people say about my band. It's no concern to me. I'm only concerned with creating quality and that's what I've done. I've got no problems with that."

The fighting words continued until the critics backed off. Then Hay came back shooting with real ammunition. He handpicked a new Men At Work: sax player Paul Williamson, guitarists Colin Bayley (ex-Mi-Sex) and James Black (ex-Mondo Rock), bassist Jeremy Alsop and drummer Chad Wackerman (ex-Frank Zappa). "Sail To You," the fourth (Australian) single from *Two Hearts*, almost arrogantly sported a jacket photo of the new (and as yet unrecorded) line-up.

Toward the end of 1985 the new Men hit the brutal Australian pub rock circuit, where no excuses are ever accepted. No superstar trappings: The band rocked on like hopeful aspirants without a recording contract. Hay called the tour "Back To Business," declared that it would include Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand, and—having told the critics to go and get stuffed—basked in their praise. The shows were mostly sell-outs, and the punters' verdicts unanimously affirmative. "We'd always seemed to play Australia at the end of a world tour, when we'd be really tired," Hay says, as if in apology for the band's previous live reputation. "This time it's different, the audiences have been great. Now it's more relaxed and more musical, not as crazy as it was."

Hay's battle to re-establish Men At Work has been a purgative. All the lethargy which prompted the year-and-a-half suspension of normal duties is washed away. "I don't have *anything* to prove," he insists. "I'm a lot clearer about what I want to do. I want to make Gaelic soul, that's my roots. I want the rhythm section to be more flexible, the style mellower but more dense. Fronting a band like this is a release for me. All of a sudden I feel as if I've hardly scratched my capabilities. In the old days maybe my own paranoia about sudden success was that I wouldn't stretch myself. Now I've got that energy I've always had, but lost over the last few years. I'm so proud of this band, I want to record with them. I want to play clubs and build up a live following from scratch."

Despite the cocky over-confidence, even Hay must glimpse the truth behind Greg Ham's pronouncement at the end of the 1983 tour. "I don't think we'll ever be allowed to be that big again," Ham claimed. "Such an amazing amount of our music was being played that it really was an overkill situation." What the new Men At Work can offer in terms of slick professionalism and experience is tempered by a loss of innocence and spontaneity. Gone is the wide-eyed amazement of five young rockers steadfastly refusing to take hero-worship seriously. As journalist Peter Wilmoth observed, "It may never again be possible to watch them acting quirky and eccentric and believe that is how they really feel." Ⓜ

Thanks to Peter Wilmoth of the Melbourne Age *and Christie Eliezer of* Juke *magazine for their assistance.*

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Poolside mayhem with a reshuffled band of rock 'n' roll anarchists

By J.D. Considine

VAN HALEN
ALL FOR ONE & FREE FOR ALL

It had the makings of a typical California rock star interview. There we were, high in the hills above Bel Air, sitting poolside under a clear blue sky at the home of guitarist Edward Van Halen. On one side of the property was the house, where band wives sat chatting and watching TV; on the other side was 5150, the former racquetball court that serves as Van Halen's recording studio. Cluttering up the space in between was an impressive assortment of Ferraris, with the odd Maserati, Lamborghini and Porsche thrown in for balance. Were it not for temperatures in the low 60s, it would have been a perfect rock star fantasy.

But the weather was par for the course. The idea was to get a handle on the new Van Halen—Edward and Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony and recently-added singer Sammy Hagar—in advance of a new album, scheduled for February release. This being November, the album was still unfinished and untitled, a situation that tended to limit conversational gambits. So as the band members huddled in their deck chairs for warmth, it looked like the best opening was

Photographs by Steve Marsel

to talk about the course of events leading to the replacement of David Lee Roth by Sammy Hagar.

Before the question could be posed, Sammy Hagar jumped in. "You better ask your questions quick," he said, "because these guys don't wanna answer them." At which point the rest of the band laughs, and Edward Van Halen gets up, wandering off towards the house.

It looks like it's going to be one of *those* interviews.

Granted, the band remains something of a four-ring circus, but when we last saw them, David Lee Roth was acting as ringmaster. Van Halen was just coming off *1984*, its most successful album ever. Thanks to the chart-topping "Jump" and Edward's cameo on Michael Jackson's "Beat It," the band was closer to the mainstream than it had ever been. Even in light of their platinum-plus back catalog, Van Halen seemed on the verge of a major breakthrough.

All was not well within, however. The bickering that had long been a part of the band's creative process was becoming increasingly obvious. At the time, Roth put it this way: "What Eddie and I do is, we *argue*....Somehow we reach a compromise. No one is ever happy except the public." But whatever equanimity accompanied that admission was soon overwhelmed by the press reports; "Rock's Oddest Couple: Can It Last?" screamed a cover line in this magazine.

Still, such a dissolution seemed about as unlikely as Edward and Valerie's perennially-rumored divorce. Even when Roth released his solo EP, *Crazy From The Heat*, in January '85, the notion of a band break-up was carefully sidestepped. By mid-February, according to a source close to the band, the foursome had "mostly finished" two songs toward *1984*'s follow-up.

ALEX: Where'd you get those shoes?
MUSICIAN: *In Baltimore, where I live.*
ALEX: You live in a shoestore?

Everything changed, though, as Roth's cover of "California Girls" moved into the top ten, and the singer spun out a pair of pulchritudinous videos in support of the EP. Say what you will about Roth's singing, his video work was almost universally acclaimed, leaving him eager to expand his horizons. Sensing that the moment was right, Roth began shopping a cinematic treatment based on *Crazy From The Heat*. There was still no public talk of his leaving the band, but the seeds had been sown.

Edward, for one, wasn't particularly happy to be left twiddling his thumbs as Roth wheeled and dealed. "We were basically in the twilight zone, not knowing whether Dave wanted to do a record or not," he complains. "He left us hanging there for quite a while—like six to eight months without us knowing what the fuck the guy's trip was."

So Edward found some new playmates. One was Patti Smythe, the voice behind Scandal, whom Edward describes as "a good friend of Valerie's and mine." Another was Pete Townshend, who discussed doing an album with Edward. "But I like the feeling of a family," Edward insists, and eventually it became time to straighten up family ties.

The end result was fairly simple. Edward, brother Alex and Michael Anthony decided to hand Roth his walking papers, and went shopping for a new singer. By June, they'd found one in Sammy Hagar. But just how they got from the old line-up to the new remains a matter of mystery, intrigue and bad jokes.

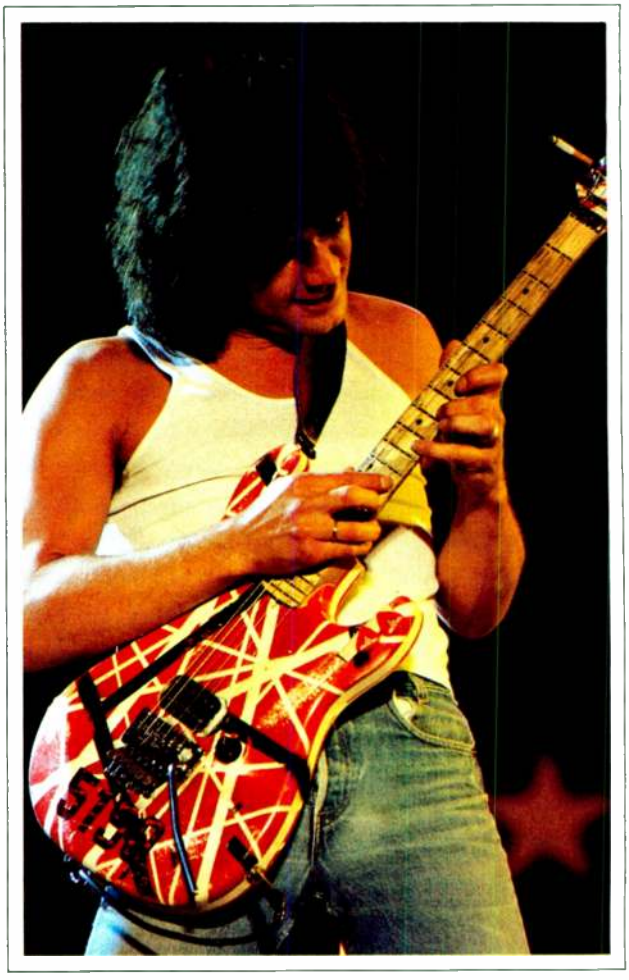
SAMMY: Well, Al, I think you should explain what happened. 'Cause you know. I don't know. I don't know what the fuck happened.
ALEX: It's very simple, and very mundane and very boring.
EDWARD: I know, but I can't tell.
MUSICIAN: *Why can't you tell?*
EDWARD: 'Cause it's hard to explain.
ALEX: [*Cautioning*] Hey, look, don't squeeze the potatoes, okay, 'cause it hurts their peelings.
SAMMY: Awww, man, that stank! [*to tape recorder*] That was *Al*, in case you don't get the voices right.
MUSICIAN: *How did the split come about, whereby you got rid of David Lee and hired Sammy?*
EDWARD: Very simple. Very simple. Dave is not a rock 'n' roller. He wants to be a movie star. And it came down to Mike, Al and I making the decision whether we were going to movie star with him....
ALEX: [*Interrupts*] Do the soundtrack.
EDWARD: ...whatever. He was hinting around to us four doing a movie. We wanted to make an album, and he wanted to do a movie, so we said, "bye!" Bye.
MICHAEL: Plain and simple.
ALEX: It was a friendly split, mature. At least it was on our behalf. [*Laughter*]
EDWARD: We're musicians, not actors. We wanted to make an album, he wanted to do a movie, so we said, "Bye!" Plain and simple.
SAMMY: So he's making a movie, and we're doing an album.
EDWARD: And a smokin' motherfucker at that. I'm tellin' ya, you ain't heard nuthin' like it.
MUSICIAN: *As I'm sure you're aware, there were dozens and dozens of rumors about what happened.*
ALEX: Of course. It's all conjecture....
SAMMY: That was probably before anyone said anything.
EDWARD: It was probably before it even happened. I mean, people had been talking about it all along.
MUSICIAN: *Plus there was all that stuff from the last tour....*
EDWARD: That he couldn't jump so high anymore?
MICHAEL: The arthritis in his left toe?
SAMMY: He was caught backstage doing *what*?
ALEX: Now, listen, okay, we're bullshitting here. Sometimes the truth is funnier than if you make something up, y'know?
EDWARD: No wonder we're laughing so hard.
MUSICIAN: *Okay, so you three decided you were going to keep on playing.*
MICHAEL: Oh, yeah. It wasn't actually a decision....
EDWARD: We never planned to stop or anything. We just wanted to make a record, he didn't, so we said "bye." Then he said "bye." So we said "hello" to Sammy.
MUSICIAN: *How did Sammy come into the picture? Was he just walking up the street?*
ALEX: Look, this is interesting. This is a true fact. Originally, when we signed with Warner Bros....
EDWARD: [*Interrupts*] Look, fuck this shit, goddamn it! Ask us something about us, not about *him*.
SAMMY: I read in *Musician* magazine, in the want ads section: "Van Halen looking for a lead singer." I called 'em up, and said "I can sing."
MICHAEL: It was probably Dave's number.
SAMMY: It was Dave I got, and Dave said, "Yeah, they're trying to find a guy for 'em..."
MICHAEL: ...who can sing....
ALEX: Look, he has to print something, and this is the truth.
SAMMY: Now, Ed called me up....
ALEX: This is the truth.
SAMMY: Quickly, Ed called me up and said, "Hey, you wanna get together and see what's happening?" I said sure. Came down here, and it was magic. *Boom*. Overnight. Instantly. Automatically. When I came down, I was thinking, maybe. No big deal. I was happy, but I became happier playing with these guys. So that's all you do it for, right? All of a sudden I said, "Hey, there's something happening here that I'm not fulfilled at on my own." So I stuck around.
MUSICIAN: *When Sammy came down the first time, did you just have him sing along to something?*
EDWARD: Yeah, yeah.

SAMMY: They had two things that we jammed on at first.
EDWARD: Hey, we had twenty, man. We just didn't want to overwork you.
SAMMY: We had two things at that time that ended up being songs.
MICHAEL: He never heard it before. He listened to each song a couple times, not even that, and he just came in and sang it.
SAMMY: In fact, a lot of the melody I sang is what's actually being used now in the vocal track.
EDWARD: Hey, when we walked out of that studio...[*He stands on his chair.*] Pretend the chair ain't there.
MUSICIAN: *For the tape, Ed is about a foot and a half off the ground.*
EDWARD: We be floatin'.
SAMMY: It was great. It came kinda naturally.
ALEX: In a funny way, it was a twist of fate. As fate will have it, if you believe in the stuff, Sammy was the original choice for being in this band to sing, when we first started recording.
MUSICIAN: *Really?*
ALEX: Yes.
EDWARD: And this thing, the way the band is right now, was meant to be. Was meant to be, and is bein', and it should have been *a lot* earlier.
ALEX: It took six records of, um, umm....
MICHAEL: Warming up, y'know?
MUSICIAN: *Well then, what happened the first time?*
ALEX: We got legal problems.
SAMMY: Well, it never came around to it. It was a few people's conception.
ALEX: Everybody was legally entangled in one situation or another. Sammy had his contractual agreements to meet, and we ended up signing to a record company with Roth, and that was the way it worked. We couldn't get out of it, and by the time we found out that Sammy was the choice, it was too late.
SAMMY: But I never found out. It was just a discussion.
EDWARD: We found out that, after the fact, the powers that be actually wanted to replace Roth with Sammy.
SAMMY: It worked out okay. Probably if I'd have joined this band from the beginning, I'd have been trying to make a movie right now, see?

Roth, who in fact *is* making a movie right now, declined comment on his former bandmates' version of events. When his film is finished, he'll have plenty of rebuttal time once his own publicity blitz gets under way. In any case, the cinematic *Crazy From The Heat* is being assembled for CBS Productions with the Picasso Brothers (a.k.a. Roth and video auteur Pete Angelus) co-producing. "The movie, like our name, will be a combination of fine art and pizza delivery," is the company line. Although the film will be billed as a comedy, not a musical, Roth hasn't given up his singing career by any means. In addition to a score by Nile Rodgers, the film will feature a yet-unnamed David Lee Roth band, featuring guitarist Steve Vai and bassist Billy Sheehan. A tour and album are expected by late summer.

Alex's assertion that Sammy Hagar had been considered as a replacement for Roth back before Van Halen started recording is a little harder to swallow. As Heidi Robinson, the band's publicist, put it, "That's news to me." *

Nor does it help that the band worked hard to convey other odd impressions about their new lead singer. For instance, after Sammy confirmed that he is, indeed, down on drugs, Edward added, in perfect deadpan, "Hey, look. For a man that's fifty-two years old, he looks pretty young." A joke, right? But unlike so many of the pranks they pulled, this one kept getting repeated, as if it were Sammy and not the interviewer they were teasing. Even after the tape had been turned off, Alex happened to mention that MTV had reported Sammy's age as forty-two. "Ha!" he laughed. "They were only ten years off."



Let's see Stanley Jordan try *this*.

Regardless of what might have been, the fact of the matter is that after seven years of getting used to David Lee Roth, the record-buying public will understandably be hesitant to accept Sammy Hagar in his stead. Sammy, after all, already has a name and an image; unfortunately, it's worlds apart from Roth's class-clown act. With his tendencies toward jingoism and obvious affinity for the heavy rock crowd, Sammy's solo career presented him as the exact opposite of Roth's quick-witted, cosmopolitan smartass. Granted, that's great for the earth dogs who didn't get David Lee's jokes in the first place, and no doubt they feared that Van Halen was going to end up hip and upscale like ZZ Top. For those fans on the pop side of things, though, Sammy is seen as a giant step backwards.

MUSICIAN: *Well, are you concerned at all about the difficulty of putting the new line-up across to the outside world?*
ALEX: We *are* the outside world.
EDWARD: You mean the *inside* world.
ALEX: We're the first ones to go out. We go out on the streets, we go out and party at clubs, we don't have ten bodyguards or whatever to make some kind of impression on somebody. See, we never lost touch with reality, which is a mistake a lot of people make. Since we are the gutter rats, so to speak, and we like it, we know all the other gutter rats will like it.
MUSICIAN: *What I was worried about....*
ALEX: [*Interrupts*] You shouldn't be worried. *We're* the ones who've put everything on the line.

*At press time, Warners v.p. Bob Merlis commented, "'The powers that be' referred to here are not Warner Bros. If you look at the chronology, I don't think this version holds water."

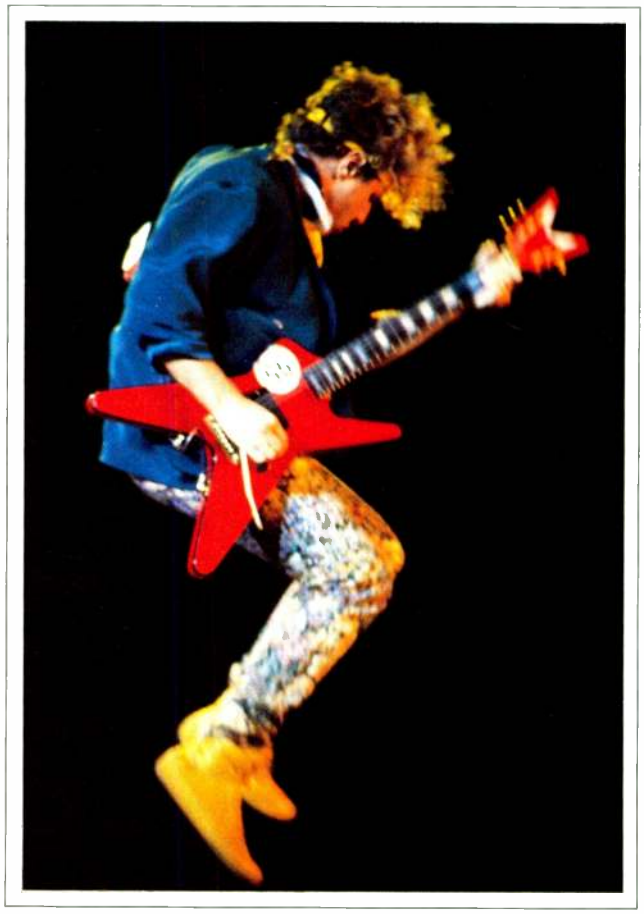
DEBRA TREBITZ

MICHAEL: Plus the fact that Sammy's made a big name for himself on his own.
EDWARD: So what are you worried about?
SAMMY: J.D., really, you don't have to worry, you'll be fine.
ALEX: The pain will go away as soon as it stops hurting.
MUSICIAN: *People I've talked to about the new line-up see Van Halen as being one thing, and Sammy as being another, and have trouble putting the two together.*
EDWARD: When they hear it, and see it....I'm telling you, I personally don't think Van Halen, the way it used to be, was as good as it is now with Sammy, and I don't think Sammy was as good on his own before he joined our forces. It's incredible.
SAMMY: There were no compromises we had to make, and we didn't have to find the thing. It was there, automatically. So, really, it's much simpler than anyone trying to look at my past career and their past career. It's much simpler. It's like a deck of cards. It just went [*makes shuffling motion*] *prrrrrpt*! Perfect.
EDWARD: As Al says, you have to drive a Volkswagen to appreciate a Porsche. This definitely be the Porsche.
SAMMY: The thing we did at Farm-Aid, it happened to be with my old band.
MUSICIAN: *That did confuse a lot of people.*
SAMMY: That's because everyone was trying to say it was the new Van Halen, when it wasn't. It was just me and Eddie.
MUSICIAN: *Of course, they also took you off TV halfway through.*
SAMMY: Actually, no, they took Eddie off TV. If you remember, it was during his solo.
EDWARD: It was, really. I did somethin' wrong. I might've pooted onstage.
SAMMY: Yeah, in his playing he was saying, "Hey, you bad motherfuckers, check this fuckin' wild shit out!"
EDWARD: And they cut me off, man. They put Merle back on.
SAMMY: The country pickers, it shook them up a lot when we came out there. But the audience went nuts. The bottom line is, the audience went wild. I've been in front of 90,000 people, 70,000 people, whatever was there, quite a few times. Never to that kind of reaction. We tore ass up there. But anyway, the point is, Eddie and I looked like we'd been together forever up there. To me. I got a tape of the whole goddamn thing, and I can sit and watch it and go....
EDWARD: And I was nervous as a motherfucker. I see this guy out there. He had however many people were there—stadium show—fuckin' going like *that*. I mean, more so than a Van Halen show. And I'm standing on the side of the stage, goin' "Fuck! I'm gonna go out there and look like a goddamn weenie!"

A certain amount of the band's attitude can be summed up by Alex's remark, "Wait till you hear the music and see the band. Then the rest of the conjecture and philosophical bullshit is gonna come to an end. If you like it, you like it. You don't like it? Then okay, see ya later."

True, that's been Van Halen's basic attitude from the start, but this time there's an important difference. Where once an important part of the band's edge was the creative tension between the Ed-Al-Mike-Dave relationship, now the band works in harmony. Alex: "The good thing about the four of us is that we all have the same tastes, the same feeling for the music. So there really is no heavy-duty arguing as to, 'Well, I wanna keep *this* song.' 'No, you're not gonna put *that* on the record. Fuck you.' That kinda stuff."

And you *can* hear the difference in the music. The rough mixes Edward played were monstrous in their muscle and momentum. With Alex playing a Simmons double-bass kit, the interplay between the drums and the guitars is as fast and ferocious as when Cobham and McLaughlin connected in the old Mahavishnu orchestra. Yet none of that energy is



Let's see Pete Townshend try *this*.

for show, for the overall sound of the song stays close to hard rock basics, and even the most virtuosic moments are carefully molded to the melody.

As promised, Sammy's singing fits perfectly with the sound of the band. Edward likened Sammy's voice to that of Bon Scott, and it's easy to understand why; Sammy has plenty of range and can scream like a banshee, but his sound is always under control. To a certain extent, it's the vocal equivalent of Eddie's guitar sound, combining a cutting edge with an underlying warmth. Best of all, Sammy's melodic instincts are so in sync with Edward's that the songs move forward like a sonic juggernaut, a seemingly unstoppable force.

No wonder, then, Edward seems so ecstatic with his current work—as Valerie Bertinelli put it, "It's nice to have him come home from work happy for a change"—and so bitter about the past. When showing him a copy of my book, *Van Halen!* (Quill), I joked about how, with the band's new line-up, my ending was wrong. "No it's not," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, that band's history. It's over, finished." Flipping the book open to the last page, he saw a picture of Roth wearing chaps, his ass hanging out, and laughed. "Right. *The end!*"

ALEX: J.D., let me say one thing, and that is: You're doing the same thing that a lot of people are going to be doing, which is make comparisons. But as soon as the band comes out, like I said....
EDWARD: This is the *real* Van Halen.
SAMMY: I'm more confident with this album than any album I've done by myself, or with anyone else. It's so unique, so strong, so full of energy that it's the best thing I've ever been

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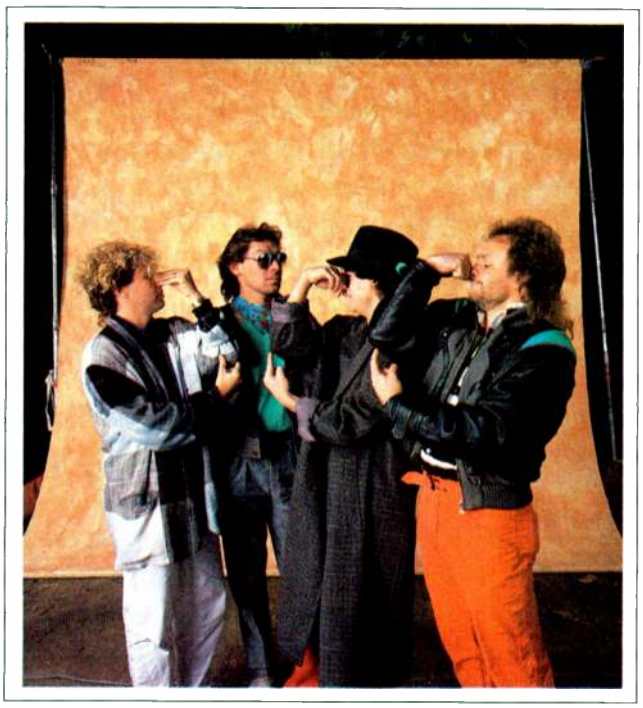
involved with. Or ever heard, to be honest with you. I mean, I'm talking about back when I was a fan and heard Zeppelin for the first time, heard Cream for the first time, or Hendrix—the three biggies, you might say, in my life.
EDWARD: For a fifty-two-year-old man...
MICHAEL: ...he's pretty in tune.
MUSICIAN: *Okay, if you don't want comparisons, did you think about changing the band's name at all?*
EDWARD: I don't see why? The band is still the band.
ALEX: Let's put it bluntly....
EDWARD: We were going to change the name to Roth, but decided against it.
ALEX: Let's put it bluntly: Roth did not make Van Halen.
MUSICIAN: *I'm not saying that he did.*
ALEX: Well, that's just to put it bluntly.



"Half the time I feel like an animal trainer!"

EDWARD: We made Roth.
ALEX: That's the bottom line. This is Van Halen. And now you're looking at the real band.
SAMMY: Some people wanted us to change the name, and a lot of people probably expected me to want to change the name. But that was the last thing I wanted. I was *joining* Van Halen. To me, this is the same music, only a different singer. Only it happens to be a little more sophisticated. Y'know, because I've got a different vocal range, I think Ed can take the limiters off, and open the top up.
EDWARD: There's no limit, swear to God! I mean, last night, Donn Landee, Sammy and I were doing a vocal thing, and I asked him to hit the highest fuckin' note he's ever hit in his life. I was just sitting there thinking, What *can't* this motherfucker do? In the previous Van Halen, I wouldn't even have suggested anything of the kind. And he just went out there and fuckin' did it *three times in a row.*
MUSICIAN: *So the governor is off the engine now?*
SAMMY: Totally. It may blow up but the son of a bitch is going.

The addition of Sammy Hagar to the band has done more than change its sound, though, for the band's inner balance has shifted. No longer is Van Halen a matter of frontman, axeman and henchmen; now, it's all for one, and free-for-all. Sometimes Sammy gives a straight answer, then Alex or Mike jokes from the side. Other times, Alex tries to introduce some order to the proceedings, and ends up playing straight man to Michael or Edward's foolishness. It's as if each band member has developed his own conversational shtick: Alex is either frank and practical, or the band's foremost purveyor of canned corn; Edward veers between passionate declarations and utter non sequiturs; Michael deals mainly in exaggerated sarcasm. Only Sammy seems to be without a solidly definable style, as he tends to give mostly straightforward answers, following the comedy instead of initiating it.

All of which makes almost any question posed by the band seem loaded. A propos of nothing, Edward turned to me and asked, "You have a girlfriend?" Knowing better than to say "no"—obviously, the next question would be, "Well, do you have a boyfriend?"—I hedged my answer.

"Well, you might say that."

"You have any pictures of her?" Edward continued.

"No," I said, "I have a wife."

"Do you have any pictures of *her*?" asked Michael.

"But we were talking about your girlfriend," said Sammy, snickering.

Edward pressed on: "You don't have *any* pictures of your wife or your girlfriend?"

"Not with me," I said, trying to figure how to explain that I didn't have a girlfriend, just a wife. Edward then lowered his voice.

"Do you have any pictures of her...*nude*?"

Good Lord, now what? "No, I don't have any pictures of her nude."

With a conspiratorial gleam in his eye, Edward cocked his head and asked, "Wanna buy some?" As the rest of the band whooped in delight, Edward yelled, "I beat ya to it, Al!"

"That's Al's favorite joke," explained Michael, with Sammy adding, "Every interviewer, he lays that on him."

No wonder rock writers look so haggard.

EDWARD: I'll tell ya, to boil this whole thing down, it's just a lot of fun. I've never had so much fun in my life.
MUSICIAN: *Well, this interview is certainly more fun than the last few I've done.*
ALEX: Yeah, and you probably won't *get* anything out of it, either!
SAMMY: It's going to really project onstage real strong, I tell ya right now. It's gonna be unbelievable.
EDWARD: Fuck onstage, man, I'm a selfish motherfucker. I wanna be happy first. I can't get onstage and make anyone happy unless I'm happy, y'know? And I've been happy since the day this guy [*indicates Sammy*] walked in.
ALEX: And I'll be happy soon as I take a leak, so excuse me for a moment. [*Laughter, as Al gets up, and heads to the side of the pool, where he commences operations.*]
MUSICIAN: *I don't know if the mike will pick that up.*
MICHAEL: What? Oh, I'm sorry. Here. [*Picks up tape recorder, holds out toward poolside.*]
SAMMY: Are you pissing in the pool, Al? [*to Edward*] Aw, man, are you gonna let him piss in your pool?
EDWARD: Hey, Al, off the side, man.
MICHAEL: Hey, don't be takin' a dump in there!
EDWARD: Off the side, you fuckin' idiot.
SAMMY: Aw, man, I'm never swimming in that pool.
[*Alex returns.*]
EDWARD: Goddamn, Al!
ALEX: Hey! There's chlorine in there.
EDWARD: [*mumbles*] I don't swim in there, anyway. What the hell....
ALEX: Do you know how many people who go to public swimming pools sit there and take a leak?
SAMMY: Half the time I feel like an animal trainer, but that's

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okay. I don't mind. It's the same thing—the circus, rock 'n' roll, it's all the same shit. Look at Motley Crue.

Progress on the album seemed to be zipping along, although it was impossible to determine just how far along the band was at the time. Direct questioning got me nowhere. "About five miles of tape," said Alex, adding, "It doesn't really matter how many [songs] we've finished at this point. We're shooting for a release date of the record beginning February, and plans are already being made for touring."

Such evasiveness was understandable, though, given Edward's overwhelming paranoia about the work in progress. It wasn't so much that he was embarrassed about the music itself, just that he didn't want an unfinished product described as if it were the wholly completed work. Thus, when he played the rough mixes, he kept a running commentary: "There'll be harmony vocals here...a guitar solo here...we haven't put the vocal in there, yet...." As for lyrics and song titles, forget it. "Don't write any of this stuff down," he said. "It all might be different when the record comes out." Edward, in fact,

Farm-Aid: "I thought I'd look like a goddamn weenie!"

just about flipped when he saw me looking at some of the equipment in 5150's studio rack, because he thought I was trying to copy the titles off some tape boxes sitting there.

As usual, Edward has been contributing most of the musical ideas, with Sammy providing the lyrics and some vocal lines, and the rest of the band rounding things out. "Yeah," says Alex. "I bring the beer..."

"...and Mike passes out," adds Sammy.

But there has been no real formula to the recording. "We set up differently all the time," Alex explains. Sometimes, the bass or guitar is run direct, sometimes they mike the amp. Sometimes they do both and mix it. "There's even been times when I've set up by myself and added my part to the tape," he said. Edward has sampled drum tracks with his Emulator, and even plays a ballad on a Steinway grand MIDI'd to an OBX-a. Alex summed up, "It's whatever works."

Donn Landee, the band's longtime engineer, is running the board, and everything else is more or less cooperative. Asked about a producer, Edward responded, "We all basically are [producing], and if we run into a brick wall, Mick Jones is going to be helping out."

That's Mick Jones from Foreigner, by the way. "Not the guy from Sex Pistols," as new waver Sammy put it.

Inside 5150: Letting it All Hang Out

MUSICIAN: *I need to know about your equipment.*
ALEX: I have nine inches.
SAMMY: Mine, I fold it in half, so it's only six.
ALEX: Is that flaccid, or hard? Oh, you can't fold it in half when it's hard.
SAMMY: When it's that long, it never quite gets hard....
MUSICIAN: *No, No! I mean your* musical *instruments.*

Because Van Halen hadn't worked out it's live show yet, or even finished recording, no one had a definitive equipment list. Poking around in 5150, however, turned up the following:

Edward Van Halen had so many guitars laying around in the studio you'd have thought it was some kind of musical instrument clearance house. His main guitar—a Strat-style body by Boogie Bodies, a '59 Gibson P.A.F., a customized Floyd Rose tremolo and a Kramer neck—was on a guitar stand by his amps (two Marashall heads on single stack, plus a Laney KLIPP guitar head with a Guild/Hartke cabinet housing four ten-inch speakers). Elsewhere, there was a Fender Stratocaster with a Seymour Duncan humbucker in the treble position and a Floyd Rose tremolo; a Ripley stereo guitar; a pair of Steinberger guitars with tremolos; and two rather beat-up Stratocasters, one with a rosewood neck and "5150" scratched into the finish, the other with a maple neck and more mundane scars. Scattered around the guitar set-up were an ancient Echoplex, a Lexicon PCM 42, a TS Engineering Trigger, a Roland DC 30 analog chorus/echo and a Music Man Music Machine practice amp. How these were hooked up remains a mystery.

In addition to the guitars, Edward had a Steinway concert grand, an Emulator, an OBX-A and a Minimoog.

Michael Anthony had three basses in the studio: A Schecter J-Bass, an Apostrophe 5-string, and an 8-stringed, aluminum-necked Kramer. He had fond words for the Apostrophe, especially praising the neck, and the Schecter (although he had no idea what model it was). His main amp was a Mesa Boogie D-180, which he ran through a Flagg Systems bass reflex cabinet. There was also an old Ampeg amp nearby, but Michael preferred Mesa Boogie's cleaner sound and equivalent punch. His only apparent effect was a Pearl Octaver.

Alex Van Halen had a double Simmons kick drum set-up, rounded out by five Simmons toms, all hooked up to a Simmons SDS-5 through a Yamaha power amp, and a 6½-inch by 14-inch rosewood Tama snare (the head, like all his acoustic drum heads, was a taped Ludwig black dot). His cymbals were by Paiste—a 40-inch gong, a 24-inch ride, two 20-inch crash, a 20-inch rude crash, a 20-inch China and 15-inch Sound Edge high-hats—and he uses mostly Ludwig hardware, Ghost pedals and Promark 5A oak sticks.

As for 5150 itself, **Ken Dean**, who works as second engineer with **Donn Landee**, reports that the guts of the studio is a 1969 UREI United Recording console with a couple extra cue busses, feeding into an Ampex 1200 24-track and a 3M Model 56 16-track and a couple Ampex 2-tracks. The outboard effects are fairly simple, consisting of Eventide Harmonizers, UREI 1176 limiters and an EMT 140 echo chamber. The microphones include a couple Neumann U-48s, a U-87, a few Sennheiser 421s, a couple Shure 545s, and a London C-12 mike. The monitors place JBL components into older Auchsberger cabinets, with H&H power amplifiers.

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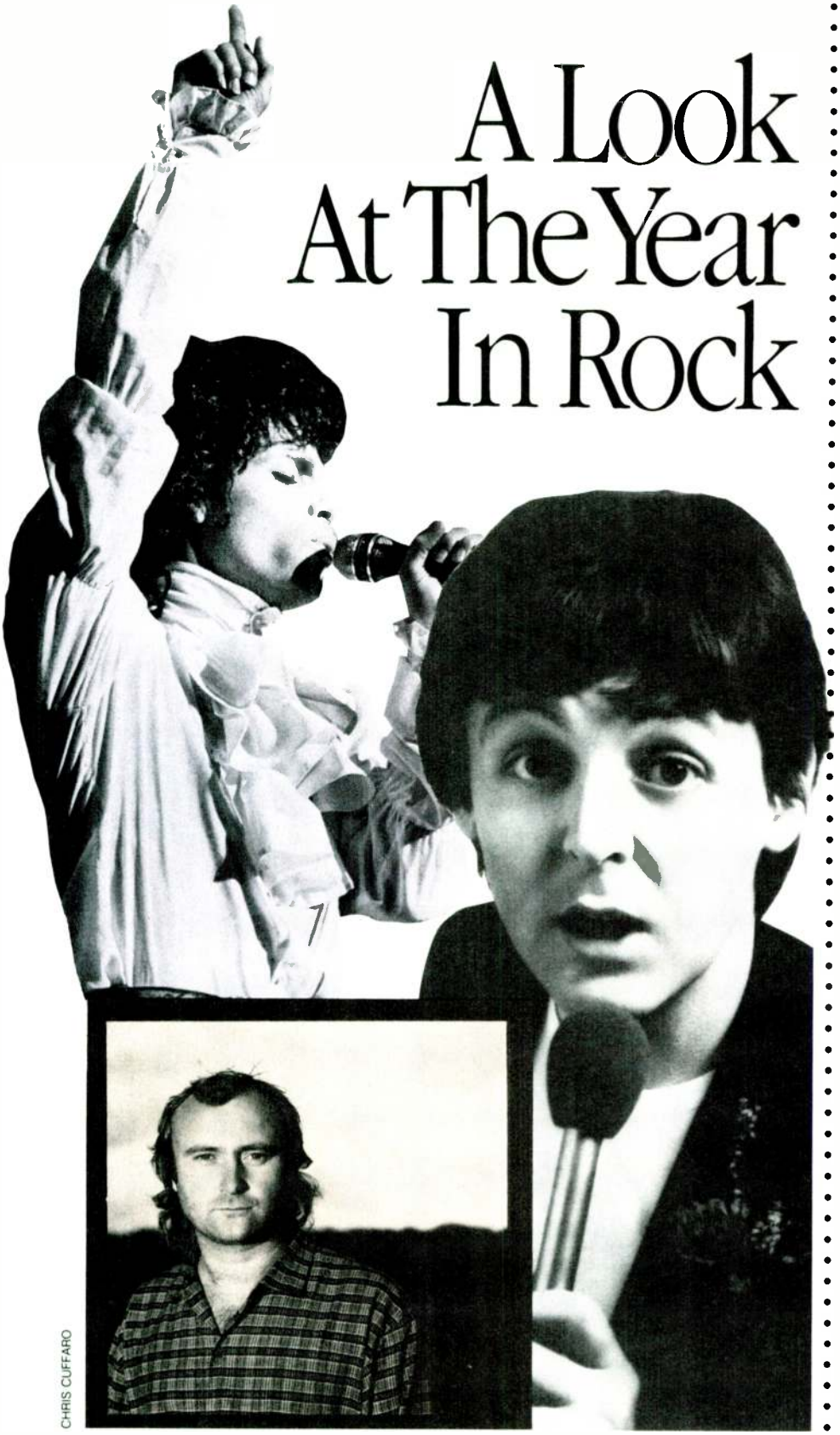
MUSICIAN: *So, what guitars are you using these days?*
EDWARD: Same old shit. Except it seems to sound different, I don't know why. I'll show you what I use. You just look at it, and you say: "Shit."
SAMMY: I'll speak for Edward for a second. He's got about twenty different guitars in there. Now, I'm one of those guys who, when you're standing around bullshitting for a couple of minutes, waiting for tape to rewind, I always pick up one of his guitars and play it. And every one of them fucking things is tuned different.
EDWARD: I never tune. I tune the guitar to itself. I don't mean the piano or anything.
SAMMY: Every one of 'em tuned differently. And I don't mean like just D-tuning. Some of them are such bizarre-assed tunings, number one, that I was going, "What the *fuck* is this thing? And number two is...[*looks puzzled*] Oh. I forgot. [*Band goes into hysterics.*]
EDWARD: I never change my strings. I just wait till one pops, and then put a new one on. I love dead-sounding strings, and I like guitars that you have to *play*, y'know? I'm not saying I like to make it difficult for myself, but every guitar I have has a different personality, so to speak.
SAMMY: And a different sound, because he plays through the same amp with the same settings.
EDWARD: And I tend to play different on different guitars.
MUSICIAN: *So each guitar makes you get involved in playing in a different way?*
EDWARD: No, but yeah.
MUSICIAN: *Well, because it has a different tone, it makes you think a different way when you play it.*
EDWARD: Yeah. I guess.
SAMMY: Every song, he plays a different guitar. It impresses me, as a guitarist. Usually, I go into the studio to find a guitar that sounds good; try 'em all, pick one that sounds the best, and do the fuckin' album. This guy, every goddamn song he's got a different guitar, tuned different.
EDWARD: But it's just a fuckin' mistake, y'know? I mean, if you can find a strobe tuner anywhere from here to the end of the property, I'll give you a million dollars. Soon as I earn it.
MUSICIAN: *The way you describe it, it seems to be like when you're painting a picture, and you would use yellow differently than you would use red.*
EDWARD: No, it's more like I just pick up the yellow, and I don't know what color it is. I just reach for any crayon.
MUSICIAN: *But once you hear what's coming out, you must play to that sound.*
EDWARD: Yeah, I guess I kinda do. I like the noise I make.
MUSICIAN: *Well, this is really hard stuff to talk about.*
EDWARD: No it ain't. It's easy.
SAMMY: No, that's a fair statement. Being an outsider, that's a fair statement. He just *does* it. He doesn't sit and go, "I'll use this trick here...."
EDWARD: It's kinda in your bones, I don't know. It's a natural kind of movement, y'know. Like fuckin' or something.
SAMMY: Weeelll, let's not take it too far.
EDWARD: I think. I don't think. Sometimes I'm takin' a dump, and something comes to me. Sometimes, whatever. But I don't sit there and think, because it's too hard for me. Hurts, y'know [*laughs*]. I don't like to think too much, what the fuck? I think the best music comes out of nowhere. And if something comes out of nowhere and goes somewhere, then it's cool. But if it comes out of nowhere and goes nowhere, then you're back to square one. And I don't know what the fuck I'm talking about.
MUSICIAN: *No, seriously, I do follow what you're saying.*
EDWARD: Good for you, because I don't.

With Malice Toward Some, With Charity For All:

A Look At The Year In Rock



CHRIS CUFFARO

Fad Of The Year: Charity

An RCA videodisc player from the America-First Committee

To all the U.S. corporate sponsors who praised Live Aid as a day when "Americans reached out to help the world," deftly ignoring that the event was started by an Irishman and based in England.

A chrome-plated scale model ambulance chaser

To all the Hollywood stars who rushed up at the end of the Philadelphia concert to sing "We Are The World."

The cure for Aids

Take all the money from Band Aid, Live Aid, "We Are The World" and Fashion Aid, and pay it to the farmers in Farm Aid to grow food for Africa.

The Good, Bad And The Ugly

Albums of the year

Don Henley, *Building The Perfect Beast;* Midnight Oil, *Red Sails In The Sunset;* John Prine, *Aimless Love*; R.E.M., *Fables Of The Reconstruction*; Talking Heads, *Little Creatures*; Luther Vandross, *The Night I Fell In Love.*

Distinguished survivors

Eric Clapton, Lonnie Mack, Robert Plant, Sly & Robbie.

Great albums by old pros who deserved better

Van Morrison, *Sense Of Wonder*; Graham Parker, *Steady Nerves*; Richard Thompson, *Across A Crowded Room.*

What's God got to do with it?

Amy Grant, Maria McKee (Lone Justice), Prince, Stryper

Rookies

Bronski Beat, Whitney Houston, Freddie Jackson, Yngwie Malmsteen, 'til tuesday

One-hit wonders

Animotion, "Obsession"; Book of Love, "Boy"; Dead or Alive, "You Spin Me Round"

Best dialogue in a rock video

Paul Bruno: "You're a hard man to find."
Phil Collins: "So how does it end?"
Cully Holland: "This little hobby of yours has gone too far."
Mick Jagger: "Gimme ya coat."
Prince: [*coughs*]

Megadeal of the Year

Paul McCartney goes back to Capitol Records.

Best Rumor

Steely Dan reunites.

Favorite soap operas

The Go-Go's; New Edition; Wynton Marsalis fires brother Branford and Kenny Kirkland.

Honorary Citations

The Phil Collins "Flying Drummer" (SST on a plaque) for ubiquity

Thomas Dolby, Keith Richards, Dave Stewart

The George Santayana Bronzed Memory Chip for most muddled use of history in a pop song.

Tom Petty ("Rebels"); Sting ("Children's Crusade")

The Julian Lennon Reincarnation Carnation

Ziggy Marley of the Melody Makers.

The annual "How Can We Miss You If You Don't Go Away" awards (known as the "Nixons")

Adam Ant, America, Malcolm McLaren, Yoko Ono, Ray Parker Jr., Lionel Richie, Spandau Ballet, Spyro Gyra, Uriah Heep

A platinum breathalyzer for most unconvincing performance

Vince Neil's court-ordered anti-alcohol speech

A Lou Christie lightning-bolt pendant is in the mail

To Bryan Ferry, who called Keith Forsey for another song after getting first crack at—and declining—"(Don't You) Forget About Me"

The Leon Trotsky Rehabilitation Award

John Cougar Mellencamp

The *Trouser Press* Vitality Award

The Firm, *The Record*, the Aerosmith reunion, Oberheim

A gold slipped disc

Supertramp

Worst cover versions

Pat Benatar, "Seven Rooms Of Gloom"; Heaven, "Knockin' On Heaven's Door"; Motley Crue, "Smokin' In The Boys Room"; Power Station, "Get It On (Bang A Gong)"

Hypes

Hooters, Lone Justice, Suzanne Vega, Washington Squares, Cock Robin

1985 In Your Face

Love, devotion and the Big Man

Clarence "call me Mokshagun" Clemons became a follower of Sri Chinmoy, former guru to Carlos "Devadip" Santana and "Mahavishnu" John McLaughlin. Whether Clarence will now start playing seventy-two notes to the bar is still unclear, though it is unlikely E Street Band fans will be able to summon a minute of silence before each concert. We knew something like this would happen if Bruce enforced that no drugs/no liquor/no bad words policy.

Something's happening and you don't know what it is, do you, Mrs. Gore?

From wimps to tramps: Sheena Easton and Olivia Newton-John

Slow Blues

Willie Dixon sued Led Zeppelin for copyright infringement on "Whole Lotta Love," sixteen years after it was a hit.

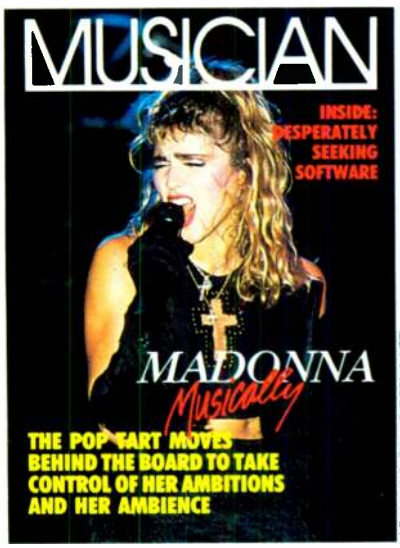
One giant step

Wham! became the first Western rock group to play in China. The Chinese have yet to extend any further invitations.

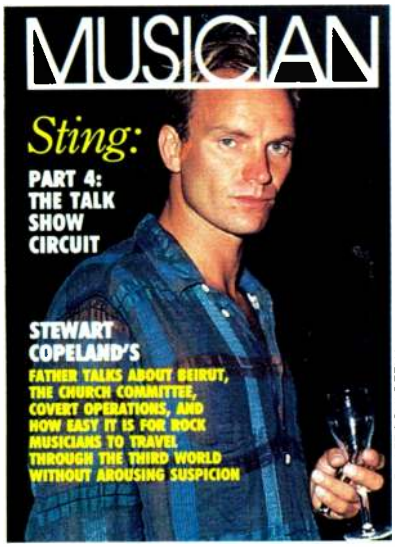
Toot City

With admirable restraint, the following did not record "My Toot Toot": Robert Palmer, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Toots Hibbert, Toots Thielemans, Toots Shor.

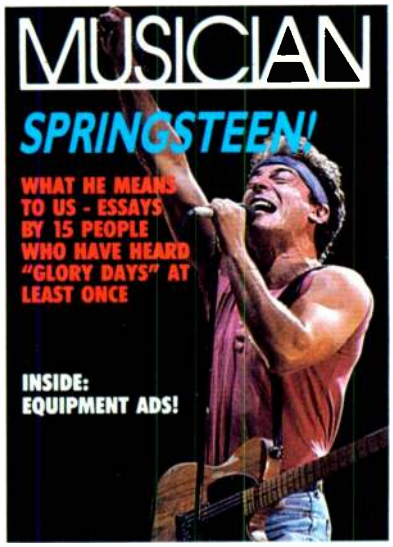
Covers We're Glad We Didn't Do



ARMANDO GALLO/RETNA LTD.



DANIEL QUATROCHI/RETNA



GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

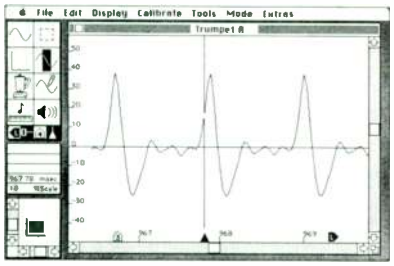
The Sound Designer/Emulator II Computer Music System.

Aural Stimulation.

Since its introduction the E-mu Systems Emulator II™ has set the standard for digital sampling keyboards. The Emulator II offers truly stunning sound quality and an impressive array of features: 17 seconds of sampling time, built in disk drive, a variety of analog and digital sound processors (including VCA's, VCF's and LFO's), a powerful MIDI sequencer, a SMPTE code reader/generator, full MIDI implementation and much more. The sonic realism, creative power and expressive control of the Emulator II are unequaled by any digital sampling keyboard.

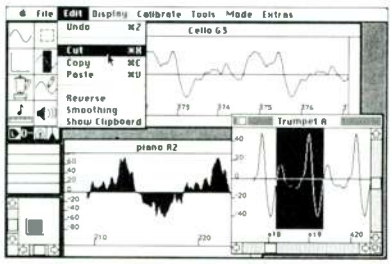
Now, Digidesign announces Sound Designer™—a powerful music software package that links the Emulator II and the Apple Macintosh,™ creating a music system offering unprecedented performance at a breakthrough price.

What can Sound Designer do? Sample any sound with the Emulator II. Transfer the sound to the Macintosh and display the waveform on the Mac's high resolution screen. You won't be kept waiting—the Macintosh and Emulator II communicate at the lightning speed of 500,000 bits per second—nearly 17 times MIDI rate!



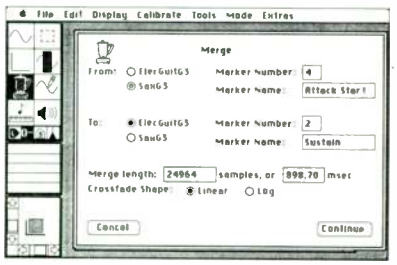
The sound waveform displayed can be scaled *independently* on both the amplitude and time axes to show any degree of detail, from a few samples to the entire waveform. Use the "Zoom Box" to magnify a small area of the waveform for closer inspection. Scale marks and a screen cursor display the exact time location and level at any point in the sound.

Use cut and paste editing to rearrange the sound, or to splice pieces of one sound onto another sound—up to three sounds can be displayed on-screen at once. Sounds can be edited with an accuracy of nearly 1/30,000th of a second! Throw away your razor blades.



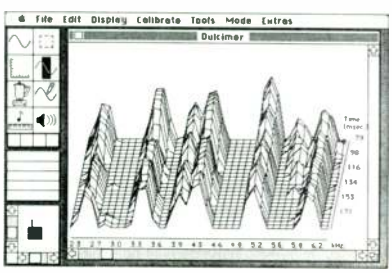
Redraw any part of the waveform using Sound Designer's pencil. Remove clicks or other extraneous noises from sounds by simply drawing them out of the waveform.

Use Sound Designer's digital mixer to perform a variety of digital signal processing functions. Mix sounds in any proportion, fine tune the level of a sound or create hybrid sounds using the *merge* function. A saxaphone that gradually becomes a screaming electric guitar? No problem. Of course, the sound you create can be quickly transferred to the Emulator at any time for high quality playback.

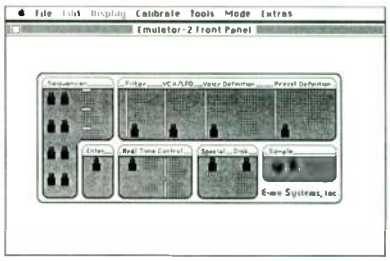


The essential process of looping sampled sounds is greatly simplified by Sound Designer. No more random (and time consuming) searches for loop points—you can *see* the waveform and quickly assign the loop in the proper location.

Break the sound file down into hundreds of separate frequency bands using Sound Designer's FFT (Fast Fourier Transform) based frequency analysis. The three-dimensional FFT waveform reveals the envelope of each frequency as the sound evolves. Very educational for those intrigued by the nature of sound.

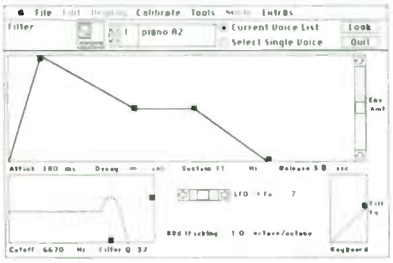


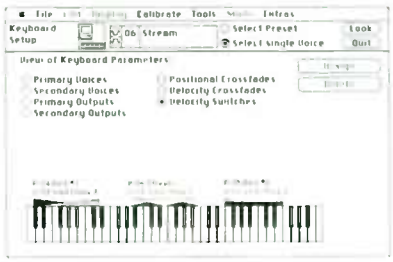
Synthesis? Yes. Sound Designer includes direct digital synthesis. Because it is software (algorithm) based, virtually any type of synthesis can be implemented, including FM, Waveshaping, Additive and other powerful synthesis techniques.



And once you have created your sounds, you can use Sound Designer's Emulator II front panel mode to adjust all of the Emulator II's parameters. Graphic programming screens are provided for each Emulator II module: arrange samples on the keyboard, draw filter response and ADSR curves, set up controller and MIDI configurations, adjust keyboard velocity, MIDI, controller and arpeggiator parameters and more.

Macintosh is a registered trademark licensed to Apple Computer Inc.





Don't worry about obsolescence—Digidesign is continually adding new capabilities to the system, and updates are available to registered owners at nominal cost. Resynthesis, digital EQ, compression, expanded synthesis capabilities and more will be offered in future updates.

At about one-third to one-tenth the price of comparable systems, the Sound Designer/Emulator II combination represents the best value in computer music systems. However, the system offers another advantage more important than money.

Most computer music systems are hardly user-friendly. User-indifferent is a better description: strange commands to memorize, confusing terminology and painfully slow operation have thwarted many musician's attempts to use this advanced technology.

You don't need unlimited patience and a Ph.D. to learn Sound Designer. Sound Designer takes full advantage of the Macintosh's simplicity—program functions are *visually* represented by icons (pictures). No cryptic commands to memorize!

The Emulator II/Sound Designer system is a valuable tool, whether you're scoring a film, adding sound effects to a video production or creating the sounds for your next hit. You'll find the system quite stimulating—to both your creativity and your ears!

Want to see the system in action? Send $29 to Digidesign (address below) for a 30 minute demonstration video (specify Beta or VHS). Like to know more about the Emulator II? Send $2.00 to E-mu Systems for a color brochure and a *very* impressive demo record.

The system requires an Emulator II, Sound Designer, a 512K Macintosh, two disk drives or an internal hard disk (recommended). And an active imagination.

E-mu Systems, Inc.
applied magic for the arts
1600 Green Hills Road
Scotts Valley, CA 95066
408.438.1921

digidesign
920 Commercial Street
Palo Alto, CA 94303
415.494.8811

Consumer Alert

No doubt taking a tip from his editor George Harrison, former Apple publicist Derek Taylor published his memoirs in a hand-numbered limited edition for a mere $350. The book is also signed, by both Taylor and Harrison. Well, George did miss out on all those songwriting royalties.

Story we passed up

The Honeydrippers challenged Willie & the Poor Boys to a softball game. The 'Drippers apparently won when Brian Setzer singled in the eleventh, but forfeited the game when no one could remember if Setzer played on the record.

Story we're glad we passed up

"Confessions of David Crosby"

The doggone song is mine

Protégé Michael Jackson bought the Beatles song catalog out from under Paul McCartney and started selling the rights for TV commercials.

Do the Russians film their children too?

Bring On The Night featured footage of Sting's inamorata delivering their baby. Sting's reaction: "It meant more to me than I thought it would."

American ingenuity

Lee Iacocca, rebuffed at turning "Born In The USA" into a jingle for Plymouth cars, settled for a clone version ("Born In America") with a Brooce soundalike. Now if they copied Japanese cars that well....

They killed this city with rock 'n' roll

Starship. Will no one drive a stake through their hearts? Runner-up: Jerry Garcia for his heroin bust.

But does He get points?

Places on the Holy Guest List reserved for all those artists who thanked God on their album covers.

We were the Clash

Congratulations to Joe Strummer for finally acknowledging what everyone else knew all along: The Clash hasn't been a "band" for two years. *Cut The Crap?* How about *Pull The Plug?*

Because they're artists

Arcadia took nineteen days in the studio to mix one single.

Bah humbug

CBS Records rounded out its "We Are The World" year by firing forty employees just before the holidays. Then they dropped Bob Geldof's Boomtown Rats.

Is this (ego) trip necessary?

The week of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit conference, A&M Records ran a full-page ad in *Billboard* depicting a baby and quoting Sting's "Russians": "I hope the Russians love their children too." (Love them as well as they love Sting Jr.?)

Solo careers we could do without:

Freddie Mercury, Tommy Shaw, Jane Wiedlin, David Lee Roth.

LESLIE FRATKIN

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

A blank tape tax

This from legislators who do not favor such pre-emptive penalties on supposedly less criminal purchases like pistols and bullets. We rock journalists buy blank cassettes to tape interviews, and we know that record execs pushing the bill sit behind stacks of unsolicited demo cassettes. The congresspeople who favor the blank tape tax want aspiring bands and local musicians to pay money to Michael Jackson and Madonna—in the interests of fair play. Undoubtedly this will be followed by a tax on blank paper, to be divided among the victims of plagiarism, mail fraud and blackmail notes.

No respect, consumer division

Blasters, Billy Bragg, George Clinton, Nona Hendryx, John Hiatt, Nick Lowe, John Martyn, Pre Fab Sprout, Tom Waits, Maurice White.

Non-events

Go-Go music, yet another Beach Boys revival, yet another Bob Dylan revival, the MTV awards

Comedy is not pretty

Eddie Murphy, *How Could It Be,* The Fat Boys

Comebacks

John Fogerty, Aretha Franklin

Disappointments

Stevie Wonder, X, Paul Young

MIA

Peter Gabriel, Pretenders

See ya in 1989?

Jeff Beck

The real Suzanne Vega

Jane Siberry

Art object

Sonny Rollins, *The Solo Album*

Credibility gap

Prince "retires" from live performing

To live and die in L.A.

Morris Day, Michael McDonald, Motels

Does anybody *really* know what time it is?

The Alarm, the 3 O'Clock

ANDY FREEBERG/RETNA

Dave Marsh Books We'd Like To Read

I'm On Fire: Madonna and the Politics of Fashion

Born in the USA: John Cougar Mellencamp and the Rust-Belt Constituency

Down in Jungleland: Little Steven and the Anti-Apartheid Crusade

Wreck on the Highway: The Book of Rock Star Car Crashes, from Jan & Dean to Vince Neil

Johnny Ninety Nine: One Hundred Thoughts, Minus One, about John Lennon

Guest Stars You Will See On *Miami Vice* In 1986

ZZ Top portrays three slain FDA agents who return from the dead to give Crockett and Tubbs the keys to the Eliminator.

Paul McCartney is a Pebble Beach night-club singer tied in with the mob; Stevie Wonder plays a pimp in an episode set entirely on a giant piano.

Lisa and Wendy play CIA freedom fighters posing as hookers to infiltrate a Nicaraguan bordello run by Madam Murder (Aretha Franklin). Prince, in a cameo role, plays a pimp.

Jackie Gleason plays Bebe Rebozo in an episode set in President Nixon's old Key Biscayne estate and involving a scheme to purchase untaxed blank tapes from Cuba. Ric Ocasek plays Nixon. Sammy Davis Jr. plays a pimp.

The Instant Yuppie Record Collection

Any George Winston LP
Beatles, *Abbey Road*
Linda Ronstadt, *Lush Life*
Billy Joel, *Greatest Hits Vol. I & II*
Tee Vee Toons Presents Television's Greatest Hits
Bruce Springsteen, *Born In The USA*

Suggested Corporation/Artist Tour Hook-ups

Dos Equis beer sponsors Los Lobos
Classic Coke sponsors Bob Dylan
Union Carbide sponsors Artists United Against Apartheid
DeLorean Motors sponsors Glenn Frey
Coors sponsors a PMRC lecture tour

Predictions, Fearless & Otherwise, For 1986

Columbia Records releases no more than five singles from *Born In The USA*.

A heavy metal band scores a hit with a cover version of Grand Funk Railroad's "We're An American Band."

Neil Young scores a country crossover hit with his haunting ballad, "David Crosby Almost Cut My Hair."

Bob Geldof receives the Nobel Peace Prize, but does not get a phone call from President Reagan.

Dexy's Midnight Runners breaks up; no one notices.

Jethro Tull does not break up; no one notices.

Squeeze breaks up, reforms, breaks up.

The Who finds some excu$e to reunite.

MTV covers the Rock and Chess concert at New York's Madison Square Garden in its entirety; Martha Quinn analyzes the final match between Leonard Cohen and Grandmaster Flash.

Several new "Aid" benefits will occur, among them:
Lemon-Aid. Money will be raised to cover the debts of rock stars whose grandiose ambitions got the better of them. The highlight will be a reunion of Emerson, Lake & Palmer with their seventy-five piece touring orchestra.
King Sunny Aid. To benefit the victims of juju music hype.
Jowl-Aid. Funds will provide needed facelifts for aging rock stars. The show will include performances by Mick Jagger, Jimmy Page, Rod Stewart and Carly Simon, plus a special solo piano recital by former President Nixon.

Great Moments In Rock Journalism

"I have become a truth-seeker in the matter of rock culture..."
—William F. Buckley, Jr..

"As I see it, we have no alternative [to rock music] but to hold our noses, insert earplugs and hope our kids grow out of it—as we did."
—Ann Landers

"Personally, I think a lot of heavy metal is rubbish. I think a lot of rock is rubbish, and a lot of operas, and classical music, too. I think a lot of my own work is rubbish."
—Bob Guccione, Jr.

Bonus Question

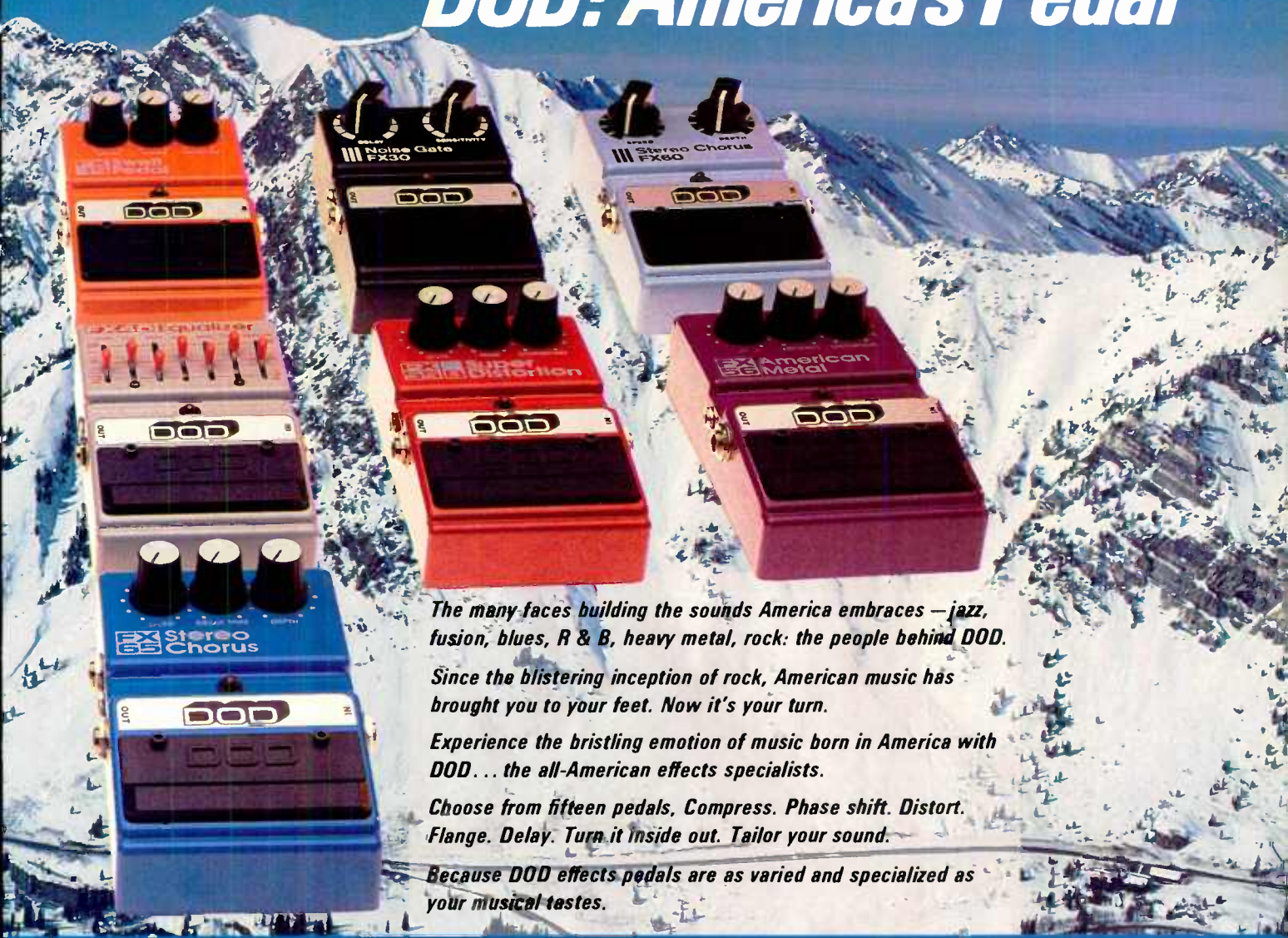
What *was* Dan Aykroyd doing at the "We Are The World" session?

SL/RETNA LTD

FIN COSTELLO/RETNA

Three-year limited warranty on all DOD effects pedals. *DOD Electronics Corporation, 5639 South Riley Lane • Salt Lake City, Utah 84107 • (801) 268-8400*

DOD: America's Pedal



The many faces building the sounds America embraces — jazz, fusion, blues, R & B, heavy metal, rock: the people behind DOD.

Since the blistering inception of rock, American music has brought you to your feet. Now it's your turn.

Experience the bristling emotion of music born in America with DOD . . . the all-American effects specialists.

Choose from fifteen pedals, Compress. Phase shift. Distort. Flange. Delay. Turn it inside out. Tailor your sound.

Because DOD effects pedals are as varied and specialized as your musical tastes.

DOD

Born high in the heart of the WEST, DOD is the only company on earth that offers a three-year limited warranty on effects pedals.

DOD will keep you on your feet with our all-American pedal.

Contact your favorite musical equipment dealer for more information about DOD equipment.

PETE TOWNSHEND BY NUMBERS

BY BILL FLANAGAN

What could be worse than to be an American in London on the 4th of July? But here I am, backstage at a Dire Straits show at Wembley, trying to drag Mark Knopfler downstairs to have his picture taken for the cover of the September *Musician*. And have you ever seen so many distractions? Here's Prince Charles and Lady Di, the blood of Cromwell still dripping on their genetic code, pish-poshing and tish-toshing. There's Bob Geldof, come to shame the Royal Honeymooners into popping up at Live Aid next Saturday. Oops, here comes Sting, leonine pipes all poised to sing the intro to "Money For Nothing." Across the parking lot Bruce Springsteen is about to begin "Independence Day" and I would prefer to be there, amid all the little U.S. flags, than here in the heart of the Empire. That it's Fourth of July only amplifies my usual disposition that it's better to be a mosquito at a Springsteen concert than consort to the Princess of Wales.

But stop the music. *Here comes Pete Townshend looking just like T.S. Eliot*. His hair is cropped close to his high forehead, his suit dark, his necktie conservative. Townshend shakes hands and exchanges

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVIES & STARR

NO EASY WAY TO BE FREE

pleasantries. His demeanor is that very British cordiality that approximates graciousness overcoming great weariness. When he joins Dire Straits onstage Townshend hangs back, strumming power chords as if stirring a martini. Guitarist Jack Sonni, thrilled to death, does Who-leaps and Who-windmills in front of Townshend, goading him to please give us one, Pete. Townshend smiles and then he launches, leaps and piston swipes. The crowd cheers. The Royal Twosome smile regally. He's the greatest.

If anyone could make a colonial love the English it's Pete Townshend. In his youth he even made the Union Jack hip. Leading the Who, Townshend—like the Kinks' Ray Davies—sometimes seemed to be the only English rocker willing to acknowledge a nativity east of Long Island. The Who's was a noble empire, and Townshend presided over both its glory and its disintegration with the style and bluster of Winston Churchill. For rock 'n' roll fans everywhere he was a grand inspiration.

And now he's turning into T.S. Eliot? Studying Townshend's new look I mentally list similarities: Eliot and Townshend were both passionate young artists who wrote anthems for their disenfranchised generations ("The Hollow Men," "My Generation"). Both gained great fame with restriction-busting, somewhat overwrought epics (*The Waste Land*, *Tommy*). Each experienced marital discord, unexpected religious conversion, wrestled his demons under control, and went to work at the British publishing house Faber and Faber. That last one's the clincher. I'll bet at least one other person in this room has secretly compared Townshend to Eliot: the same one who wrote about a "teenage wasteland" fifteen years ago.

Four months later I see Townshend at another party, this one at the Whitney Museum in New York. His new book of short stories, *Horse's Neck*, has just come out, as has an album called *White City* and a fifty-minute film/video with the same title. From different angles the three works tell similar stories of a rock musician approaching middle age and trying to repair burned bridges to old friends and family That is not *all* any of the three—book, album, or film—is about. Each medium has its own standards and each its own opportunities to explore. But each adds perspective to the others. All three are clearly the work of a talent mature enough to work through the demands of different media, and still hungry for new disciplines to conquer.

T.S. Eliot finally calmed all his anxieties and lived out his days happily reflecting in his glory, unburdened by the Muse. Pete Townshend may affect the airs of the landed gentry, but he's not writing children's books yet. If his work is a reflection of his soul, then, beneath the calm surface, Townshend's blood is still boiling.

MUSICIAN: *You reached a strange point in the last days of the Who, especially with the* It's Hard *album, where you were writing one type of song for the Who and another type for your solo albums. The impression I got was that you saved your most personal stuff for Townshend albums, and wrote about war and peace, anthemic subjects, for the Who.*

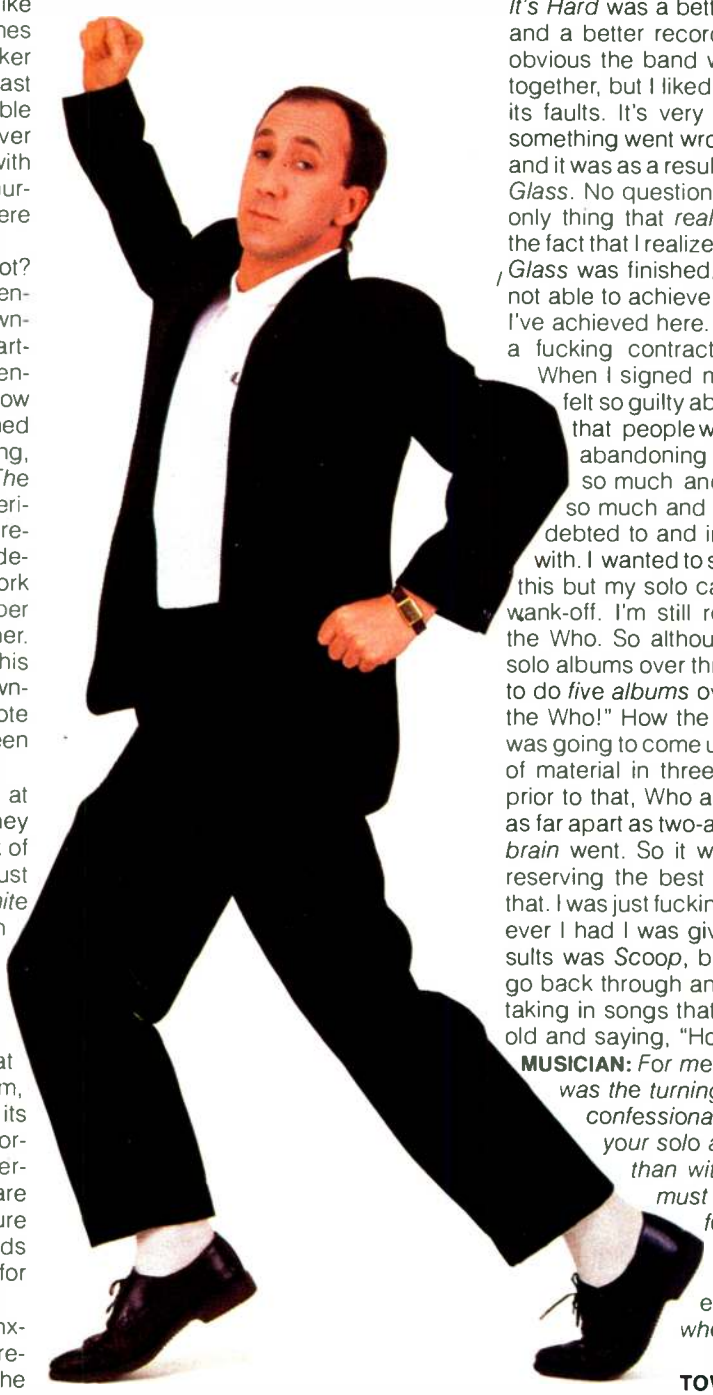
TOWNSHEND: Yeah, I suppose that was in reaction of the fact that when I did *Face Dances* I tried to continue the same kind of personal writing that I'd done on *Empty Glass* and it didn't work. Ironically, it worked very well for me; I really liked the songs that I wrote for *Face Dances*. I don't so much like the songs that I wrote for *It's Hard*. I think *It's Hard* was a better sounding record and a better recorded record and it's obvious the band were working better together, but I liked *Face Dances* for all its faults. It's very difficult to analyze; something went wrong around that time and it was as a result of me doing *Empty Glass*. No question about it. I think the only thing that *really* went wrong was the fact that I realized, as soon as *Empty Glass* was finished, "Hey, this is it. I'm not able to achieve with the band what I've achieved here. But I've just signed a fucking contract for five records."

When I signed my solo album deal I felt so guilty about it, so concerned that people would think that I was abandoning the group I loved so much and the people I loved so much and felt so greatly indebted to and inexorably entwined with. I wanted to say, "Yes, I am doing this but my solo career is a bit of a wank-off. I'm still really serious about the Who. So although I'm doing three solo albums over three years, I'm going to do *five albums* over three years with the Who!" How the hell did I imagine I was going to come up with eight albums of material in three years' time, when prior to that, Who albums were getting as far apart as two-and-a-half years. My *brain* went. So it wasn't a question of reserving the best material for this or that. I was just fucking *desperate*! Whatever I had I was giving! One of the results was *Scoop*, because I started to go back through ancient demos. I was taking in songs that were twenty years old and saying, "How about this?"

MUSICIAN: *For me,* Who By Numbers *was the turning point. That was a confessional album, fitting with your solo albums much more than with Who records. It must have been strange for Roger Daltrey to sing, "We talk so much shit behind each others backs," when one of the* other guys wrote it.

TOWNSHEND: Another

> "PEOPLE ASK, 'WHAT WAS IT LIKE, AFTER ALL THAT GREAT 60'S WORK, TO FIND YOURSELF OD'D IN A CLUB LAVATORY?'"



line in the same song is about "a handsome boy who's only just after my ass." I don't think he was particularly keen on that one. There have been times when Roger's said "Pete, I can't sing this," but *never* for the reason you'd imagine. I'm sure he wasn't comfortable singing a line about homosexuality, but he sang it. But he has refused to sing songs in the past because he said "Listen, Pete, you should sing this, not because I don't *want* to sing it, but because it's yours." On *Face Dances*, with "Cache Cache" he just said, "Listen, this is something that really happened to you. You should sing it." On *Who By Numbers* we were both facing the fact that the management structure of the band was going to have to change and it was going to be really painful. We were going to have to hurt people, we were really going to have to hurt our managers. And I for one reason felt the need to say, "Yeah, look how futile this fucking aspiration or inspiration or rock industry is, when it comes down to this. We have to fuck people over who fucked us over." Roger at the time was very angry and was the active component in dealing with the band's financial and structural problems. He had to contain himself and discipline himself so he wouldn't be distracted by emotions. But I allowed mine completely free vent, almost knowing that Roger was going to stay together and carry it through. So he provided me with the luxury to write that kind of stuff. If I had been on my own right then and faced with that kind of thing, maybe I would have actually written sort of lightweight pop. Because I *was* writing stuff like "Squeeze Box" at the time, songs like "Girl In A Suitcase," which will be on the second *Scoop*. So in a way that chemistry was important.

MUSICIAN: *In your early work you wrote lots of songs in the voices of characters. When you became very personal it meant a great deal to some of your fans and you've continued in a personal vein since then.* White City *offered you a chance to write personally through somebody else's eyes. You can get away with saying things that might be too personal otherwise.*

TOWNSHEND: I think what's actually happened, too, is I've become slightly bored with the whole process of—I don't think the word "confessional" is right, but—the function of presenting myself as a consequence of what was happening around me. When you look out the window and see a street full of garbage, you can think,"Oh God, I've got to go and do my shopping and I've got to wade through that garbage. Why doesn't the city do something about it?" Or you can go out there and spend the day and whistle a happy tune and clear the street up. I'm cleaning the street myself. And it's a slow process. As I do that I suddenly realize, hey this isn't so bad, life isn't so bad, in fact I really *like* this, it's great. Now I can talk about doing it when I come to write a song. I work with a women's battered wives refuge; my wife runs one. When I incorporate domestic violence into *White City* I know what I'm talking about. I know the consequences of unemployment and how it might affect and emasculate young men. Like that period of the Who when there was an awkwardness: me talking about my own feelings and using my own voice. You're right, it was a tremendous jump. Even in *Quadrophenia*, where a lot of things I was writing about were personal, I was attending to the fact that the four guys in the band felt that Jimmy was part of them. One of the reasons why some of the narrative conceptual pieces of mine have been effective is because it's forced me to use voices and to speak through characters and to think about the way people feel. When I was writing the script for *White City*, I had great difficulty forming the characters. Then the director came over from Australia and sat down and said, "Listen, this girl is a bit weak. This guy is a bit of a wimp; what's driving him?" He forced me to attend to the fact that he wasn't just accepting them at face value, or accepting them as satellites of Pete Townshend. In a way I've written *Horse's Neck* as a series of satellite incidents. I'm not going to work that way ever again. If I ever write another book it will be a novel and I will just hit people with the things I want to hit them with direct.

> "I REPLY, 'I'VE ALWAYS LIVED IN A GARBAGE CAN QUITE HAPPILY, EXCEPT THAT FOR SOME REASON I OPENED MY MOUTH.'"

MUSICIAN: *The dream you describe in the song "Athena" comes back in the book: a snake in the belly or rib cage of a white horse.*

TOWNSHEND: My first memory—which I do describe in the book—is a distorted memory and maybe not a real memory. My first memory of the idea that my parents had a life of their own, an independent life and an independent love, was connected with the image of them riding horses. I only realized the other day something more acute: I was very slow to learn to read because my education had been broken a tremendous amount by moving around with my parents. In the end they got very concerned about it and sent me to live with my grandmother for two years by the seaside. I've always been obsessed with that period because it was a period when I felt tremendously rejected. In fact, they were trying to help me out so I wouldn't get fucked over by the road. For a long time I blamed my grandmother; she was the one who was there, and obviously wasn't mad keen to have me there all the time. I went to school, I wasn't doing very well and my grandmother got very impatient with me. So she read me half of a book and waited until I was really

hyped up on it, and then stopped and said, "If you want to read the rest of the book *you* must go ahead and read it." The other day I remembered that the book was *Black Beauty*, a book about a horse. Slowly but surely I'm starting to fit this image in. What's interesting is that although it's entered recently into my life as a kind of *symbol* in the most acute, Jungian sense, a transfigurative sense, each time I see it I feel it's got something else attached to it. It's rooted in things that have happened to me, it's not just a symbol. When I had that dream, most of which is expanded on and fictionalized in the book, I made an immediate interpretation. Whether the interpretation was a correct one or not doesn't really matter. I realized that this image was powerful enough to mean different things to different people and I just wanted to sort of lay it down. Sometimes it means one thing to me and sometimes it means another.

MUSICIAN: *The line "My heart felt like a shattered glass in an acid bath" also shows up again in your book.*

TOWNSHEND: I was just sitting in L.A. trying to write this song which was originally called "Teresa." I knew I could get the horse dream into one line and I was looking for equal one-liners: "I feel like a flattened ant on a crazy path." Do they call them "crazy paving paths" in the States?

MUSICIAN: *No.*

TOWNSHEND: In England you get broken sidewalk slabs and make garden paths with them. It's called "crazy paving." An ant going across this path will go, "God! Where am I now?" Then he'll run over here. "God! Where am I now?" Then over there. Then suddenly somebody comes along and goes *squash*. That's how I felt: "Where am I? I'm thinking I'm finding my way around and then somebody comes and flattens me!"

When you look at the work of someone like...Eliot, for example, what is apparent with him is that he would spend months writing pages and pages of stuff, stripping stuff down so that every line had that kind of intensity. Apparently Dylan Thomas was the same way. I don't care that much about the lines. It's nice every now and again to come up with a good one, but it's quite nice to throw them away. Because it recognizes that songwriting is *not* poetry. It has so much else going for it: rhythm, pace, immediacy, delight and—most of all—a backdrop. You've got a backdrop both of atmosphere and, in an even more interesting sense, a backdrop of history. When you sit down to write a rock song you are saying, "Right, I am going to work within this precise genre." And we know where it comes from. It goes right down to the ground like a tree trunk into slavery. And this might just be another ring in the tree's growth but we know this tree is going to continue to grow. It represents another push in the growth, the overcoming of grief as a result of human degradation. So it's a very profound thing; you know you're only a part of it. It's like building a wall, another brick.

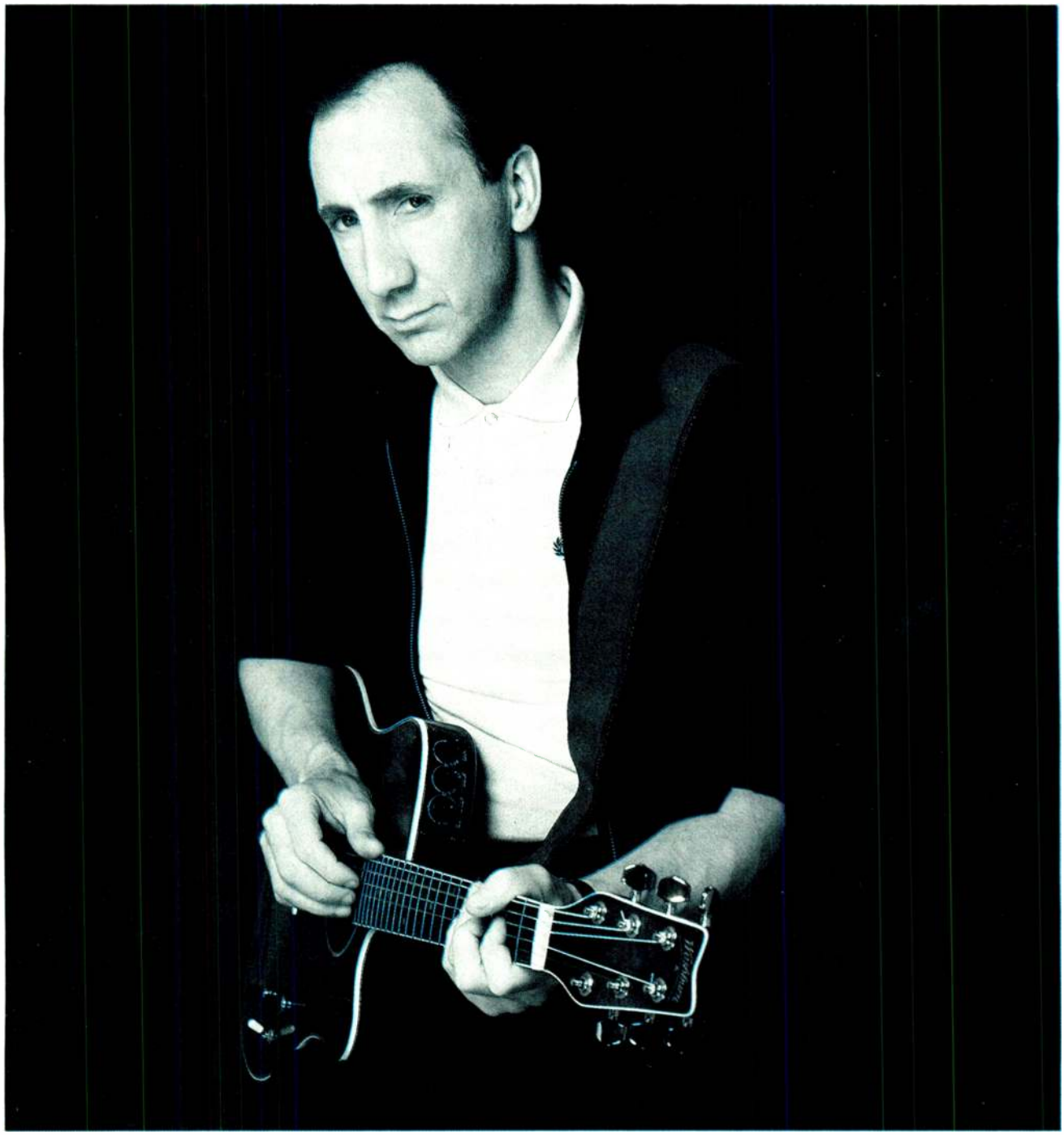
MUSICIAN: *Your writing seems to juxtapose a fatalism with—you can't call it optimism, but a sense of human decency!—that people should treat people well even if it's not really going to change things.*

TOWNSHEND: Well, that's nice because that's exactly my philosophy in a nutshell. It's what I've been trying to do very much in *White City*. People say to me, "What was it like when, after all that aspiration and great work you did in the 60s, to find yourself OD'd in some lavatory in a nightclub?" My analogy was, "Well, I've always lived in a garbage can quite happily, except for some reason I decided to open my mouth." I still *like* it in the garbage can. I don't really want to be anywhere else. I think this world is a garbage can and that's it, there is no nirvana. If there is nirvana, and if there is a better life, it's right in the garbage can. By calling society or the world in which you and I live garbage, that's a resolve to try and take it as it comes.

> "INSPIRATION INFERS THAT SOMETHING COMES FROM ABOVE. BUT MY IDEAS COME FROM AN INNER THING."

MUSICIAN: *The different media in which you present* White City *give us the chance to see the story through the eyes of different characters. In the story Pete, a rock star, goes back to the old, poor neighborhood and sees his down-and-out friend Jim. Watching the film—which unfolds from Pete's point of view—I wondered if you were aware of how insensitive Pete was being to Jim's feelings. Then I read the short story on the album jacket—which is written from Jim's perspective—and saw that of course you were. Even more interesting is a song like "Second Hand Love." On the record it seems like a straight-ahead rock tune, easy to identify with. In the film, Pete and Jim's wife kid about the fact that Jim still doesn't know they used to sleep together, and the song takes on a whole new angle: Suddenly it can be heard as an enraged diatribe by the victims of guys like rock star Pete. Were you conscious of how different media would change perceptions?*

TOWNSHEND: I hoped for that. "Second Hand Love" quite surprised me in its venom—because it was a song I wrote for Jim, a monologue for Jim about his mother. The only contrived effect I was after, was that people would hear it and think, "This is a blues about this boy whose wife is cheap." And then you would realize when you saw the film that it was actually a guy talking about his mother. We are all very proud as children if our mothers are presentable and glamorous. But if they're *seductive* we are in some way dirtied by the fact that there is no way that we can respond. So we end up as misogynists—we need but hate female seductiveness—and at the same time we also hate men who are attracted by that seductive image. And who was attracted first by that seductive image? Why, our fathers! You end up with a classic Freudian triangle. When I performed "Second Hand Love" it was with such force that I realized it obviously must have been born of something which I had experienced. When I was living away from my wife Karen I wrote "Stop Hurting People," a prayer that I would be reunited with her. In the song I say I realize "that my first love will be my last." What I meant was is that there is only one experience of love. Our problem as human beings is that we find it very difficult to universalize. That is the great challenge, isn't it? That's the Buddhist vision. Universalize your love because love is indeed universal. But we're just mortals, we have to attach it to something. In that song I was saying I spent twenty years trying to universalize it: Following Meher Baba, reading Sufi literature, writing poetry, worshipping in the rock 'n' roll church with my brothers and sisters. In the end, I'm sorry, but it comes down to you. You're the one I want—and if I have to make the choice, I'll take nothing from there and whatever I can get from you. On *Empty Glass* I wrote "a little is enough"; that idea came from Meher Baba's secretary. He came to England to see me one day. I said to him, "I have a terrible problem: I don't think my old lady really loves me. I've abused our relationship so much." He said to me, "When you say you don't feel she *really* loves you, you mean she loves you a little bit?" So I said, "Yeah, I think she still loves certain things about me, but she can't forgive me for things I've done in the past or for neglect." He said, "Well, love is not quantitively definable. A little is as valuable as a lot. Time is the only thing which adds a quantity, and time is an illusion. So if you're thirsty and somebody offers you a glass of water, that's fine. They don't need to offer you an ocean—a little is enough of something which is helping you to grow, to blossom, to spread." You don't need to have this great vision of roman-



Pete Townshend as T.S. Eliot, ca. 1985

tic love or spiritual love. In a sense the three songs are irrevocably linked together. In any order, I hope.

MUSICIAN: *You first said "A little is alright" in "You Better You Bet." Then in "A Little Is Enough" you said, "I know the match is rough." That in turn became the central line in "Stop Hurting People": "I know the match is bad." So it's all well entwined. Chinese Eyes* was a controversial album, but it probably means more to me than anything else you've done.

TOWNSHEND: Every now and again I come across somebody who only wants to talk to me about that record. I'm very, very proud of it. I think the late additions to the album were a bit weak. "Stardom In Acton," "North Country Girl"—they're nice but they're a bit weak compared with the force of the other songs. But the circumstances from which those songs came—I was not thanking God so much as thanking myself, for the ability to write, because it was so helpful to me at the time to be *able* to write. I suppose if you're a builder and you have some terrible emotional problem, you can go build something. Looking back, I thought I was doing something quite cathartic. There was a lot of sadness behind that album, but the great thing about it to me was the building. It's a great structure.

MUSICIAN: *There was a time when rock songwriters were anxious to expand the form. You're one of the few who's stayed committed to that.* Chinese Eyes *got a lot of knocking for it's vocabulary. One*

guy told me he didn't like "Slit Skirts" because big words like "recriminations fester" shouldn't be used in a rock song.

TOWNSHEND: Well, I think in a sense there is a problem there. But we must never allow rock writing to become reductive. One of the things that even people that within MTV are aware of is rock promos tend to deal with audiences as lowest common multiple. It's *reductive* of something which has actually got tremendous potential. Now, when you start to use big words, people have got a choice: Either they say "I don't understand," or they rush off for a dictionary. And if what that guy is saying is, "This Townshend guy is expecting me to run off with a dictionary! What's he inferring? That I need to be improved intellectually?" Then that's his hang-up. But *my* definition of what's a rock 'n' roll song was very narrow, and a lot of other people's definitions are going to be equally narrow.

The last time I did an interview for *Musician* magazine I got into trouble talking about songs that I felt *were* rock songs and songs that I felt weren't. I talked about McCartney and a few others, and people really got me wrong. I was only stating opinions, I wasn't making qualitative judgments. Bob Dylan's triumph, I suppose was to demonstrate that you didn't have to stick to *song structure*. "Like A Rolling Stone" was "too long for radio" but it did have a chorus.

What's the structure of the rock song? First, the rhythm: You have to be able to dance to it, drive to it, or smooch to it. It's almost like journalism. State your case in the first few bars, tell people what this is going to be about, use a catch phrase. Get them in the first few seconds, capture their attention. Then you have something called a verse to create an atmosphere, a bit of color to get the ideas across. But then don't abuse these people! They want entertaining. Go back to the original premise, give them the catch again, keep them interested. Then go back and write another bit, amplify it a bit more. This time you can write pretty heavy stuff because you've got them. Then it's time to thank them. So give them a break; go off and give them a guitar solo or write something we call a middle eight, maybe even change the subject, give them another view of the whole thing. Then close your argument; give them an epigram; conclude; wrap it up in the last verse. And finally, as you walk away into the distance, give them the catch again. And that's what it is. That's the frame. You can bend it around a little bit, but the definitive rock songs have been written against that very powerful, simple set of limitations.

MUSICIAN: *Do you approach songwriting as a craft you can sit down and work at, or do you wait for inspiration to strike?*

TOWNSHEND: I can do both. I'm pretty angry about the use of this word "inspiration." It reminds me of poets waiting for the muse. Inspiration has got so confused with, "Hey, you know I can't write, unless I'm out of my skull, unless I'm depressed and miserable. I have to be drunk, I have to be stoned, I'm a junkie because I don't get any inspiration." Inspiration infers that something is coming from *above* and flowing through you. Ideas for songs and motivation to write come from an *inner* thing. To share something, to communicate something, is something you have to need, to want to do for some reason, but what you write about comes from what you see and what you do. It doesn't come from space. If you're short of ideas for songs, get your ass up, go walk around in the city. You'll get an idea in fifteen seconds. There's no mystery to songwriting, I don't think. A lot of writers like to mystify their work and the process, partly because they don't understand it, partly because it adds a kind of humility; "It's not *me*, I'm very lucky I can do it" or "It brings me great joy." Behind it all is a great *human* quality, which is that when you get your head down you can *do* something. I'm a great believer in *doing*. M

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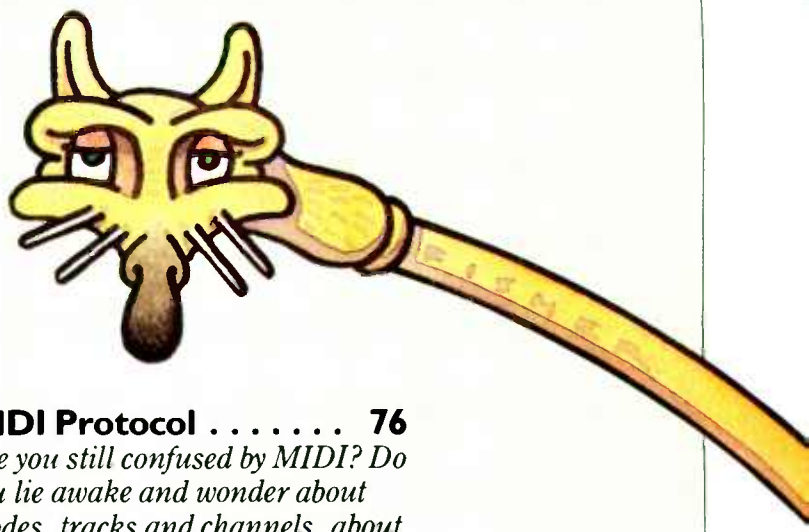


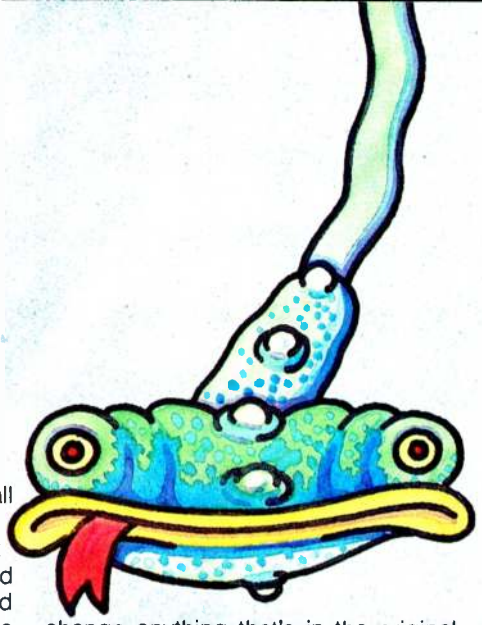
OLIVIER BREMOND

HOWARD ROSENBERG

MIDI Protocol: the Diplomacy of Digital

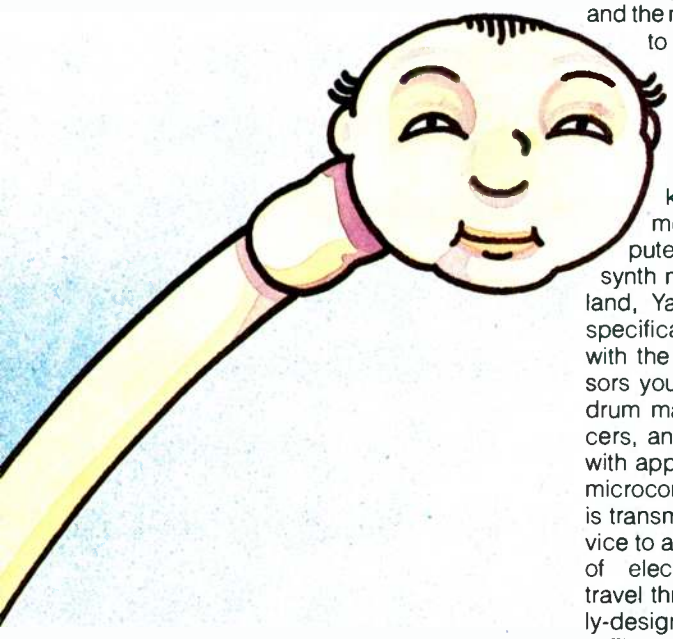
How Musical Nations of Many Languages Do Business Together

By Alan di Perna



Only a computer could count all the words that have been written about MIDI over the past year or so. And if computers could quantize the emotional tone behind these words, there'd be high readings in the category labelled "Awestruck Wonderment." We've had countless reports on hot new MIDI products and fervent claims that, by the end of the decade, MIDI will have landed your DX7 on Mars and established an intergalactic network of home studio satellites.

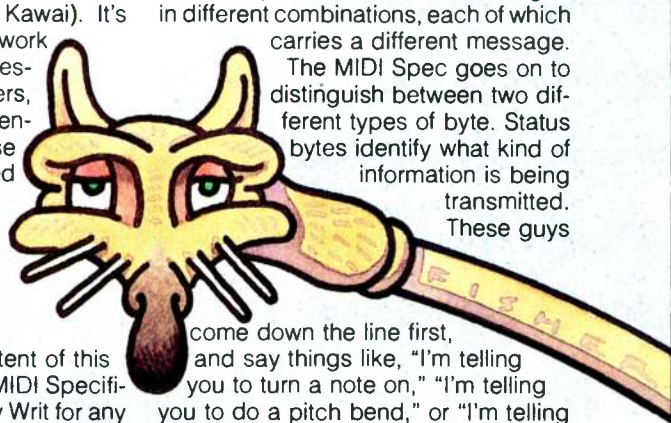
It's easy to get carried away speculating on the long-term possibilities of MIDI. But this article's on a much more mundane mission. We're here to seek out and explore the MIDI protocol itself; to boldly cut through marketing hype and the murky mire of in-group tech talk; to emerge, eyes triumphantly alight, with a clear understanding of the vast reaches just beyond that mystifying acronym we mortals call MIDI.



What's in the Wire? As we all know, MIDI (the Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a computer interface devised by five top synth manufacturers (Sequential, Roland, Yamaha, Korg and Kawai). It's specifically designed to work with the kind of microprocessors you find in synthesizers, drum machines and sequencers, and to interface these with appropriately equipped microcomputers. The data is transmitted from one device to another via patterns of electronic blips that travel through the specially-designed MIDI cable.

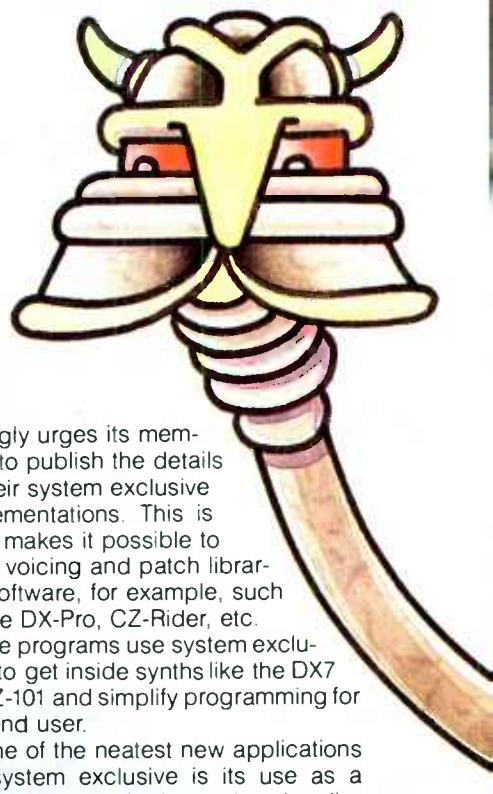
The exact form and content of this data are all laid out in the MIDI Specification 1.0, which is the Holy Writ for any manufacturer who wants to create a MIDI product. Anyone may read the text, though. It's available for a nominal fee from the International MIDI Association (11857 Hartsook St., North Hollywood, CA 91607 [818] 505-8964). The IMA, in fact, has just brought out an expanded, more detailed version of the MIDI Spec—a sort of Revised Standard Version. It doesn't change anything that's in the original MIDI Specification; it just fills in some of the "gray areas." (More on this later.)

So what does the 1.0 Specification have to say about MIDI data? Well first of all, we learn that the data is organized into packets of information known as bytes. The bytes are made up of electronic blips called bits. There are eight data bits in a MIDI byte, plus a start bit and a stop bit. The start and stop bits are there to enable the microprocessors to distinguish between the end of one byte and the beginning of the next. Remember, all we're dealing with here is a line of blips coming down a wire, so it must be made clear which blips belong to which blip family in order for the MIDI message to make sense. The "language" of computers, you see, is binary arithmetic, a system where the only values are 0 and 1. When the current is on, that signifies a logical 0 in MIDI; current off equals a logical 1. Each byte, then, is a packet of 0s and 1s arranged in different combinations, each of which carries a different message.



The MIDI Spec goes on to distinguish between two different types of byte. Status bytes identify what kind of information is being transmitted. These guys come down the line first, and say things like, "I'm telling you to turn a note on," "I'm telling you to do a pitch bend," or "I'm telling you to change from one patch preset to another." Close on the tail of the status byte comes one or more data bytes. These furnish the particulars: "The note I want you to play is Middle C. Play it with X amount of attack velocity." If the receiving instrument is configured to perform all of these specific tasks, it will do so. If not—say it's a keyboard synth that doesn't have veloc-

Illustration by Mark Fisher



ity sensitivity—it will respond to those commands it can carry out (in this example, it will play Middle C) and ignore the commands it can't carry out (in this case, the velocity information).

In saying this, we've dispelled the First Great MIDI Misconception: that connecting a less sophisticated synthesizer to a more sophisticated machine will give the economy model all the performance features of the deluxe job. It just doesn't happen that way.

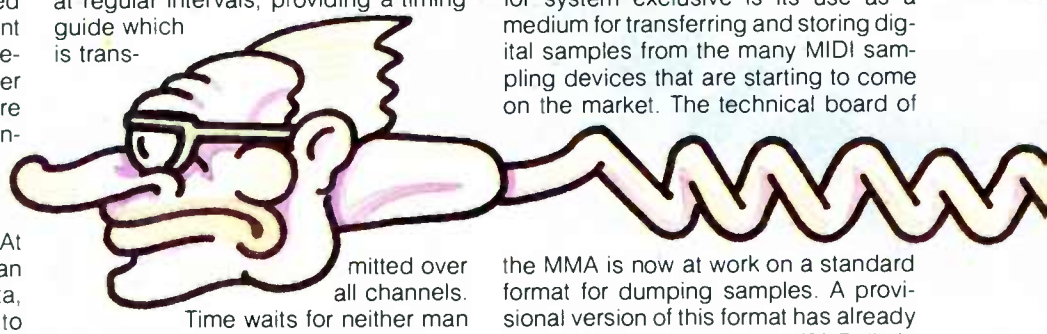
Are You Picking Up Now? MIDI is set up so that information can be transmitted and received over sixteen different channels. This is what lets you play one-man band and have a MIDI sequencer (or personal computer/MIDI software setup) controlling a whole roomful of instruments, each playing a different part, all in perfect sync. Each instrument can "tune in" to the channel that carries the part it should play. At the same time, all the channels can share certain common types of data, which enables all the instruments to synchronize and coordinate what they're doing. Thus the MIDI Specification, in its infinite wisdom, distinguishes between two basic types of MIDI message: Channel Messages and System Messages.

Channel Messages In the status byte of a channel message, the first four bits (collectively known as a "nibble" in cutesy computerese) address the message specifically to one of the sixteen channels. Only those instruments which are "tuned in" to that channel will respond to the message. The remaining four bits of the status byte go on to specify the type of data that will follow.

System Messages These messages are *not* encoded with channel numbers and are subdivided into three types:

1. *System common* messages go out to all units on all channels in any given MIDI hookup. These are the MIDI messages with a sense of place. They make it possible for all instruments in a system to "go to" a particular song that is stored in a sequencer. While the song is playing back, system common messages tick off the measures as they go by, which is helpful if you want to edit the song, identify problem spots, etc.

2. *System real-time* messages, just as their name implies, are MIDI's timekeepers. That is, they take care of all the basic "clocking" functions that hold a MIDI sequencer system in sync. MIDI clock data is based on a twenty-four-pulse-per-quarter-note scheme. In a process called interleaving, MIDI clock bits are dropped into the data stream at regular intervals, providing a timing guide which is transmitted over all channels. Time waits for neither man nor machine, which is why MIDI allows all these real-time messages to interrupt the data stream whenever they need to. System real-time messages are also what make it possible to hit the "Start," "Stop" and "Reset" controls on your sequencer and have all the instruments respond accordingly.



3. *System exclusive* messages are a kind of window which opens out onto the future of MIDI. As people find new applications for MIDI (Curing cancer? Splitting the atom?), system exclusive is likely to be the means by which they implement these applications. The original impetus behind system exclusive was to let manufacturers of several MIDI instruments develop "custom" messages that they could pass among their instruments without messing up the normal flow of MIDI. To achieve this, each manufacturer of MIDI products is assigned an identification code number which is included in the status byte that starts off a system exclusive message.

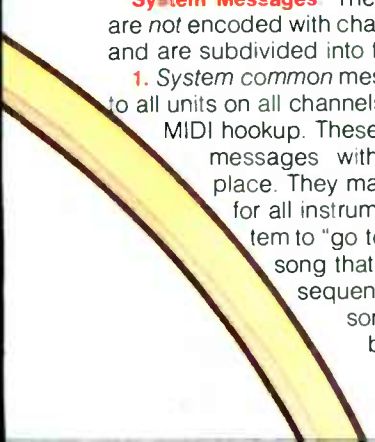
But system exclusive data is not the sole property of the manufacturer who holds a particular ID number. The MIDI Manufacturers' Association (the main MIDI organization here in the States) strongly urges its members to publish the details of their system exclusive implementations. This is what makes it possible to have voicing and patch librarian software, for example, such as the DX-Pro, CZ-Rider, etc. These programs use system exclusive to get inside synths like the DX7 or CZ-101 and simplify programming for the end user.

One of the neatest new applications for system exclusive is its use as a medium for transferring and storing digital samples from the many MIDI sampling devices that are starting to come on the market. The technical board of the MMA is now at work on a standard format for dumping samples. A provisional version of this format has already appeared in the September '85 Bulletin of the IMA (which functions as *the* MIDI user's group, and, as such, the information bureau for the MMA).

Essentially, the dumping of samples involves a fairly elaborate "header," or series of status bytes, in which the manufacturer's system exclusive ID byte is followed by bytes identifying the sampling rate and sampling frequency of the system, the length of the sample and other vital pieces of information. All this is a preamble to the sample data itself. MIDI system designer/manufacturer and MMA chairman Jim Cooper elaborates:

"The format can handle anywhere from eight to twenty-eight bits of quantization. The header also spells out the sampling rate in nanoseconds, so just about any conceivable rate can be accommodated. The header also provides information as to whether there's a loop point present. If you're dumping from an Emulator II, for example, you can specify what the loop points are for any given sound at any given point in time. On the whole, it looks like a very thorough and useful format."

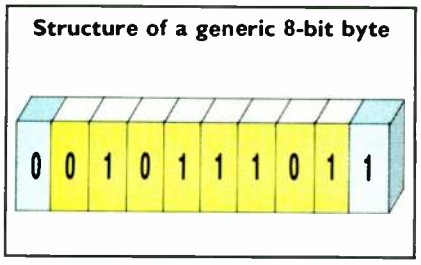
By now it should be clear that,



although there are technically just four basic types of MIDI messages (channel messages and the three categories of system messages), there are virtually no limits to the kinds of information MIDI can be used to convey.

Nightlife Among the MIDI Modes

Now that you know how MIDI data is configured, let's look at how it's transmitted from one instrument to another. Think of an instrument receiving MIDI data as a popular nightclub with a fluctuating door policy. On some evenings, the management's policy is to let *everybody* in. On other nights, things are more exclusive; only a select group of patrons is recognized and admitted. It's the same thing with our MIDI instrument. All the data that's in the cable presents itself at the MIDI In port, but the instrument can react to this mob in a number of different ways. It can recognize all sixteen channels' worth of data. (MIDI has a name for this door policy; it's called Omni.) Or it can



limit its response to certain channels only. How can it tell which is the elite data? Easy: the dress code. The "right kind" of data will be wearing the correct channel number on its channel message status byte.

Now we'll push the analogy one step further. Not only can a nightclub choose which customers get in the door, it can also choose how they'll be treated once they're in. The club can throw open all of its facilities or decide to open up just one room. It's the same thing with a MIDI synth. It can make all of its voices available to incoming MIDI data (assuming it's a polyphonic machine). Or it can open up just one voice and operate monophonically. And if it's one of those chic new multitimbral *boîtes*, it can let in several different channels of data and send each one off to a different group of voices, making sure there's no intermingling among different classes of data.

Putting all of these different options together, the MIDI Spec identifies four basic modes for receiving data:

Mode 1: *Omni On/Poly*. Probably the most "straightforward" MIDI mode. The receiving instrument responds to messages transmitted on all sixteen channels. Note messages are polyphonically assigned to all the instruments' voices. This mode is often referred to simply as the "Omni Mode."

Mode 2: *Omni On/Mono*. As in mode 1, the receiving instrument responds to messages on all channels. The difference is that all incoming note messages are assigned to just one voice. This mode is used to get a polyphonic instrument to play monophonically. It is one of two modes commonly called "Mono Mode" (see below); so make sure you get your terms straight if you're buying a piece of gear or hooking up with another MIDI musician.

Mode 3: *Omni Off/Poly*. The receiving instrument only responds to messages coming in on one designated channel; but note messages are assigned polyphonically. Generally known as the "Poly Mode," this is one of the most important modes within MIDI. Mode 3 is the one you use when you want a central controller, such as a sequencer, to send out different, but synchronized polyphonic musical passages to different MIDI instruments.

Mode 4: *Omni Off/Mono*.This is the "other Mono Mode." It's an important one too. Thanks to Mode 4, a single multitimbral instrument (such as an Oberheim Matrix-12 or Sequential Six-Trak) can be used to play a number of different musical lines. As we mentioned earlier, a multitimbral system can be programmed to receive several different channels of MIDI information and assign each channel to one or more of its voices. So suppose you had an eight-voice multitimbral synth. You could have a monophonic bass part coming in on one channel and a monophonic melody line coming in on another. Using one voice per channel to build chords, other channels could be used to bring in two three-voice accompaniment parts, or one six-voice accompaniment, or any other combination you wanted.

Channels Vs. Tracks

Now we come to another great area of MIDI mystification. The sixteen MIDI *channels* are one thing and the number of *tracks* on a MIDI sequencer are something else entirely. Channels exist within the MIDI protocol itself as a way of organizing MIDI data. All MIDI data travels down the same wire, which means that the channels exist solely as numbers within the channel message status byte. It isn't as though there were sixteen separate wires or anything like that.

Tracks, on the other hand, are not a part of the MIDI protocol itself. What they are is a feature included in MIDI sequencers enabling the user to organize his musical data in roughly the same way he would organize his music on a multitrack tape machine. A quick look at today's MIDI sequencer market will underscore the difference between channels and tracks. Although there are just sixteen MIDI channels, there are several thirty-two-track and even sixty-four-track sequencers out there. And by the same token, even if you have a simple one- or two-track MIDI sequencer like a Yamaha QX7, you can still operate on all sixteen MIDI channels. The ability to merge tracks on a MIDI sequencer is what makes these wonders possible. And once again, the key to it all is that simple-but-effective concept of interleaving different types of bytes in a stream of MIDI data. Jeff Rona explains:

"Say you're merging two tracks down to one, and let's assume that each track is on a different MIDI channel. Well, there's a status byte which specifies which MIDI channel each data byte is associated with. And because of this, you can interleave MIDI data with no problem. The only thing that changes is that you may need to add status bytes when you have data interleaving from two tracks down to one. This way, the new, merged track always remembers which data comes from channel one, which from channel two, etc., and where it's all going."

The Notorious Time Lag

This brings us to another tricky bit. Apart from the inner workings of the 1.0 protocol itself, MIDI time lags are probably the greatest source of heated conversation, mass confusion and wrinkled brows among MIDI users. It all stems from the fact that MIDI, as we've mentioned several times already, is a serial interface. It operates at a rate of 31.25 Kbaud, which means that it takes about 320 microseconds to transmit one byte of MIDI data in the interface's "single file" fashion.

Now here's where the trouble begins. When the data stream for a given message starts getting too complex (i.e., when it contains a lot of bytes), a bottleneck develops. To return to our nightclub analogy, this is what happens on a busy night. They're only letting 'em in one at a time, so there's an annoying wait while everybody lines up to get in. But there's more at stake here than a boring time for our little club-going MIDI bit. There is more data than the receiving instrument can process in order to play the notes right on time. Needless to say, this can wreak havoc in a programmed performance. For this reason, some observers have suggested that MIDI would have been better off as a parallel interface, in which the data travels along separate, parallel lines,

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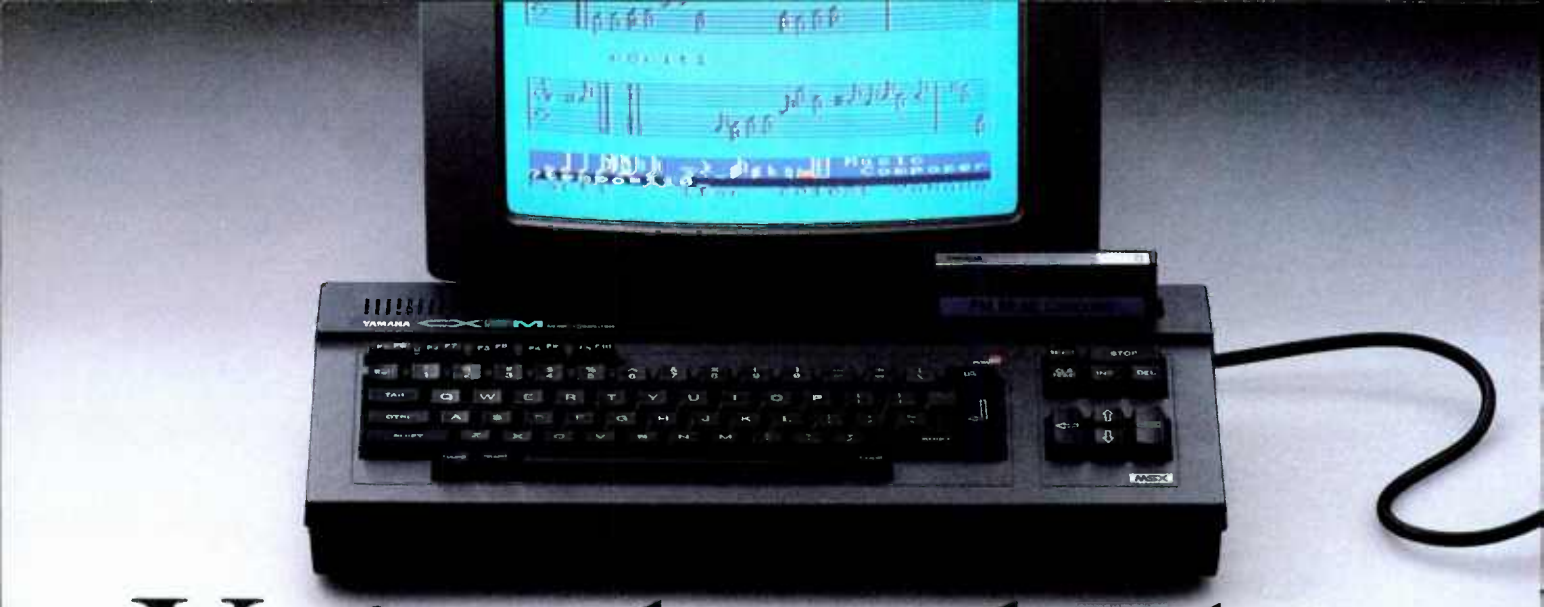

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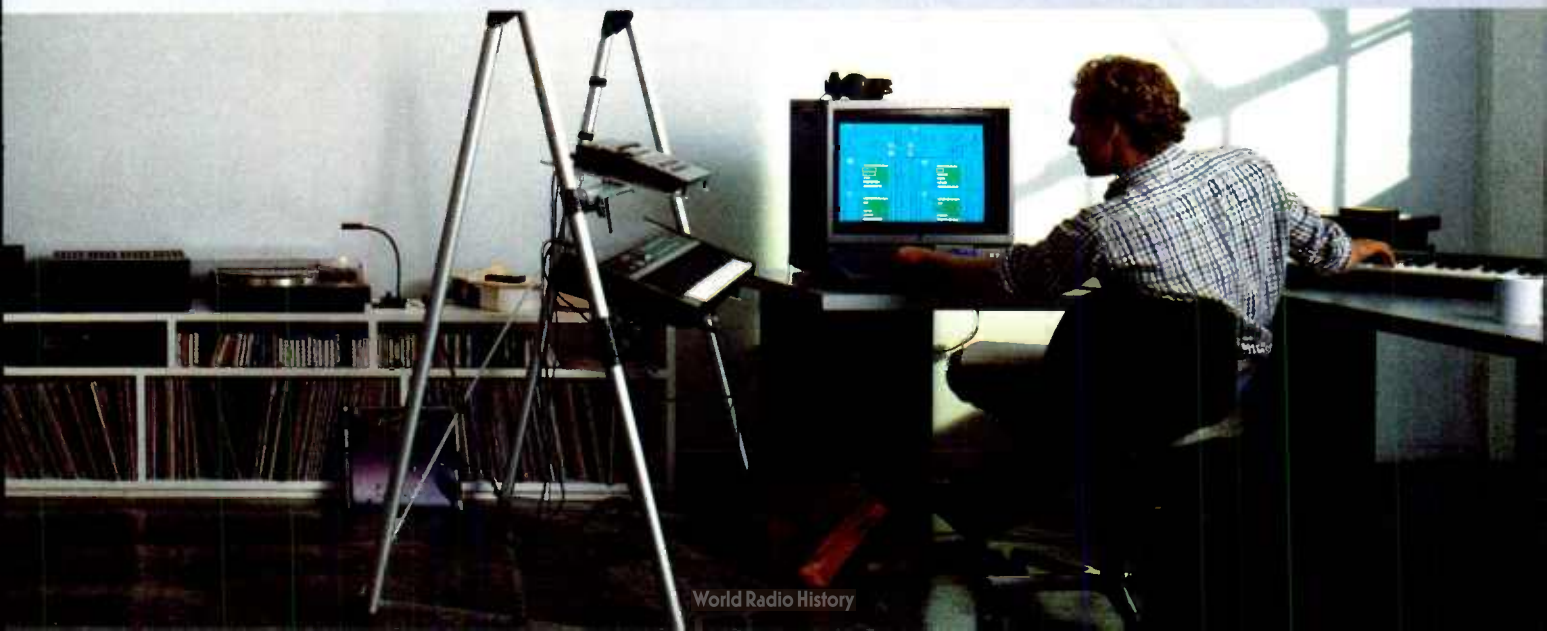


thereby speeding up the rate of transmission. "Why not open up a few more doors to the club?" these people argue.

As one of the original movers behind the MIDI 1.0 Specification, Dave Smith of Sequential has answered more than his share of questions about MIDI time lag problems. Smith was instrumental in initiating the "MIDI Talks" between Yamaha, Roland, Korg, Kawai and Sequential. With a little imagination, it's pretty easy to visualize the diplomatic finesse required to get five top manufacturers—competitors no less—to reach a consensus on something as complex and detailed as MIDI. The 1.0 Specification represented some compromises, Smith readily admits. But, he goes on to insist, the reasons for making it a serial interface were quite sound. Many people assume that the serial format was adopted to help keep cabling between instruments simple and inexpensive. But that, Smith exlains, was only part of the story.

"For me," he says, "electrical isolation was just as important as the cost factor and simplicity of the connector. If we had gone parallel, electrical isolation would have become very difficult. Everyone knows how bad ground loop problems are, even without MIDI. Start adding additional connections between instruments—especially digital connections as opposed to audio connections—and the problem is compounded. It would have been almost impossible to keep out ground loops if MIDI had been a parallel interface."

Besides, all the MIDI experts we spoke with agreed that most MIDI time lag problems do not stem from MIDI itself, but from the types of software and microprocessors (commonly Z80s and 6809s) used in MIDI instruments. Because they have to take care of internal control functions *and* process incoming MIDI data, they often can't process the data as fast as MIDI can transmit it.

"It only takes a millisecond to send out a MIDI command," Jim Cooper observes. "But on a DX7, for example, it takes roughly seven milliseconds before notes start sounding."

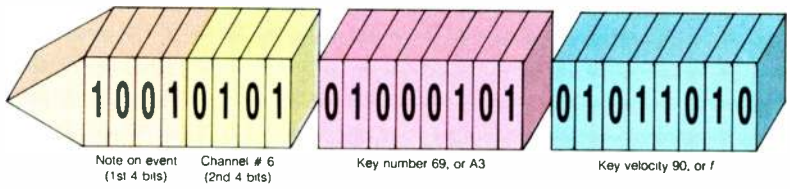
What's more, MIDI is designed to make the most of its 31.25 Kbaud rate. In transmitting a series of note commands, for example, it will automatically kick into something called running status, which eliminates unnecessary status bytes. Result: what's referred to as a faster thru-put rate.

"Once you've specified 'this is a note on, which happens on Channel 1,'" elaborates Jeff Rona, "then you don't need to send any more status bytes until you're sending something other than a note on. Running status, in other words, is implied status. It means, 'Whatever the last status byte was, it holds for these data bytes as well, until otherwise specified.' This gives you a potential thirty percent compression of data. Typically, a note on command is three bytes long. You have a status byte, the pitch value and the velocity. If you're going to follow that uninterruptedly with several more note ons, you can skip the status byte."

For those of you who *still* aren't satisfied that MIDI's serial baud rate is fast enough for you, there are hints abroad that it may double. And the "digital sampling explosion" may just be the factor that makes this new "double standard" a reality.

"The amount of data in a sampler just blows away the amount of data in any other keyboard instrument," Dave Smith comments. "Take the new Prophet 2000 for example, which has about 256,000 twelve-bit words of data. And we're going to have an expander out pretty soon which will double that. That's a whole lot of data to send out when you're only transmitting 31,000 bits per second. You're starting to talk minutes of transfer time. Doubling the MIDI baud rate would be very simple and viable to achieve. It would help immensely in transmitting sample data and cut in half all these time delays people are talking about. Existing hardware could handle the doubling pretty easily. It only requires a few hardware changes to make the instrument select between the double speed and normal speed. In time, maybe even a 4X MIDI rate will begin to make sense."

These three bytes are saying, "Play A above middle C at forte dynamics."



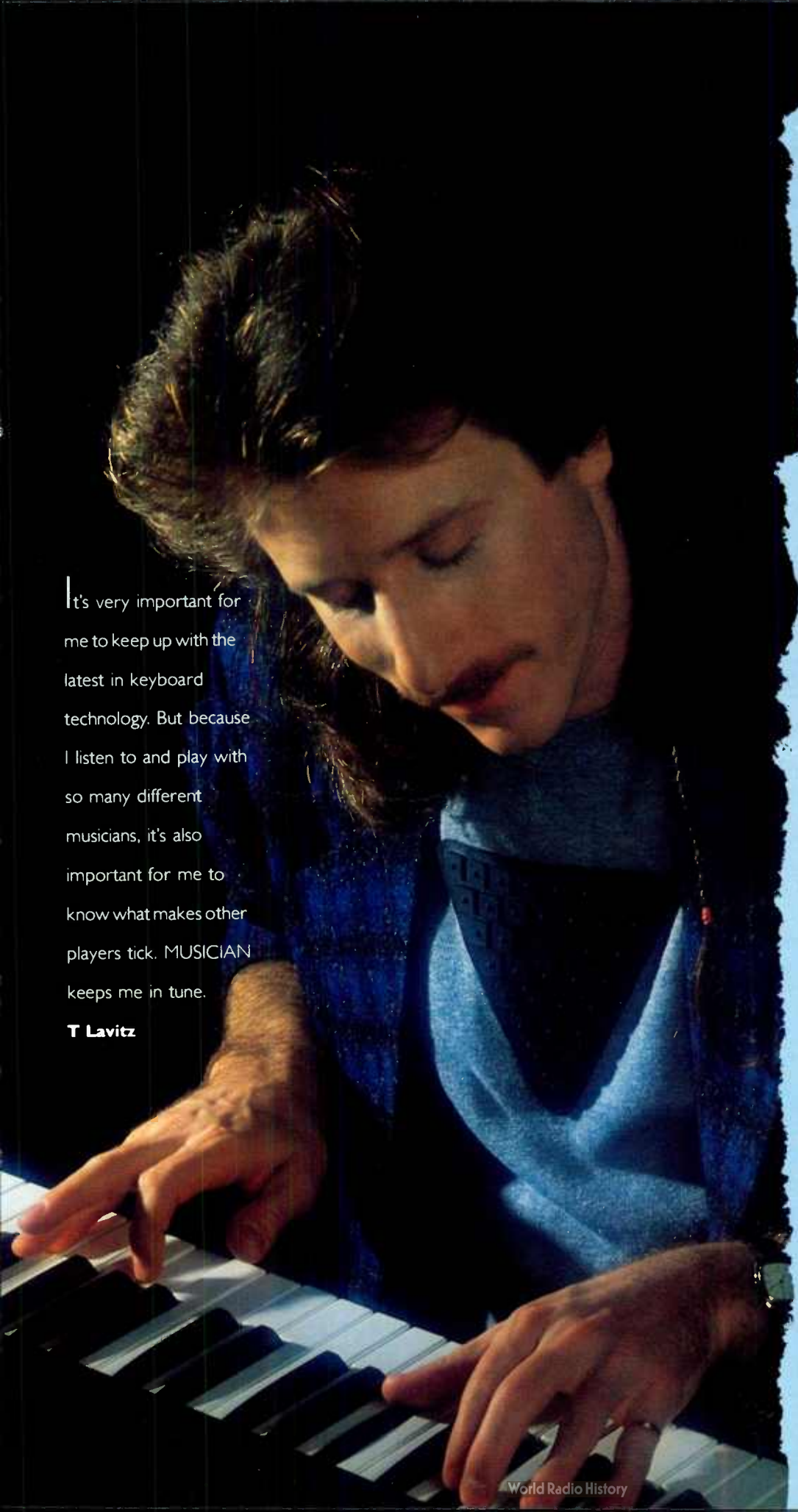
The Revised Standard Revisited

We started out by talking about the new addendum to the MIDI 1.0 Specification. It seems like a good place to finish up as well. This detailed new document signals an important coming of age of MIDI. The era of embarrassing incompatibilities between different manufacturers' MIDI products seems to be drawing to a close. Scores of new companies are getting on the MIDI track without any major derailments. In short, things are looking up for MIDI consumers. They have more choices and fewer worries about different pieces of equipment not working together.

Now that MIDI's awkward stage appears to be over, the technical people at the MMA and IMA have been able to go back and clean up some of the housekeeping details of MIDI implementation—how much delay time is allowable when interleaving MIDI clocks with on and off bits, how the "all notes off" command differs in each of the four modes...that sort of thing. According to Jeff Rona, the new addendum to the 1.0 Spec will also formalize a lot of de facto standards that have grown up in implementing MIDI. Here we're talking about things like code numbers for breath controllers, footpedals and other accessories. As more and more sophisticated pitch-to-MIDI conversion devices make it possible to use any traditional instrument as a MIDI controller, more official code number assignments are likely in the future.

MIDI musicians everywhere can benefit more directly from Part Three of the new MIDI document. It contains a standard format and detailed instructions for manufacturers to use in creating implementation charts for their MIDI products. If you're buying a new device for your existing MIDI setup, this should make it easier than ever to gauge how well different products will match up with what you've got already. Want to know if that new drum pad will accept MIDI clock data from your sequencer? Wondering whether that new keyboard can receive all the velocity data your Roland MKB-1000 sends out? All you have to do is A/B the MIDI implementation charts for each instrument.

Apart from the implementation charts, a good working knowledge of the MIDI protocol itself is your best weapon against unsuccessful hookups. When Box A doesn't seem to respond to Box B, you can start asking the right kind of questions. "Can Box B receive in the Omni Off/Mono Mode?" "Am I transmitting and receiving on the same channel?" If you've read this far, you should already have a pretty good idea of what kinds of questions to ask. And the next time someone hands you a line about MIDIing to Mars by 1995, don't buy unless he can tell you how many status bytes it takes to achieve escape velocity.



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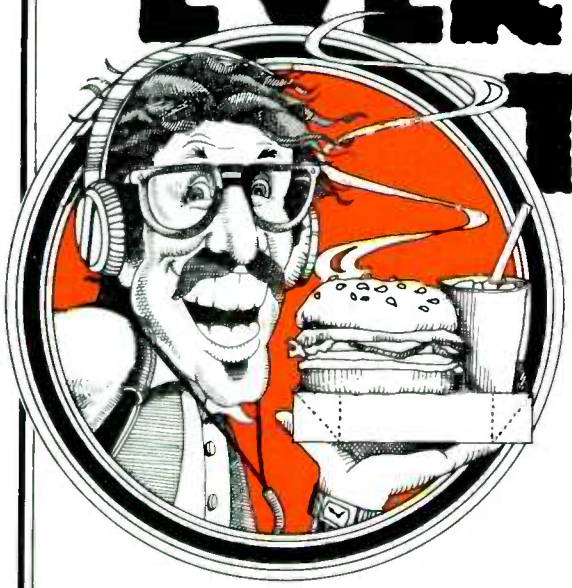

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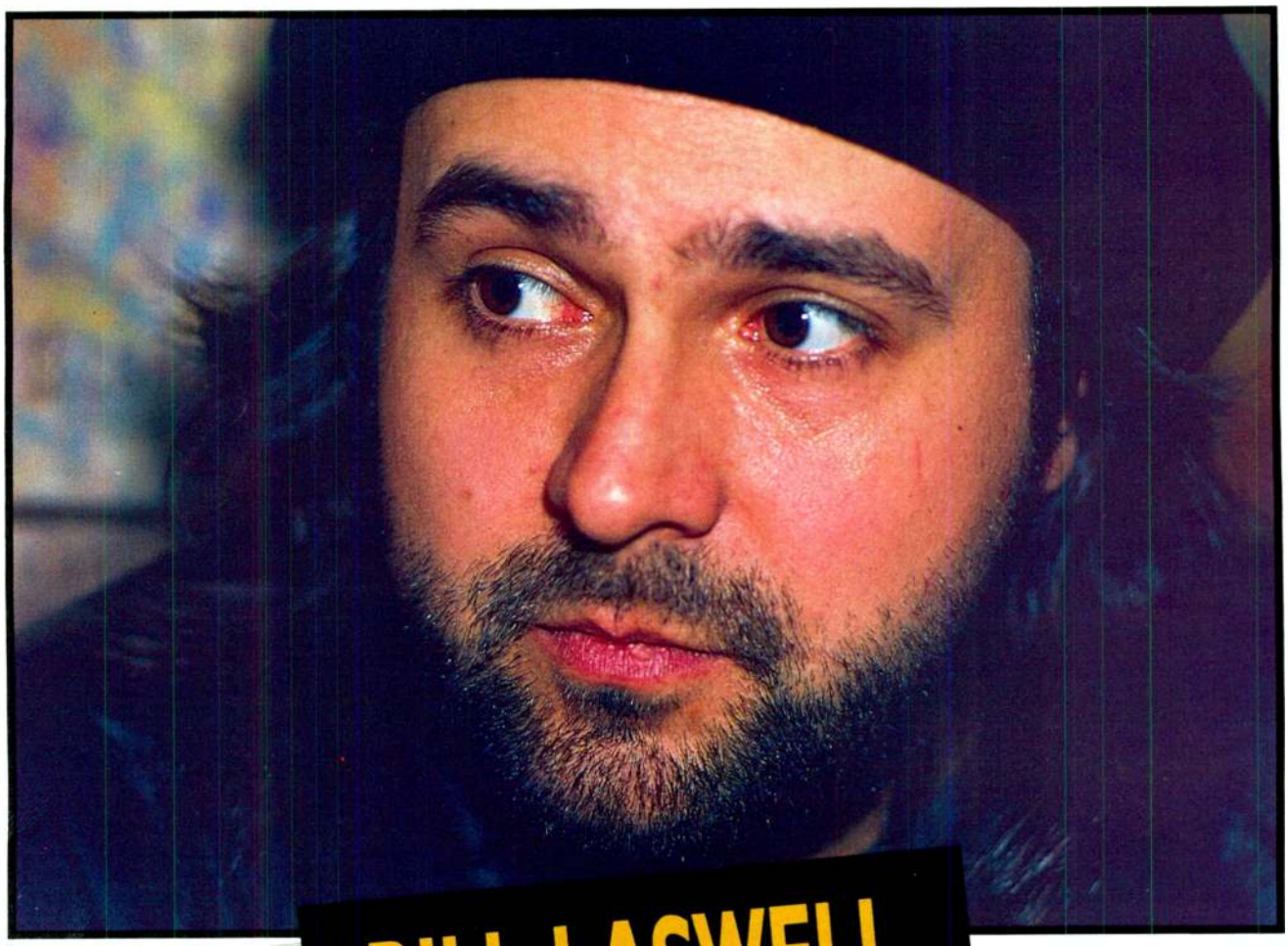


BILL LASWELL

A Rare Conversation with the Bassist/Producer Who Stood the World on Its Ear.

By Jerome Reese

One spring day in Paris in 1983, a cocky young bassist named Bill Laswell was lying on a bed in a hotel room, hat slanted low over the eyes, telling how he was going to conquer the world. There was something foreboding about this twosome of Laswell and his manager, "administrator" Roger Trilling, as they expounded their Master Plan, set in motion by that summer's release of a flurry of Laswell-connected records: "A lot of people who are currently fashionable won't be talked about soon. We believe that musicians today have no idea of what the future's going to bring. We're not working only towards the future, but we'll be right at home then. We're working to set new standards for recording so that people will see that there's a lot to do, that rock or jazz aren't dead."

Flashy words for a twenty-seven-year-old musician with some fascinating but flawed albums with a collective called Material, and who not five years before had been starving on the streets of Manhattan. But Laswell hadn't been wasting any time. His father was in the oil business, so he grew up on the move. When he was eight his father died, and his family moved to Detroit, settling in a predominantly black area of the city. At thirteen, Laswell was playing bass guitar in local bands, and by age fifteen had already left home to play R&B on the Midwest and Southern chitlin' circuits. But Detroit, with its bizarre melting pot of Motown sophistication, pre-punk excesses like the Stooges and the MC5, and the acid funk of the Funkadelic brigade, left quite an impression on the discerning youngster. By the time he reached New York in 1977, punk had left its mark on everything from rock to jazz, and groups like Talking Heads, the Contortions, Television and the Lounge Lizards were all the rage. But Laswell had larger ambitions, and formed a "mystery company" called Material to promote his eclectic vision. After producing some crude rap records for the independent Celluloid label, to which Laswell is still loyal, he first tasted success with a modest dance hit, Nona Hendryx's "Bustin' Out."

By 1983, Laswell was definitely a comer, his various Material records, *Temporary Music*, *One Down*, and *Memory Serves* a critic's wet dream. He seemed to be playing Russian roulette with a hipster's record collection, using a veritable roll call of contemporary improvisers and legends, taking styles and rhythms and shuffling them all together. Hey, wanna hear what reggae, soca and rap would sound like together? Laswell was trying it. From the look of his records, and the company he was keeping, this was one cool dude. Words like "fusion," "synthesis" and "eclecticism" were taking

on new meanings in the wake of this ebullient experimenter.

And there was something rambunctious and irresistible about his bass playing. It sounded ominous, brooding, and yet elastic, right in the pocket, a cross between Larry Graham's funk anthems, Bootsy's nastiness, Michael Henderson's jazzy wah-wah voicings, and Robbie Shakespeare's pounding minimalism. Quite a combination, and he made it seem effortless. It was also a welcome change from the Jaco clones prevalent.

That spring day in Paris, the tendentious tandem—erudite music scholar and swaggering musician—were making quite an impression. From the outset they set the pace, quizzing me, placing booby traps, judging the relative merits of my questions, trading private jokes. Finally, exasperated, I threw down the gauntlet, telling Laswell that the best things he'd done on record so far had been direct ripoffs of Miles, the seminal *On The Corner* in particular, especially a tune called "Black Satin" (which recently turned up again on a Laswell production for Sly and Robbie). Suddenly the tone changed, Laswell admitting that "Miles' electric period is extremely important, crucial. It's our favorite musical period. That, and Tony Williams Lifetime, which was the best improvising rock group ever." He went on to say that his jazz roots began with Miles' albums like *Pangaea*, *Dark Magus*...the dark period. We wondered why no one had realized that Miles had made the most ferocious and awesome funk of the 70s. We ran down some Miles trivia and then they proceeded to play a prized bootleg tape of a 1974 Miles' concert. "Crucial" indeed! As I was leaving their hotel room, Laswell told me to look out for a production he was working on for Herbie Hancock, due out soon.

Laswell and Trilling, bless 'em, were right on the money (so to speak), as several months later a nerve-rackingly unforgettable ditty called "Rockit" began thundering out of beatboxes, stereos and television sets everywhere. Written and produced by Laswell, and played with Hancock, the album it was on, *Future Shock*, won a Grammy and went on to sell a million and a half copies, quite a feat for a mostly instrumental affair with a hardcore scratch groove. Laswell, as we all know by now, became much in demand, has appeared on countless albums (nearing seventy as you read this) and produced several dozen, including splashy lucrative affairs like Mick Jagger's *She's The Boss* and Yoko Ono's *Starpeace*, as well as relatively obscure projects like the Senagalese group Toure Kunda, the Last Poets, or Gambian kora player Foday Musa Suso.

Laswell's name became synonymous with quality, his reputation built on his showy eclecticism. The guy obviously had a weird sense of humor too, pitting Johnny Lydon against Afrika Bambaataa for a bit of "World Destruction." Not surprisingly, Laswell and the Material collective were lionized by the press. The ideas were flying, the names involved eye- (and ear-) opening. Laswell seemed to be the ultimate in 80s hip. Then he produced a second Hancock album which didn't/couldn't do as well as *Future Shock*. The Jagger debacle followed (the Nile Rodgers tracks outshining his) and, with the other releases, Laswell's name was becoming synonymous with quantity.

All this in only two and a half years? Was he burnt out?

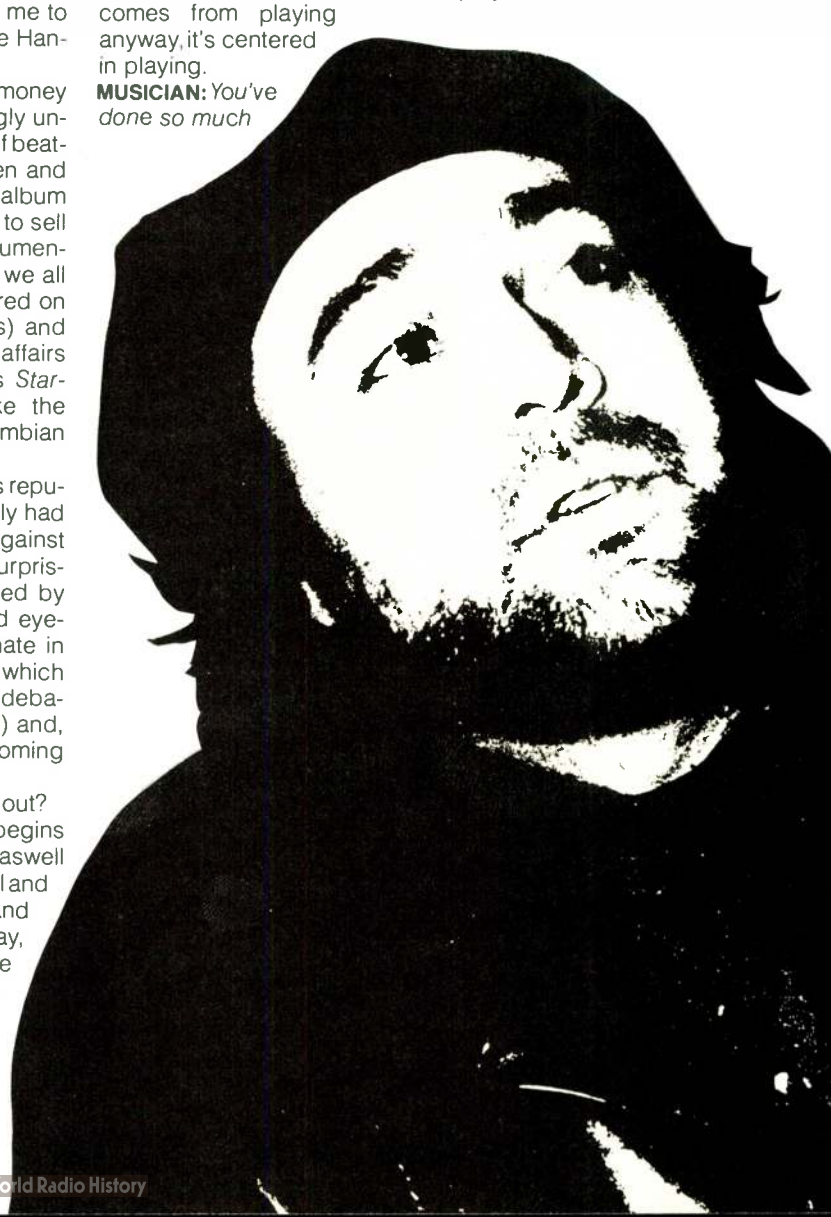
It was somewhat ironic, when even the new ZZ Top begins with a direct quote from *Future Shock*! The sound Laswell perfected in such a short time, while crafting an original and somewhat menacing blend of turgid street rhythms and exotic melodies, has become as inescapable as, say, Trevor Horn's grandiloquence. Laswell had said that he was aiming at bringing a clear, living sound to his work, found only in rock productions at the time, and he'd succeeded brilliantly. Furthermore, some recent records, like Deadline's "Down By Law," showed Laswell the bassist in top form, even if Material was showing signs of conceptual fatigue. A mid-season slump? It was time to find out.

When Laswell (and Trilling) showed up for the interview in Manhattan, I found him much bulkier, looking older than his thirty years. He wore a beret and a leather fringe jacket, circa 1984 Miles, except that the trumpeter's flashy red was now Laswell's usual black. He handed me a present, a beautiful encyclopedia of Miles Davis done by the Japanese (as only they can), but avoided eye contact. He looked guarded, bored and shy all at once. We found ourselves in a French restaurant near his apartment, and Laswell immediately ordered cocktails. Throughout the interview he either looked at his "administrator" or stared off into space, warming up gradually as the drinks came. His soft, high voice is a curious contrast from his jaded hipster stance. Actually, Bill was a nice guy when we talked about Japan or travel. Otherwise, he was laconic and piquant, his tongue as deadly as his bass playing.

MUSICIAN: *Two-and-a-half years ago you told me you were going to devote yourself to production and play less bass, even saying that with all the advancements bassists had made in recent years it would take too long to catch up. Now that you've produced an innumerable amount of records since 1983, will you devote more time to playing?*

LASWELL: [*Looking knowingly at Trilling*] Right now I'm in training. I'm going to play a lot more bass, but I'm in training now. I always played some on records, and kept playing with people I like, but now I have to play a lot more. Production comes from playing anyway, it's centered in playing.

MUSICIAN: *You've done so much*



production work it seemed to be reaching a glut point. Aren't you tired of working all the time?

LASWELL: No, I'm not tired of anything. I'm not a workaholic. That's a misconception. I have short sessions. I spend most of my time in the bar. And we have a great time. I hate studios. I'm in one six to eight hours a day at the most. It might seem like a lot of work to most people but it's really not any more than anyone else is doing. I work much quicker, that's all. I'm not a perfectionist at all. I want to get on to the next thing. It's true with playing as well. But you can't go too quickly. You have to remain natural. But if I'm not working I feel guilty. I feel very guilty right now, but I'm learning to take it. [*Musician apologizes.*] No problem. But I'm getting over it. I'm in training. Work less and do more.

MUSICIAN: *You've said in the past that people take records too seriously, that to you records were more like "postcards."*

LASWELL: I don't remember saying that. Lately I've begun to say that I don't take them seriously. I recognize a record as a receipt for my work. I don't respect the record at all, or what's done with it, or who does what with it. I only respect my own work, and a record is a receipt. I will never have respect for it, only for my own playing, which is developing now. I start to recognize the need to get better.

MUSICIAN: *Don't you respect some of your recent records?*

LASWELL: I haven't done that many recently. My memory is blank, so I can't answer a question like that.

MUSICIAN: *Come on. Deadline's* Down By Law *is a Laswell project if ever there was one!*

LASWELL: No. Deadline is a production record done very quickly. These records are done in very loud laughter and extreme chaotic situations. They're done in fun. People view them as very serious things—they're not. People will spend more time reviewing and writing about it than I spend making it. I'll be on to the next thing.

MUSICIAN: *Bernie Worrell says that what was so special about Detroit, especially in the late 60s when you were in high school there, was that there was an incredible mix of musics. He was friends with Ted Nugent, Iggy Pop, the MC5, there was no color barrier in music.*

LASWELL: That's absolutely right. I do remember that connection. I remember concerts of Funkadelic and MC5 on the same bill. Which was really interesting to me; because you're there you think that's what's happening. You don't realize that it's not like that anywhere else. Which is amazing, really. Maybe that's what had a big influence on me subconsciously.

MUSICIAN: *Was the Material collective an attempt to recreate Detroit in New York?*

"These records are done in very loud laughter and extreme, chaotic situations. They're done in fun."

LASWELL: Coming to New York from Detroit was like going to another planet. It takes a long time to formulate an opinion of what's going on here, it's so big. I still don't know what's happening in New York, if anything is. There has never been an idea behind Material, it's just been a means to work and to create work for other people, to have a situation where a lot of people can have interplay, not be fixed to a particular group. The freedom of being able to create groups and activities. I'm constantly in contact with many musicians. It's getting bigger all the time. The street music is constantly changing. Afrika Bambaataa is doing things with South African music, recording MC5's "Kick Out The Jams." Street music will always be there, but it's constantly changing. Things are opening up now.

MUSICIAN: *I first heard you with "Massacre" [guitarist Fred Frith, drummer Fred Maher] in a tiny club in Paris in 1980. Even then your style was totally your own. Have you consciously worked at it? Do you think your style is original?*

LASWELL: No, I didn't think it was original at all. Just recently I was playing in Japan—I hadn't played the instrument in two months—and I recognized that sound; the style occurred and I recognized it, and I thought that maybe something was there. This was a very recent discovery. I thought before I was maybe just playing bits of things I was interested in. That's why I have to practice now. It's not the "sound," it's all part of a particular language that has to be developed, but I recognize now that there's a style. Now I'm going back to listen to all these things; before, I was just doing that very quickly and basing it on influences. Many things, not just musical influences. You can't talk about influences without sounding stupid. I'll be the last person to explain my sound, but the first person to pursue it.

MUSICIAN: *You've expressed a high opinion of*

Jamaaladeen Tacuma. What other bassists do you admire?
LASWELL: I don't even think like that. I don't listen to bass players, really. There's not that many bassists I like.
R. TRILLING: Lately when I've come to Bill's house he's been playing bass along with a compact disc of trains. That's true.
LASWELL: But as far as playing bass that's not so clever, really. I never had more than a five minute conversation with any musician that I felt was too bright recently, especially bass players. I'm more interested in information and travel, not so much in trying to work out various apologies to Charlie Parker. If that's what playing well is and that's a standard for modern music, than I'm not a musician...I'm a criminal [*laughs*].
MUSICIAN: *Having spent so much time in the studios in the past three years, are you a studio expert now, or does the engineer do the work?*
LASWELL: I still don't know how studios work. I work with the engineer. Basically, I base everything on whether or not you have an idea. If you have an idea you can find an end. I always go into a project with a basic structure and idea. If I have a way to see the whole thing then I'll do it, if I can start it and finish it on my terms. And for me it'll be done, and other people may have comments, but it'll be totally on the periphery of how the thing was generated. I always decide if it's good or bad, because that's when it's finished. And what people say means absolutely nothing. When the record comes out it's like a receipt for me to say "fuck off."
MUSICIAN: *You worked on some African projects when you were there, a Manu Dibango album, the Toure Kunda record. Do you find Paris a center for African music?*
LASWELL: What comes from Africa is still in Africa. As for "fusion" of rock and African music, Ginger Baker already tried it over ten years ago. What's happening now is just another commercial thing.
MUSICIAN: *As you probably know, Fela was furious with what you did to his* Army Arrangement *tapes, even remixing it and rereleasing it himself. He went so far as to say that it was typical American "colonization" of African music....*
LASWELL: Fela had a great band ten years ago. I received those tapes to work on—I did it as a favor—I would never have approached it as a job. Those tapes were badly done, badly played, and all of Fela's horn solos were abysmal. I have no respect for bad musicianship and I have no interest in politics. Fela's solos were erased. We mixed the LP in five minutes, as a favor. If that's a musical contribution, thanks. And if it's not, fuck off! I would never have produced a record like that, and I would never work with musicians at that low a level. I support what Fela did ten years ago. But I have no words for politics. I'm not a "Live-Aid" festival, I just make records.
MUSICIAN: *You overdubbed one of Worrell's best organ solos ever on that Fela record. Whose idea was it?*
LASWELL: It wasn't an idea. It was logical. Bernie's a great musician. You have bad tapes, you call your friends. Your friends will always help you. So you call Sly (Dunbar), Aiyb (Dieng), and Bernie. You can talk about Africa and fucking bullshit for days, but the fact is Bernie's a high-grade musician and Fela's in jail, and these people are working and he's not. I make records, I don't do anything else. Musically I use a lot of the same musicians because I like them personally. I feel that it's part of my job to make music but to also help the people I work with. And if I help them half as much as they've helped me, then I'm doing quite well.
MUSICIAN: *A standard criticism of your production techniques is that there's a sameness to them, no matter who you're producing.*
TRILLING: You mean like Steve Gadd?
MUSICIAN: *That's something else. He's often just a drummer working in a hit factory. You* control *your projects.*
LASWELL: I don't think people identify so much with the music played by names. They identify with the names. And what's happening with our recent work is that we've stopped printing names on the albums, so that records will be sold as records. I would say "music," but that's another thing. When you get a record it'll be just a record, no names.
MUSICIAN: *Sounding like Miles Davis in the early 70s again?*
LASWELL: Well, he's doing it, with no consideration of the names. I think it's important that people try to speak about the music, not about the names.
MUSICIAN: *Word has it that you did a project and presented it to Miles, a twenty-minute piece with you, Anton Fier, and Daniel Ponce. Will you work with him?*
LASWELL: I recorded a ten-minute track for Miles in New York in the spring. There seems to be a good contact with Miles. I hope that in the future we will work with him. But forget about the names, you already have an image of people doing something for someone else. And that's not how music is built. It comes out of an essential idea.
MUSICIAN: *But one of the initial successes of Material was having had the idea of putting names together and creating unexpected things....*
LASWELL: You mean names because you think of genres, areas clashing or contradicting, or a collusion of some kind with another. And it's all alien to the fact that you're listening to a sound. I've done a million things in the last few years and I've always printed the names on the records, and I feel that it's pretty much defeated the work, because people have their own expectation of what those names mean. They build their own opinion of where these musicians come from, and where we are is just where they've stopped off on the way. And I don't think that's correct. In this day and age we have to stop to say names relating to production or musicianship. But it's just sound. It's going on around you right now. You listen to this [*indicates the restaurant*] for five minutes. It means absolutely nothing, but if you go along the bar and name each person and they happen to be famous, then you're going to build a fantastic opinion of what's going on. Which would be totally irrelevant. [*Laughs*]
MUSICIAN: *Your latest production was for Yoko Ono. Even after Jagger that was quite a surprise.*
LASWELL: No surprise to me. I've appreciated her for many years. For years and years. I'm a fan of Yoko's early records. My favorite playing of John Lennon is the Plastic Ono Band record. I thought it was a phenomenal record, and it was a big influence on the early stages of my development, and that was years and years ago. "Fly" as a record was a big influence. These are records, musical records. People are just a little bit out of touch, that's all. Badly informed. They are so badly informed and so badly out of touch that they've come to grips with a whole other reality which is being dictated, and that's what pop music is about right now, the other reality. Which is just based on people being nice to each other and not understanding the past or the future. It's all happening right now, you understand. But I'm not here. So they will never understand exactly what I'm thinking about or doing. And it doesn't matter at all. But I know why I work with Yoko Ono and she knows why, and that's so much more important.
MUSICIAN: *I have the feeling that of all your productions the one that most tried your patience was Jagger's.*
LASWELL: That's a very different kind of work. It involved a lot of patience on my part, and that's not how I work normally. But I found a way to work, I found a new level of patience, and I also made a decision not to work that way again. But you learn a lot in records like that.
MUSICIAN: *Just a guess, but I'd think that Jagger hired you mainly because he's an old pro and you were like the new toy in the window. He probably just wanted company, he must be so bored making records by now.*

continued on page 112

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Stan Ridgway

A Wall of Voodoo-er Loses it at the Movies & Finds it at the Clubhouse

By Alan di Perna

The Clubhouse is up on the fourth floor of an office building Raymond Chandler might have called "reasonably shabby" fifty years ago. It's on a characteristically sleazy stretch of Hollywood Boulevard, stuck among the topless bars, massage parlors and T-shirt places that dot the "Walk Of Fame." The maverick artistic spirit of Hollywood directors like Welles, Hawks and Chaplin has long since departed this dismal tourist trap district. But up at the Clubhouse, Stan Ridgway is working out his own feisty alternative to another firmly entrenched "studio system." Only this time, the battleground is pop music rather than movies.

The Clubhouse, you see, is Ridgway's personal recording studio and hideout. For the most part, the place was built by the advance that I.R.S. Records gave the ex-Wall of Voodoo singer for *The Big Heat*, his long-awaited solo debut. He cut a large portion of the record there, co-producing with an old friend, Louis VandenBerg. With a sly smile, Ridgway explains that he made the album for a fraction of what it would have cost to record at a posh commercial facility.

"I could have gone out and found the latest haircut producer and made the whole album that way," he remarks. "But instead, I decided to try and do it myself with people I've been working with. This way, I figured, at least I'll learn something new about my craft. So much of what an artist does in the so-called big-industry pop machine isn't really done by the artist at all. It's more a case of what's done *to* him. So many bands are ruined by trendy production. I wanted to avoid that. For me, building this studio was a means of getting more control over my music."

Not that Stan hasn't tried working with outside producers. Some of *The Big Heat* was recorded by British producer Hugh Jones. On some other tracks, Mitch Froom and Joe Chiccarelli lent a hand. But after dealing with all the standard problems of scheduling a name producer, meeting high commercial studio rates and worrying about record company recoupment, Ridgway decided there *had* to be a better way. For him, that meant the Clubhouse.

The first lucky break came when Stewart Copeland loaned Stan his 24-channel Allen & Heath Syncon mixing console. Copeland and Ridgway had become friendly back when the Police drummer was working on the *Rumblefish* film soundtrack, and the two collaborated on a single, "Don't Box Me In." Some time after that, Copeland bought a new console for his home studio. Considering what to do with his old board, he thought of Stan.

"When the console arrived, we found *these* hairs inside," Ridgway deadpans with mock solemnity. He points to a yellowing piece of typewriter paper pinned to the Clubhouse wall. Scotchtaped to it are strands of blonde hair labeled: "Police hair. Stewart hair, etc. Found in board 4/4/85."

"We're saving these in case we need to make a little cash later on," Stan continues. "We can bring them down to the Boulevard and sell them."

"Owning a studio just makes you better at soldering."

Guided largely by Louis VandenBerg—now Ridgway's business partner as well as co-producer—the studio began to take shape around Stewart Copeland's old console. The partners acquired an Otari MTR-90 24-track recorder, a well-stocked effects rack, JBL4330 and Auratone T-6 monitors—all the amenities of a well-equipped, high-quality/no-frills recording studio. You get the feeling, though, that VandenBerg is only half serious when he says the equipment selections were guided by a "sleek Indian down on the Boulevard" who threw some bones down on the pavement and told them what to buy.

"If we had listened to the real experts," Ridgway speculates, "we would never have built the place. Immediately, they were saying things like, 'Oh, you *have* to float the floor first.' But if you decide not to listen to the experts, everything tends to become demystified as you get further into it. Building this place from the bottom up, I couldn't even begin to tell you what I've learned. Some of it's not even necessary. It doesn't help you write better songs. It just makes you better at soldering."

HOWARD ROSENBERG

Old friendships played a role in supplying musicians for *The Big Heat* too. Ridgway recruited a group of local players that includes Mike Watt of the Minutemen, Joe Berardi of the Fibonaccis, session trombonist Bruce Fowler, and Bill Noland, who played guitar with Voodoo for a while. "The bulk of the record is totally homegrown," Stan points out. "Everybody more or less did it for a basket of fruit or something equally as lucrative."

Ridgway picked up some of the slack by playing a few more instruments than he did with Wall of Voodoo. He did quite a bit of the guitar work and played a little banjo too—all in addition to his usual contributions on vocals, harmonica and keyboards.

"Actually, I've played guitar since I was twelve," he recounts. "Before I sang anything, I was a guitar player. I played bebop, jazz, all of that. I never even thought about being a singer then. I sang some blues, did a lot of bar jobs and literally evolved myself into playing completely free-form Ornette Coleman stuff. And that's when the punk thing hit. I said, 'Hmmm. Songs...Good idea.'"

The song Ridgway is presently working up is called "Camouflage." "It's my Vietnam ghost story," Stan explains. The song is a sort of homage to the country gothic genre that produced records like Red Solvine's "Phantom 309," one of Ridgway's favorite songs. In "Camouflage," it takes a full 7½ minutes for Stan to spin his epic yarn of a green PFC rescued by a giant phantom Marine. "I tried to edit it and make it shorter, but it just didn't work," he says. "It's kind of like film editing. Sometimes you can make something seem longer by cutting out material that shouldn't be cut."

Once Waterman gets a basic sound together, work begins in earnest on a final mix. Ridgway and the engineer man the faders. VandenBerg hovers behind the board, listening, offering advice and encouragement. Keeping a close watch on the Otari two-track and Sony F-1 mixdown machines is Wazmo Nariz, former Voodoo road manager and performer of that 1979 cult fave, "Checkin' Out The Checkout Girl."

The mix is a genuine team effort; but Ridgway is clearly in charge. The tricky part, he explains, will be to help the story along by bringing in different musical elements at key dramatic points. Kotos, banjo and mandolin, gongs and eerie orchestral passages peek around the corners of the narrative as the mixers try out different combinations. Ridgway works his way through a pack of Marlboros as the mix progresses. After five or six attempts, the musical embellishments finally bring the tale to life. Stan breathes a sigh of relief: "This is great. I was so afraid it was going to come out sounding like the Country Bears Jamboree."

Cinematic, narrative songs like

Stanard Brands

Stan Ridgway's principal electric guitars are a '67 Fender 12-string and a candy-apple red Fender Telecaster with a Bigsby tailpiece. "I mainly bought it because it looks good," Stan says of the Tele. "It matched the socks I had on."

The guitars go through a Fender Princeton or a Super Reverb amp. Apart from a Roland Heavy Metal Pedal, all of Stan's guitar processsing comes from the Clubhouse's effects rack. This includes an Eventide 949 Harmonizer, Lexicon 200 digital reverb, Roland SDE 3000 and Korg SDD 300 digital delays, an MXR flanger/doubler and a Klark Tekniks graphic eq.

The keyboards used on *The Big Heat* include a Roland Jupiter 6, Yamaha DX7, Prophet V and Prophet 600. Many of these were driven by a Roland MSQ-700 sequencer. The drum machines Ridgway used were a LinnDrum and a Roland TR-808. Many of the sounds on the record were sampled and edited using the Clubhouse's Akai S612 sampler (with the M280 disc drive.)

Ridgway also plays Hohner Super Chromatics and Marine Band harmonicas.

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"Camouflage" have always been Stan Ridgway's strong suit as a lyricist. It's something that goes all the way back to early Voodoo tunes like "The Passenger," maturing over time into slice-of-life vignettes like "Lost Weekend" on 1982's *Call Of The West*, Stan's last album with Voodoo. A lot of the songs on *The Big Heat* rely on the same kind of vivid, widescreen images and snippets of dialogue. After all, the whole record takes its name from a Hollywood *film noir*.

Though he denies ever wanting to be a filmmaker and patently hates music videos that try to turn lyric sheets into shooting scripts, Stan Ridgway is deeply steeped in movie lore. His conversation is peppered with references to everyone from John Huston to Sergio Leone. He acknowledges Orson Welles as a big influence and laments the fact that the American public never knew quite what to do with an ironic sensibility like Welles'. Then as now, he says, popular entertainment is based on clear-cut, black-and-white distinctions. Good guys and bad guys. Frank Capra. Here's the part where you laugh; here's the part where you cry.

"Unfortunately," Ridgway concludes, "I've always been more interested in the kind of emotions where maybe you want to laugh and cry at the same time."

It's easy to find the thread that links Ridgway's Voodoo-period lyrics with his songs on *The Big Heat*. Musically, however, the connections aren't as obvious. Here, Stan made a deliberate effort to distance himself from his past work.

"With Voodoo," he reflects, "I really wanted to get rid of all the cliches and make sure that nothing recognizable stuck out of the songs. Anything that influenced a song was underneath the song, fueling it. But a listener wouldn't perceive that our inspiration for the tune was "Smokestack Lightnin'" by Howlin' Wolf or something like that. Whereas on this record, I really wanted to bring those influences close to the surface, so that they can be perceived. For me, songs are like flares. You send them up and see who responds.'

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Sunrise In Memphis

Nashville's Hottest Producer, Chips Moman, Returns to the Birthplace of Rock

By Joe Sasfy

Jerry Lee Lewis enters first. Then in succession Roy Orbison, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash go into the small undistinguished building at the corner of Marshall and Union Boulevards in Memphis, Tennessee. Once inside, Lewis bows as if he has returned to Mecca. Around thirty years ago, all their careers were launched here.

The neon sign in the window reads as it did in the 50s: "The Memphis Recording Service." If that rings no bell, perhaps the historical marker outside will. It says this building is the original Sun Records studio, where in 1954 a young truck driver named Elvis Presley recorded his first single. When Presley left that studio on July 6, 1954 with a piece of magic called "That's All Right Mama" in the can, history was changed. A cultural revolution was born out of an unholy marriage of blues, gospel and country. It was called rock 'n' roll. Now, on September 16, 1985, history is being made again.

The studio itself, an eighteen-by-thirty-foot room, looks far too small and modest for its reputation. But here is where Elvis recorded his first five singles—where Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes," Cash's "I Walk The Line," Orbison's "Ooby Dooby" and Lewis' "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" were captured on a single-track Ampex tape deck. That machine, beat up and dusty, sits in the rear corner like some magic talisman whose secrets have been lost in the age of science.

Lewis sits at the piano and the others join him. The pumpin' piano man strikes up "Memphis" and they all start singing. For the first time since 1959, music pours out of the Sun studio. In the back of the room Sam Phillips, Sun's founder and producer, smiles, beaming like a religious patriarch who knows his flock has returned home.

This event is the work of Chips Moman, Nashville's hottest producer of the last decade. But Moman is in Nashville no longer. He's relocated to his native Memphis, started a new production company and his building a new studio with Herb O'Mell, a jovial Memphis businessman and former manager of Ronnie Milsap. Just for starters, Moman's inaugurating his return with nothing less than Lewis, Perkins, Cash and Orbison reunited in the original Sun studio.

"I think it's extremely important for the record industry to get the input of Memphis," Moman explains, his soft drawl acquiring an edge of passion and conviction. "We need the input of New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta, Detroit. All we're hearing these days is Nashville and L.A. A two- or three-city record business in a country this size is not enough. We've only got about five big record labels now and it's narrowing down to where we won't even have a chance for another Elvis Presley. What I'm trying to do is bring some focus back to Memphis and get the rest of America back into the record business." Moman is putting his money—and career—where his mouth is.

"I feel a lot of pressure," the producer admits of the Sun project. "You never know how these things will turn out. Everything in this business is a guessing game. That's what makes it intriguing."

Over four days, the four Sun legends record old songs and new, as solo artists and quartet. Everything is played live in the studio. None of the material has been rehearsed, but the songs require only a few takes to nail. That's a credit not only to the artists and Moman, but also to the band, the same Southern studio aces Moman has employed for the last twenty years: Reggie Young (guitar), Bobby Emmons and Bobby Wood (keyboards), Mike Leech (bass), and Gene Chrisman (drums).

The Memphis 5: Orbison, Lewis, Perkins, Cash & Moman

DAVE DARNELL

Surprisingly, Moman is rarely seen in the studio. He spends most of his time in the mobile recording unit outside. When he does enter, weaving inconspicuously through the crush of hangers-on and a TV crew from Dick Clark Productions, he confers casually with musicians and vocalists, then disappears again. With nary a voice raised, a temper flared or ego bruised, the music comes together with fire, precision and a big Memphis groove.

If Moman and his four stars were only after a good commercial record project, simply a professional job, the pressures might not be so great. But they have reconnected with Memphis' unique musical legacy, summoned up the spirit of their greatest music and are after something more elusive than just hits.

"We all left part of our hearts and souls in Memphis and Sun Records," a fit, well-tanned Carl Perkins explains. "When I drove into town this morning and passed the Sun studio, I remembered thirty years ago when I parked a 1940 Plymouth in front of that building. It's a magic place. It's an emotional high to be part of this project."

All week, the city of Memphis will remain on an emotional high. There has already been a "Welcome Home, Chips" day; with press gathered from all over the world and record labels already bidding wildly for the finished project, Moman is understandably anxious. He's the one who has to find room on one record for four of the most singular voices and talents in American popular music.

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His plan is simple. "We'll just go in there and see what happens," Moman shrugs. "We'll just ad lib it. That's the way I do most of my sessions. I learned that here in Memphis. Freedom is what started Sun Records."

It's not surprising that Lewis, Perkins, Orbison and Cash work together so easily; their personal lives and careers have intertwined for thirty years. Death and tragedy bind them. Lewis has lost two sons and two wives. Perkins has lost both of his bandmate brothers, Jay and Clayton. Orbison has lost a wife and two sons. Cash has seen his older brother and two close friends, Johnny Horton and Luther Perkins, die. As Orbison puts it, "It has made gentler and kinder souls of all of us."

If they were once hellraisers, only Lewis remains something of an aging *enfant terrible*—joking one moment, intimidating the next, demanding attention and then earning it at the piano. He is about to try a song he hasn't performed before, the Crests' doo-wop standard, "Sixteen Candles." With characteristic bravado, Lewis stands and announces, "This is a one-take hit. Now watch me."

He injects melancholy into the song, slowly tearing its guts out with improvisatory vocal asides and a piano solo that seems to talk. At the end, Lewis blows out an imaginary candle and everyone agrees, indeed, it might be a hit. The Killer then bangs on his piano announcing, "Nothing's as good as the first cut. Let's don't go doing it over and over. It don't help."

The same day Perkins records a couple of incendiary rockabilly cuts. One, "The Birth Of Rock 'n' Roll," tells the Sun Records story in four lines: "Nashville had the country/ But Memphis had the soul/ White boys got the rhythm/ And that started rock 'n' roll." Perkins rips off a dirty-toned sputtering guitar solo in the middle that evokes "Blue Suede Shoes" and the overnight success that greeted all four men at Sun.

"It's one thing to be picking cotton in a cottonfield and looking at a new Cadillac going down the road," Perkins explains. "It's another when it's you in that Cadillac and you're looking back at that cottonfield. That should humble you but, being human, you just think the hits will keep on coming. We all went wild."

The next day Cash reprises a 1957 Sun single, "Home Of The Blues," and a 1978 original, "I Will Rock 'n' Roll With You." His cavernous, rumbling baritone sounds better than it has in years, yet the singer's recent bout with drug addiction (again) has left him drawn and haggard looking. It's a sobering reminder of the periods of drug and alcohol abuse that once threatened the lives and careers of Cash, Lewis and Perkins.

"It just happened too fast," Cash recalls, his beefy jowls shaking. "I guess we weren't too well equipped to handle it. I was introduced to amphetamines on a tour in 1957. We were driving 600 miles and it felt good, so I thought, 'What could possibly be wrong with this?' By 1967, the pills had devastated me. I was ready to die."

For the last two days of recording, the scene switches from Sun to the American studio built by Moman in the early 60s. This is where, in one eighteen-month stretch in the late 60s, Moman and these same studio musicians cut seventy-four national hits. Moman himself produced rock one-shots like the Gentrys' "Keep On Dancing" and the Boxtops' "The Letter," as well as Elvis' last great records, "Suspicious Minds" and "In The Ghetto."

If Sun is small and modest, American, located in a rundown section of Memphis, is a larger funky wreck of a studio littered with Elvis memorabilia. Indeed, Presley's name is invoked repeatedly during these recordings; few feel his spirit isn't hovering in the studio, the unheard voice leading them all. Even Lewis, one not given to praise unless it's self-directed, admits, "When I first heard Elvis Presley's recording of 'Blue Moon Of Kentucky,' I thought, 'My God, here's the man opening the door.' He

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was a phenomenon—the most incredible performer that's ever been."

In a week filled with emotion-charged events, one of the most moving involves the memory of Elvis Presley. Cash, Orbison, Perkins and Lewis form a gospel quartet and raise their voices with pentecostal fervor on "Remembering The King," a beautiful ballad. Then they disappear into the mobile studio with Moman to hear the playback. When the five men emerge, it's obvious they've all been crying.

But if there was sadness on "Remembering The King," the musical finale of this project would be purely celebratory. On the last day, John Fogerty, Dave Edmunds, Ricky Nelson and a few other celebrities arrive for a fittingly historic ending. "I couldn't miss this," Fogerty says. "I'd be crazy. Something like this might not happen for thirty years."

While preparations are made for the finale, the stars circulate, snapping each other's pictures, getting autographs, sharing stories and forming an impromptu Memphis Music Admiration Society. Nelson and Edmunds seem shy and somewhat in awe of these legends, but Fogerty is more gregarious, clearly thrilled to meet the men who inspired his career. When Fogerty is brought over and introduced to Jerry Lee Lewis, Lewis shakes his hand and

continued on page 110

What Would Sam Phillips Think?

The sessions held at Memphis' Sun and American studios were recorded via a mobile unit outfitted with a thirty-two-input Sphere (series Eclipse A) console. The tape machine was a 3M thirty-two-track digital unit, using 3M tape. Rough mixes were performed on a 3M four-track digital unit. For a safety back-up, an Ampex MM1200 recorded a twenty-four-track analog version on Ampex tape. Fostex RM780 reference monitors were used, with Electro-Voice Sentry 3s as auxiliaries. Outboard gear included Trident limiters, ADR vocal stressors, DBX 160 limiters, and Lexicon 224X and Klark-Teknicks DN780 reverb units. Microphones were mainly Neumann U87's, though drums took an AKG 414, Sennheiser 421 (on kick-drum) and Shure SM57 (on snare).

Moman's new studio is still in progress, but engineer and studio manager David Cherry has some details. The console will be an SSL 4000 series thirty-two-track board (forty inputs). The main deck is a 3M digital thirty-two-track, with a four-track digital editor. There are also Ampex ATR-124 (twenty-four-track) and ATR-102 (two-track) analog recorders. Other gear includes Lexicon and Yamaha digital reverbs, and dbx noise reduction for the analog machines. Macintosh power amps will feed custom monitors. Microphones are by Neumann, Electro-Voice, Shure, AKG and a Calrec sound-field (remote-controlled stereo) unit.

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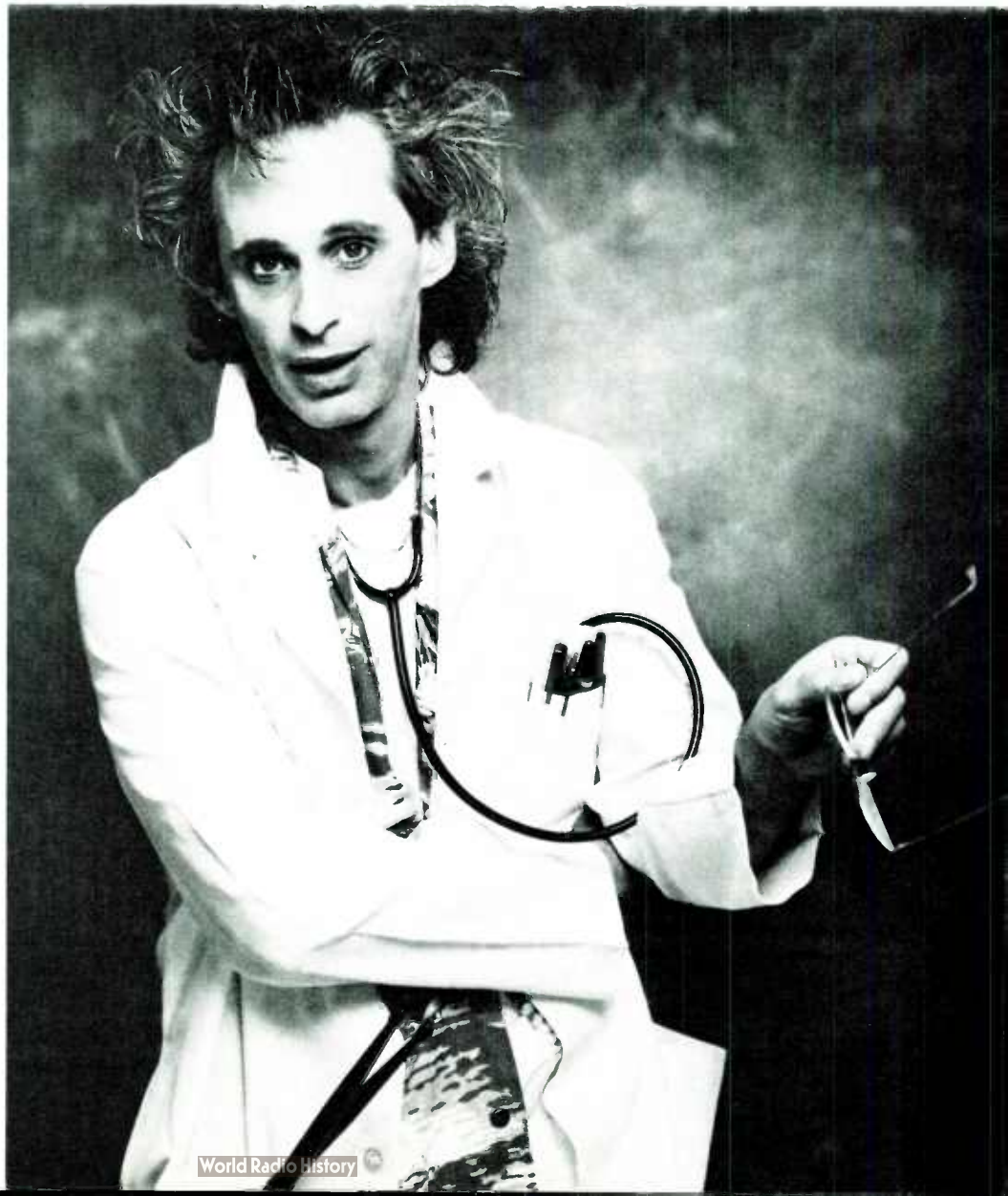

SIMMONS

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Developments

Winter N.A.M.M. Preview

By Jock Baird

As you read this, the first waves of music instrument industry shock troops are descending on Anaheim for their winter N.A.M.M. assault, and this show promises some real action. First and foremost will be the first production version of a MIDI guitar controller from **Ibanez**. Last summer's Crescent City N.A.M.M. saw three contenders for this title, but the **ivl Pitchrider** 7000 (a $1000 add-on pickup system) has bogged down and the $2000 **Octave Plateau** MIDI guitar, which looked especially inviting, is undergoing further changes and although just around the corner, won't be shown at Anaheim. This means Ibanez will have a clear field of fire for what could be the most important MIDI product of the new year.

The Ibanez MIDI Guitar system consists of a guitar (IMG 2010) and and a rack-mount control unit (the IMC-1). The guitar is a handsome reverse-tuning job with a massive tremolo-armed bridge and a graphite-reinforced neck. It has two mixable outputs, one synth, one straight guitar signal, courtesy of the two specially designed humbuckers. Having gotten my hands on an earlier version of this guitar, I can say that it tracks fast, plays comfortably and the normal-guitar half is full-toned.

Yes, it does have pitch-bending on all six strings (though you can disable it and have pure chromatics if desired), and yes it's velocity-sensitive. The tremolo arm can be programmed to control anything you want, much like a mod wheel on a keyboard. You can also transpose keys (a digital capo!). The control unit plays different synths simultaneously or independently through all sixteen MIDI channels. It can assign all six strings to different voices (if one of your synths is multi-timbral). The IMC-1 has 128 programmable presets to recall patch changes on your synths, and can be controlled from an equally new IFC60 Intelligent Foot Controller so you don't have to fumble around onstage in the dark. Okay, so it's nice, but who can afford it? At under $1300 for all three components, grunts like you and me. This instrument will permanently change a lot of guitar minds about MIDI.

Ibanez MIDI Guitar System

Ibanez is thinking system here—that Intelligent Foot Controller can also control three more new MIDI units, all of which also have 128 programmable presets. The first, the MIU8, is a one-into-eight splitter/interface that recalls complex patching and muting routes. The second, the DUE400, is a digital multi-effects processor, i.e., compressor/limiter, distortion, 1800 ms. delay, and chorus/flanger. The third is an effects patching unit, the EPP400, which mixes and matches five (three in stereo) different effects loops. Prices are still up for grabs at press time.

Hartley **Peavey** is also thinking system, and playing to his strength. Yup, it's a MIDI amp, the $1000 Programax 10. That sounds more mysterious than it really is—the MIDI part is really just implemented to run the ten programmable presets, using a remote foot pedal controller called the RCM 2000. But using a MIDI foot pedal means you don't have to have a different pedal to run their new $900 Model 4000 Programmable Effects Processor. (Unfortunately, the Peavey pedal only transmits on two channels.)

Peavey Programax 10

The amp is typically Peaveyan in its quality: It uses a sophisticated solid-state linear power stage called Saturation circuitry, which gives the sound the warm fuzziness of tubes. The two 12-inch speakers are kick-ass Scorpions. The amp's 3-band eq, reverb and mix of volume settings are the storable part; a MIDI THRU capability means you don't need to Y-plug from the pedal. The effects processor flanges, chorduses, doubles, slaps back, echo fades, vibratos, does long delays (4095 ms.), externally syncs, shakes, bakes and plays encores. It's 12-bit, has a 7-pole anti-aliasing filter to minimize signal coloration, and has 22k of bandwidth.

Korg has a few new wrinkles for the show. Not terribly surprising is an expander module for their popular digital DW8000 called the EX 8000; an arpeggiator is added. A bit more surprising is a Korg-custom programmer called the MEX 8000 that will use system exclusive MIDI data to expedite programming of all Korg synths; it has 256 memory locations for under $200. But very surprising is a $2,000 12-voice sampler, called the DSS-1 and a $1,700 grand

piano variation with four piano presets (which can be updated with a ROM card the size of a credit card). Korg is presently building a library of samples, but the DSS-1 will sample on its own at a frequency of 50k. What else? How about a Vocoder/Harmonizer dubbed the DVP-1 with all-digital signal processing for 1200? Or a revised Poly 800 Mark II with refined MIDI capabilities and a chorus/delay/flanger thrown in? Korg is also plunging into the Apple/C64 software universe, with a bit of help from **Passport**. They now have their own interface, 4-track, 6,000-note MIDI sequencer (KSQ800), voice editor (KVE800) and printing software, all within easy price reach.

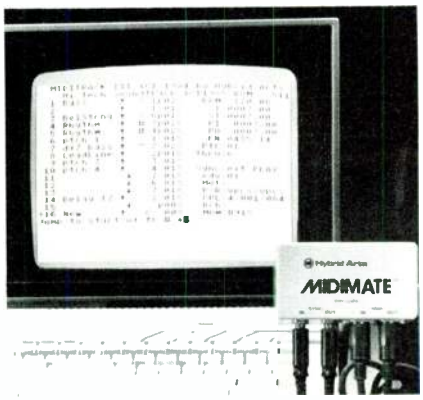
Casio is also rushing headlong into the MIDI sweepstakes this show. You probably have heard there's a $700 CZ-1000, basically a CZ-101 with full-size keys. Now there's a $1,000 CZ-3000, a CZ-5000 without the sequencer. There's also some new MIDI implementation on the touch-sensitive $1,000 CT-6000 which make the autoacoompaniment functions MIDI-compatible. But Casio's N.A.M.M. spotlight will be turned on the new $600 RZ-1 drum machine, with twelve drum sources, (each with its own audio output if desired), velocity sensitivity through a MIDI keyboard, and on-board sampling and storage (!). Then there's their TB-1 2-in/8-out MIDI THRU box, which can take two simultaneous performances and send them to separate channels, all for $70.

Other low-cost MIDI synths include a new line of keyboards from **Suzuki** called the Keyman, ranging in price from $179 to $600. These are more of the home variety, since they have drums, speakers and autoaccompaniment, but they do have MIDI IN and OUT. **Hohner** brought out a new synth, the PK-250, which features 32 voices and a new Multiple Event generator digital voice system for $1,700. **Technics** also has a new version of their PCM synthesis keyboards called the SX-K350 with MIDI and a four-track on-board sequencer. And you might want to take another look at the **Seiko** DS-250, which splits its two 8-voice generators into two independent modules, giving you a synth and an expander for $600. You may want to get the $250 DS-310 programmer, though, to get the most out of its digital oscillators.

Of course, as soon as you begin to acquire some of these keyboards, you're going to develop serious switching headaches, which is why a small San Diego company called **Voyce Music** is bringing out a $500 programmable MIDI controller, the LX4. It runs a master synth and three slaves, recalling 99 programmable configurations, patch numbers, level changes, and octave settings of all four—it also has a "layer chain" memory for ordering the presets. The LX4's best feature is its ability to split your master keyboard into three zones (split points at your discretion) and put three different synths on it. For a live performer who has his hands full, this is a great unit, but I have feeling its remarkable cosmetic similarity to a Yamaha RX drum machine will help feed some legal eagles this winter. (From Voyce Music, 619 549-0581)

Another example of the explosion of MIDI specialist products we'll see at N.A.M.M. are three new rack mounts from **Akai**. Each relieves a nagging annoyance every MIDI Odysseus encounters: the ME-20A that turns a chord played over MIDI into an arpeggio, up or down or whatever—it's also a 1056-note step sequencer; the ME-10D is a MIDI digital delay of 1000 ms.; and the ME-15F is a MIDI mixer that intelligently mixes MIDI signals together by changing the dynamic data. Is there a market for this kind of specialty stuff? At $150 per unit, you better believe it.

Mary Tyler Moore is going back to prime time, and to celebrate **Simmons** will unveil the MTM, an 8-channel programmable interface to translate analog inputs into MIDI and conversely, MIDI data into triggers. The immediate need this will fill is to bring all Simmons electronic drum kits out before the SDS9 into the MIDI age. But it also interfaces any acoustic drum as well, even pre-recorded ones, and makes possible all manner of other MIDI machinations. It'll list for $1200, but the 32-character LCD, membrane switches, and extras like re-



Hybrid Arts MidiTrack III

Fender Buys Sunn

Last year at Anaheim, **Fender Instruments' Bill Schultz** stole the show by announcing his purchase of the company from CBS. This time he's headline-stealing again, acquiring **Sunn Electronics**. Sunn has been on the rebound in the last few years, augmenting their trooper amps with new mixing boards and stage lighting gear. This move follows rumors that Fender was discontinuing its own pro sound line (they recently cancelled their deal with **Ramsa**, for example, who had made consoles for Fender). What moves Schultz will make to integrate the two quality amp lines is still uncertain.

Why Are These Men Smiling?

JOCK BAIRD

Lee Berk, president of Berklee College of Music (right), is smiling because he's inaugurating a new MIDI music lab at the Boston school, and a new Music Synthesis major chaired by ex-Donald Byrd sideman David Mash. **Ray Kurzweil** (below) is smiling because he got Lee to pay cash for the six new Kurzweil MIDIBOARDs and 250 Expanders which are the centerpiece of the six work stations in the lab. **Bob Moog** (top) is smiling because the food at this press reception is a lot better than usual. In addition to the Kurzweil sampler, each station in the Berklee MIDI lab is armed with an Oberheim Xpander, a Yamaha TX816 module, a Yamaha RX11 drum machine, a Macintosh computer with Opcode interface, a Hill Audio mixer and a pair of AKG headphones. (Next door in the old synth lab are a lot more MIDI toys.) Contact Berklee at 1140 Boylston St., Boston MA 02215, (617) 266-1400 for more details on the lab and the new Music Synthesis major.

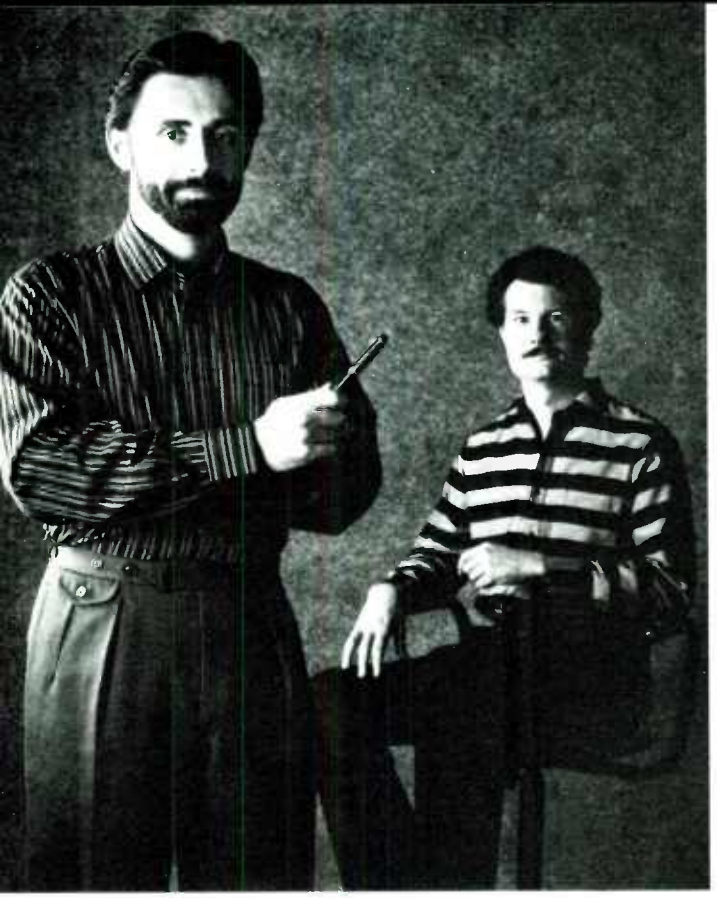
peat echo and note ease the pain.

And here comes the software brigade! Even the scoffers who last year called computer music products a pie in the sky are now scrambling for a piece. This puts more and more of a premium on the head starters (soon these first-wave software companies will develop snob slogans like "Serving you since 1884"). **Octave Plateau** spent a lot of time in the early days unable to help its software buyers find Roland MPU-401 interfaces, so it finally developed one of its own, the OP-4001. The 4001 offers a few more perks, like a 5v clock pulse, clock to FSK conversion and an unpitched metronome for those (like me) who find the MPU-401's musical pulse distracting, but at $295 the 4001 also costs a hundred bucks more. Octave Plateau is also into Rev. 2 of their excellent 64-track Sequencer Plus for IBM-PC, with new menus, pop-up windows and editing features, as well as their Patch Master librarian program for PC that works for all MIDI instruments and not just the Voyetra. Another old hand, **Passport**, has a new interface for Mac, PC and Apple called the MIDI Pro Interface; it has a bevy of sync, sync-to-tape, and clock features.

In computerland, one of the year's big stories is the rebound over at Atari, which is readying a 16-bit machine called the 520B that will chase the Mac and the Commodore Amiga for a fraction of the price. This will put the only Atari software company out there, **Hybrid Arts**, in an even a better position than they're in right now. And where are they now? Thanks to the low price of the 128K Atari 130X computer, they can offer an incredible deal: their superb 16-track, 10,500-note sequencer/synchronizer/remote control system, MidiTrack III, ($374 list, which includes cables and hardware), *and* a complete computer & disk drive system for $700. This program has editing, recording and synching features similar to IBM-based systems, and must be a serious contender for anyone starting from scratch. Hybrid Arts also has C-64 and IBM versions of MidiTrack, and their 24-track, SMPTE-reading Atari 520B version called MidiTrack ST will draw a crowd. They've also got $79 voice libraries for CZs and DXs on all three computers. These guys are here to stay. (213)-826-3777.

MIDI, MIDI, MIDI...isn't anybody talking about anything else? Well, yes. One N.A.M.M. attendee is thinking ahead to the next stage, and his past performance should make us take note. He's **Jim Miller**, whose IBM-PC sequencer system Personal Composer (then under the Yamaha banner) ushered in the MIDI age at N.A.M.M. two years ago. Miller still sells Personal Composer on his own—the quality of its music printing is still unsurpassed—and he's got Version 2.00 out for Anaheim. This version has a SMPTE interface, 200,000 MIDI events for a 640K system, and a third enhancement that may be the beginning of the second great MIDI wave: an artificial intelligence programming language. I'll let Jim explain it himself: "The problems of recording, transcription and synthesizer voicing were implemented using standard languages. But the majority of the problems remaining are best implemented using AI (Artificial Intelligence) knowledge-based expert-system methods.

"The AI language integrated into Personal Composer v2.00 will be Common LISP plus subsets of both SmallTalk and C. Also, user-loadable modules can access all of Personal Composer's functions and variables for fast execution. So whatever the application, whether non-AI such as Super-Jupiter voicing, or AI such as analyzing a video image of sheet music and translating it into the music database, Personal Composer's primitives can be accessed via this general purpose language. From now on, AI applied to music is our only concern." Damn. And I was just starting to figure this MIDI stuff out.



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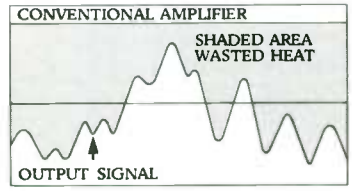

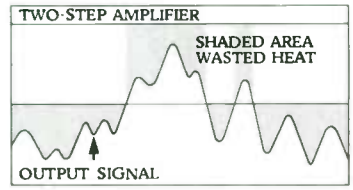

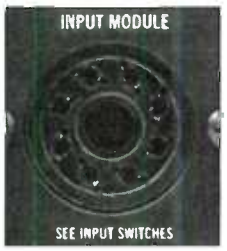

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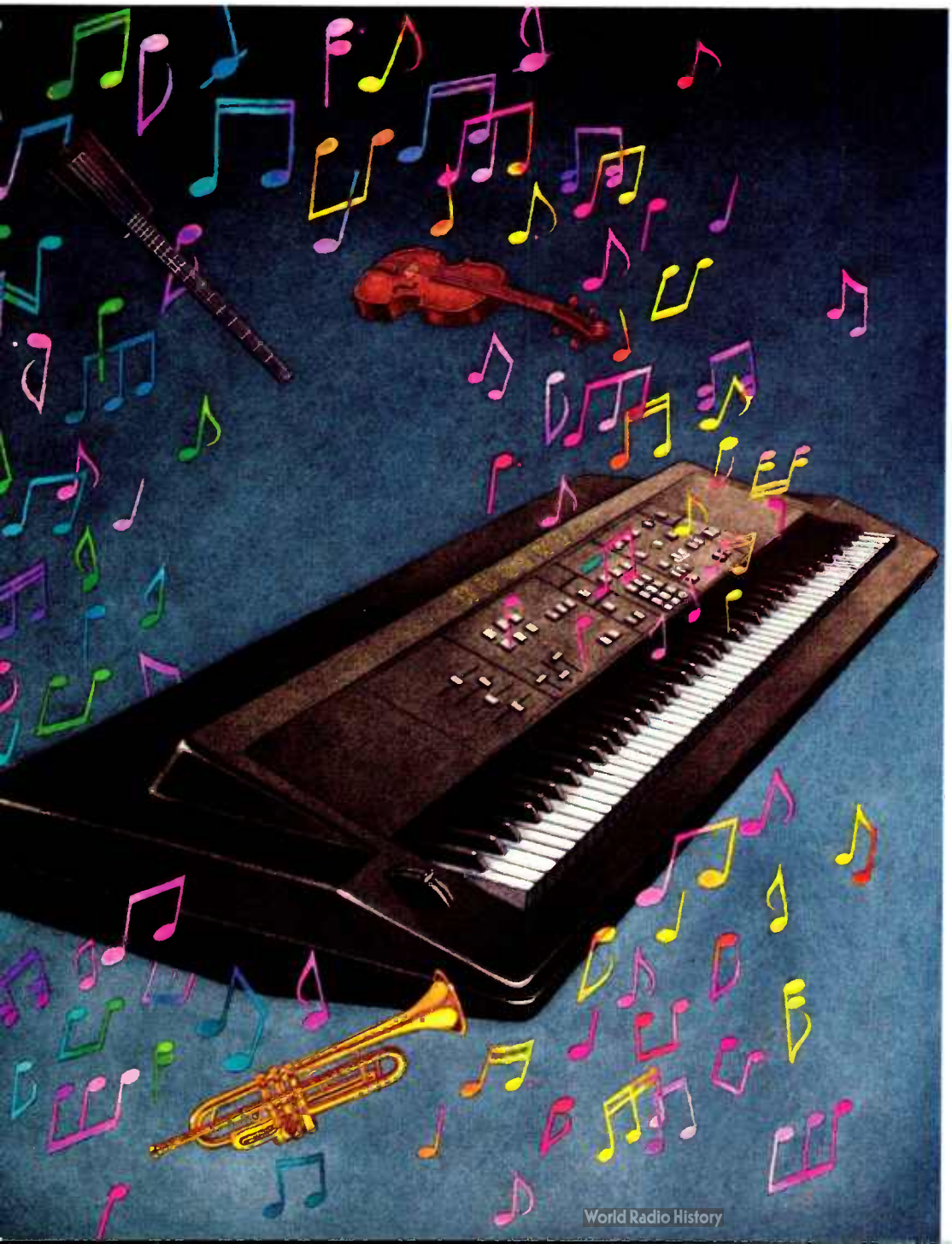

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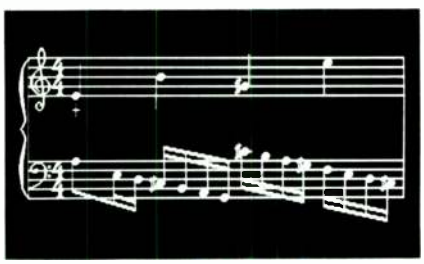
Software City

Roland MPS

By Jock Baird

I want everyone to put on their crash helmets, because we're now entering a Power Zone, the digital domain of the IBM-PC. I know a lot of you may be unimpressed, since Big Blue's business machine rep is an anathema to your Little Red Apple/MAC propensities, or your Commodore/Atari financial situation. But put away your prejudices, check out the plummeting prices of PCs and compatibles, and consider what a MIDI music software program like Roland's MPS can do. You too may stop associating the color blue with meanies.

MPS divides its program power into two specializing, interactive modes. The first is the 8-track sequencer/recorder half, or SONG mode, while the second is the transcription/notation half, or SCORE mode. The basic building block of MPS is the Phrase. Working in Song mode, the program collects real-time performances in a so-called Phrase buffer, lets you do things to the phrase like autocorrect and transpose it, and then either insert it into an arrangement or carry it over into Score mode and work with it directly in notation. You can also Lift phrases out of an existing track and duplicate them elsewhere in the arrangement, or look at them transcribed. The only limit is that the Score side looks at just one phrase at a time, but as we shall see there are ways to get around that.



The display for Song mode is eight rows of boxes, one per measure. There are eighty on each screen "window," with eighty more in the next, etc. (You can also set exactly which eighty bars you want to see.) When the measure has MIDI data in it, it fills in; when you position the cursor on any box, the bar number reads out. This makes editing functions like inserting or removing phrases very clear cut. True, there are only eight tracks displayed, but when they are merged, MPS remembers what channel the original was recorded on, so you really have the same sixteen channels every MIDI sequencer is limited to. The ninth row of boxes is a conductor track, wherein you can change time signatures, tempos etc. for the other eight.

MPS does an unbelievable number of things—its author Kentyn Reynolds was clearly interested in satisfying the most demanding user. This means that the menu structure is a bit more complicated than most. MPS makes up for this by incorporating a query for operation, so you don't have to have the manual right there—but don't keep it too far away. MPS uses the ten function keys to the left of the PC keyboard, displaying what each key does on that page of the menu at the bottom of the screen, where the queries also appear. Song mode has two pages of menus, which the Page Up and Down keys control, and then within each function are submenus, so we're talking *lots* of menus.

As an example, let's describe lifting a part of a track into the phrase buffer and inserting it into a new part of the song. First get to Page 2, Arrange, then hit F3 (Phrase). A new set of functions comes in, and you pick F3 (Lift). The query says "LIFT! (*MPS is big on these cheery exclamation points*) Track: 3 (*which the cursor is on*) Start bar: 1 End Bar: 1." You then type in the correct bar numbers and hit the return key. "Lift complete!" MPS announces triumphantly. "Save Phrase? (Y/N)" No thanks, I'm going to insert it in the song and save the whole song later. Then you move the cursor to the bar where the phrase goes and hit the insert key. In one breathtaking sweep, the new bars fill up with data. Then you have to hit F10 or Escape to get back to the main menu.

Well, that *is* a lot of button pushing, and fortunately the system is very good at aborting ill-considered operations. But if you go back and lift the same bars of another track, as you would if you were moving a whole chorus, the Lift parameters you entered before are still there. That's fairly typical for MPS—a complicated procedure that has nifty short cuts designed in once you get the basics down. I should add that virtually all the basic Song functions like punch-in and -out, transposition, autocorrect, muting, channel reassignment, tempo

changing and synching to an external source like a drum machine or FSK tape signal became surprisingly instinctive after a week with the program.

In putting MPS' Song mode through its paces, we were particularly impressed by its ability to follow a rapid series of patch changes on a CZ101; its recording of pitch bends and mod wheel work without taking memory when not in use; its subtlety as a velocity-sensitive, real-time recorder; and sheer number of control functions.

For all its Song mode power, the thing that really sets MPS apart is its Score mode. While most computer sequencers opt for new "improved" notational systems, here is the original with no compromises. And the level of detail is incredible, from obscure time signatures to thirty-second note triplets, from accidentals to ties and beaming. You can hear what you've written or edited as soon as you've done it, you don't have to go back to Song mode. And although it only reads out one phrase at a time, you can assign different lines to different channels, so you can have a bass patch on the bottom line, piano on the middle parts and a solo voice on top, all on one pair of staves.

If it seems too incredible to be true that MPS perfectly transcribes what you played, you're partly right. After it records the notes, it needs a bit of formatting for note resolutions and clef, key and time signatures. It also notates just what you played, but makes no attempt to beam, add rests or make sure all note values add up to the right number of beats per bar. For that you have to go in and reshuffle, and given the incredible variation of musical symbols (not to mention dynamics changes, which you can alter), it's not a simple system. You have to use a couple of function keys just to specify what note you're inserting, so to do a sixteenth note beamed to a dotted eighth will take you an inordinate number of key punches. (There's also no scale for where you are in the bar, so you occasionally have to back the cursor back to beat one and count eight sixteenths to make sure you're on the third beat.)

For all its complexity, though, it's mind-boggling to be able to work so fluidly with real notation. Listen to your part playing while the screen flashes a bar at a time—you'll be hard pressed to maintain that blasé, seen-it-all poker face you've been cultivating, and harder pressed to maintain your unnatural prejudice against Big Blue.

MPS lists for $495. It requires a PC or compatible with 256K of memory, with 64K more needed to print out scores in high-resolution mode (i.e., more than one bar at a time). You'll also need a Roland MPU-401 interface ($200) and an MIF-IPC card ($110).

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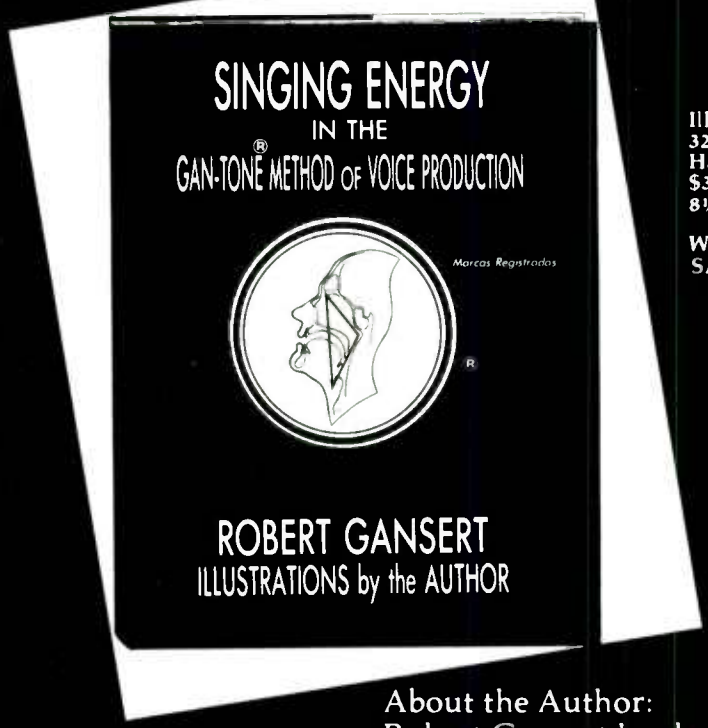

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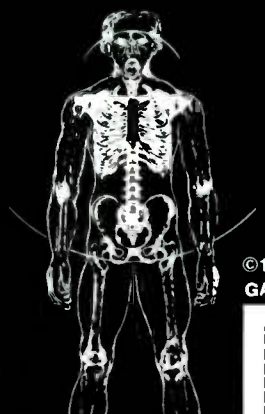

About the Author:
Robert Gansert has been a performing vocalist for over twenty years, and has been featured in numerous concerts and recordings. His work has been internationally acclaimed. He is currently a noted instructor at the Carnegie Hall studios.

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Memphis from page 100

says, with a devilish smile, "What'd you say your name is, man?"

The last number is a lengthy jam on Fogerty's Presley tribute, "Big Train From Memphis." Ace Cannon is on saxophone, Wayne Jackson (of the Memphis Horns) on trumpet. Cash, Fogerty and Orbison share one mike. Lewis, Cowboy Jack Clement and Sam Phillips, in his recording debut, share another. Ricky Nelson, Perkins, Edmunds and Marty Stuart of Johnny Cash's band sing at a third. For harmonies, Toni Wine and June Carter join the Judds, the mother-and-daughter team that has taken country by storm.

The song turns into a musical celebration so joyous that the band won't end it. Lewis finally finds an opening and transforms the song into "Blue Suede Shoes" and then "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." Moman, orchestrating the whole number, is near ecstatic. Later he admits, "I still can't believe it was reality, not a dream."

For many of those in Memphis, especially Moman, this dream was just a beginning. Underlying the event is the idea of a new start for Memphis as a recording center. For over fifty years, black and white musicians poured into this town from Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas in search of a groove. But memories of the blues, rockabilly and soul legends that once prowled the Sun, Stax, American, Royal and Ardent studios have grown fainter as the past recedes.

Moman is recording here because America's recording centers—Los Angeles, New York and Nashville—don't believe in magic, much less the notion that spontaneity belongs in a modern recording studio. Moman believes that, given a little faith and freedom, the deepest and truest music humans have in them will flow out as surely as the Mississippi heads to the Gulf.

"I've got my bankroll stashed with Chip," says an excited Jerry Lee Lewis, whom Moman's signed to a contract. "He's my redeemer in this business. Without him I'd just quit. I've never left this town. I've just been waiting for it all to come around so I could record here again. It really can happen again."

"It's going from here on up," Sam Phillips proclaims, his voice rising like a backwoods preacher. "Memphis is going to be bigger than ever. Not overnight; this is a long-range thing. But if Memphis can't be a leader again, we've got no business getting back into it. I know the delta and its people. We're unspoiled down here. All we have to do is what we've always done: Be creative. Be different."

You could almost hear Elvis say "amen" in the Memphis night air. ▣

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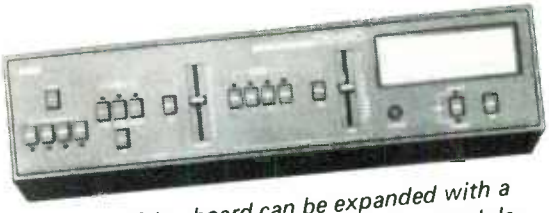

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Cray from page 28

their say-so in our songwriting. We're learning and they in turn are seeing there's a lot of importance in simplicity."

Drummer Dave Olson came from the (West Coast) Nighthawks, a hard-touring band that helped Cray's band get around on the Northwest blues circuit. "I'm a time player, not a chops player," says Olson, "And Robert's got this nice way of singing almost behind the beat, so I don't have to push the band, 'cause as long as I play with him, it's got that relaxed feel and the band just sorta flows."

Despite a slight case of jitters and uneven sound, the Cray band took the Ritz stage with aplomb. As Richard performed his characteristic twinning dance steps with his bass at stage left, Robert kept to his post at center stage, miming his guitar licks with wordless movements of his mouth ("speaking in tongues," Richard calls it). At their show in London's Hammersmith, Mick Jagger had stopped backstage to pay his respects, but tonight there was just the applause of an increasingly warm crowd. Afterward, Robert peered out of his dressing room at the Neville Brothers, contentedly soaking up another breed of roots music. He's in no great hurry to reach the commercial big time. "I wanted to play this kind of music because I felt most comfortable talking about real-life situations, good or bad, and as far as making a career of it—you plant your feet in one particular place and just be honest about it."

Richard, as usual not far away, adds, "There's longevity in honesty."

"That's a fact," says Cray, "And I also thought you could make money at it. Because...people might come around. And I want to be there when it's happening." Ⓜ

Laswell from page 88

LASWELL: Yeah. I just think he wanted somebody to talk to. I was curious.

MUSICIAN: *Were you surprised by the incredible success of "Rockit"?*

LASWELL: I'm not surprised by anything. "Rockit" wasn't so much about musicianship, it was a freak record, really. It has to do totally with timing, and you can owe maybe sixty percent of that to the fact that the correct DJ was involved, the scratching element appropriated into the current dance format. It's a freak. You don't start like that and finish anywhere. I didn't think it would be a huge success, but it seemed like a very clever thing to do at the time.

MUSICIAN: *For the edification of our readers, could you tell us the difference between records and music?*

LASWELL: Music is going on all the time, and you can't take it and put it in any one place. I think that what you're finding now is that people aren't with music so much, that records are being made today from other records. So you can have the record, but you can't have the music. I do it all the time. MTV is built on the idea of records being made from records. Music is very alien to all this. Music is being cut out. In a big way. The industry is trying to forget about music as best they can, because it can only create trouble. It's gonna come back as a revolution or a wave of some kind which is going to upset the marketplace.

MUSICIAN: *Aren't you getting a bit tired of all your rhythm workouts, the endless use of the [Oberheim] DMX? Wasn't it a dead end after a while?*

LASWELL: People keep telling me what I've done, but you have to look at the whole thing before you can talk about any of it, and if you're talking about one area then it's no good because it's part of a bigger catalog. I haven't used a drum machine on a record in eight months. The recent records don't have electronics. They're a bit late coming out, but that's the particular work I do now. It might seem like a dead end if you're sitting on a bench, but I work a lot, I'm always moving. You have to understand that a lot of records being judged so crucially were done in a matter of seconds, minutes, hours. They were done with the DMX simply because we wanted to do them fast. Fuck off, you know, because we did it as a joke. For free. For fun. A record is a joke.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever do records for anyone but you and the clique?*

LASWELL: I'm doing it for him [*pointing at Trilling*]. I am not doing it for anyone. I'm doing it because it has to happen. Public Image is a great record, people will hear about it. When they discover who the personnel are they'll go crazy. [*He tells me, and it is indeed quite a mix.*] I've tried so many times to get people to try and see names in a new context, and it never works. I don't think people are that clever. There has to be a gut feeling about the music first. People don't associate names with any particular credibility anymore. Especially when you work with reputed musicians and not so much pop stars. I've got a live band which is available, with Ronald Shannon Jackson, [German tenor saxophonist] Peter Brotzmann, and [guitarist] Sonny Sharrock. It's a quartet. I wouldn't necessarily say it has a great deal to do with DMXs or dead ends. It has a lot more to do with music than with records, and it's very hard to put music on record now. We're going to call the quartet the Sex Beatles.

MUSICIAN: *You're a big producer in Japan now, spending much time there.*

continued on page 130

Wire Train from page 12

is just to have this certain kind of fun, the kind that's gotten from living inside music," Hunter concludes. "You know, when you put on your favorite Troggs album and pretend to play guitar, and jump all around the room like an idiot, that's when you lose yourself and your inhibitions. I'm lucky enough to be able to do that a lot.

"You know what?" he says, reflecting on his imminent twenty-fifth birthday. "When I was seven, my Dad asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I said, 'chronically bedridden.' But then when I was eight, my Mom gave me *A Hard Day's Night* as a consolation prize for my sister being born. And you know," he muses, staring remotely at the green satin rock-star shirt he's forgotten to pack, "you know...here I am about to turn a quarter of a century, and all is as it should be. Everything's exactly as I expected it to be since I was eight.

"All," he adds poetically, "is well."

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CORRECTION: A Hayden Book Company ad in the December issue of *Musician* for the new Second Edition of *Musical Applications of Microprocessors* by Hal Chamberlain mistakenly included the book number and price of the now out-of-print First Edition. The correct book number is 5768-7 and the correct price is $39.95.

TWO DECADES OF POETRY AND HARD TRUTH

BOB DYLAN

Biograph
(Columbia)

Take a cassette of this five-album set, get in your car and drive through the night. Can you remain untouched? If you can, you are not only insensitive, but probably a goddamned idiot. Even if we agree that Bob Dylan is not a god, his is still as great a talent as the rock 'n' roll tradition has produced. That he continues to do extraordinary work is demonstrated by recent songs like "I And I" and "Dark Eyes."

Both of which are too new to be included here, on a compilation that takes Dylan's career from 1962 to 1981 and includes fifty-three songs. This boxed set boasts twenty-one tracks previously unreleased, available only on 45s, or presented here in different form (some, like "Forever Young," never sounded so good). Of the remaining songs, many are hits, and many others great album cuts. They're not assembled by chronology either, but rather by mood. This not only makes for good listening (party sides, late night/lights-off sides) but provides a context that makes familiar songs sound fresh. For instance, "Tombstone Blues," in its *Highway 61* setting, *has* become kind of hoary. But here placed between the Johnny Cash-meets-Jack-Kerouac rush of 1962's "Mixed Up Confusion" and the Captain Ahab-at-the-pulpit rocking and railing of 1982's "The Groom's Still Waiting At The Altar," that old chestnut is born again. Together those three songs give us three different visions from the same twentieth-century Flying Dutchman, impressions glimpsed out the window of a ghost train.

Another side could be classified "love songs," had not Dylan forced the genre to mature so far beyond that restriction. From "To Ramona" to "Tangled Up In Blue," the sequence shows how Dylan disposed of mono-emotional songwriting. Though each song finds its focus in the singer's relationship with a woman, the narrator's disposition is never predictable: He may be wiser than "Ramona," but the woman in "You're A Big Girl Now" puts him through the wringer. Closing the side with "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" may make the listener first think, "But that song's not necessarily about a woman"—and then realize of course, *none* of these songs are necessarily about women. Or men. Too much attention to detail can confuse real meaning, like thinking about kissing someone for the first time while you're doing it.

Some medleys work less well. It is probably inevitable that a Dylan history include a side of protest songs, but too bad Columbia stuck to the Civil Rights era standards; songs like "My Back Pages" or "Tears Of Rage" would have better signalled Dylan's eventual growth and perspective. And some songs actually suffer from context. Coming after the pedestrian "Romance In Durango," "Senor" sounds like part of a "Cisco Kid" episode. Had it been placed between "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" and "All Along The Watchtower," "Senor"'s tension would have been emphasized, instead of its locale.

Given Dylan's output, there's obviously no way to squeeze all his masterpieces onto five LPs, and as samplers go this is a well considered collection. What remains most frustrating, in fact, is the evidence—as if we needed it after *Greatest Hits Volume II* and *The Basement Tapes*—that Dylan and Columbia are sitting on treasure troves of unreleased material. The live version of "Visions Of Johanna" makes us hunger for more from Dylan's '65-'66 concerts. The excitement of "Mixed Up Confusion" and "Crawl Out Your Window" only reminds us of the magnificent Dylan singles, from "If You Gotta Go, Go Now" to the acoustic "George Jackson," that have still never ap-

MARK FISHER

peared on any album. Why couldn't as much attention be devoted to assembling Bob Dylan's uncollected work as has been paid to Elvis Costello's?

Certainly *Biograph* is a great step in the right direction. It's just a shame it's so short. – **Bill Flanagan**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Lost In The Stars
The Music of Kurt Weill
(A&M)

See no evil, hear no evil: "Serious" composers are often better off dead once subsequent generations tinker with their works. But revivalism needn't be predatory: Producer Hal Willner's previous remakes of Nino Rota and Thelonious Monk raised interpretation to a fine art. This time out, the producer's scruffy band of Kurt Weill characters drafted from rock, pop and jazz approximate and even surpass Berlinese sleaze circa 1930. But *Lost In The Stars* also aspires to a kind of Weilly elegance— a salty combination that should inspire fans both old wave and new.

Culled from eight shows, the sixteen cuts here (with as many arrangers) read surprisingly like one score. Most of the vocalists, like Sting and Marianne Faithfull, sound appropriately debauched, berserk and besotted. Though Der Stingle tries to ride out "Mack The Knife" on resonance alone, others show how to chomp down and spit out Brechtian phrases with delicious disgust (Tom Waits: "What keeps mankind alive...is BESTIAL ACTS!"). Lou Reed merely trivializes the harmonic tension of "September Song" by reducing it to a four-square country rocker, but Todd Rundgren's "Call From The Grave," a high-tech dance mix light years beyond *Threepenny Opera*'s original acoustic resources, perfectly captures its eleventh-hour desperation.

The instrumental cuts here are pure poetry. Junking her usual Weill-like oom-pahs, Carla Bley wraps a luscious wind chorale around Phil Woods' alto sax on the title cut, while on "Youkali Tango" the more classically inclined Armadillo String Quartet remains eerily faithful to Weill's erotic ambivalence. Most eccentric of all is John Zorn's "Little Lieutenant Of The Loving God," an aural pastiche of Weill's musical subconscious before it ever got organized on paper. Zorn's way with liberating notes from bourgeois bar lines might make the composer turn over in his grave, but at least it's the kind of theatre Bertolt Brecht would have loved. Maybe that should be Willner's next project.

– **Pamela Bloom**

SADE

Promise
(Portrait)

Promise possesses neither the imperturbable poise of *Diamond Life*, nor that album's surefire hit material. But this broody, saturnine effort does provide a nice complement to Sade's shining debut; her limited but lustrous alto, raw trills, icy time tremors and sinuous contours remain captivating within their confines.

It's important to stay mindful of Sade and company's original intentions. Though *Diamond Life* was heralded by many to be a recasting of Jobim's and Astrud Gilberto's elegance as a soundtrack for today's jeunesse dorée, it had far more to do with those disenfranchised youth in the UK and on the Continent who were trying to reinstill romance and lend some cosmopolitan charm to their lives. Sade and her cohorts didn't have two shillings to rub together when they cut *Diamond Life*, and to miss that irony and gracefully spare esthetic is to deny the band its ingenuity.

If "It Is A Crime" opens a bit too dolorous, take the extra moment to absorb Andrew Hale's supple piano, Paul S. Denman's liquid bass lines, the delicate percussion of Dave Early and the lovely way Sade hovers above and below the limpid horns. There is nothing phony here, and nothing philistine. "The Sweetest Taboo" weaves a confident bossa nova fabric, while "Jezebel," about a beautiful, penniless and prideful young woman, who "won't try to deny where she came from," turns out to be a directly-observed tale of social grasping's dangers.

Promise isn't perfect; the six minutes-plus "War Of The Hearts," with its clumsy lyric and canned drum pulse, nearly wrecks side one's spatial clarity. But the gorgeous combination of "Mr. Wrong" and "Never As Good As The First Time" on side two more than restores the balance. Even in its few weak moments, however, *Promise* could pass as a latterday Steely Dan galvanized by a startling female voice. And just how bad is *that*?– **Timothy White**

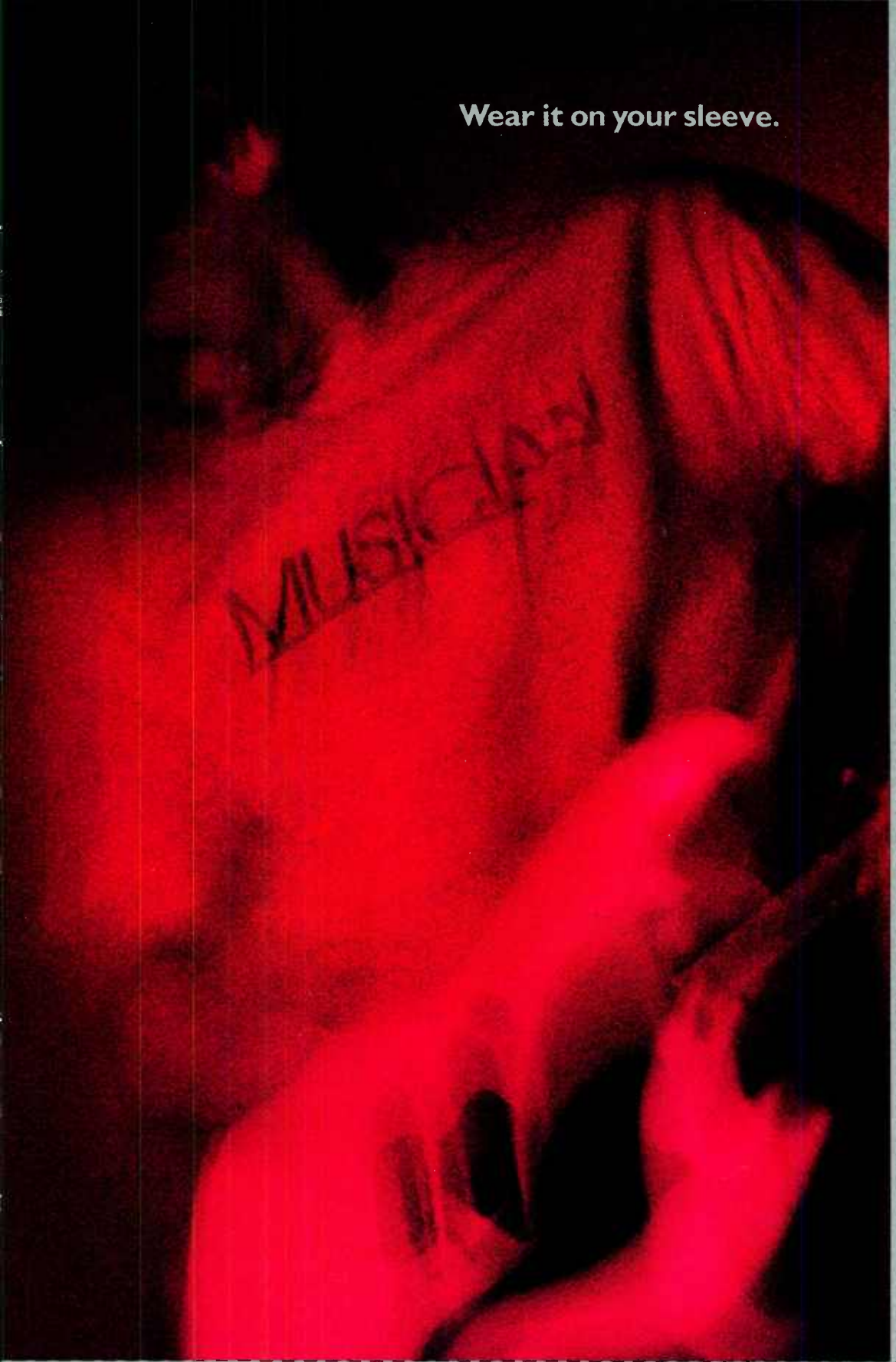
ROBERT ASHLEY

Atalanta (Acts Of God)
(Lovely Music/N.M.D.S.)

There are two distinct ways to approach new music old-timer Ashley's three-disc magnum opus: Either read the enclosed booklet to figure out the piece's complex and arcane set-up—a Greek myth superstructure which Ashley has souped-up to include his uncle, storyteller Willard Reynolds, surrealist painter Max Ernst, and pianist Bud Powell—or ignore the whole shebang and just listen. Both work.

The story goes like this: Atalanta, a girl from a royal family, is raised by animals in the wild. She becomes a good runner. She'll marry the guy that beats her in a foot race, but the chumps who fail get the axe. Finally one dude wins by placing three golden apples on her path; Atalanta, swift of limb but perhaps not so much of mind, stops to look and loses. En route to their wedding, they stop off at Aphrodite's pad and do the dirty, which irritates the goddess so much that she turns them into leopards. The three apples become Ernst, Reynolds and Powell, symbols for the opera itself: image, narrative and music.

But the music really needs no explanation. Sung and spoken mostly in Italian, the narrative may make no sense, yet still overflows with meaning, proof that relevance is extracted subjectively. Thankfully devoid of clichés that feel *for*



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MUSICIAN WEAR

you (thunderous climaxes, weepy strings) Atalanta lets one freely stumble towards significance, encouraging an even more personal interpretation. And there's plenty to interpret: Imagine, for example, a baritone emoting in Italian to a muttering, mildly hysterical woman as multiple keyboards burble in the background. *Atalanta* is part avant-garde, part Fellini soundtrack, a cultural car crash between old world decadence and new world laconicism. Sometimes it's even fun. And you certainly can't accuse an opera that cites the discovery of Willie Mays of too much pretension. (Available from N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

– Peter Watrous

PETE TOWNSHEND

White City
(Atco)

The old ruminator is back. Pete Townshend's latest vinyl foray into the depths of his soul, *White City*, is pretentiously subtitled "A Novel"; it's also the inspiration for a new longform video. Should the disc and/or tape be well-received, we can surely look forward to a *White City* theatrical film, dinner theatre production, and possibly bubblegum cards.

As with other Townshend projects, trappings and grand intentions tend to overshadow actual content. If we pretend that music is the main thing, however, the LP easily earns a passing grade. From the diaphanous "Brilliant Blues" to the thundering "Give Blood," Townshend's keen melodies and the precision support of David Gilmour, Pino Palladino, et al, make it easy to tolerate his whiny singing. And he shows the range of a standout Broadway composer; just measure the distance between the delicate grace of "I Am Secure" and "Face The Face," a real thumper of a dance track. Musically this disc has everything except rock 'n' roll, but Pete played plenty of that with the Who, didn't he?

Of course, that's never enough for Townshend. Set in the London housing project of the same name, *White City* also purports to chronicle Pete's return to his roots. Alas, only the anthemic "White City Fighting," with its evocation of a violent time when "blood was an addiction," provides any illumination of that. The other tunes lack context (presumably the video fills in the gaps), while abounding with wholesome moral instruction. "Come To Mama" reminds us that pride is bad, while "Crashing By Design" observes how we forge our own destinies. On the back cover, Townshend trowels on yet another layer of meaning with an amusing story on the making of *White City* that's both self-deflating and self-serving. Just like an intellectual!

Perpetually ambitious and self-indulgent, Townshend will someday keep generations of revisionist historians busy arguing over whether he was a genius or a ninny. *White City* (the record) entertains, but doesn't weigh enough to tip the balance either way.

– Jon Young

TROUBLE FUNK

Saturday Night Live!
From Washington, D.C.
(Island)

Stars of the D.C. Go-Go scene, Trouble Funk represent a throwback to an earthier, less predictable disco groove. *Saturday Night* purports to present the groove *and* the scene, a live set that documents not only TF's music but the essential interaction between Go-Go performers and listeners. In this setting Trouble Funk segues easily from one tune to another without pause, weaving snippets of tunes with established dance melodies. In some ways, the fast-and-loose display of musical cliches mirrors the in-and-out live mixes of more ambitious club dj's like Afrika Bambaataa, who turned everything from oldies to TV commercials to sit-com theme music into grist for the dance mills. Trouble Funk's mobility, their extension of this mix concept to live performance, is thus their most impressive innovation.

Trouble Funk's music, after all, is still essentially hard-core funk. Tracks like "A Quick One" boast staccato horn lines straight out of Fred Wesley & the J.B.'s, while a Bootsy-style big bass bottom helps propel the band throughout the set. A steady percussive drive locks together conga, hand instruments and traps to chanted vocals, making a dance machine that rolls along as steady as a heartbeat.

As an introduction to Go-Go, *Saturday Night* disappoints only by its lack of scope. Much has been made of extended Go-Go performances that challenge audiences to keep pace with the bands, but with less than half an hour of music, this disc weighs in light. A double-pocket LP would have better conveyed the hypnotic tempo of a Go-Go show. If it's about the groove, you got to let it go.– **Fred Goodman**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Dr. Demento Presents
The Greatest Novelty Records Of All Time
(Rhino)

BULLETIN! We interrupt this magazine for an important announcement: [*woman's scream, breaking glass*] This time Rhino Records has gone too far! [*Cue in "Pomp And Circumstance" under following*] Yes, Rhino—the oddball L.A. label whose own catalog reads like a joke—has foolishly allowed DJ Dr. Demento (Barry Hansen) to compile six albums' worth of novelty records. The seventy-nine selections are arranged chronologically by decade, starting with "The 1940s (And before)." The sixth record is a timely assortment of novelty Christmas recordings: Rhino may be crazy, but not dumb.

The result is a laughing matter. Critical temptation is to make sweeping, pretentious statements about the pop taste of each decade that generated these records. So let's do it: The first volume indicates that in times of mass unemployment and impending war, people wanted to hear "Three Little Fishies." In the supposedly escapist 50s, novelty records reflected community paranoia about foreign invaders ("The Purple People Eater," "The Flying

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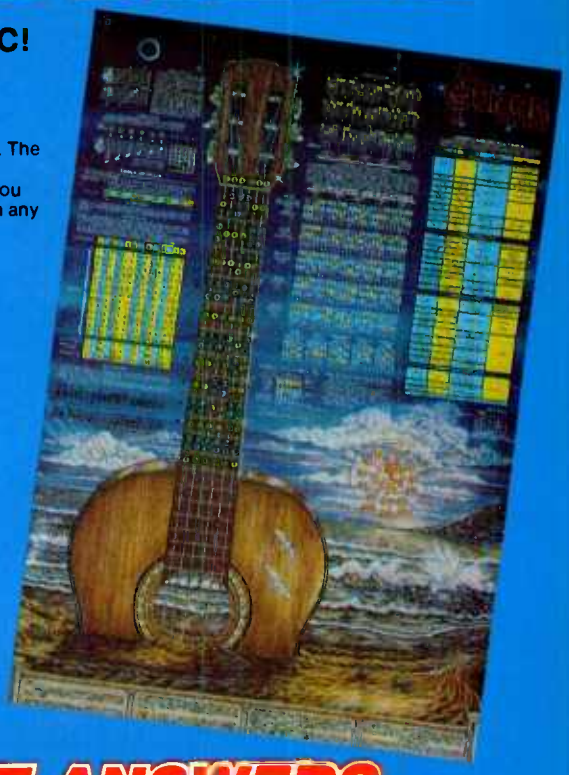

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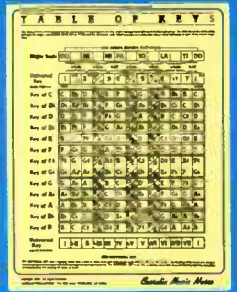

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Saucer," "Russian Bandstand"). This trend continued into the 60s until transmuted by soft drugs and hard camp ("The Eggplant That Ate Chicago," "They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!"). Demento's 70s choices suggest an encroaching pothead sensibility (Cheech & Chong, "Fish Heads," *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*), while the 80s—surprise!—revert to sheer silliness ("Weird Al" Yankovic, Bob & Doug McKenzie, "The Curly Shuffle"). A strain of blue humor runs throughout, from coy double entendre ("The Dinghy Song") to single entendre ("Bounce Your Boobies").

Until the 70s, the cuts here tended to be actual hits, which says something about radio's increasingly chicken-hearted programming. Some of the selections aren't quite "novelties"—"Minnie The Moocher"? Randy Newman's "Short People"? The great "Surfin' Bird"?—but Demento does include all major figures, excepting the Chipmunks, and plenty of minor ones. Maybe he could issue a supplement with Chubby Checker's "The Class." Or John Zacherle's "Dinner With Drac." Or Jim Backus' "Delicious!" Or....

— **Scott Isler**

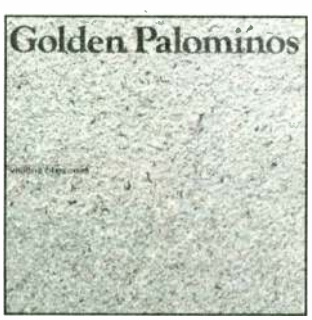
ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID

Sun City
(Manhattan)

Enough, already, with the benefit records; as Peter Wolf puts it, "Let's get down to the real nitty-gritty," *Sun City* is not the kind of LP designed to make you feel good for coughing up eight or nine dollars. If this project works at all, it will make you mad as hell at the way the world works when it comes to racial relations.

The "Sun City" single is also this album's best hook: A tough, semi-anthemic rant against apartheid, it layers star-studded cameos over a raucous, rock-tinged dance groove that's about as universal as pop music gets. But while it's great to hear the likes of Miles Davis, Bruce Springsteen, Run-D.M.C., Rubén Blades, Joey Ramone, Sonny Okosun, Bobby Womack and Jackson Browne on the same song, this record really kicks in on "Revolutionary Situation," which translates the single's upbeat insistence into a numbing collage of newsclips, and on "Let Me See Your I.D.," wherein the distance between South Africa and the U.S. of A. is made pitiably small. No listener with any conscience can help being moved by this music.

Yet *Sun City* has suffered from the curious racial politics of American radio. MTV and AOR stations have pushed the single with admirable enthusiasm, but ironically many black radio outlets remain standoffish, preferring to substitute Gil Scott-Heron's wholesomely black but dated "Johannesburg." Fighting apartheid *with* apartheid seems downright idiotic. But that's all the more reason to support an album like *Sun City*. — **J.D. Considine**



GOLDEN PALOMINOS

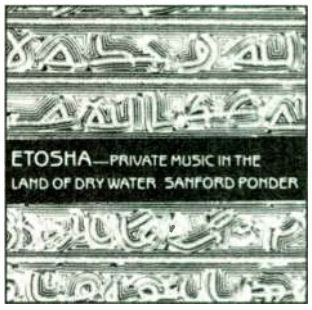
Visions Of Excess
(Celluloid)

Visions Of Excess indicates that the volcanic eruption of sound featured on the Golden Palominos' debut LP has congealed liked pumice into abrasive rock nuggets. If many of the musical ideas expressed here also seem suspiciously derivative, they are still some of the most ferocious derivations to be heard on vinyl since punk was in its finest flower.

At the core of the Palomino "concept" sits percussionist Anton Fier, who produced and arranged this LP, co-wrote several cuts and pounds the skins throughout with a mix of Cro-Magnon muscle and admirable finesse. Co-conspirators include Bill Laswell and Jody Harris on bass and guitar respectively, along with a gaggle of rock ringers. The method here may suggest Steely Dan's, but the music—raw and metallic as the soundtrack from an auto body shop—is anything but. Also unlike the Dan, the guests here are given enough free rein to take over the party.

"Boy (Go)," for instance, with its jangly guitars and hypnotically repetitive vocal cadences by Michael Stipe, begs comparison with R.E.M.; the main difference is Richard Thompson's considerably more inventive guitar fills, and Stipe's relatively decipherable lyrics. Johnny Lydon turns an otherwise obscure punk cover of "The Animal Speaks" into the glory that was the Sex Pistols, while, further afield, the Palominos exhibit some intriguing affinities between modern no-wave and late 60s psychedelia: "Silver Bullet," featuring Jack Bruce, pays homage to early Cream, "Clustering Train" to early Jefferson Airplane, and Moby Grape's "Omaha" to, well, Moby Grape. Unfortunately, the only tune that shows much melodic invention, "(Kind Of) True," is merely B-grade Pretenders, though Syd Straw's singing on it is nearly the equal of her more celebrated counterparts. But then songs aren't really the point here so much as rhythm and sound, which Fier and Harris help propel with exhilarating abandon. The result is one album where the sum of the parts ultimately redeems the whole.

— **Mark Rowland**



SANFORD PONDER

Etosha—Private Music In The Land Of Dry Water
(Private Music)

Sanford Ponder's *Etosha* is an engaging enigma. Simply stop at the spec sheet, and this project seems appropriately high-tech: 32-track digital recording, performed mostly on a Fairlight CMI and a Yamaha DX7 (although a retrograde piano makes occasional appearances), and available *only* on CD or Dolby-ized chrome cassette. Yet, the music sounds surprisingly warm and, well, natural. It isn't simply that Ponder introduces "Watergarden" with spring rain and rumbling thunder, and spikes "Frontier" with bird songs, cricket chirps and coyote cries, though they do provide appropriate verisimilitude: It's more the ease with which they're integrated into Ponder's electronic textures. At his

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best, he lets the listener forget the circuitry and hear his music with the same naivete granted more "traditional" instrumentation. Ponder also avoids compositional as well as technological clichés, and an appreciation for his work doesn't hinge on the sort of pseudo-Zen Kitaro fans seem eager to swallow. *Etosha* is sheer delight, pure and simple, music both nourishing and instructive. What more could science offer? (Private Music/Mail Order, 220 E. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010)

— **J.D. Considine**

THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA FEATURING IAN ANDERSON

A Classic Case
(RCA Red Seal)

People talk about symphonic rock, but now that usually means *synth*phonic rock. This here, though, is the real McCoy—classic Jethro Tull given the full orchestral treatment—and it's heartening to hear how these pieces have adapted to this flattering new format. "Bourree" shows how much Bach would have benefited from a walking bassline and a knowledge of the blues; none of that contrapuntal crap gets in the way with this baby. Ian Anderson's flute is a wonder in itself; with a vibrato that wobbles as freely as a drunken bicyclist, you can practically hear him inhaling inspiration as he gulps for air between phrases. Has Jean-Pierre Rampal ever dared to flaunt his frailty so boldly? Then there's "Too Old To Rock And Roll, Too Young To Die," which recalls the riches of that greatest of American composers, Leroy Anderson, and "Fly By Night," which annotator Derek Jewell describes as sounding "like vintage Henry Mancini." Is this class, or what? Finally, the LSO hasn't sounded this good since their epochal recording of "Whole Lotta Love." Then again, on their usual diet of Beethoven, Brahms and Bruckner, when would they have the chance?

— **Jann Guccione**

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SHORT Rock TAKES

Rubén Blades Y Seis Del Solar
Escenas (Elektra)

Even in translation, Blades' lyrics are miles beyond the rhymed hectoring of Anglo political songwriters. Issues are important, but it's always the people behind them that hold his, and our, attention. Besides, you don't need to speak the language to appreciate Blades' melodic gifts—"Silencios," a duet with Linda Ronstadt, is the best ballad she's sung in over a decade—or the ease with which his band unfurls each layer of rhythm. Pop sophistication of the first order.

The Rave-Ups
Town & Country (Fun Stuff)

The title sums things up nicely. Jimmer Podrasky has a nice hillbilly twang for a guy from Pittsburgh, and solid rock instincts; the way the guitars kick in on "Positively Lost Me" has more to do with the Who than with Hank Williams. The ability to connect country and rock on that level raises the Rave-Ups above other putative cowpunks, generating a sound that's utterly captivating. And Podrasky's writing is strong enough to make Dylan's "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" seem more at home here than it ever did on a Byrds album. (Box 1814, Beverly Hills, CA 90213)

Elton John
Ice On Fire (Geffen)

The title overstates it some, but there's no denying that he's getting hot again. This isn't the effervescent Elton of old, of course, though both the sassy drive of "This Town" and the flamboyant fluff of "Wrap Her Up" seem familiar. But by translating the guts of that 70s pop approach into contemporary self-consciousness, he's made these songs lovable, anyway.

Marvin Gaye
Romantically Yours (Columbia)

That this collection of supper-club classics even exists will probably surprise all but the most knowledgeable Marvin fans; what's even more surprising is the extent to which it succeeds. Some arrangements throw curves, like the "What's Goin' On" treatment lent "The Shadow Of Your Smile"; some, like "Maria," play it straight. But Gaye is great throughout. Best of all, the oldies prove an ideal set-up for a side of equally sentimental, exquisitely-sung Gaye originals.

Kashif
Condition Of The Heart (Arista)

Slowly but surely, Kashif is becoming as strong a singer as he is producer/composer. That's still not enough to keep Cindy Mizelle from walking away with "I Wanna Have Love With You," but it does make "Condition Of The Heart" his most winning single yet. And on the tough-minded "Botha Botha," Kashif proves he's nobody's light-weight.

ABC
How To Be A Zillionaire (Mercury)

Despite continued shifts in style, ABC holds to the same pop perspective: A song is only as good as its setting. That may not speak well for Martin Frye's melodic gift, but it does explain why *Beauty Stab* stank. Still, that was last year's model; this year, we get synths and sex. The latter amounts to little beyond sex-symbol Eden's command, "kiss my snatch" ("A To Z"), but the synths nicely flesh out the lovely "Be Near Me" and "15 Storey Halo."

Pat Benatar
Seven The Hard Way (Chrysalis)

Neil Geraldo's feel for sound effects may mute the band's arena rock posturing enough to bring Benatar's vocalisms down to scale, but whatever credibility she earns through "Sex As A Weapon" evaporates with her cover of "7 Rooms Of Gloom." This is progress?

Robert Palmer
Riptide (Island)

The trouble with Palmer posing as a ladies' man is that he sings about sex as if it gives him hernias. Granted, that does lend a certain intensity to his cover of "I Didn't Mean To Turn You On," but hardly the kind desired.

Asia
Astra (Geffen)

Here's the new crap, same as the old crap.

Arms Akimbo
Arms Akimbo (Blue Rat EP)

"Dominique" is the winner here, articulating the band's nuvo-folk approach as clearly as "Money Changes Everything" said it all for fellow Atlantans the Brains. That's not to deny the other tunes some merit, but finding such greatness in one of five songs ought to be recommendation enough. (9400 Roberts Ave., Suite 1-J, Atlanta GA 30338)

Primitons
Primitons (Throbbing Lobster)

Like so many new Southern bands, the Primitons' jangly guitar and lean beat invite comparison to R.E.M. In this case, though, that's a compliment, for while this debut is every bit as catchy as *Chronic Town*, the music is less elliptical and more hook-oriented, while the grooves emphasize drive over drone. Mostly, theirs is a sound unto itself. (Box 205, Brookline, MA 02146)

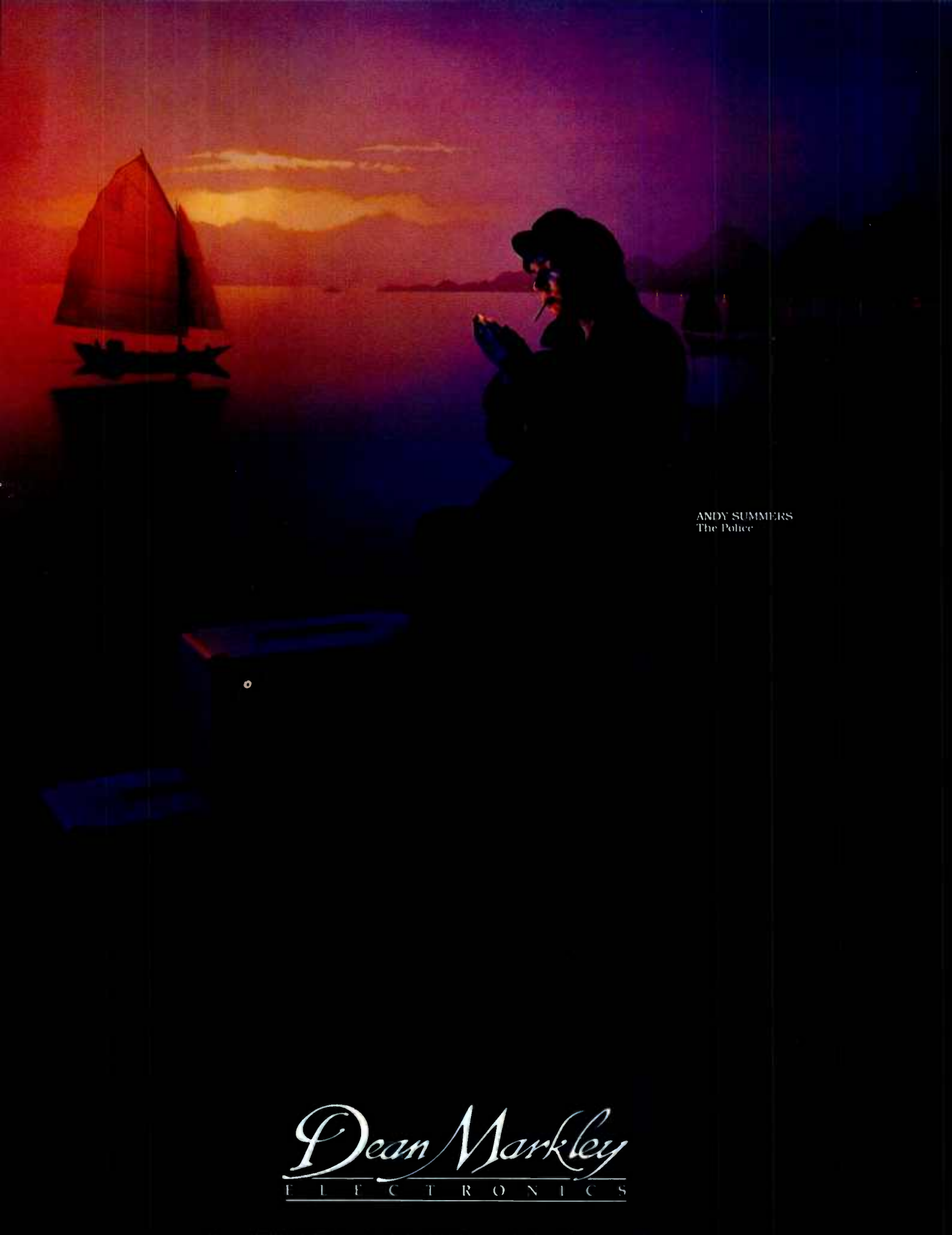
Yoko Ono
Starpeace (Polydor)

The end has always been more important than the means for Yoko Ono, and on one level *Starpeace* provides a philosophical forum—you can't reach the whole world through ads in the *New York Times*, y'know. But musically, Yoko also wants to matter more than as a famous widow, and on that level, at least, this is a genuine success.

L.L. Cool J
Radio (Def Jam)

If rap is about words, then much of it sounds alike. But if rap is about the relation between words and rhythm, then L.L. Cool J is big news. As far as verbal expression and characterization goes, Cool J is as sharp as either D.M.C. or Whodini's Jalil, but factor in the def beats he raps over, and *Radio* is fresher than anything on the airwaves.

BY J.D. CONSIDINE



ANDY SUMMERS
The Police

Dean Markley
ELECTRONICS

SHORT JAZZ TAKES

Jaki Byard & the Apollo Stompers
Phantasies (Soul Note/PSI)

A famous unrecorded big band finally records a record that deserves to be famous. Charts thick with swirling lines, Byard's orchestral style-cuisinarting solos, pairing medleys like Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" with versions of "So What" and "Impressions," make for an aural and cerebral repast. This endlessly curious and tinkering mind has made an endlessly detailed and listenable record.

Carla Bley
Night-glo (Watt/ECM)

What a funny idea. Bley's written up some Southern California fusion charts, hired some slack-jawed studio guys to play them, and had Steve Swallow rumble through most of the melodies and take most of the solos on, get this... bass! Just so nobody misses the point, she's had a really schlocky cover made up. The record's so authentic that it really is boring. And I'm probably giving Bley too much credit.

Sir Charles Thompson
Portrait of a Piano (Sackville)

Thompson apprenticed under boogie pianists Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson and recorded with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Coleman Hawkins, so you know he has some touch. Fifty years of professional playing have inculcated deft control of overtones and silence, making tunes like "Ain't Misbehavin'," "All The Things You Are" and "'Round Midnight" sound fresh, which is one big achievement. With a left hand that can stride like Fats Waller and a right that can buzz like Bud Powell, he's made a solo record that'll make today's pangenerationalists shake with envy.

Jimmy Lyons Quintet
Give It Up (Black Saint/PSI)

With help from Cecil Taylor associates Karen Borca and Enrico Rava, Lyons builds dense but opaque compositions out of clipped, repeated melodies and friendly, unfrenetic group interaction. A beautiful record that doubles as a great argument for free improvisation.

Sonny Murray
Sonny's Time Now (Disc Union)

A reissue of a rare record. An unusually vicious Don Cherry and a moaning Albert Ayler share the front line; two basses separate them from a splashing, savage Murray. Wave-like swells of sound, tightly controlled, make this a dark, brooding and powerful record. Beware: Amiri Baraka spews out an intensely anti-Semitic poem on one track.

John Hicks & David Murray
Sketches of Tokyo
(Disc Union/Japanese Import)

A quickie duet record done in Japan, it shows, on "Naima," how indifferent Murray is to the Coltrane legacy, and on "God Bless The Child" how attracted he is to the Ben Webster/Coleman Hawkins strain of saxophony. But two muscular guys are always going at it here, and the result is often ferocious.

Benny Carter
A Gentleman And His Music (Concord)

Benny Carter doesn't record every day, like he should. Here he's playing better than ever, with a raspy and vibrating tone like a violin and a staggering harmonic imagination. *Gentleman* features archetypically unruffled Carter solos, and also, unfortunately, a bevy of musical guests clogging up the grooves.

Pauline Oliveros
The Well & The Gentle
(hat Art/N.M.D.S.)

Oliveros, a new music composer and accordionist from way back (she played in the 1964 premier of Terry Riley's *In C For Instruments*) spends one side plus sixteen minutes playing solo accordion. It sounds stark, intensely personal, and not much fun. The two and a half sides of material she recorded with a larger group, however, have a communal, improvised feeling, as if her folksy, surging Minimalism wasn't really self-consciously artistic but meant for the whole tribe to join in.

John Adams
Harmonielehre (Nonesuch)

Fifty percent orthodox Minimalism at most, as big Mahleran slabs of strings and shimmering transition period serialist harmonies grab the spotlight. Pleasant without being stupidly sunny, occasionally acerbic without turning foul, Adams neither challenges nor condescends, which explains why so many people like him. Here he's also achieved a fine rapprochement between Minimalism and the European tradition.

Blue Notes

This batch of reissues—Donald Byrd's *Free Form*, Lee Morgan's *The Gigolo* (both featuring Man of the Hour Wayne Shorter), Elvin Jones's *Poly Currents*, Bud Powell's *The Amazing...Vol. III*, Hank Mobley's *Hi Voltage*, and a few more—doesn't kick me in the teeth album by album like previous batches have. But: Grachen Moncur's *Evolution*, arguably the most experimental Blue Note out by 1963, uses essentially the same pianoless band Jackie McLean used a few months earlier in *One Step Beyond*. Featuring Tony Williams, Bobby Hutcherson, McLean and Lee Morgan, Moncur sets sweeping, textural backdrops that make McLean and Morgan leave their licks at the door. Though it swings hard, with Tony Williams slamming rhythmic doors right and left, it's austere, serious music, uncompromised by hard-bopisms. Art Blakey's rare *Indestructible*, one of the last records he made for Blue Note, has the hold-on-to-your-hat band of Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Wayne Shorter and Cedar Walton. Up there with the classic *Free For All* and *Buhania's Delight*, the LP mixes modalisms with straight-ahead swinging and funk, one answer to the problem of what to do with yourself during the 60s. I like Stanley Turrentine's *Blue Sounds* because I like Stanley Turrentine, at the time a unique, slightly left of center tenor player who knew his grits and groceries. If *Blue* was more conventional than usual for Turrentine, so be it. It still hits the treasured late-night, thick-toned tenor groove.

BY PETER WATROUS

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Laswell from page 112

Is an original scene being created there?

LASWELL: There's a building up of young artists who are beginning to develop their own music. I don't think that in terms of pop music you have a big voice from Japan yet, but it's coming. In the very near future you will be hearing Japanese pop music that you won't associate with America or England.

MUSICIAN: *Will it be Japanese, or part of the "World Beat" that's bandied about so much these days?*

LASWELL: Yeah, a universal sound, but from where? From here or Japan? You'll be able to hear a Japanese contribution. I'm working long term in Japan. I'm optimistic. Japan is deep. It's so different, so different. When you want to find out about Japan come and see me there. It's a fascinating culture.

MUSICIAN: *Two-and-a-half years ago you were saying exactly what you were going to do. And you did it, sort of. Now you're vague about the future.*

LASWELL: I don't have any dreams. All my dreams are nightmares. All my plans are dreams.

MUSICIAN: *You managed to do what you wanted, playing instrumental music, which was quite a feat.*

LASWELL: Well, it wasn't that difficult. What's difficult now is looking at a much broader scope, and I'm thinking more international, so I'm not really trying to break it down into one particular musical area. Music is not an international experience, it's a local, a neighborhood phenomenon. Don't go to a club tonight, go to Peru and listen to local musicians. People that know about music are people who are well-traveled. I believe that. Let's assume that nothing's been discovered, that nothing's been done, and I'm starting with that as a kind of idea. We'd actually have to get rid of a majority of musical instruments that are being used now, because an instrument has nothing to do with it.

MUSICIAN: *You must know that the press, the English press in particular, has become rather harsh with your productions, after praising you two years ago.*

LASWELL: I realize it. It means absolutely nothing. I don't want to insult writing about music, but that's so much on the periphery of what really goes on. It's a painful thing for a musician to speak about, but to write about what I'm doing isn't possible. To write about something I have made is very similar to me taking one of your reviews and trying to play it at Carnegie Hall. And I would play it, and maybe people would like it, but it would have fuck-all to do with what you're saying. And when you write about one thing I'm already on to the next, and it's got a million intricacies you're not touching on. Music is a very special thing, a very magical thing. And you don't verbalize about it without really living it. And I don't verbalize about it, I live it. So my opinion is give up now and kill yourself. Kill everyone you like [*laughs*].

I know what people say. But until I see those guys at my bank telling me I can't cash a check or until I wake up one morning and they're in bed with me, that has fuck-all to do with what I do. I've been through a million ups and downs in the last few years: I'm great, I'm a genius, I'm a drunk, I'm fucked up, I'm incredible...but I'm just doing it for myself. And it feels great, if you want to know the truth. I may play on 10,000 more records, but that will only change what people say, not what I'm doing.

MUSICIAN: *What do you think of Prince?*

LASWELL: I think he's really talented. And very independent, and I respect him a great deal. [*Turns to Trilling*] I do. He's great. I could never work with him because he's his own machine. My input would be a distraction to a person like that.

MUSICIAN: *How do you practice, how do you compose?*

LASWELL: It's always a different source for each record. It can be based on things I write and work on at home, or it can be just influences. You can combine influences to create situations, which could seem totally original from the outside. Anything in pop or rock music you hear is based on some other situation.

I didn't play every day for a long time, but I do now. I have to catch up. Bassists like Jonas Hellborg [Mahavishnu] made me realize that I have work to do. Technical things. But I plan to do things that aren't technical [*laughs*]. I'm going to practice with drummers as well, I'm obsessed with drummers. Three in particular. Ginger Baker, Tony Williams, and, mainly, Ronald Shannon Jackson. I'm trying to base a relationship around each person, a development with each person. Learning experiences, and receipts, I hope. It's part of the times to go back to drumming. People feel the need to get back to basic roots. You can only go so far out, and then you become ridiculous. You're just out there.

MUSICIAN: *Don't you think that part of going back to the roots is the Reagan climate? It's very reactionary.*

LASWELL: I think the whole situation of rock is reactionary. You have radical benefits now, "Farm Aid" and the like, which are also vaguely reactionary, I think. They're all approved somewhere, by someone. It has a great deal to do with Reagan, of course. [*Snickers*] It's as Gil Scott-Heron said: "You either stand for something, or you go for anything." And, basically, everybody's going for anything, while standing for something. They took it wrong. Me, I'm going for everything, while standing for something.

As we get up to leave, Laswell prevents me from paying for my drinks. With a laugh, he says: "Look, I'm rich and famous, I'll pay." Several hours later I meet up with Trilling. Maybe it's fate, but on TV we chance upon Miles Davis playing a pimp on *Miami Vice*. Suddenly, our encounter back in Paris seems like a very long time ago. As we go out, Roger says: "I was thinking about something Bill said today in the interview. You know how musicians are. Bill hates everything everybody else does. That's why I was so surprised to hear him say that he liked Prince. Maybe he's becoming more gracious."

Laswell's Materials

An English Wall fretlass bass, an old Fender precision 6-string bass, and a Steinberger. "I'm going to stay with the Fender 6-string totally for playing live. For recording obligations I have the Wall and the Steinberger. Amps? I don't even have an amp. I usually rent Ampeg, with a two cabinet voice. For some of the old funk things I used a Music Man Stingray."

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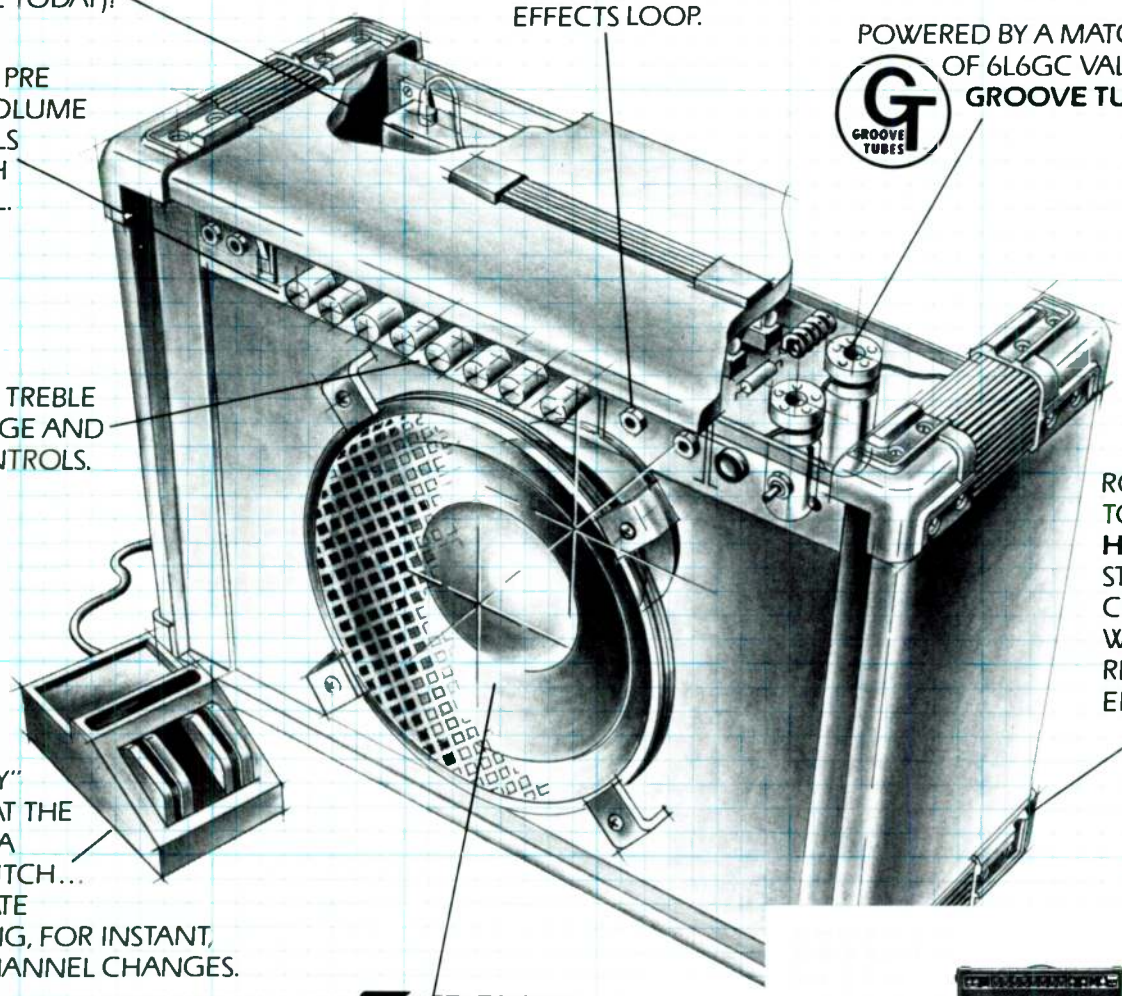

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