

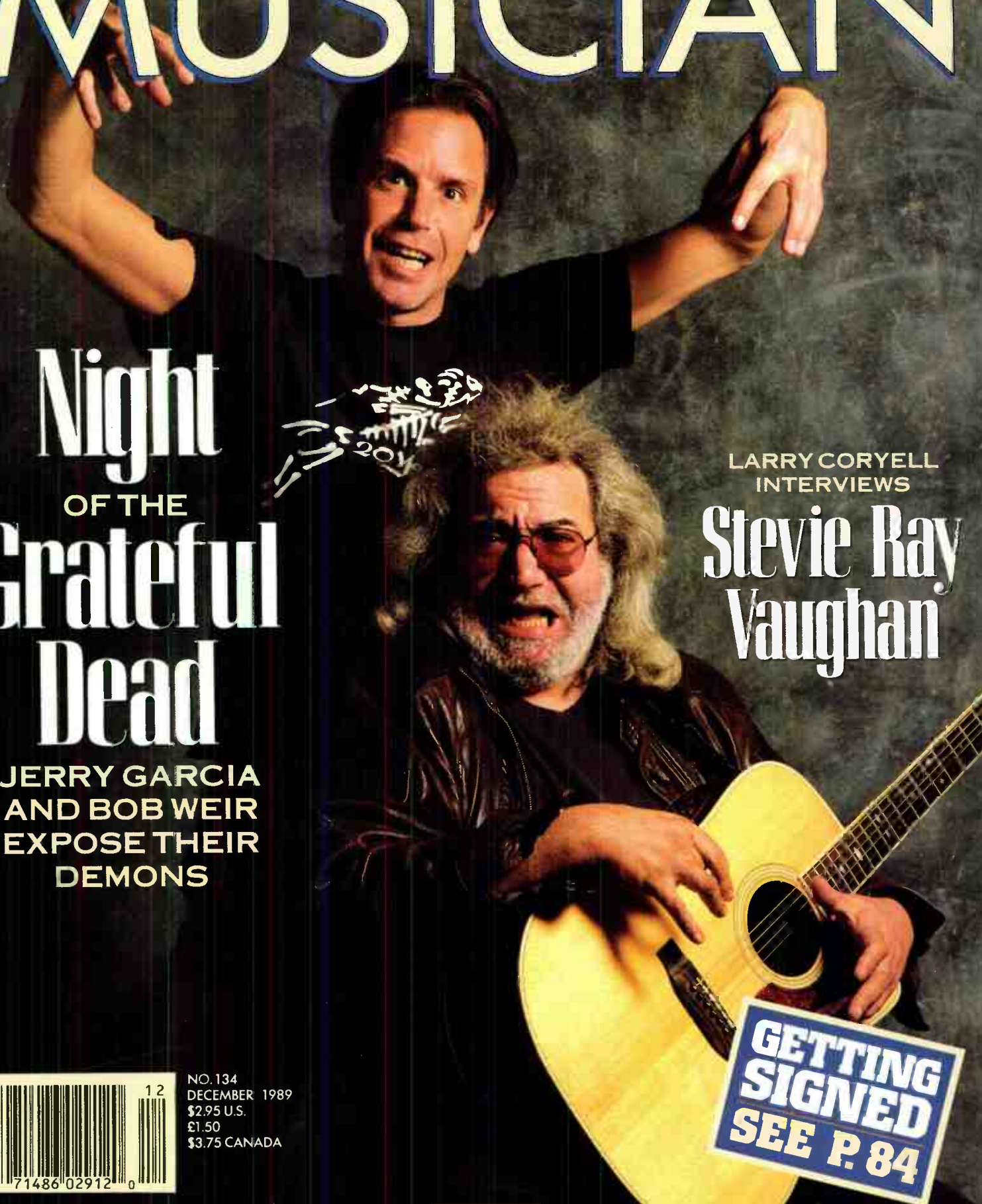
Laurie Anderson Resurfaces • SNL's T-Bone Wolk

MUSICIAN

Night OF THE Grateful Dead

JERRY GARCIA
AND BOB WEIR
EXPOSE THEIR
DEMONS

LARRY CORYELL
INTERVIEWS
Stevie Ray
Vaughan



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NO. 134
DECEMBER 1989
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```
Edit/Chord[1]/Note
F#: Note=1111
```

The U-20 can store 8 chord "sets," each consisting of a different chord assigned to each pitch in the octave.

```
I-R3: Electric Set U:0
C#3: I-128 So:C#3 Mu:Of*
```

If you're considering composing, consider this: The U-20 can store four different drum and percussion arrangements, each with its own key assignment, level, panning and tuning.

```
Edit/Sound/Effect/Chorus
#Out=Pre Rev Level=17*
```

Each of the 64 sound patches can have its own reverb and chorus parameters, with each part being assignable to just reverb, just chorus, or both.

```
Edit/Timbre[1]/Tone
Tone = 03-018 BARAFON 4
```

While any of the 128 preset tones can be assigned to any of the 128 timbre locations, more exotic instruments can be accessed via U-Series ROM cards.

```
Edit/Sound/Part4/Output
Asgn=Rev Lvl=127 Pan=3*
```

Each of the six parts can have its own effects on/off, level, and pan setting.

```
Edit/Sound/Part2/Timbre
Timbre=B35:JP8.Brass
```

Any internal timbre can be assigned to one of six parts. This keyboard, by the way, is multi-timbral with a 30-voice polyphony, making it ideal for live performances.

```
Rx|01|02|03|04|05|06|10
I-88 #064 : Worlds Apart
```

Since the U-20 will simultaneously receive on up to six MIDI channels plus a rhythm channel, you can create entire arrangements with an external sequencer, and split or layer up to six sounds on the keyboard.

```
Edit/Timbre[5]/Pitch
# Bender Range=7-36 #2 *
```

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INSIDE MUSICIAN

A Billboard Publication

No. 134 • December 1989

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By Peter Watrous

Is it possible these aging children know something we don't? About drugs and politics? About improvising rock 'n' roll? About playing their instruments? About the folks who follow them around? Let's go ask them.

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By Jim Macnie

In a jazz world split into petty factions, four of the most daring musicians have teamed up to offer hope to all sides. Building bridges and breaking down clichés with David Murray's music commandos.

56 Paul Kelly

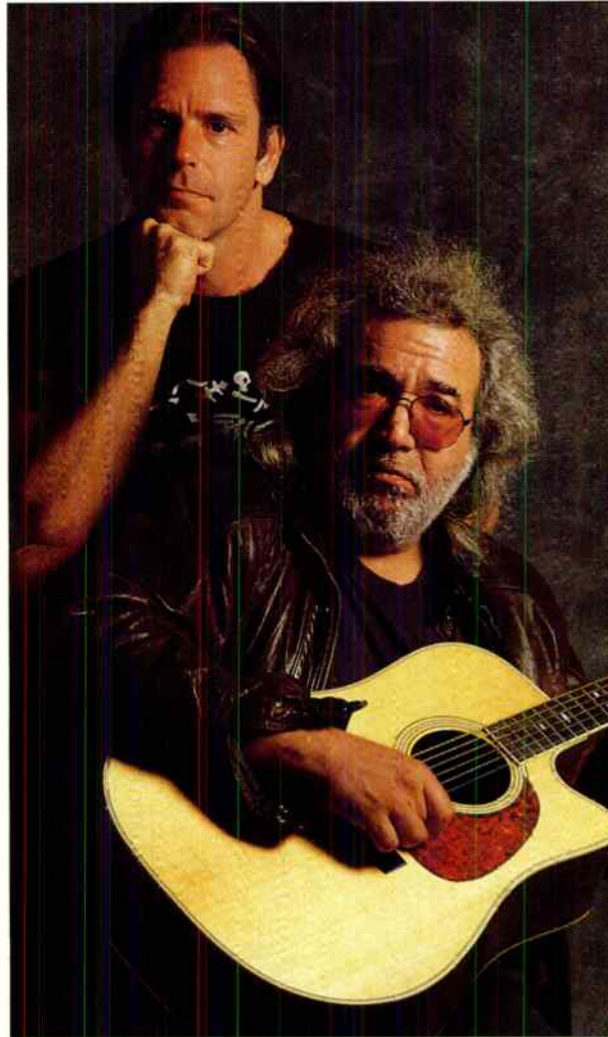
By Bill Flanagan

Strong, smart and silent: what we talk about when we talk about Australia's quiet rocker, who's due for some U.S. recognition after a formidable outpouring of Oz albums. Also, a conversation with producer Scott Litt.

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LETTERS

Beck Pages

THANKS FOR THE excellent cover story on Jeff Beck (Sept. '89). In this age of "dinosaur rock" it's great to see an artist like Beck, who would rather break new ground than rest on his laurels. Unlike Jimmy Page, I don't think you'll ever have to worry, "Has Beck still got it?"

Steve Patchett
Lancaster, PA

SCOTT ISLER'S Jeff Beck interview was an excellent example of what happens when a writer gives the subject "room to breathe": insightful questions, excellent follow-throughs on the answers and an obvious admiration of the artist's work. This approach provided Beck with the initiative to be truthful and thoughtful in his replies. Well done. Also, the Steve Rapport photos were excellent.

C.A. Keeton
Nashville, TN

WHY DOES SCOTT ISLER write that the Yardbirds sound dated but Beck's solos don't, when most of the "alternative" acts you write about love to rip off the Yardbirds but could care less about "new" Jeff Beck?

Frank Jarvis
Geneva, IL

Marrvelous

WHAT CAN I SAY about the Johnny Marr article (Sept. '89) other than that it was absolutely brilliant! Finally Johnny has spoken and my eyes have been opened. Until this article I'd been blaming Johnny for the Smiths split and—well, to tell the truth—I really hated him. But I see now that no one in the Smiths was to blame. After reading that article any and all Smiths apostles should understand Johnny better and stop blaming him.

Johnny Marr is a musical genius and one of the greatest guitarists ever. I'm glad to see him playing with a brilliant man like Matt

Johnson and I wish him nothing but happiness for the rest of his hopelessly long career.

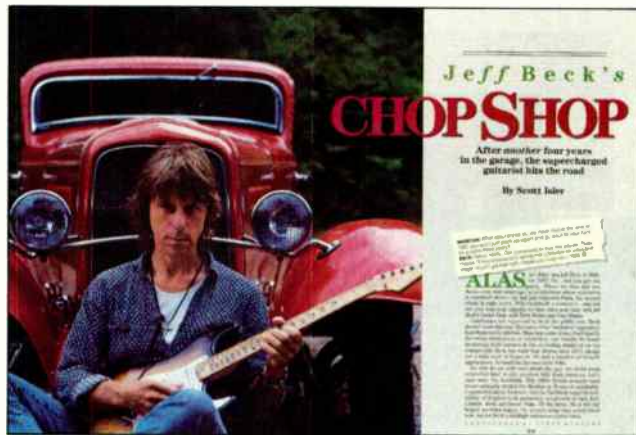
Viv Nicholson
Toledo, OH

I WONDER HOW many readers caught the multilingual pun (probably unintentional) on the cover of your September issue. The slang expression for "I'm fed up" in French is "J'en ai marre." At the very least, Johnny Marr can express his frustration to all your francophile readers every time he introduces himself.

Who says music writers aren't literate?

John Boylan
Los Angeles, CA

Waddaya mean, "probably unintentional"?—Ed.



Bullsheehan

FOR THE SAKE OF your readers everywhere and also for your own sake, please:

- A. Stop giving press to infantile, misogynist, egotistical no-talents like Billy Sheehan (Sept. '89), or
- B. Stop calling yourself "Musician magazine."

Robert Capra
Boston, MA

X Murder

IT HAS COME to our attention that Billy Sheehan was misquoted in your magazine regarding a band he

liked called "King's Axe." I'm quite sure this was a misprint and should have read "King's X."

Recently Billy was quoted as saying, "King's X is the band that will change the world." This would lead me to believe it was "King's X" Billy Sheehan was referring to.

Deirdre LoCascio
Megaforce Worldwide
East Brunswick, NJ

People's Choice

SO KRISTINE MCKENNA finally liked an album (Neneh Cherry's *Raw Like Sushi*, Records, Aug. '89). After reading her review, I finally understand why McKenna despises R.E.M., 10,000 Maniacs and all my other favorite bands: Kristine McKenna is a disco queen. Could some-

umpteenth live version of "Whipping Post." Think about it.

Josh Blinder
Bethesda, MA

IN HIS REVIEW of Prince's *Batman* (Sept. '89), J.D. Considine writes that what makes the record so "approachable" is its focus. Unfortunately, the focus is on selling 10 million copies. After releasing the best single LP of his career last year and having it all but ignored, Prince has come up with a funky but unchallenging record that doesn't approach the level of *Lovesexy*. That Considine refers to that album as "borderline nuts" proves that he is no better than the teenyboppers who jumped on the Prince bandwagon during *Purple Rain* and then jumped off as soon as he refused to produce a carbon-copy follow-up. Hopefully, Prince will get back on track and stop pandering to those who can't handle his new power of soul.

Eric Perl
Brooklyn, NY

R.E.Morse Code

SO DUNCAN STRAUSS honestly expects us to believe that Firehose's "homage" to Michael Stipe is devoid of any satirical overtones (Sept. '89)? Come now! I don't doubt that Crawford's intention was to write a song for Stipe, nor will I dispute that "For the Singer of R.E.M." was penned at Stipe's request. However, the tune is anything but a casual tribute to the heroes of Athens, Ga. From the instrumental opening's inexplicable tempo acceleration to the cleverness of the wordplay, "Singer" calls attention to critical misgivings even fans like me have had of R.E.M. The few times I've seen Firehose live, "Singer" was performed in a manner tongue-in-cheek at best. I would suggest that perhaps Duncan got taken for a ride.

David Gerard
New York, NY

body please build a time machine and send her back to 1977? Then she could aim her diatribes at the Clash and Talking Heads, and write effusive sonnets to the Bee Gees.

Lisa Borders
Philadelphia, PA

REGARDING ROY TRAKIN'S review of the Allman Brothers' *Dreams* (Sept. '89): I realize that this is total anathema to you people at *Musician*, but some of us potrooms out here like Jethro Tull! And some of us would probably prefer owning Jethro Tull's boxed set to listening to Gregg Allman and the boys do the

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TEACHERS



keyboardist Karen Peris, a shy 26-year-old whose charm comes partly from being nowhere near as eloquent as her lyrics. Musically, however, she ranks among the raconteurs she so admires; the Innocence Mission's self-titled debut LP is ethereal rock filled with images and emotions to soothe the soul.

"By the time somebody gets to the end of our record, I'd like them to

have a sense of comfort and encouragement from the songs," Peris says. "I always think of 'the innocence mission' as a place, rather than being on a mission." But if the Lancaster, Pennsylvania quartet writes lullabies for a restless world, there's more than

AIRMAIL SPECIAL

WHY DO JAZZ musicians make such compelling subjects for dark, moody onstage photographs? We dunno, but Lee Tanner's 1950s and '60s portraits—in *Jazz: A Book of Postcards* (Pomegranate)—are further proof of the genre's power. Give 'em as stocking stuffers to friends and hope they send them to you.—*Scott Isler*

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Rest for the weary

THEY HAVE the Cocteau Twins on their answering machine and echoes of them in their music, along with the traditional strains of rounds and waltzes.

Kate Bush on Valium might sound like this—if she mixed stories of lonely grandmothers, French Impressionist painters and confused czarinas with more oblique tales of

longing and wonder.

"I think anyone who

can make people see things with words—people who can make you fall in love with a character by the way they phrase things, I just think that's wonderful," says the Innocence Mission's singer/songwriter

dreaminess to its music. "I think of innocence as a strong, not a soft, quality," Peris says. "To me, cynicism is a weakness. But the purity of purpose that goes with innocence, that's strength."—*Robin J. Schwartz*

BANG THE (EAR)DRUM SOFTLY

PETE TOWNSHEND'S recent \$10,000 donation to San Francisco's Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers (HEAR) brought attention to the serious problem of ear damage. "Rock 'n' roll is like any other sport. You should wear protective equipment," says Kathy Peck, bassist, singer and HEAR co-founder.

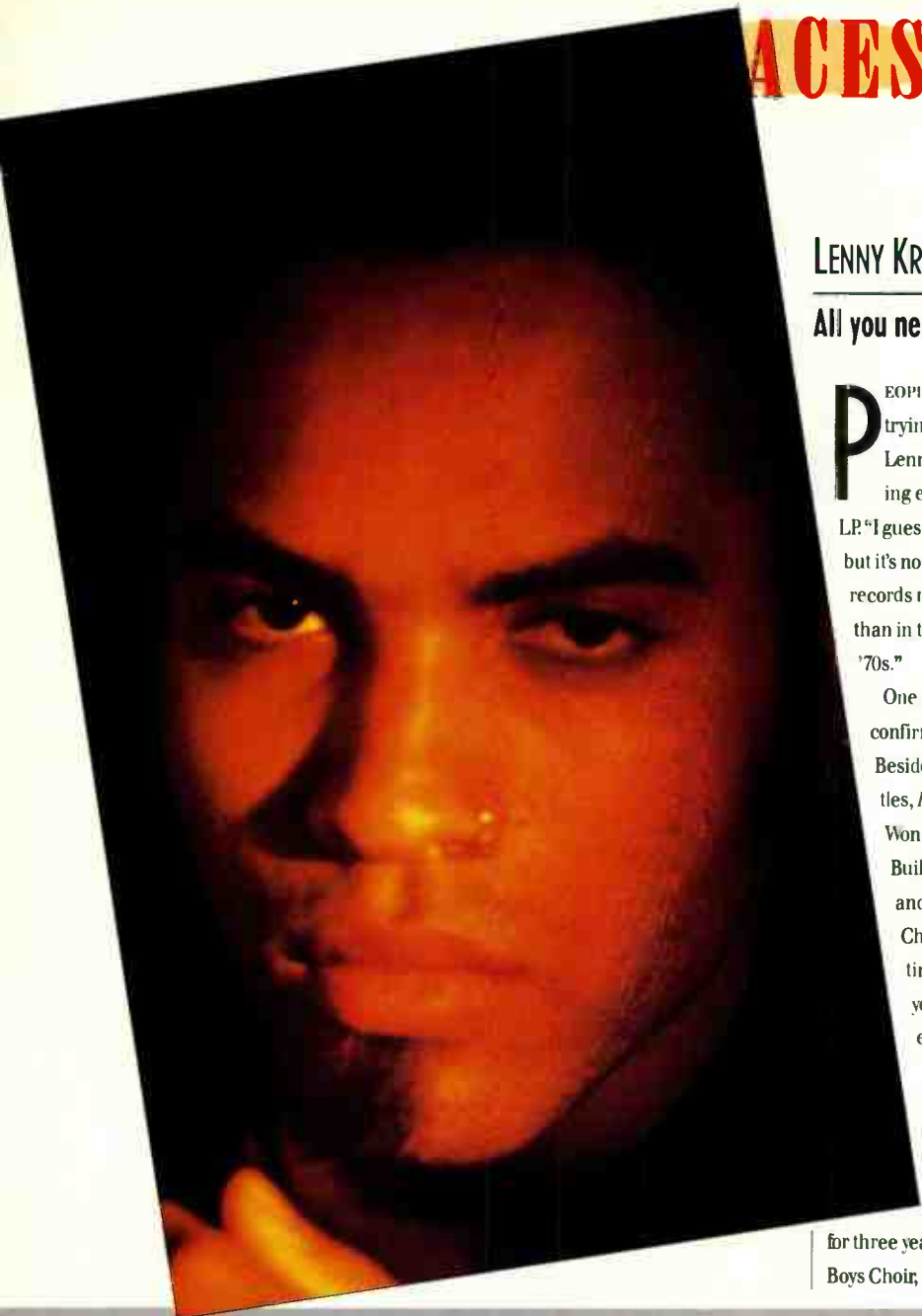
Peck had her ears checked shortly after her band the Contractions opened for Duran Duran at the Oakland Coliseum in 1987. She was ultimately diagnosed with 40 percent hearing loss due to otosclerosis, a growth of spongy bone in the middle ear, which was aggravated by the loud music.

Along with hearing-impaired lawyer John Doyle and a concerned doctor named Flash Gordon, Peck formed HEAR in 1983, and immediately started hearing screenings at the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic. They now take a mobile van to schools and work to educate musicians, mixers, en-

gineers and producers about the dangers of high volume. HEAR provides custom earplugs that lower all frequencies equally rather than just squashing the highs. "You can still hear everything," claims Peck, who is performing again, *with* plugs.

Peck feels that rock has to be loud, but not dangerously so. She hopes the problem can be solved from inside the industry if the information gets out, but it may take hitting where it hurts—in the pocketbook—before anything much is done for ears' sake. "We're going to have to start dealing with this. There are lawsuits, and this is not good," Peck says as she packs for an EPA hearing in Washington, D.C. "We don't want the government mixing the sound. We believe in education, not regulation."

(For an informational packet on hearing, send a \$5 donation to HEAR, PO Box 460847, San Francisco, CA 94146. For information about custom earplugs, call 1-800-635-EARS.)—*Robin Tolleson*



LENNY KRAVITZ

All you need is love!

PEOPLE ASK if I was consciously trying to make a '60s record," Lenny Kravitz says, describing early reaction to his first LP. "I guess I'm from the old school, but it's not nostalgia. I just think records never sounded better than in the late '60s and early '70s."

One listen to *Let Love Rule* confirms Kravitz's sympathies. Besides echoing the later Beatles, *Innervisions*-era Stevie Wonder et al., tracks like "I Build This Garden for Us" and the CD-only "Flower Child" reveal a trippy optimism sure to tickle folks yearning for those wide-eyed days of yore.

Though *Let Love Rule* is the 24-year-old's solo debut, he's no newcomer. As a teenager Kravitz was first alto for three years with the California Boys Choir, singin' the classics with

such longhair luminaries as Zubin Mehta and Michael Tilson Thomas. A change of voice ended his tenure with the group (shades of Menudo!), prompting a new direction.

After high school Kravitz concentrated on honing his chops—he plays most of the instruments on his album—and dodging stereotypes. "I must have turned down seven record deals," he sighs, "because they always wanted me to play a particular style. I've been told my music isn't black enough, but I'm doing what comes naturally, not trying to be black or white. This whole racial thing in rock is disgusting. Thank God for people like Prince and Living Colour." Kravitz maintained his independence by cutting the album first, then pursuing a label contract.

He's unfazed by the possibility of stardom, having learned from those near and dear: mom Roxie Roker (one of the stars of "The Jeffersons") and wife Lisa Bonet ("The Cosby Show"). Instead, mild-mannered

Lenny Kravitz frets about the creative side, explaining, "I wanna find out why guys get bad. Is it too much money? Too much ego? If Elton John and Stevie Wonder were here, they'd probably say, 'You'll see, motherfucker. You don't know.' Maybe I'm being totally naive, but I want to keep my perspective."

Hence, this pledge: "When I start to suck, I'll go away."

—Jon Young

10 Compact Discs

We'd Like to See...but Never Will

- Autosalvage (RCA)
- Tim Buckley, Lorca (Elektra)
- Hamilton Camp, Welcome to Hamilton Camp (Warner Bros.)
- Circus Maximus (Vanguard)
- The Fugs, It Crawled into
- My Hand, Honest (Reprise)
- Kaleidoscope, A Beacon from Mars (Epic)
- NRBQ (Columbia)
- Pearls Before Swine, One Nation Underground (ESP-Disk)
- MC5, Back in the U.S.A. (Atlantic)
- Gil Scott-Heron, Winter in America (Strata-East)



MAXI PRIEST

Return of the native

MAXI PRIEST, the 28-year-old reggae singer from Southeast London, wants to take reggae "to a point where it hasn't reached yet—I want to take it further than Bob [Marley] did." Already well-known in Europe, Priest has his eye on the top of the U.S. pop charts, which his reggae version of Cat Stevens' "Wild World" cracked earlier this year. "We have no Michael Jackson in reggae," he says in a mixture of cockney and patois. "If I aim for the top, even if I fall short I'm okay."

If Virgin Records has its way, Maxi Priest won't fall short. The label whose

promotion machinery broke Ziggy Marley in the U.S. is gearing up to do the same with Maxi Priest when his new album is released early in 1990. The follow-up to *Maxi Priest* is being recorded in London and Jamaica with tracks produced by Sly Dunbar and Handel Tucker, among others, and contains a mixture of "ballads, soul, and roots, rock, reggae." "Recording in Jamaica has a warm feel to it," says Maxi, who was 25 before he set foot in his parents' homeland: "I wanted to be somebody before I came here."

Jamaican audiences currently devoted to "dancehall," the D.J. or rap form of reggae, didn't warm easily to Maxi's lover's-rock style. But he is gradually winning them over. Ironically, he began as a D.J. with London's Saxon Sound System (he also built the sound boxes), but he says his music has evolved since then. "I still love the dancehall sound,

though," he adds with a diplomatic smile.

Despite his name, Rasta faith and waist-length dreadlocks, he is "not a preacher" nor "a political person." What's left are sweet melodies, soft

for Maxi Priest to follow, given that the late Jacob Miller, one of reggae's great pioneers, was his uncle. But, he insists, "I don't only want to be known as a reggae singer. I have a talent and I'm about to use it." If anyone can bridge



RAGING SLAB

Giving some skin

IT READS like a recipe from K-Tel Hell. "Lynyrd Skynyrd meets Metallica," as one admirer put it. Wide-brim Stetsons and trucker T-shirts. Enough buckskin, hand-tooled leather and Indian feathered/conch-shelled vests to stock a Nashville tourist trap.

Misguided fashion sense, '90s style? Especially for a Critics' Choice band working out of lower Manhattan? Raging Slab doesn't think so—though as frontman Greg Strzempka admits, "If I had a penny from everyone who said it won't work, that I should shave the moustache . . . get

lyrics and music that doesn't threaten the status quo.

Reggae music was a natural course

the ocean between the land of Maxi's birth and the land of his heritage, he will. —Maureen Sheridan

the big hair going . . . a little makeup . . ."

With Strzempka's diesel-powered bar-br.-.vl vocals and Elyse Steinman's ferocious slide guitar, Raging Slab (it's trucker jargon for an empty highway) is no retro-lobotomized boogie act. The band's self-titled RCA debut sounds like Ry Cooder being rear-ended by a runaway tractor trailer. And it's spiked lyrically with enough Dexedrine double-endres to do Iggy or Beefheart proud.

Still, that Manhattan address tends to confuse. The five arrived at a club down South recently to find themselves dubbed "New York City Hard Core!" and the place, according to Strzempka, "full of 14-year-old skinheads with skateboards. Nobody left, though, and they were real

funny afterwards—like, 'Wow! Cool! You sellin' T-shirts?'"

Then there's the A&R guy, rabidly vegetarian, who refused to sign the band unless they ditched the animal-skin finery. "It was, 'That's sort of half the point,'" Strzempka says drily, though Steinman admits even RCA initially cringed at the monster truck in the "Don't Dog Me" video. "Even our manager said, 'Please don't,'" she says. "But we *love* monster trucks. And now everybody loves the video."

And the band roars on. As Strzempka admits, "People have said, 'This RCA thing's a little tame for you guys, isn't it?'" He suggests there's no substitute for Raging Slab live: "Standing still for an album cover photo is definitely *not* what we do." —Dan Hedges

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NOISEMAKERS

The Red Hot Chili Peppers Eat It Raw

*Grooving on
the "mother's milk"
of sex and funk*

BY

Roy Trakin

ONE THING George Clinton told me about playing funk I'll never forget is, you have to take it all the way home," says Flea. Sitting in the middle of a fashionable Melrose Avenue Italian bistro, the Red Hot Chili Pepper bassist and co-founder of the group is

doing his share by wearing a beany with a propellor attached on top.

"You don't give it up half-assed," chimes in his buddy, lead singer and fellow original member Anthony Kiedis, who's attracting some attention via a particularly colorful tattoo on his shoulder. "Funk is hard-core music which deals with hard-core emotions. War and peace. Love and hate . . ."

He might have added life and death, because that's what the Chili Peppers confront on their fourth and apparently most successful LP, *Mother's Milk* (not including 1988's "best of" EP, *Abbey Road*). It took the heroin OD of long-time guitarist Hillel Slovak and the exit of drummer Jack Irons—and the addition of John Frusciante and Chad Smith to replace them—for Flea and Anthony to grab the reins of the Chili Peppers' cult following and steer it toward the promised land of commercial success.

"The death of Hillel changed our entire attitude," explains Anthony, the band's spokesman. "Losing your best friend at the age of 26 is a mind- and soul-blower. But

had to bear down, change our lifestyles and look at what was important to us—things like friendship, love, making great music and not getting sidetracked by the more negative influences in life. We tried to use our loss as a bolstering, positive influence—if nothing else, to prove to the world what we were doing was worthy and legitimate. Hillel may be dead; we're not."

The group underscored that resolve with the first single from the new album, the AOR-ready anthem called "Knock Me Down." It's a cautionary saga that warns, "If you see me getting high . . . knock me down."

"Oddly, I began writing that song before Hillel died," Anthony reveals. "I hadn't really thought about completing it until after he passed away. It's about recognizing we're all human beings and the best we can ever be is just that—human. Nobody is any better or worse than anybody else. And you're never above a problem . . . including the deadly disease of addiction. One should be willing to accept the helping hand of your close friends instead of trying to do everything yourself. You should never think you're so cool or in control you can take care of problems that are beyond being solved by an individual . . ."

Anthony insists he feels not guilty about being unable to prevent what happened, only "ultimate sadness."

"In hindsight, I wished I could have helped him, but it's ridiculous to dwell on that," he says. "You can't blame yourself."

Instead, Anthony and Flea picked a pair of brand-new Chili Peppers and tried to turn their tragedy into triumph. After three albums and an EP that failed to dent the charts, the band was anxious to raise the stakes, insisting there was no pressure to do so from management or their label, EMI.

"We have a desire to communicate our music to a much larger amount of people than we have in the past," agrees Flea, propellor blades turning on his hat. "I think we captured more energy than we ever have on record before. Considering everything that happened, the fact we stayed together was a big bonding factor."

"Our record company never attempted to



Left to right: Chad Smith,
Flea, John Frusciante,
Anthony Kiedis

there was definitely an inspiration which came from Hillel dying which helped sharpen the focus of the band. Flea and I were left with each other, and we decided, 'Here's something we started a long time ago that we haven't finished.' We both realized we

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World Radio History

ask us to do anything other than what we do," claims Anthony. "Probably more out of fear than anything else. I think it was that lack of pressure that helped us because we did our thing without changing for the sake of industry or radio or anything. The only pressure came from ourselves."

The contributions of new guitarist Frusciante and drummer Smith were more than incidental. Frusciante was a Chatsworth, California valley guy who'd followed the Red Hot Chili Peppers as an avid fan before joining the group, the same day he quit

Thelonus Monster.

"It was like an injection of fresh monkey blood into the temple," notes Anthony, digging into an appetizer of fresh mozzarella cheese. John adds, "I already felt like I was a member of this band spiritually before I ever met them. They were an extension of my attitude toward the world and music, and my philosophy of how I want to live my life."

As for Detroit native Smith, he had no idea what the Chili Peppers were about before he auditioned. "We just explained we were a hard-core, bone-crunching, mayhem-in-

ducing, psychedelic sexfunk band from heaven," Anthony laughs. "And could he produce that type of drumming?"

In its first few weeks of release, *Mother's Milk* has sold almost 200,000 copies, more than any other previous Chili Peppers album. "This record is more radio-acceptable," agrees Anthony. "Although it wasn't our intention to change in that direction. We weren't trying to fit in. It was just a natural expression of how we felt. This was a direct link from our hearts, souls and genitals to guitars and vocal cords."

Speaking of body parts, the Chili Peppers have attained a degree of infamy by playing live gigs wearing nothing but sweat socks, strategically placed and not on their feet. The lads donned hose to recreate the Beatles' famed album cover for their own *Abbey Road* EP.

"We're advocates of freedom in music and, to us, being naked when you play expresses the ultimate act of freedom," Anthony declares. "When we feel like getting naked, we will. When we don't, we won't. If you ask us to, we probably won't. But if you beg us not to, we'll be sure to. It's a shame we're more recognized for the socks than our music because our music has a lot more to say."

"Besides, the sock is out, hors d'oeuvres are in," exclaims Flea.

"We're wrapping ourselves in Polish kielbasa," laughs Anthony. "Let's face it, sex is a very big part of funk music. It's one of the more predominant emotions we deal with. It's the whole feeling you get in your crotch when you hear this kind of music . . ."

Los Angeles is not like New York. Blacks and whites don't mingle all [cont'd on page 127]

He was weaned on American blues. His guitar blazed the trail for some of British rock's finest hours. No guitarist since has escaped the enormous shadow of his influence.

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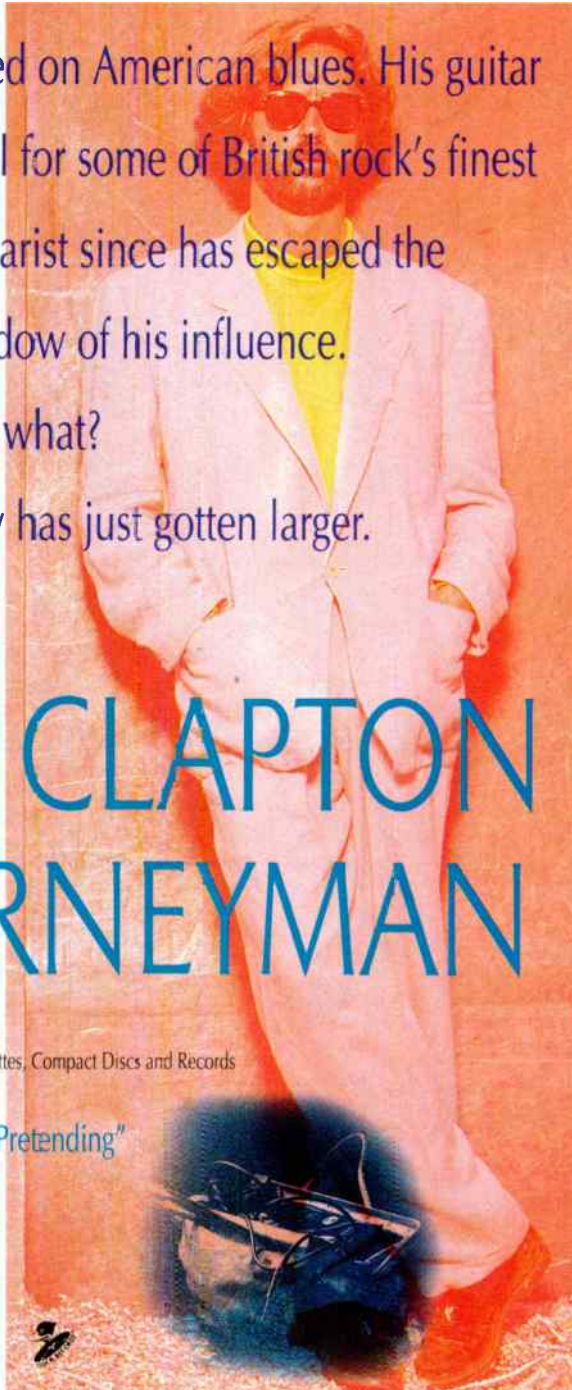
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PICK OF THE PEPPERS

BASSIST FLEA plays a Spector bass, though he's currently breaking in a Guild Pilot, with GHS Boomer strings. Guitarist JOHN FRUSCIANTE favors a 1968 Fender Stratocaster "for most things," and has recently added a black Les Paul with three gold pickups to his arsenal. "I'm not interested in using any effects pedals," says the stone Hendrix fan, "though I'm sure I would be if I got involved with them for any length of time." Instead, he favors "cheap-shit" stuff like "this big old ugly Boss chorus pedal." He uses D'Addario strings on his axes. Percussionist CHAD SMITH plays a Pearl drum kit and endorses Sabian cymbals "because they don't break."

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World Radio History

NOBODY IS AIMING for complete originality anymore,” says Tim Berne. “From my upbringing I can allude to soul music or bebop almost by osmosis. But somehow I decided that kind of playing didn’t really interest me. There are a million ways to structure music without putting changes down, and if it sounds good,” he declares,

“there’s nothing wrong with using anything. In the most interesting music, you don’t hear the forms. It’s all disguised, it’s just music. And I’m able to get to that.”

That’s not a boast, just a deadpan assessment. Saxophonist Tim Berne’s fourth album as a leader, *Fractured Fairy Tales*, is neither a jazz album nor a collection of experimental compositions. Its tunes are more like suites, densely composed, with little repetition and a parapsychologist’s notion of thematic continuity. It is panoramic, eventful—anything but safe.

Berne, 34, came to music late—he started playing in the mid-’70s after training to be an elementary school teacher. His musical ideas still seem to bound around him with the velocity of youthful discovery. Sitting in his musician-minimal Brooklyn row house (decor details: an upright piano cluttered with scores, a Steve Byram collage that was used on the cover of his last album, *Sanctified Dreams*), he gets excited just considering musical possibilities, like a mad scientist whose latest experiment has yielded unforeseen effects. The lanky saxophonist comes off as detail-oriented without seeming nerdy; the address book on his table, for instance, open to “R,” is filled not with phone numbers but lists of things to try in the studio. “I just maim these books,” he grins. “I’m constantly writing stuff down.”

There’s a lot to write. Berne’s own collages are meticulously constructed, but their essence, he feels, is best left unanalyzed. “I’m asking guys to play written music like

they’re improvising and vice-versa. It’s got to flow seamlessly. Just when you start to get comfortable with something, I like to change it. I want to hear the payoff, but then as soon as you hear it”—he snaps his fingers—“it’s gone. The transitions happen before you expect them. There are always at least two things going on at the same time, so there arc moments of tension; when it clears, it’s obvious where we’re at.”

Improvised sections are vital to Berne’s



Tim Berne Gets Fractured

Jazz saxophonist “Bernes” the rules but saves the spirit

BY

Tom Moon

concept, and on *Fractured Fairy Tales* every player has a voice: Trumpeter and longtime Berne collaborator Herb Robertson supplies a brass history that surveys Louis Armstrong, Cat Anderson and Lester Bowie, among others. Violinist Mark Feldman adds virtuosic runs, while cellist Hank Roberts, who also sings, reinforces Feldman with grinding-teeth long tones. Bassist Mark Dresser plays the padding, not-always-linear bass lines, with spontaneous asides. Drummer Joey Baron, whose kit includes triggered electronic drums and a cheap portable keyboard, pitches in not only roiling and polyrhythmic syncopations, but KrazyKat chords that help push along the tempo.

The writing goes far on personality, but it’s

◆ Solos are the last consideration. ◆

the solos that give these “fairy tales” their kindness, humor, menace. Berne says his decisions about which takes to use are based *not* on the feel of the solos, but on the execution of the ensemble parts. “Solos are the last consideration. These things are so heavily composed, they’re almost fail-proof. The environment behind you is so strong, in terms of what your solo is about, that you can just play a note—with your own sound and feeling—and it’ll work. It’s hard to blow it.”

The solos are in fact the easiest parts of Berne’s music to play. *Fractured Fairy Tales*,

recorded in two days with little editing or overdubbing, required the musicians to constantly shift gears—from one time signature to another, from improvised expression to exacting parts, from whimsical foreground to invisible background—and with little room to fudge. But even in the wildest moments of collective improvisational fury, there is usually some governing compositional idea, a context that demands the concentration of a monk at meditation.

Like Ellington and Mingus, Berne writes for specific players in his ensemble, con-

stantly challenging their skills as storytellers and signifiers. Like Basie, he creates tension by pitting one section against another in fits of call-and-response dueling—strings vs. horns vs. rhythm. Like his friend and sometime collaborator John Zorn, Berne is not wedded to the standard 32-bar song form, or one type of phraseology. Like the Art Ensemble of Chicago, he wants to get the sound of an endlessly combusting collective.

Berne admits to loving “really dense shit,” but until recently he couldn’t find “a way to get it clean. I found out it totally depended on what I would say in the studio. I remember in ‘Hong Kong Sad Song’ there’s this one place where the band is playing a warped version of funk, and it wasn’t making it. I told Mark Dresser to think of himself as a bridge between the strings and the drums; suddenly we had this three-level effect that I wanted instead of just mud.” He revises constantly: Most of *Fractured Fairy Tales* is the result of two European tours last year (one with Miniature, the trio of Berne, Roberts and Baron, and one with his own group) followed by two months of re-thinking.

The tour helped him loosen up. “Every night, something really ‘out’ would happen, and it carried over into the music. One night Herb would be juggling his mutes onstage, or reading aloud from a book. It wasn’t meant to be silly, it was inspired. Essentially, it was a mirror of how we are off the stand—we’d spend most of the time on the train in Europe trying to make each other laugh. And slowly we found ways to bring that into the music, actually laughing and enjoying ourselves and singing in front of the audience. All of that turned up on this record, but not in a contrived way. The other records were more straight music; this one has a little theater to it.”

Those tours, and a recent series of shows with Zorn’s *Spy Vs. Spy* project, gave Berne something else to think about: fearlessness, a strange concept for a composer who likes to control his environment. When he and Zorn began working on an Ornette Coleman project five years ago, it sounded much like the classic Coleman ’60s quartet. Now it’s evolved into the hardcore mash heard on this year’s *Spy Vs. Spy* LP. Berne defends the approach—to do Coleman any other way at this point would be “ridiculous.”

“I know people who are into jazz hate that fucking band,” he admits. “They think John can’t play the saxophone, they think I can’t play. But it’s exactly the group sound Zorn is



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looking for. If we shocked a lot of people, fine. That's probably the ultimate tribute to Ornette. John is like that. He's not afraid to try things out, to go up and totally fail. He's made me do things I wouldn't have done, just to see what was happening."

Berne owes much of his own growth to the alto saxophonist Julius Hemphill. He was drawn to him because "he made a strong connection to what I had been listening to growing up. Here was one person with all this funk in his music, and at the same time was associated with the avant-garde scene."

Hemphill brought Berne into the world of the improvising artist—one who plays, composes, leads a group and still serves other groups as a sideman. To create playing opportunities for himself, Berne put a band together. It was, he remembers, less than successful: "I just did it so I could play. I would write these ridiculous tunes, with horrendous notation, and gradually—it's a good thing those people had patience—I learned to do it better."


After five years, Berne was inspired by Hemphill to record. He started his own label,


Empire Productions, and got involved with the independent-label jazz scene. After sending around his four titles—one per year starting in 1979—he landed a two-album contract with Soul Note, releasing two small-group records that sound like prototypes of his current approach.

During this time, Berne was working at Tower Records. Through a friend who worked in Columbia Records' advertising department, he landed a major-label deal. It isn't a fond memory. His first record for CBS, *Fulton Street Maul*, attracted critical raves despite little promotion. His next, *Sanctified Dreams*, was equally hailed and got the same treatment. Released in January 1988, it didn't receive any advertising attention until August. Berne points to an interview he read with Columbia's jazz VP George Butler as an indication of his relationship with the label: "He said some bullshit about having something to do with bringing us along. Not only had he never met me [Berne wasn't signed through the jazz department], I had already been dropped by that time."

Now Berne records for JMT, where his brand of post-bebop improvisation/composition is more welcome. But Berne says he's still misunderstood: He wants to play as a sideman, but doesn't get the calls because people think of him as a leader. He wants to explore more traditional forms, but is perceived as a "free" player.

It bothers him. "I'm not that interested in free improvising necessarily. I find it more interesting to control the environment. Free playing doesn't utilize talents well—most of us go to our clichés in a free situation. I'd rather have the musicians be slightly uncomfortable, having to deal with more abstract things, like anger and sadness and frustration.

"I don't sit around thinking about Mingus or this record or that record," Berne says. "I think in terms of drama. These are really little novels." 




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Allen Toussaint

*"I'm the guy
that wrote
the songs."*

Ted Drozdowski

IN NEW ORLEANS' Gentilly section, just across Clematis Avenue from a homestyle restaurant where boiled crawfish is served on newspaper for 99 cents a pound, sits Sea-Saint Studios. It looks as nondescript as a sheet metal shop, all wood and cinderblocks. But it's the house that songs built: "Mother-In-Law," "Working in a Coal Mine," "Ya Ya," "Fortune Teller," "Holy Cow," "Yes We Can Can," "Southern Nights." And the gold Rolls-Royce out front belongs to the man who wrote them, Allen Toussaint.

For 30 years Toussaint has been the linchpin of Crescent City pop. He's penned hit upon hit for performers like Ernie K-Doe, Lee Dorsey, Irma Thomas, Benny Spellman, and seen them become bigger hits when they were covered by white artists like the Rolling Stones, Robert Palmer—even Glen Campbell. "I've never thought much about who's recorded my songs," Toussaint muses. "I see a name on a statement sometimes and I think, 'I'm gonna check that out.' I get busy, and it's 10 years later."

Toussaint started writing songs nearly the same day he began hammering on his big sister's piano. "I thought that all pianists could play all kinds of music, and that all musicians wrote their own songs, so it seemed normal to me," he recalls. In 1955 he

(RCA), in one sticky Southern night. It delivered his first hit, 1958's "Java," with Alvin "Rod" Tyler on sax.

In 1960 he began directing sessions for Minit Records at Cosimo Matassa's J&M Studios, a funky, grassroots joint that midwifed some of the best rock ever recorded. To date he's produced enough singles to fill a shopping bag and more than 30 albums, including the Meters' *Fire on the Bayou*, Dr. John's *In the Right Place* and Labelle's *Nightbirds*. And he still plays on other artists' sessions when he's in the mood (check the liner notes to Elvis Costello's *Spike*).

Lately Toussaint's been having a ball. "It's an exciting time for me," he explains as he navigates the gold-record-lined path to his Sea-Saint office—past former New Orleans mayor Moon Landrieu's proclamation declaring Allen Toussaint Day, past his '86-'87 Outer Critics' Circle Award for the off-Broadway musical *Stagger Lee*. "It's writing season," he continues. "Sometimes you write songs just because you know how, but right now they're coming through total inspiration. I wake up in a hurry to get to my piano."

It's also recording season, and when Toussaint finishes his first album of original music since 1978's *Motion*, he'll find a label and try to tour. "It's feeling just like I remember it feeling years ago, in the days at Cosimo's," Toussaint says as he sits at his Yamaha

baby grand. "But even better, because as a writer you grow, just like you grow in everything else."

Toussaint grew up in one of New Orleans' poorer sections, where he turned his parents' shotgun house into a little Tin Pan Alley. "I occupied the first two rooms of my parents' home," he recounts, "and all the singers would come to spend the day there: Aaron Neville, Ernie K-Doe, Benny Spellman, Irma Thomas, Willie Harper. We would socialize and sing songs—things by the Harmonizing Four, Irma would sing something by Hank Ballard. Then I'd get down to writing

a song for Irma. I'd sing a bit of it and teach it to her; she'd go into the next room to practice by herself. Then I'd write one for



joined Shirley and Lee's band, and at age 20 cut his own album, the all-instrumental *The Wild Sounds of New Orleans* by Toussaint

◆ Everything he does gohnb be funky. ◆



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someone else, maybe Aaron, and we'd sing behind him as he learned the song. Then Irma might come back out, and we'd all sing behind her. Then I'd write one for someone else. That's how we lived.

"When it was time to go into the studio, all the guys who'd be singing background were right there. We'd pile into the car, sing the song on the way down, get to the studio and have a fine time. And sometimes we'd go right back to the house afterwards to continue.

"In two days I wrote 'Mother-In-Law,' 'A

Certain Girl,' 'Wanted 10,000 Reward' and 'Hello My Lover,'" Toussaint recalls. "Three of them in one day. You know, K-Doe was responsible for 'Mother-In-Law' living. Many times if an artist didn't sing a song I'd written very well right away, I'd throw it out. At first 'Mother-In-Law' didn't happen right. He wasn't singing it on a certain melodic structure I had. I thought, 'Why bother with this? I can write another.' But Ernie said, 'No man, let's try it again.' And I'm glad we did, because many songs were just left in the trash can—with no regrets.

"That period was so much fun, and everyone was so young and uninvolved with the worries adulthood brings," Toussaint says, pausing to sip wistfully at a Barq's root beer. "If Cosimo hadn't closed his studio I don't know if we would have bothered to build one. Things were done quicker then. Everything was much looser. When it came time for the saxophonist to take his solo, the trumpet player would jump up with a handkerchief in his hand and run around the studio. It was just... *fun!*"

"People expect certain basic quality elements in the music nowadays," he continues. "Not that it's ever been fashionable to be out of tune or off-time. It's just that it's so rigid now. Which I don't mind—the best music has always been very well in tune and has tried to keep the best tempos possible. But with 24-track machines came the ability to correct even little bitty mistakes. When it was two-track we didn't bother with that. And since everything does cost, I must admit that it has cost a little bit of the fun."

Toussaint interrupted his string of Minit hits in 1963 for a hitch with the Army. After he doffed his uniform in '65, he was back on the charts again, most notably with Lee Dorsey. "Ride Your Pony," "Holy Cow," "Working in a Coal Mine" and his soul manifesto "Everything I Do Gohn Be Funky" all came within four years.

If Toussaint is the Saint of Sea-Saint Studios, then Marshall Sehorn is the Sea. Toussaint formed a still-firm partnership with the burly white New Orleans record producer and promoter in the late '60s, which in turn sparked Sansu Enterprises, the parent company for Marsaint Publishing and the Sansu, Amy and Deesu labels. In the fall of 1972 they opened their then-state-of-the-art studio on Clematis, which came with one of the finest house bands in American pop history: keyboardist Art Neville, guitarist Leo Nocentelli, drummer Joseph "Ziggy" Modeliste and bassist George Porter, collectively called the Meters.

The Meters had started in the mid-'60s backing Fats Domino. By the time Sea-Saint opened, Toussaint had used the quartet with Dorsey, Aaron Neville, Betty Harris and Irma Thomas, and with Sehorn had produced the Meters' hit instrumentals "Cissy Strut" and "Sophisticated Cissy" as well as their first four albums.

Through the mid-'70s the Meters played on Sea-Saint sessions for Dr. John, Robert Palmer and other clients, including the

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group Labelle, whose 1974 classic fusion of funk and disco, *Nightbirds*—produced and arranged by Toussaint—yielded the smash “Lady Marmalade.”

“In the old days we were having so much fun in my parents’ front room that what we had done didn’t dawn on me for many, many years,” Toussaint relates. “But I cherished the success of ‘Lady Marmalade,’ even though I didn’t write that song. Patti LaBelle was so grand that if we hadn’t had a hit I would have stuck my head in a hole in the ground. And the Meters did such a fine job. It’s Art Neville. Every time he puts a band together it’s magic. It has to do with his playing. Art is very, very hip. And he’s a lover of the pentatonic, like myself.”

Toussaint’s less enthusiastic about his own ’70s solo work. He was always uncomfortable with recording himself. After a 12-year hiatus he was persuaded to make his second LP, *Toussaint*, for Tiffany Records in 1970. He cut three more albums for Warner Bros., but has stopped touring and recording his own material since 1978. He’s performed occasionally in New Orleans, where he’s a staple of the annual Jazz & Heritage Festival, and he released a record of Mardi Gras standards on a local label last year.

But at this year’s Jazzfest, as it’s called thereabouts, Toussaint debuted new songs, a new 12-piece big band and what seemed to be a new attitude as he joyfully danced to the front of the main stage and introduced himself as “Allen Toussaint, the songwriter from New Orleans.” The tunes, like the pointed “Who’s Minding the Store?” and the perky love song “Now You See Her, Now You Don’t,” have the punch and spirit that Toussaint’s solo albums like *Motion* and *Southern Nights* seemed to miss. And talk about hooks . . .

“Yes, I’m finding performing fun now,” Toussaint admits, a smile breaking the smooth planes of his face. “It was tragic at one point. I’d felt that my stuff was done in the studio to prepare the way for other folk to do it live. I’d agree to a date, and hope that day took a very long time to come. I didn’t feel I had the vocal expression that I would expect from a performer, or the stage presence. I’d thought I might not be suitable for an audience.

“Now I’d like to do even more performing,” he says. “I’ve got a different focus when I’m onstage. I let people know that I’m not one of the stars. I’m the guy that wrote the songs, that’s all, and here I am.”

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TOUSSAINT'S TOP 5

"Working in a Coal Mine"—Sometimes with Lee Dorsey I had a formula. If you notice, Willie Harper and myself sing the backup of, say, [sings] "Working in a coal mine, goin' down, down, down . . .," and then we hand it over to Lee for [sings] "Five o'clock in the mornin'." Then we take over again. In "Get Out of My Life Woman," Willie and I go, [sings] "Get out of my life woman," and Lee goes, [sings] "You don't love me no

more," and then we come back in again. So it's sort of call-and-response. For a while I used that with Lee Dorsey every time.

That guitar lick was written out. During those days many times I'd write the guitar and drum parts out. Especially the drums—and the bass lines all the time. The drum pattern, you'll notice, is "boom-chick, boom-chick, boom-chick boom-boom-ching-ching." I went through a few drummers before I got that.


"Get Out of My Life Woman"—That was

Walter Peyton on bass, who was a wonderful reader and bassist. There were other guys who you could give chord changes, and you'd like it, but when it came down to needing every note, it was Walter on electric bass. On upright during the "Mother-In-Law" days it was Chuck Badie, all the time, and Nat Perrilliat on tenor—he was ultra-important. Those were grand times.

"Mother-In-Law"—All comedians told mother-in-law jokes, so I had an automatic subject there—even though I didn't have a mother-in-law. The melody line came first. It was sung by the Harmonizing Four years before: [sings] "Mary don't you weep." I had it going between the I and the VI. That really seemed like the times to me, that kind of change. Many things went like that, if not exactly from I to minor VI. It was a popular song form.

"A Certain Girl"—Oh yes, Ernie K-Doe again. We felt very good about that song when we recorded it. Ernie sang, "One day I'll wake up and say," and I'd written, "One day I'll walk up and say." Now I like "wake up" better than "walk up." That was written especially for Ernie to sing, after "Mother-In-Law" had established him. Nat Perrilliat played saxophone. What Fathead Newman was to Ray Charles, Nat Perrilliat was to me. When he played saxophone, it was beautiful. "Fortune Teller"—Benny Spellman sang backup on "Mother-In-Law." And he said, "Hey man, since that record's selling so good, why don't you write me one of my own?" I put him off, because as far as I was concerned, I was through with anything that sounded like "Mother-In-Law." But he kept encouraging me, so I wrote him one: "Lipstick Traces."

Then I needed a B-side, 'cause we were cutting singles all the time, so I wrote "Fortune Teller." It was inspired by the way Benny moved onstage. He would spread his arms out and move his head on his shoulders like an Egyptian. The music sounded sort of like that. The first line, "I went to a fortune teller," came to me. Once you've got your first line, you can finish a song.

I was writing songs then that took the whole song to tell their story. I'd write songs without a deliberate hook, just sung from beginning to end, and I hoped people would find them interesting enough to listen. That's a lot to ask. Now I think it's a mistake. From time to time these songs work, like "Ode to Billie Joe." But I prefer songs that don't demand your undivided attention. 

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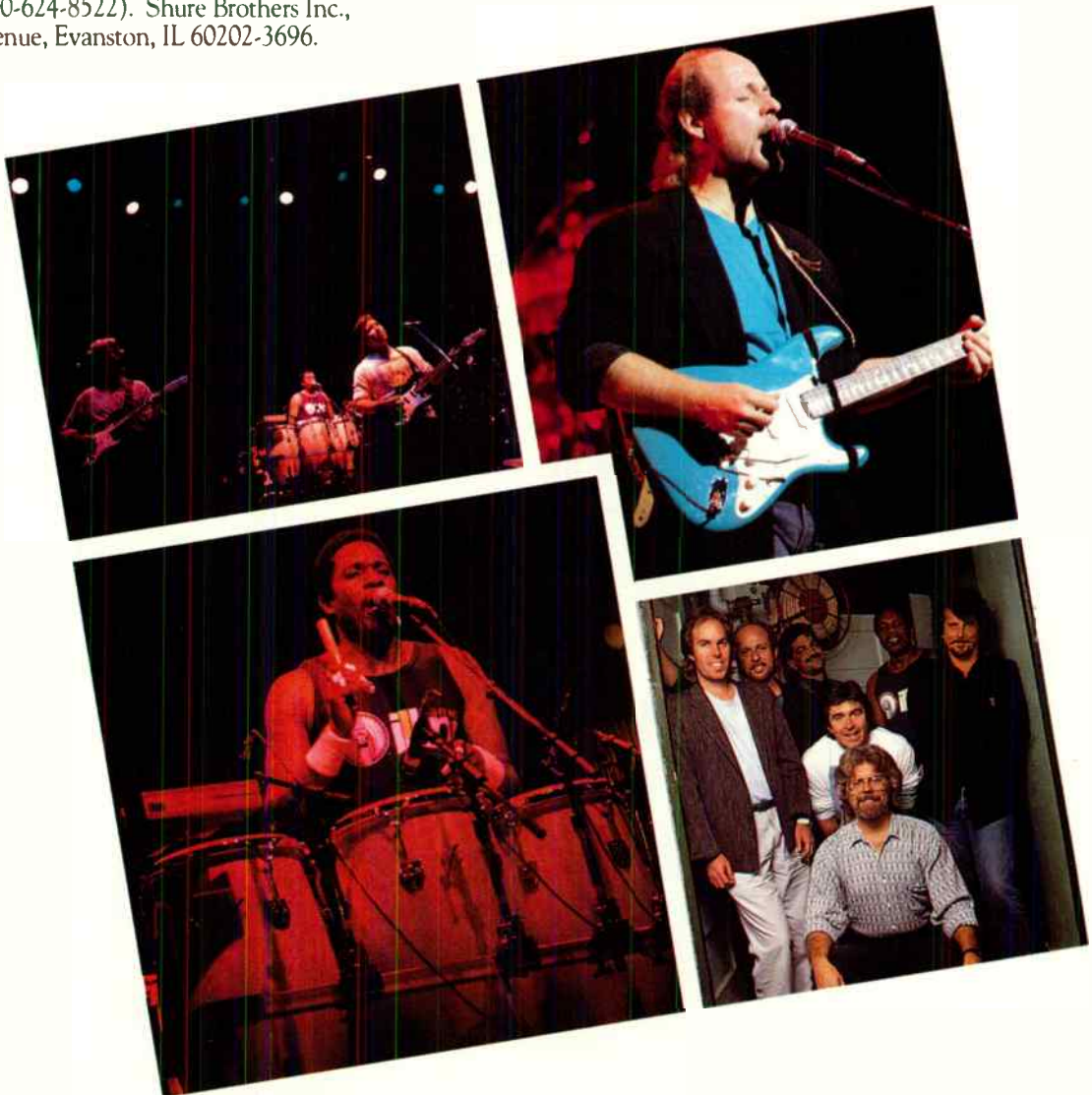
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I PULL UP INTO THIS FLAT, DUSTY PARKING LOT OUT AT THE END OF AN industrial park, California style: nice gardens, rent-a-cops everywhere to keep errant youth from parking in the wrong place, low buildings cranking out bomb parts or something. It's the Shoreline Amphitheater, just south of Palo Alto, heart of Dead country.

"Hey man, want some sheet of acid, mushrooms, ecstasy?" asks a woman as I pull up next to a Volkswagen bus. Another guy floats by, selling more acid. On the windblown plain blonde girls drift, their India-print dresses blowing . . . hmm, I have an extra ticket, maybe I can trade it for a . . . Jesus, what am I thinking? Walking into the amphitheater,

**THE GRATEFUL DEAD ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU AND ME
BY PETER WATROUS**

Photograph: Susana Millman



stalls of stuff from third-world countries, shorts, tie-dyed T-shirts, fractal decals, decals of skeletons and more testify to the hippie capitalist movement. On the way in, a security guard yells, "No alcohol or drugs, now, Jerry wants you to be cool."

It's Dead time, and the band, which is more popular now than any time in its nearly 25-year history, ambles out and does what it does, rambling through a set of tunes, mostly old, some off the new album, *Built to Last*. The hits are there, but during the first set the songs don't really catch on. The second set, much beloved by fans, gets better: The band does an intense version of "The Other One" along with a spread-out "Scarlet Begonias," one of their finest songs. All this bleeds into a fumbling improvisational section that segues into another tune. The veterans in the audience say it's the classic average set, but the power of the band seems to be there, and they have that intimate sense of interaction that groups have after years of playing together. Garcia's chilly guitar slices through the clean tones of Phil Lesh's bass while the drummers wham away in the background. Both Garcia and Weir are fooling around with MIDI hookups; Garcia takes a tenor saxophone solo in the middle of a song, followed by a trumpet solo. Weir's comping turns into shivering washes of sound. The band, rejuvenated by Jerry Garcia's cleaning up his drug problem, a hit record (*In the Dark*) and a steady growth of followers—generates good will, and even a bit of tension. Clumsy and a bit leaden, they're totally white; rhythm isn't their business. But they have a weird sort of integrity. Experimental, they're still intent on carrying on in their own fashion relatively oblivious to the music-industry machine. And they're taking more fans with them now than ever. As easy as it is to dump on them as clod hippies, it's a mistake. The band represents the last flowering of the American Beat movement. They were some of the first people to turn LSD into a world view. Following Ken Kesey (author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) and Neal Cassady (inspiration for Kerouac's *On the Road*), they helped start the 1960s, the last great social conflict and watershed of the twentieth century. By translating the anti-authoritarian impulse of the beat generation—which in turn had taken many of its role models from an imagined black subculture—they transmitted an essential (though minority) world view for the masses. And if the masses did dwindle in the '70s, well, how many bands can claim that they helped in a revolution?

The day after the concert both Garcia and Weir want to talk about that connection. The early, formative experiences of the band inform its workings to this day. And that sense of community, which to outsiders can seem narrow and frat-like, is their world. They live it, believe it; it's a world they constructed for themselves.

"When I fell in with Ken Kesey and Neal Cassady, it seemed like home sweet home to me, to be tossed in with a bunch of crazies," remembers Bob Weir, whose eyes open wide when he talks, like he's experiencing a revelation, or there's a murder going on over your left shoulder and he's too polite to interrupt the conversation. "There was some real serious crazy stuff going on." Like what?

"Jesus, where do you even start? For one thing I had to abandon all my previous conceptions of space and time. It was pretty conclusively proven to me that those old concepts were shams. I thought I was pretty well indoctrinated into the 'anything goes' way of dealing with

"I GOT A LOT FROM PHIL [LESH, RIGHT], WHO HAS SUCH A WIDE RANGE OF THINGS ACCEPTABLE FOR HIM TO LISTEN TO."

life. But I found much more than anything goes with [Kesey's] Pranksters. There was a world of limitless possibilities. It was, God, it's hard to say anything that doesn't sound clichéd. But it was really a whole new reality for this boy. We were dealing with stuff like telepathy on a daily basis.

"It might have been partly because of the LSD or the personal chemistry of everyone involved, and the times. We picked up a lot from those guys. Particularly from Cassady. He was able to drive 50 or 60 miles an hour through downtown rush-hour traffic, he could see around corners

—I don't know how to better describe it. That's useful if you're playing improvisational music; you can build those skills to see around corners, 'cause there are plenty of corners that come up. We gleaned that kind of approach from Cassady. He was one of our teachers, as well as a playmate."

"Cassady was one of those guys that artists could relate to," remembers Garcia, who in contrast to his somber stage demeanor is open. When he starts talking the floodgates come down; he anticipates every question, eyes twinkling with the love of conversation. "He was just using himself as a tool. He was no primitive! He knew what he was doing. And he knew when he was on and when he wasn't. I never saw anybody work as hard or test themselves as thoroughly as he did. So as a model for the band, he was important, because he could take an idea way out there. I was 19, in the army by that time. But I was ready for all of that. I grew up in San Francisco and had gone to art school. All this stuff, the tail end of the beatnik era, was familiar to me."

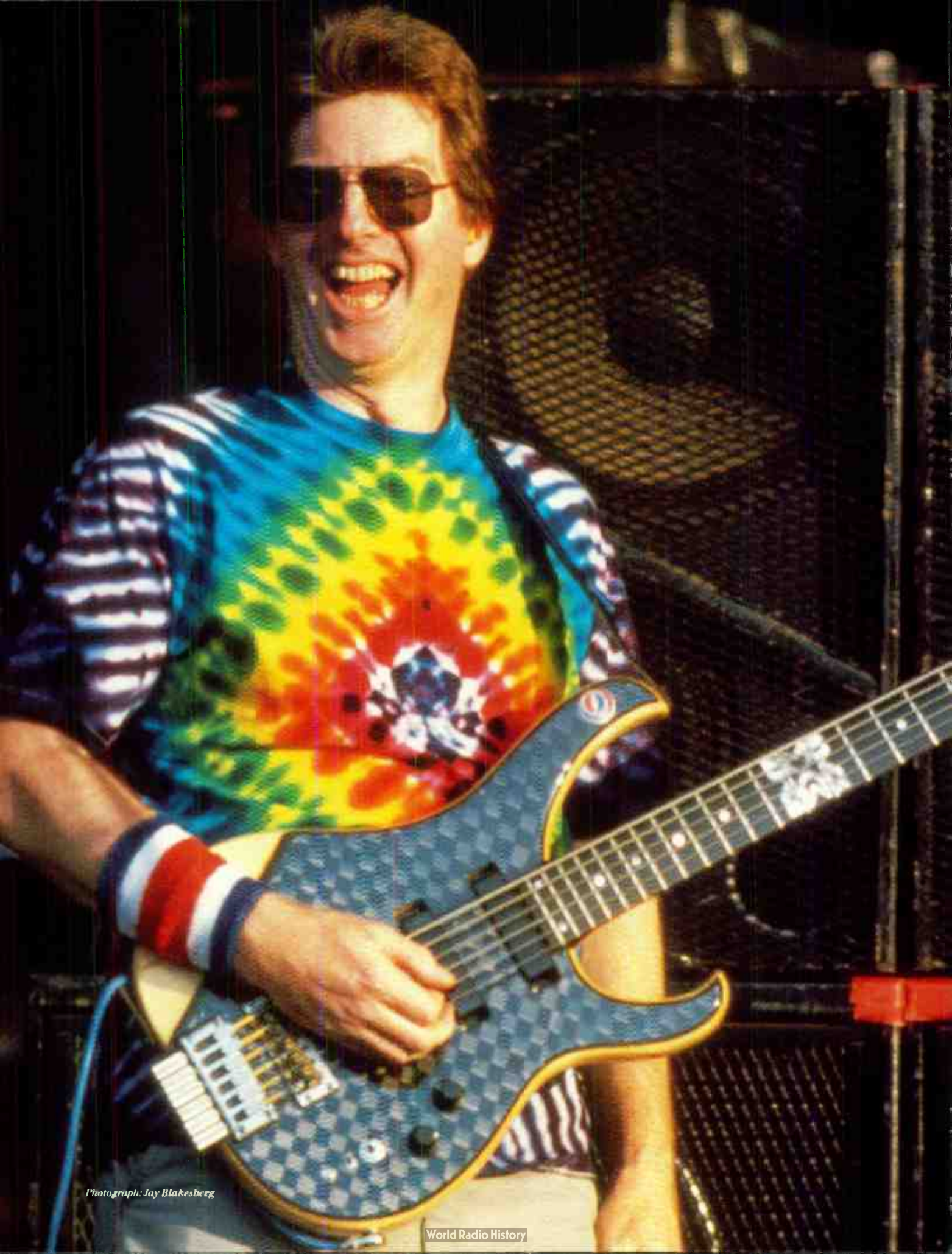
"But the whole scene was real helpful," remembers Weir. "It kept us with a head of steam, the opposition we got from the straights who didn't understand us and didn't care to. The incredulous people, I love to blow their nice, tight, closed little minds—because when they go, they really go *ka-bloey*. We all sort of shared that, we were rebellious by nature, anti-authoritarian. And the resistance we got from society in general just fueled our fires immensely. That was probably more important to us than the LSD. To feel like we were on a frontier—and we were. And then, on top of that, to encounter the resistance we got from society, that was all I really needed to know that we were really on to something."

But things have really changed in the last 20 years, right?

"They've slowed down a bunch," says Weir. "I'll give you the picture. When the Acid Test disbanded, when we weren't living on top of each other, the interactions became much looser. I still carry on with Kesey, but he lives in Oregon. I don't see him that often, I don't talk to him that often. Still, he's in my thoughts and shows up in my dreams once in a while. There isn't the polarization there was back then. American culture is now a culture of pluralism."

Doesn't that somehow subvert . . . ?

"Yeah, I'm getting there. There's room for anything, and now there's room for us. By virtue of our last record's sales, we knew there were over a million people who appreciated what we were up to. This one may do even better, which will indicate we have even wider acceptance. And obviously we're not encountering the resistance we used to. We have more support. That means we're going to have to offer ourselves some of our own resistance. Which can be done. So we'll try and do things that are more adventurous. For instance, on the record there's a song 'Victim or the Crime' that not a lot of fans



Photograph: Jay Blakesberg

like and not a lot of the guys in the band liked at first, either. It ain't 'Sugar Magnolia.' There's this notion that things should be up, and that they shouldn't be frank and uncomfortable. We're trying to fight that. Back then there was a polarization between the straights and the ones that wanted to bust out. And the busting out, everybody looked at it and said, 'My! Wasn't that amazing?' And then everybody took a nap during the '70s. But we're waking up."

Yourself included in that nap?

"Yeah, maybe even me, and all my friends. We went from being radicals of some sort—this isn't in political terms—and became responsible professionals. There was more of an accent on refine-

ment than there was on expanding our concepts of what was to be done with our medium. During the '80s we've refined a lot, to the point we're able, in good conscience, to go into the studio and make a layered album, which was something we never would have considered a while back, because we adhered to the notion that we have to all be playing together to create the gestalt for anything to happen. At this point we've refined ourselves back down to the curious revelation that anything can happen. Anything goes again, including making a studio, layered album."

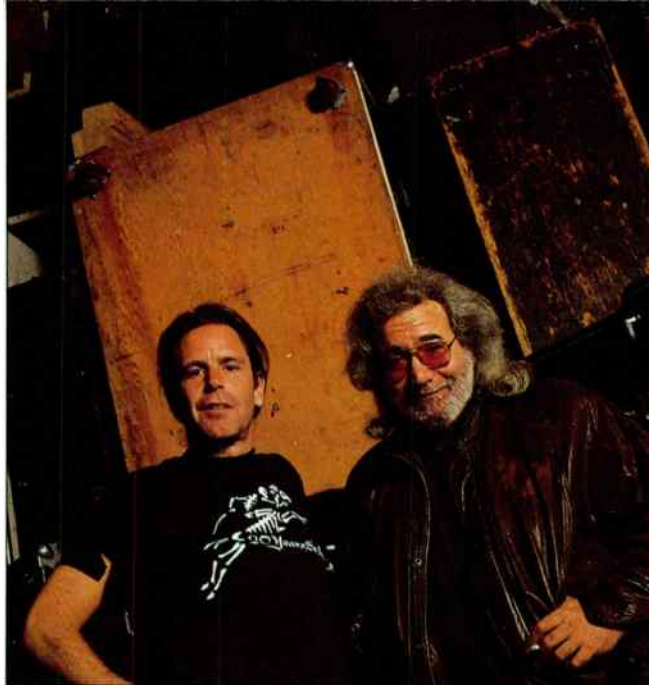
Built to Last isn't a great album. It has a funny spatial feel to it; it seems a little frozen. And the writing isn't great either. Unlike *In the Dark*, the group recorded this track by track, in separate studios, including Bob Weir's personal studio, drummer Mickey Hart's and the Dead's own Front Street studio.

"The last album had about no effect on the making of *Built to Last*," says Weir. "Maybe it had a subtle effect, because for the first time ever we had the feeling that we were getting across, where we could do what we wanted, we didn't have to please anybody but ourselves. We had a bit of confidence about the whole thing."

"Up to a point, the making of this was radically different," says Garcia. "On the last record we made an effort to approximate live recording, but in a more controlled environment. We started out this record that way, thinking that it would work again. Our classic problem is getting a studio type of control but live type of energy, which we've never been able to do very successfully. But this time the live idea didn't work well. It seemed inappropriate for the music. We tried it for a long time, but it just didn't work well; we had several false starts with the project, really. That's the simplest way to say it."

What happened?

"It just didn't seem to be working. We started to work out from the material instead, so we took an approach that was more mechanistic, at least on the surface, but it really has coughed up much more interesting results. Normally with us it takes years for a tune to evolve into something. This accelerated the process. Since we're using the Dolby SR, which is an excellent noise-reduction system, you don't get any second-generation loss when you move tapes around, so we



"The Acid Tests are one of the major ingredients in our myth. Some of that's still going on."

made additional slave reels of stuff and someone could go home and do 30 tracks on something if they wanted to. We had two sets of slave reels, one that went over to Mickey's place and one that went over to Weir's place. But also we could bring one out; say if Brent [Mydland] wanted to work on keyboard parts, rather than do it on the master, we got into the habit of saying, 'I'll just make a slave reel,' and working on it like that."

What has been constant in the Dead's music, through all the different approaches to recording and live playing, is the opposed but compatible guitar styles of Weir and Garcia. "I've never been all that traditional in

my approach to rhythm guitar," Weir says. "As rock 'n' roll guitarists go, I don't use that many bar chords. I just make the voicings depending on what I want to hear and if my fingers will do it. About two out of every three chords I hear can actually be played."

So you didn't study *Mel Bay*?

"No! I can count. I know what a thirteenth is. But it's really all done by ear and necessity. I try not to play licks when I comp. Garcia, for example, doesn't play licks at all, he just plays notes. He's thinking pre-vocally, thinking *music*. And on a good night I'm doing the same."

"It's what I hear," says Garcia. "There's a certain amount of five-string banjo in there. I have a fondness for the individual note in a long run. I like to hear all the notes. That's banjoistic. I like clarity, and I like to have foreground and background bias in terms of rhythmic dynamics. I like to be able to say, 'These notes are being emphasized.' I like to be able to accent. Sometimes in the wrong situations the dynamic difference annihilates what I'm playing. If you don't hear the inside line, the outside line seems kind of weird! It's only the improvement of onstage gear over the years that has made it possible to really articulate some of the detail of playing. That's encouraging, and as long as stuff keeps coming up that makes you play more carefully, then there's a chance that your technique can keep improving. That's only in an effort to make it invisible, really, so that the *intention* is what comes out, the implication of a note."

"I'm a modal player. It's a thing of playing a C major scale but playing it against an F major or G minor chord and all those relationships there are what falls into the realm of harmonic possibility. If the material provides a different set of musical relationships, then I have to make an adjustment. Playing modally isn't the answer to everything, and I use a lot of chromaticism in my playing; there's a whole lot of it in there, so it's not pure by any means. But it's interesting to be thrown into a situation where that sort of thing just doesn't work. 'Victim or the Crime' is one of those tunes that has an angular harmonic relationship that's so weird, you can't blow through it looking for key bases in a traditional sense. They don't exist."

"I've always liked Pat Martino. I like his crispness; I'm attracted to a guy who plays crisp, that thing of 'Here's a guy that's playing exactly



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what he means.' I like Joe Pass, guys who have that level of accuracy, Al Di Meola—you can figure out who I do like. A guy I really like now is Frank Gambale, with Chick Corea. He has a couple of solo albums out, and his playing is ferocious. It's a whole different sound, which he gets from his choice of intervals. His smoothness is unbelievable. I never heard a guitar player play that kind of stuff. That snap, the clarity! I love that stuff."

PROBABLY THE ODDEST THING about the Grateful Dead scene is its apparent insularity. Though they appear to be leftists, the band is actually nonaligned politically, more interested in anarchy and anti-authoritarianism, deep in the Western myth of the individual. The anti-authoritarian impulse allows a person to stay disengaged, to say the whole deal sucks and never take a stand, except that joining any club except an anti-club—the Deadheads, for one—is out. The political implications of the 1960s are a lot more complicated than they might seem. Especially if you have an army of slavish fans who seem to drift after their masters from city to city.

"I think that anti-authoritarianism has found its way into every nook and cranny of American life," says Garcia. "And it no longer has its original face or demeanor, but it's everywhere now. Anti-authoritarianism typifies the American character."

But how many people are going to pull a Kerouac now?

"Well, how much room is there in which to do something like that, that's the question. There's a little room, and I think that's essentially what the Grateful Dead audience is acting out. They're acting out their version of how much freedom is there in America to go for a wild ride. What's left is, well, you can follow the Grateful Dead on the road. You can't be locked up for that, yet. So it's an adventure. And an adventure, as part of the American experience, is essential. It's part of what it means to find yourself in America. It's hard to join the circus anymore, and you can't hop a freight, so what do you do . . . Grateful Dead. That's what you do. Then you have your adventures, when your car breaks down in Des Moines and you need to hitchhike someplace and a guy picks you up and he's a Deadhead. These are your war stories, your adventure stories."

But the obeisance they pay to you, that doesn't square with the anti-authoritarian impulse much, does it?

"Obeisance?!?!?! I haven't got that much obeisance lately! They buy their tickets, but apart from that, nobody lays tributes at my door."

But you have to admit that it's an audience of . . .

"It's an excuse. They're inventing us, just like they're inventing themselves, but I don't think they're coming and totally ignoring the performance. They're coming and acknowledging that we have our good nights and our bad nights."

But there seems to be a confusion between the liberal and anti-authoritarian points of view, right?

"A lot of people have missed that, in generalizing about the '60s. We're not like Jane Fonda to the Lyndon LaRouches of the world. Nobody says we have a demonic message. We're surprisingly invisible to the regular world, considering how much of an effect we have on the people who like us."

"The area between liberalism and anti-authoritarianism is a gray area for some people, but not for me," says Weir. "And not for anybody in the Grateful Dead scene. I kind of buy some of the rightist stuff; I

"WE FELT, WHEN WE WERE LISTENING TO COLTRANE, THAT WE WERE HARDLY FIT TO GROVEL AT HIS FEET."

don't like cant of any type. I'm a monkey in a tree, I'll swing from branch to branch, I don't care. But that murkiness has come up several times for me this summer. Since everybody had to talk about Woodstock; to begin with, my insight with Woodstock was that it was a big event, a big party that happened square in the middle of the dog days of summer. The press had nothing else to talk about, so they made a big deal out of it and tried to force a political perspective on it because that's the only handle they could manufacture to put on it. But it wasn't that way at all.

Those people weren't out there thinking political thoughts or leading political lives. They were partying."

But what about the conservative Deadheads who are for Bush or Reagan, isn't there a contradiction there?

"Hell no. To me neither of those guys, Bush or Reagan, could be 100 percent wrong all the time. You got to give them credence as human beings to have something going."

Okay, then don't you think there's a contradiction in your fans' dedication and the central anti-authoritarianism of the scene?

"Yeah, I tend to think that. I tend to think that one by one, hopefully, they'll realize that. They're looking for something, and they're going to find it. Having found that, then they go on, and they'll be a little less abject in their reverence for what it is that we are."

But why the confusion?

"We were different then," says Garcia, "in the sense that we were not politically aligned one way or another, which was confusing to some people. Because it's hard to tell the difference when you're far enough away."

Why weren't you aligned?

"Because politics sucked. In my life, the finest people I know didn't go into politics. In fact, I don't know anybody that went into politics. Whoever those people are and wherever they're coming from, they're not coming from the people that I admire."

But what about political activism, which is different than politics?

"When things impinge on your life in a day-to-day way, like somebody paves the place where you used to walk your dog, if it directly interferes with your life and the way you want it to be, you have the responsibility to do something about it, that's what activism is. Everyone should do that if they feel something closing in on them. I don't have any solution to the world's problems."

Yet you are supporting efforts to preserve the rain forest?

"Yeah, because it's outside the human bias. I'm more comfortable out there, when we're talking about bio-organisms that aren't human. Humans maintain the right to maim and destroy each other freely, like they've been doing for time immemorial. It's the human thing to do, though I'm not going to get involved in that stuff. But certainly I'm not going to say whether it's right or not."

But you're involving yourself in the lives of other human beings by saying that people can't make a living by cutting down their own forests, aren't you?

"That's true. I understand that. I realize it's a problem. I just feel it's a matter of information and conscience. I'm doing it because I think I have a right to."

ONE OF THE INTERESTING things about the Grateful Dead, then and now, is that they synthesize roots music with the abstractions of the

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expressionist jazz world of the 1960s. Add European experimentalists to the mix and something happens: The band offers its fans, all one million of them—who would probably refuse the abstractions from somebody else—a sensibility radically opposed to the pop-music marketplace.

“We started free playing roughly at the same time as the Acid Tests, in the mid-1960s,” remembers Weir. “But beyond acid, it came from modern classical music and jazz. Phil [Lesh] was responsible for a lot of that. He turned me on to Stockhausen, Coltrane, Varèse . . . and I love that stuff, it’s a passion of mine. And the synthesis of those schools, the jazz and modern classical, has been a passion of the band’s for a long time.”

“Playing free was just in the air,” remembers Garcia. “We’d do songs, and they’d suddenly be 10 or 15 minutes long. This would happen when we were on the fifth set of the night, back in the days when we were playing in the bars, with 55 minutes on and five minutes off. By the fifth set, there’s about eight people in the place and nobody much cared, so we would open up, just for fun, because all of us had some exposure to the jazz world and knew what it was about. Really, the phonograph record is the thing that says, ‘Hey, a song is three minutes long.’ Not music itself, certainly not dancing.”

“We had a body of material we were drawing from,” remembers Weir. “*Le Sacre du Printemps* was a big deal back then for us. Right around the time we started playing, Boulez did his definitive rendition of it on CBS. When I heard that, it just took me away. I still use it, too. Something will come up like if we’re playing in an open space, something will suggest a line, and Stravinsky comes up. If something suggests an element of that particular piece, I’ll generally go with it because I know everyone else is familiar with that piece, and I know I’ll be able to get across what I’m doing readily. And Phil was the one who turned me on to that. And there were Coltrane and Mingus records that Phil had turned me on to.”

Do you remember which ones?

“*Africa/Brass* was a big one, *A Love Supreme* was a big one.”

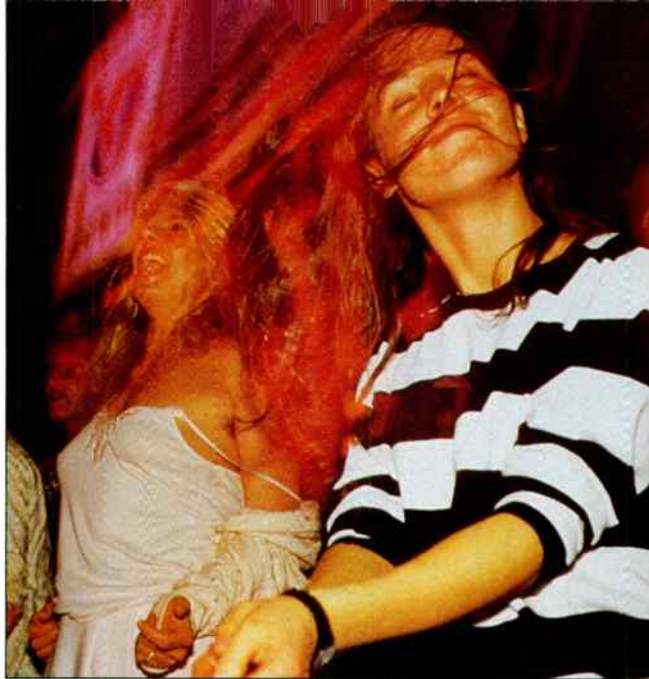
Did you ever think that you and people like Coltrane were doing the same things at the same time?

“We felt at the time, when we were listening to Coltrane, that we were hardly fit to grovel at his feet. But still, we were trying to get there. Our aims were pretty much the same.”

“Stuff like Ravi Shankar, which is a good model for ways that you can open things up, influenced us,” remembers Garcia. “People like Ornette Coleman, Coltrane. I was listening to Ornette’s *Free Jazz* record and it was like, ‘Hey, new idea! That sounds like fun!’”

How did Coltrane influence the band?

“By being an important musical person in the twentieth century. For us, listening to *Ascension* and *Africa/Brass* and *My Favorite Things*, they fill your head, even if that wasn’t the music I was playing



“It’s hard to join the circus or hop a freight anymore. So what do you do? Grateful Dead.”

saying, ‘Hey, this is something you might find interesting.’ It’s a thing you can learn to do. It takes an effort, then pretty soon you start to hear things in everything. Now I listen to music from Mozambique, from all over Latin America, and it has a subtle influence on my playing.”

How did Kesey’s Acid Tests affect the band?

“There are elements of the Acid Tests, our *baptismo del fuego*, that have assumed a mythic quality, at least in our subculture,” says Weir. “Even somewhat in the mainstream culture, from what I can pick up. They’re one of the major ingredients in our myth. The notion that there was something going on that was really absolutely extraordinary, and there’s some of that left. Some of that is still going on, and people figure we take a little of that with us, which we do. Maybe it can be most easily defined as an approach, but it’s still going on. People who suspect that that was happening, that there was a lock we burst through, are still taken by us.”

“Oddly, I don’t miss much about all that stuff, because a lot of it still exists,” says Garcia. “I miss the looseness, you didn’t have to worry about drugs or sex, or much of anything else. Life had an adventurous quality to it, and when you’re young you feel like you can take on the world, and the world was definitely ready to be taken on at the time. Somehow everything seemed possible on every level. But that only lasted a little while; pretty soon there were cops everywhere. Towards the end of 1967 things started to run down. ‘Oops,’ we thought, ‘this might not be so good.’ Only parts of it shut down, the door didn’t just slam. And we knew we weren’t going to be able to get away with all that for too long! The good stuff was what mattered to me. The good times, the playing, the Acid Tests, these things were positive experiences that didn’t have a downside. So when you have the open-ended positive thing, it’s really liberating, it’s different. But I still get that feeling in playing now, and our culture is still really supportive, so I don’t miss that much. Acid was a life thing more than a music thing. It’s just that the music gets affected with everything else. For me, acid was one of those things. I knew there was another world out there, I knew there was other shit out there, and my suspicions were confirmed. It’s like, ‘Aha!’ It always seemed just that way, that just beyond this reality there was a whole other universe of

in the early 1960s. But I definitely heard a lot of it. You get that thing . . . the background music in your life thing from Coltrane, walking-down-the-street music; it accompanies you.

“A lot I got from Phil, who has such a wide range of things that are acceptable for him to listen to. I’ve heard him listen to stuff that I thought sounded like shit, and he says, ‘Oh, it’s great,’ then later I realize it is cool. The notion of what is acceptable to listen to; I used to be one of those guys who listened to one or two things and that was it. When I was into old-time music and bluegrass, I wouldn’t listen to anything else, because I wasn’t interested. It was guys like Phil

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After all, Chuck Mangione did.

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things going on. And for me, knocking on that door, this was even better than I thought it would be."

How did that translate into music?

"Just the thought that anything is possible, clearly. From here on in anything is possible. It's ridiculous to confine yourself to any one level of anything. That's the way it seemed."

Why did the band move away from experimentation in the '70s, then?

"Because of a desire to sound good. We always wanted to sound good. Experimenta-

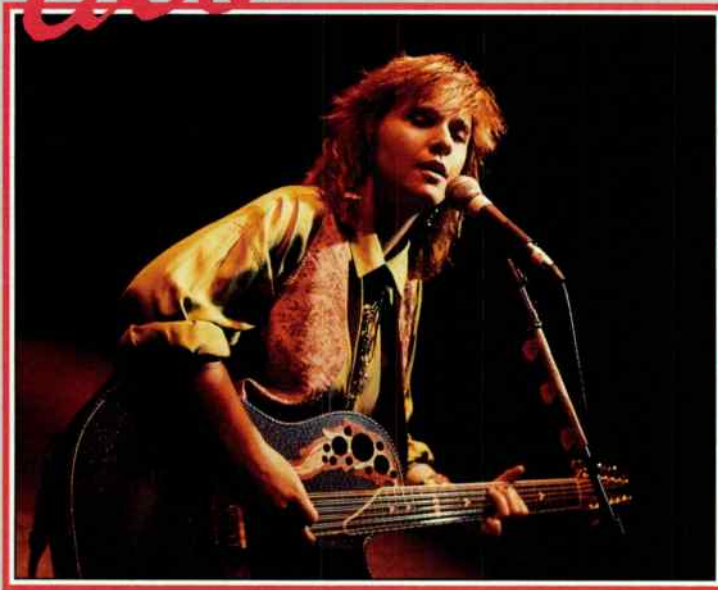
tion exists on many different levels. During the '70s we were experimenting on ourselves, we weren't experimenting with the music. Everybody was off taking their various drugs and doing their various things, off on self-destructive paths. Trying stuff out. So for a long time we held together by sheer inertia, even though all of us were off in our separate worlds of toxicity. Now we're renewed, which is cyclic. It happens periodically, it's an ongoing thing. There's no telling when or why it happens."

What effect did heroin have on you?

"It didn't have much effect on my playing. It had an effect on my whole self, more. Heroin is a good way to rest," Garcia laughs. "Heroin did a certain thing. It's tough for me to adopt a totally anti-drug stance. For me it was like taking a vacation while I was still working, in a way. I was on for eight years. It was long enough to find out everything I needed to know about it, and that was it. There was nothing else there for me. I got tired of scaring my friends. [cont'd on page 83]

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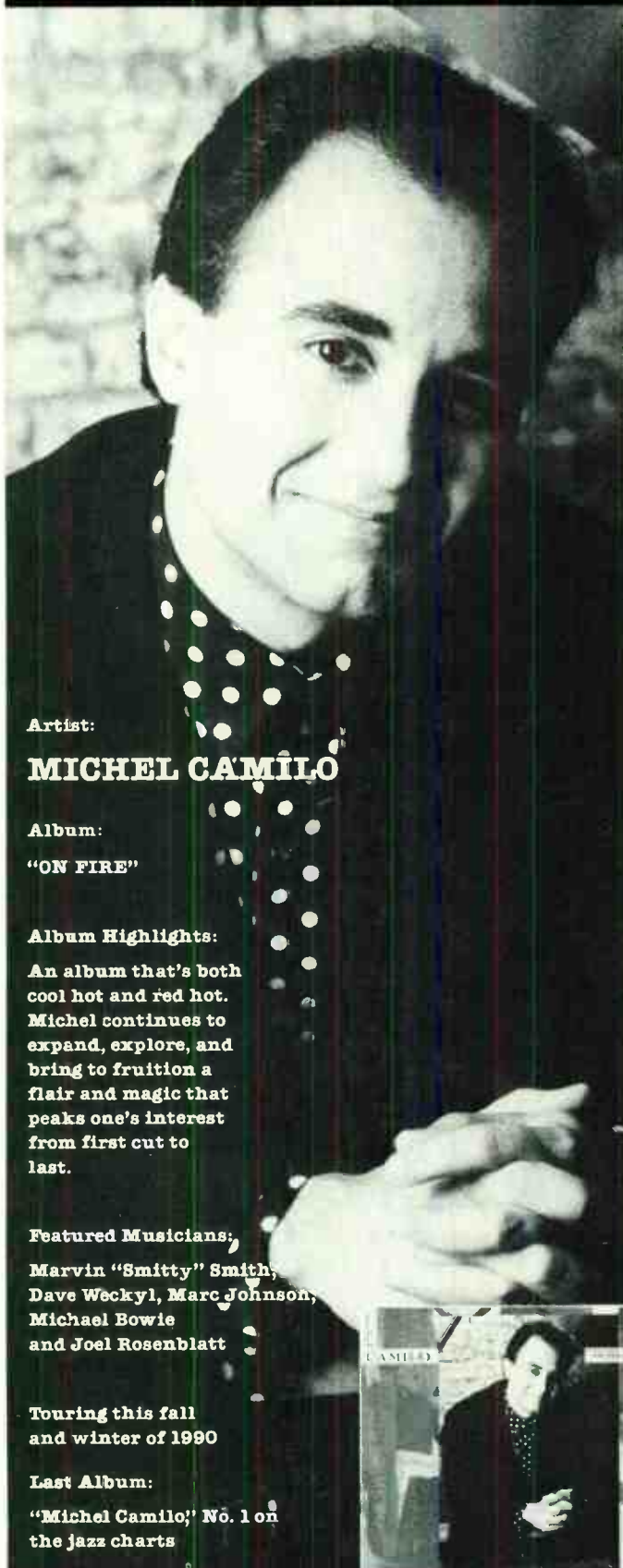
KAMAN

ME & MY MIDI

THE GRATEFUL DEAD say they have so much gear that if they listed it all we'd have room for nothing else. When pressed, they give skeletal info. PHIL LESH plugs his Modulus Graphite six-string bass. BRENT MYDLAND uses his Hammond B3 organ and a Kurzweil MIDI board controlling "an array of synthesizers." BOB WEIR plays a Modulus Black Knife guitar. Twin drummers MICKEY HART and BILL KREUTZMANN play Yamaha kits, Zildjian cymbals, Remo toms, Latin Percussion, and many, many bizarre percussion instruments built by the Dead's clever crew. JERRY GARCIA does not like to switch guitars during a show, so he was delighted when he got his custom-made Doug Irwin guitar rigged up with massive MIDI capability. Now Captain Trips claims he can get 300 sounds above and beyond the usual guitar range.

"MIDI gives us a whole set of new voices," Garcia says. "The idea of adventuring in those directions is appealing. It's difficult onstage, because there's a lot of stuff to do, to edit programs, because the attack time isn't similar between programs. So going between sounds, you have to fool with it: Like everything, it doesn't come completely free. MIDI doesn't have to have a linear or direct relationship to what you play. You can invent your own tuning. It's only customary for MIDI to parallel the instrument that's triggering it. If you've been playing guitar all your life, and all of a sudden you're playing a horn, it's interesting. The sound itself is so evocative that it automatically makes you think differently. There's interesting conversions to touch, like overblowing a horn, which come from playing harder. It's pretty sophisticated. It doesn't just imitate some of the behavior of the horn, it gets the interior of the behavior of horns, which is what makes it interesting to me."

KEY PROFILES



Artist:

MICHEL CAMILO

Album:

"ON FIRE"

Album Highlights:

An album that's both cool hot and red hot. Michel continues to expand, explore, and bring to fruition a flair and magic that peaks one's interest from first cut to last.

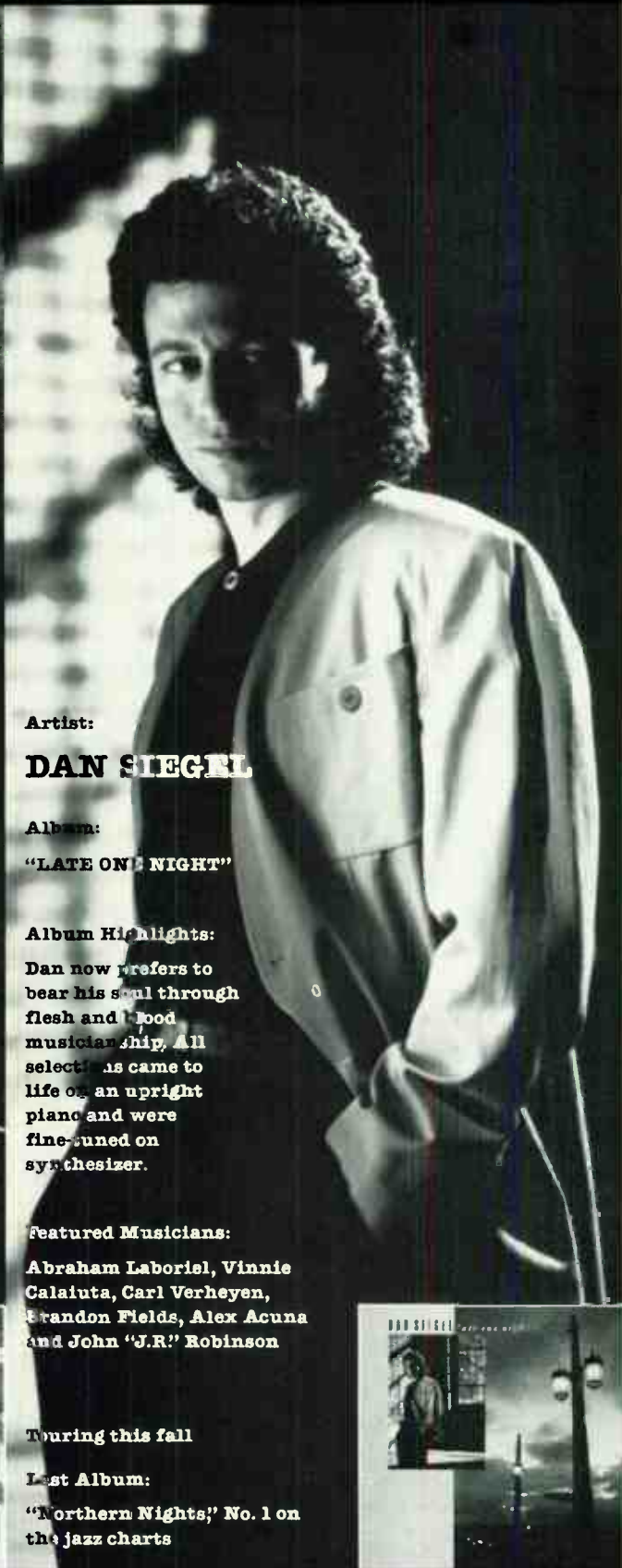
Featured Musicians:

Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Dave Weckly, Marc Johnson, Michael Bowie and Joel Rosenblatt

Touring this fall and winter of 1990

Last Album:

"Michel Camilo," No. 1 on the jazz charts



Artist:

DAN SIEGEL

Album:

"LATE ONE NIGHT"

Album Highlights:

Dan now prefers to bear his soul through flesh and blood musicianship. All selections came to life on an upright piano and were fine-tuned on synthesizer.

Featured Musicians:

Abraham Laboriel, Vinnie Calabuta, Carl Verheyen, Brandon Fields, Alex Acuna and John "J.R." Robinson

Touring this fall

Last Album:

"Northern Nights," No. 1 on the jazz charts



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W O R L D S A X O P

Ruckus in the A

Julius Hemphill, David Murray, Oliver Lake and Hamiet Bluiett

want Vernacular



STRAINS OF BENNY GOODMAN filter out of the Eastland Ballroom in Portland, Maine's Sonesta Hotel, but David Murray doesn't even hear—he's busy trying to get through the rigmarole of checking in. Young ladies sporting huge pink bows float by and he doesn't even see them—the sleep in his eyes has got him squinting and wiping. He just blew in from St. Louis. and the only thing he's sure of is his hunger.

Both Goodman and the girls are there for a special occasion: A wedding is going on, and tradition dictates the inclusion of social music and bridesmaids. When the ballroom door opens, you catch a glimpse of old folks twirling teenagers. In an extremely rule-oriented way, it's a festive scene. Murray's in town for a memorable date as well: the Maine premiere of the World Saxophone Quartet. The celebrated jazz foursome—Julius Hemphill, Hamiet Bluiett, Oliver Lake and Murray—don't travel with an entourage of ruffled damsels, but they do have the angle of social music covered. Their latest record, *Rhythm and Blues*, is a decidedly listener-friendly romp through classic pop material, including Otis' "Sittin' on The Dock of the Bay" and Marvin's "Let's Get It On." It is designed to seduce first-time listeners, and it works wonderfully. As far as tradition goes, well, the WSQ has got that covered too; just like the dancers at the wedding, they give it a twirl.

Since their inception 13 years ago, the ensemble has hammered their individualistic context into respected membership in the jazz community. Though their music has continually danced outside of the mainstream, the horns-only group has effectively employed enough tenets of traditional jazz to intrigue those enamored of or entrenched in the status quo. Through relentless work and a ceaseless array of ideas, they've succeeded in amending many listeners' views on what is and what is not acceptable. Combine the contextual innovation with their sheer blowing talent and you've got the most reliable thrills of the past decade. The impact has caused ripples within other musical genres as well. Adventurous musicians from Kronos to the Modern Mandolin Quartet owe a tip of the cap to the WSQ. Armed only with Adolph Saxe's ever-sturdy hardware, Lake, Bluiett, Murray and Hemphill have thoroughly proven the legitimacy of a hot-shit notion.

Later that night at the Portland Performing Arts

By Jim Macnie

Center, the crowd is immediately won over by the group's amalgam of honking blues, lush coos, poised unison work and strident squawk. Baritone player Bluiett takes off on a solo flight during "Sophisticated Lady" and the crowd goes wild. Altoist Lake waxes soft during a hushed motif in "Paper Works" and you can feel the rapt attention in the room. The audience applauds the exclamatory passages and the balladry with the same verve. These days the WSQ has an immense number of compositions to call upon. By interspersing the R&B tunes with their own hook-oriented compositions, they feed the listeners

something familiar. But their context still presents a facade of unorthodox behavior. This combination makes for a tension, which, even in the most conventional moments, gives the group's work a feisty undercurrent. It also reflects the self-refinements and marketplace concessions that the jazz avant-garde has made over

the last two decades. In fact, because three of its members are veterans of the late-'60s, anything-goes atmosphere, it's not hard to view the mostly middle-aged quartet as a microcosm of all the changes that have taken place in the last few epochs.

"Yeah, man, we'll talk about all that, but let's get some food, huh?"

Murray, at 34 the youngest member of the group, doesn't know anything about this interview. He's been bouncing around so much—Europe with his own quartet, St. Louis to spend time with his pal, drummer Phillip Wilson—that his managers haven't been able to fill him in. The rest of the unit are in the know about meeting *Musician*, but temporarily off-line. Hemphill is resting in his room upstairs; he got in early from D.C. where *Long Tongues*, a saxophone opera he has written, is being rehearsed. Lake and Bluiett have gotten discombobulated at LaGuardia Airport; they're due in later.

Walking along the Portland streets looking for some seafood ("When in Rome, man"), Murray chuckles over the undercooked paintings at a sidewalk street fair. Bad portraits of Janis Joplin break up the continuous array of seagull scenes. "Shit looks like they did it last night," mumbles Murray with less haughtiness than the sentiment might indicate. The tenor saxist, who has worked his way up through the jazz ranks over the last decade, has little respect for a half-assed presentation. "If you're going to do it, do it right," he muses to himself. A couple of blocks later he tempers that statement with "Well, everybody's got to learn somewhere."

Murray's learned on the bandstand. Since he came to New York from California in 1975, he's been at the helm of a number of bands: trios, quartets, octets, large ensembles. He's never not playing. Generally, it is agreed that he is the most formidable tenor sax player

of his generation, whose soloing and strategizing is seldom less than absolutely knockout. He met the rest of the WSQ when he hit town, and began to cross paths with them in the lofts and clubs that offered the gargantuan bluster of late-'70s blowing.

"So many cats were smoking during that time," Murray gushes as we get served a huge bowl of chowder, "Julius, Blythe, everybody . . . I thought we were all

going to be famous. I didn't realize that at some point I was going to emerge from the pack. But I've always been lucky, been protected by something. When I came in from the West Coast with [writer/critic Stanley] Crouch, it was weird. He was my pal, and though I'm sure he honestly believed it, he was telling everybody that David Murray was the happening cat. I had to distance myself from him

after a while, because it was almost like your brother saying, 'My brother's really bad.'

Friend or not, Crouch wasn't wrong, and the recorded evidence of Murray's exciting progression began to filter out to the rest of America. There's always someone breaking new ground in jazz, and in the late '70s Murray was beginning to look a lot like the man to watch. His use of the entire horn—effectively utilizing the top and bottom registers—helped define his individuality, and the way his compositions straddled the notions of inside/outside stances helped generate the term "freedom swing." "That's not a bad way of putting it," he concurs, "I never minded that one. Junior Walker, Maceo Parker, King Curtis—those guys are important to my playing. The high-note players who really blew hard. I've been trying to take that shit a bit farther, without neglecting Ben, Hawkins and the others. I just did a thing with Eddie Harris, who's a brilliant cat, very underrated musician, and he said, 'I'm too old, you hit all the high notes.' I've been consciously working on the whole multiphonics system. In the old days I was just squeezing hard and playing high, but now I think I really have a grip on it."

Later that evening Murray proves his point. During a tune called "Great Peace," he stands alone onstage and roars up and down the horn, building a momentum with polished élan. However, as the solo progresses, the saxist starts to gyrate, and his tone gets vehement. Through circular breathing, he creates a revolving door of sound. Honks are blurred into screams. By the time the rest of the group comes back to the stage playing the theme, he has peaked. The audience explodes.

"We all play to get to that point," he explains. "It's a turn-on, like coming. I'm trying to get out of my body, get to the spirit possession place like the guy jumping up and down in the sanctified church. If I open my eyes at the end and the audience is screaming, I'm there. It doesn't usually happen, but you've got to trust yourself to get there."



AS IT TURNS OUT, all four horn men have a good night on the Portland stage. Because they haven't played together in a week or so, the second set winds up being the hot one. It takes a bit of time to get to the profound level of interplay that they're used to. "Inspiration is important," explains Murray. "We're on the road, we get weary, we might sound a bit stiff. But there's always somebody in the group who kicks ass and jumps us ahead. Then everybody rises to the occasion. That's what makes our saxophone quartet different from other people's—we got four masters up there. Most groups have players who can read music well, but most groups don't have four guys who can play a hell of a solo."

The next morning, over oatmeal and toast, we sit down to discuss other aspects of the ensemble's inner workings, and Lake reiterates Murray's feelings. "There's a chemistry between the four of us, definitely," he states assuringly. "You can tell the difference when one of us has to send a substitute in; it's never the same." "It's a coordination thing," continues Hemphill. "When we haven't played together in a while, we're not that tight. We have to get the kinks out. Our music has a lot to do with timing." "The time we have spent together makes us what we are," concludes Lake.

The affinity between Lake, Bluiett and Hemphill has been in effect for a long time. All three were part of the Black Artists Group, a collective of St. Louis musicians who bonded together in the '60s to assure that there would be like-minded souls to interact with. In the post-Coltrane era, many minds had been scrambled; deciphering a new way to do things became paramount. Though all three had experience elsewhere, often with soul bands, they knew they had to deploy any and all options available.

"BAG was about questioning the norms," recalls Hemphill. "It was inspired by the AACM, the organization that Muhal, Braxton and Roscoe had put together in Chicago. The notion of doing something different? That's all I wanted to hear. People were rethinking the music. It was the self-sufficiency of the group that got me. I said to myself, 'Yeah, why the hell should we play in a place where a guy is demanding we sound like Horace Silver, when we could rent a hall, make up some signs and play what we want to play?' It was a breath of fresh air. To me it was kind of one-dimensional to do the old thing. I wasn't taken in any abiding way to *only* playing the horn, that was just one option. I was also interested in composing and theater. I would hang lights, write tunes, whatever."

"Don't miss a day, regardless of what happened, that's what I remember from the St. Louis days," says Bluiett bluntly. "Playing with other hornmen freed me up to a point where C7 and other symbols started meaning less to me. When I did go back and play with a so-called rhythm section, I became bored, because it was too restrictive, not adventurous enough."

"My experience in BAG was to just play the instrument, regardless of who was there," says Lake. "I would go out to clubs to hear older musicians, and if the bass player didn't show up, they wouldn't play. If the drummer disappeared, no gig. When the BAG people played, it didn't matter who came—we had a concert. If it was sax and two trumpets, we played. When we all hooked up in New York, we had played in every combination; none of them sounded consciously different to us."

This type of open-minded background begot the collective attitude

of the group. All working on the same scene, ideas about direction and possibilities were constantly being exchanged. In September of '74, all three recorded a sax quartet track with Anthony Braxton. Yet it was an outsider, saxist/educator Kidd Jordan from New Orleans, who assembled the complete WSQ. After visiting Hemphill in New York and seeing the scope of changes that the music was going through, he invited all four down South for a weekend gig. "He had a rhythm section waiting for us," recalls Murray. "We did the gigs, but what we really got excited about was the sound of the saxes." "We had no intention of keeping this group together when we were on our way to New Orleans," says Lake. "It was just another gig. After the concert, based on what went down musically, we knew: This is the shit." Murray again: "When we got back to New York we said, 'Let's shelve the rhythm section and make some *music*.'"

It took a while for the group to decipher the timbral roles, the soloing routes, the functions of their horns. Their first outing was a mess. "That Moers record we did, *The Point of No Return*? That thing sounded like Star Wars," Murray chuckles. "We were trying to blow each other out. They recorded us on the beginning of the first tour; they should have waited a bit. Six weeks later we had it together."

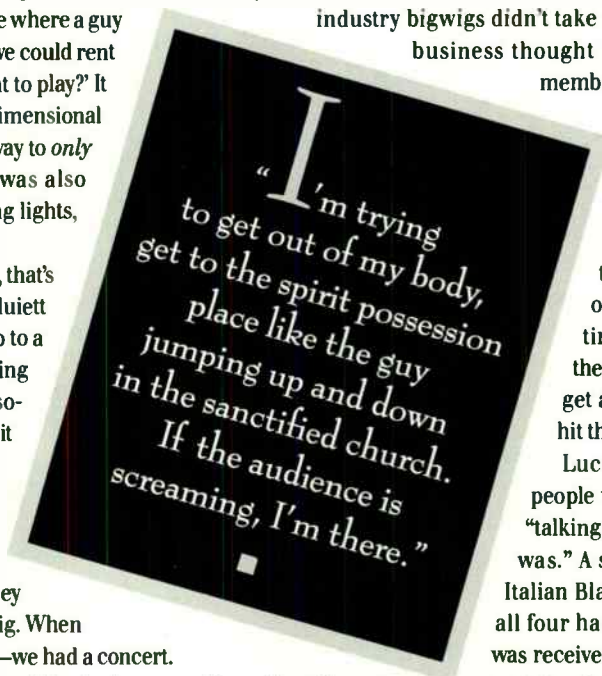
Not everyone thought so. Operating without bass and drums raised eyebrows and elicited titters from those who couldn't deal with the radical stance. Hemphill: "People came down on either side, even musicians." Bluiett: "You've got to remember that during this period we were not thought of as being normal players anyway. We were called *out*, avant-garde, people weren't supposed to like us." Lake: "I never thought of it as being wild. It seemed pretty blues-based to me. It's just that people had to get used to not having the bass and drums. Once that's over with, we're playing the blues."

Murray: "Hey, what we were doing wasn't radical to our ears, because we'd all been doing concerts in the lofts that allowed for anything to happen. I used to play for hours with Charles Tyler in my backyard in California; he and I didn't need no drummer. But industry bigwigs didn't take us seriously. Cats in the business thought it was a gimmick. I remember Orrin Keepnews telling

me, and I appreciated it, that he and others were really skeptical of the situation. They couldn't grasp it. But we took ourselves very seriously. Still, there were times when I went back to the other guys and said, 'Let's get a bass and drums and go hit the Vanguard for a week.'"

Luckily, there were also people who were, as Bluiett says, "talking about how phenomenal it was." A string of records for the Italian Black Saint label, for which all four had recorded individually, was received quite well by the critics.

Even though no major American domestic label would touch them, their stature grew. Bluiett: "The clamor came from the idea that the group could swing and function without a rhythm section." Swing they did, albeit in a variety of personalized



ways. "P.O. in Cairo," one of their early pieces, had Bluiett's bari as the anchor; two reeds setting a background, someone soloing above; on "Hattie Wall," which has become their theme song, percolation and adherence to theme got priority; "Fast Life" found all four racing through the head in unison; "Cool Red" was dependent on a blending of voices. Bluiett again: "We do a lot of work for this group, writing and playing the stuff. There were no records that could show us the way. All the sax quartets I've ever heard of were transcription groups who were playing string music on the sax. They were mostly closet groups, getting together once a week or month. But we came up with this improvising group that is really dealing with music for saxophone, written for the horn. It's an altogether different thing."

Although all four compose for the band, Hemphill's pen had much to do with the way the group sounded. He was a skillful had a big yen for the blues. "I might have been hogging the show for a while," he says, "but I don't think those guys really minded. One of the first things I can remember doing is jotting down little melodies. I think the fact that I write allows me to be more flexible; it gives me access to all the voices. My two main points of reference for arranging things are Duke Ellington and Gil Evans. I don't think about them when I work, but they have demonstrated significance to me. They're examples of people doing things differently. Ellington will have one measure go one way, and then two measures later throw in something completely different. To me that suggests that you can do whatever you want. Of course, you can't forget Stravinsky, Ravel, Debussy—it's all eligible. You learn the rules as a student, but then you break them when you're the boss. The important thing is to make it hang together."

In '86—on their tenth anniversary together—the WSQ finally released a domestic record for the Nonesuch label, and whatever skepticism remained over context or ability or posture or intent was washed away. *World Saxophone Quartet Plays Duke Ellington* is one of those records you constantly refer to. There were no tentative moves or cloudy moments, the production accentuated the warmth of the reeds, the program included well-knowns and under-knowns, bolstered at the start and finish by "Take the A Train." There was no irony in play; the ensemble's love for Duke was worn right on their sleeve. Whatever cacophony had been deployed in the past was absent. Their link with tradition became irrefutable. Across the board, the notices cried triumph.

"I think it was our best one," says Murray, "because playing Ellington's music was so familiar to us. All we had to do was go in and play the shit out of those tunes, and that's what we're good at. We worried about it a bit; it's like playing 'Proud Mary' in a way. Duke's stuff has been done so often that you really have to bring

"With older musicians, if the bass player didn't show up they wouldn't play. If the drummer disappeared, no gig. When we played it didn't matter who came, we had a concert."

something new to it to make it yours. Otherwise you're just like a cocktail guy, playing it over and over. Play it again, Sam."

Hemphill: "It would be naive to think that people wouldn't react more to us playing Ellington's songs than to us playing our own tunes. His music is wrapped around this planet. Everywhere they have electricity, they have Ellington." On the Portland stage, Hemphill's arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" does the job it's been doing for decades: making the crowd swoon. It's an ensemble tour de force, which shows off how crucial their teamwork has become. "We've gotten good at dealing with each other's minds," agrees Murray. "Sometimes we can stand there for an hour and a half not playing any melodies, and it will sound like we're playing tunes. The knowledge of different chord cycles, realizing when to get out, when to play the blues. We found out about it when two people forgot their music one night. We didn't play one song per se, but it sounded even better. It's like being part of a football team calling plays at the line: Blue! 76! Then you move your leg and the flanker takes off. That's when things get interesting."

THE HIGH SALES FIGURES that the Ellington album boasted (especially compared to their past records) raised questions about which way the group should head. *Dances and Ballads*, their last record, was made up of curt, ultra-melodic pieces that utilized the same kind of hooks that fuel pop material. When it was released, the tone of the jazz scene was retro and safe. Wynton Marsalis was mouthing off about the vacuousness of the playing in the avant-garde. Piano/bass/drums/horn was still the reigning format, and though younger players were scrolling through historical songbooks, much of it sounded pretty damn good. Competition was, as usual, fierce. The success of the Ellington record proved that the WSQ could inject unparalleled personality into the classics, but implied that the marketplace was only interested in hearing the agreed-upon touchstones of jazz.

"I think necrophilia is a good term for what's going on these days," says Bluiett with disdain in his voice, "in love with whatever's dead. They don't even seem to be interested in the people who made it in the first place, just the substitutes you can get for it now. I listen to some of the latest piano/bass/drums stuff and I can hear McCoy Tyner's rhythm section, Miles' rhythm section, Coltrane's rhythm section. Sometimes I can even pinpoint the *record* that the music is coming from. I'm not faulting those cats for trying to learn, but it's backwards in a way."

"Plus, the media focuses on it," chimes in Hemphill, "and nowadays people are really influenced by what they see and hear. It's powerful. I think, in general, it develops a body

of dependent thinkers, who are told what's happening instead of finding out for themselves. The answer to the old is-jazz-dead-or-alive question changes every time you move the spotlight."

"I think necrophilia is a good term for what's going on these days. In love with whatever's dead."

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Tomorrow holds a lot of promise. There is an upcoming gig with African drummers at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's New Music America Festival. (The only percussionists they've ever played with are Max Roach and Ronnie Burrage.) Once the topic opens, all kinds of ideas spill out. "I'd like to see us in front of a big band," says Lake, "and could definitely get into a program with Cecil Taylor. Maybe a string quartet deal; this context can go to a lot of places. If we're going to be creative and open, we can't close off anything."

"There's no shortage of ideas, just money," Bluiett laments. "Our originals will come back; we're supposed to be in the studio again before the end of the year. I think people are craving for our music but don't know it. They're used to being bombarded by electricity, but it never dawns on them that guys could play saxophones and take them to warp nine. I learned a lesson a while back. We were playing a concert and we were trying to cool it a bit—there were some old ladies, senior citizens in the front row. After a bit we got going good, really blowing. The

lady starts going with us, hollering and jumping. The wild stuff is what she was waiting on. So . . . don't ever assume what the reaction will be."

"You know," concludes Murray, "sometimes when I get hot with my solo stuff I think, 'Man, I haven't got time for the quartet no more.' And it's not just me, everybody's doing other things. But the reason I don't leave is simple: the music. We're like a family—that's cool—but I've got to stay in this band because it gives me something I can't get *anywhere* else. I look around onstage and see who I'm with—we all trust each other. We don't even have to talk to each other anymore. If it's not happening onstage, then someone will ignite it. We do *not* let it slip into some classical thing; we're not no woodwind ensemble, we play jazz. Whenever it looks like it's not going forward anymore, somebody causes a ruckus. That feels real good." M

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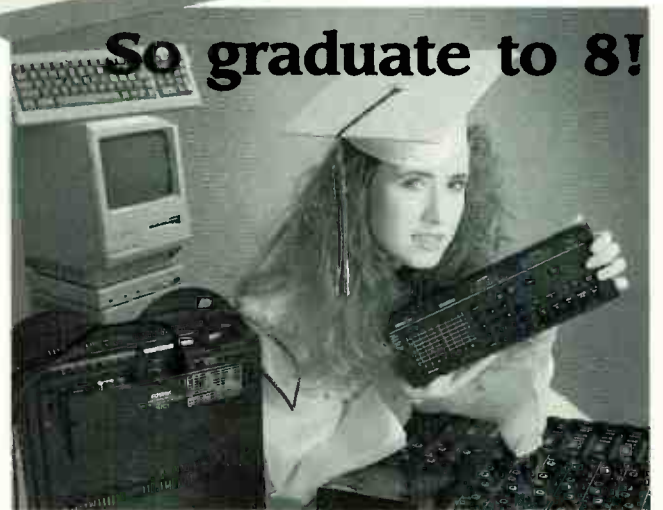
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PAUL KELLY

"I'd like to make

clear that my records aren't autobiography," Paul Kelly announces. "I'm not

trying to tell my life and my

THE MAN

experiences. The first thing I'm trying to do is write songs, rather than

WHO COULD

make confes-

sions or bare my soul. Writers create characters. There is a kind of writing

that *effaces* your own

NOT MAKE

personality. That is a legitimate goal. I lean more toward that school of

HIMSELF

writing than self-expression or

writing for therapy. In Flaubert or Chekhov the writer is hidden and the

BY BILL FLANAGAN

GO AWAY

Photography By Aldo Mauro

characters live more.”

Does that mean listeners don't know the *real* Paul Kelly?

“Sure they know me,” Kelly shrugs. “I don't think there's a real self and then there's the public self. I think it's self-indulgent to say, *You can never know the real me.*’ People can say that no matter what kind of relationship they're in—whether it's performer to audience or writer to audience or husband to wife or brother to sister. What you are is as much what you appear to be as what you are.” He smiles at the sound of that last sentence and adds, “I get confused talking about this. The real me is in the records. That's why I write songs.”

That speech contains both sides of Paul Kelly. He is a smart man and serious artist who refers to both *Othello* and T. Rex when explaining his work. But he is also a no-nonsense Australian who sneers at celebrity pretensions as silly self-indulgences. The music of Paul Kelly and the Messengers contains the same dichotomy; fans are won by the solid, hard-rocking band that can get a barroom dancing, but when they get the record home they notice that those rockin' songs contain fresh ideas, startling images, even moments of brilliance.

Americans were introduced to Kelly and the Messengers in late 1987, when A&M Records released *Gossip*, a thick, dark LP that found its muscular voice somewhere between the Graham Parker of *Howlin' Wind* and the Clash of *London Calling*. The album was striking in part because Kelly sounded so sure, not at all like a young man making his first record. As it turned out he wasn't. Kelly had three Australian albums under his belt when he formed the Messengers in the mid-'80s. *Gossip*, in fact, was a 24-song double LP set down under, cut to a single disc for the United States. Kelly had done his growing up out of American range, and appeared here as a man confident of his place.

He and the Messengers toured this country to small crowds and great acclaim. In '88 the band released *Under the Sun*, another gem and a little brighter than its predecessor. More U.S. roadwork followed, along with slightly bigger crowds and a growing reputation. Now it's March of 1989; Kelly and company are here at Ocean Way recording studio in Los Angeles making what the singer hates to hear called his “American album.” A&M, his American label, is right around the corner. His American producer is Scott Litt, who remixed three songs on each of the two previous A&M Kelly albums, but who is best known as producer of R.E.M.'s commercial breakthroughs, *Document* and *Green*. Litt arrives, applying eyedrops and raving about the R.E.M. concert he saw last night at the L.A. Forum. “They were asking for you,” he tells Kelly. Kelly—who speaks very quietly, often mumbles, and seems to have a shy kid's fear of hurting anyone's feelings—explains that he really did want very much to go and really couldn't. Litt says he knows that, Kelly just missed a great show.

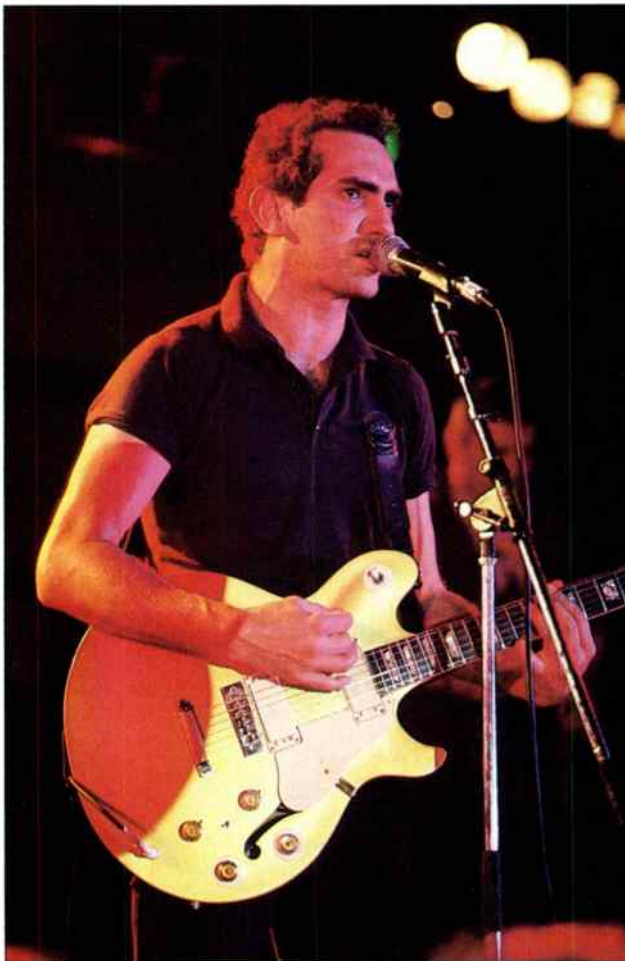
“I became really good friends with Paul,” Litt says later. “And I think that he's really talented. He's an amazing person—and a very gentle person. He's got a really good sense of propriety. He's got really good ethics.”

As a listener peels back the layers of his songs, Kelly's quirks become apparent. The machismo at the heart of most gutbucket rock 'n' roll gets an added shot from Kelly songs like “Forty Miles to Saturday Night,” in which the singer and his pal Danny are heading off to town for a wild weekend. While Kelly mentions in passing that he hopes to bump into a woman he has a crush on, the real love is between the singer and Danny. In many of Kelly's songs, buddy-ship is the strongest bond.

Kelly nods thoughtfully. “There's Alex and I and the woman in ‘Same Old Walk,’” he agrees. In that song two pals fall for the same actress. In “Untouchable” the woman is going to break up the guys.

“Oh no!” Kelly yelps. “God! I've got a *theme* running through my songs!” He calms down and considers this. “Some critics say the

♦ He's a poet at home, but Kelly serves up meat and potatoes live. ♦



women in my songs don't have much character—which is similar to what you're saying—they're either bitches or they're goddesses. I don't think friendship is much written about in songs. Especially in love songs. Most love songs are either unrequited love, or love that once was and is now gone, or love just beginning, or love with problems. And it's usually written about with just the two people. So I'm interested in writing love songs that are more like real love. Even with two people being together, there's always other things that affect that relationship. So-and-so's with someone who his best friend doesn't like very much, or her parents, or she's still working out something with her ex-partner. You very rarely find these pure emotions of love. It's very hard to deal with just two people, because they're affected by all

the people around them. That's why I'm interested in writing songs where friendships affect relationships, or where there's a triangle.

“But women and friendships and all—I'm actually writing more songs for women to sing. I've got a song called ‘Most Wanted Man in the World,’ a song about a guy saying how much his girl loves him. The emotion of the song to me seems more feminine. I was playing with the whole idea of ‘Most Wanted Man’ and the middle eight says, ‘Arrest me now, take me I'm yours, I'm guilty of loving you/ Hold me down, I'm on fire, I surrender.’ It was pointed out to me that that

sounds much more like a woman singing than a man."

On some songs on the new album, which is called *So Much Water So Close to Home*, Kelly stretches a lot farther than that. On three of the songs he actually casts himself as a woman. Ever since Eric Burdon changed the gender in "House of the Rising Sun," male rock singers have been afraid of the old folk tradition of singing a woman's song in a woman's voice. "It's more fun to try to sing it in the character," Kelly says.

He must have taken that "bitches or goddesses" criticism to heart.

"I don't know. You don't make conscious decisions when you're writing songs, but I guess that stuff's in the back of your mind. Also, in the last couple of years some women in the Australian recording industry have asked me to write for them. I think that opened up the gates a little bit, too. It's like flicking a switch or something. You do it once and you think," he laughs, "'Well! I can do it again!' I also think I've probably broadened my range a bit. I think when a songwriter's first writing you tend to draw for sources on what's immediate, what's close at hand. Like a first novel is often very heavily autobiographical. Now, I've always emphasized that my songs aren't autobiographical but my earliest songs probably used more elements close at hand, and I've probably ranged a bit further in the sources for this record. The other thing is, the woman in 'South of Germany' is a 60-year-old. The man in 'I Had Forgotten You' has to be in his 50s. It's a policeman singing 'Jundamurra.' So the writing as women is part of that process of becoming more..." he searches for a word and tentatively offers, "Impersonal? I'm trying to say that word without being pejorative."

THE EXACT DETAILS—and the gender—in Kelly's songs may not be personal, but one only has to listen to *Gossip* and *Under the Sun* to hear about a life very much like Kelly's own. The fifth of eight children of an Irish-Australian father and an Italian-Australian mother, Kelly grew up in Adelaide. *Gossip* has a song called "Adelaide." It begins as nostalgia and ends with good riddance:

*The wisteria on the back veranda is still blooming
And all the great aunts are either insane or dead
Kensington Road runs straight for a while before turning
We lived on the bend, it was there I was raised and fed
Counting and running as I go down past the hedges all in a row
In Adelaide*

*Dad's hands used to shake but I never knew he was dying
I was 13, I never dreamed he could fall
And all the great aunts were red in the eyes from crying
I rang all the bells, I never felt nothing at all
All the king's horses, all the king's men cannot bring him back
again**

After describing chasing girls and drinking in an increasingly dead town, Kelly ends by singing, "All the king's horses, all the king's men wouldn't drag me back again to Adelaide!" How's that for spitting on the old hometown?

"One of the last times I was in Adelaide," Kelly says, "I went to a football game, sat down in the stands, and the guy in front of me turned around and said, 'Ah, I thought you were never coming back here!'"

Paul Kelly's Secret Past

THE AUSTRALIAN ALBUMS

Talk by Paul Kelly & the Dots (1981). On his debut, Kelly wrote some of his purest pop. The record sounds like Graham Parker & the Rumour's first two LPs, though "I Hate to Watch You Loving Him" has the churning baritone authority of Mink DeVille, and "Please Send Me" is so much like '60s Kinks that Ray Davies probably thinks he wrote it.

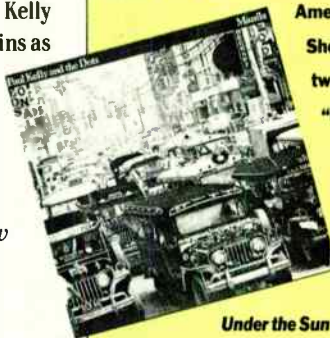
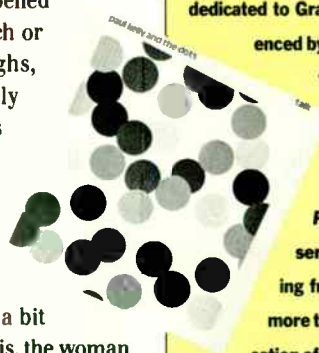
Manila by Paul Kelly & the Dots (1982). A perfect title for a cluttered, steaming, angry album. Kelly & the Dots shovel through 10 sweaty rock songs. "See You in Paradise" is dedicated to Gram Parsons, but sounds just like Joe Strummer. "I was heavily influenced by the Clash at that time," Kelly says. "Especially *Sandinista*. That's why the record sounds so muddy. I was trying to get the texture from *Sandinista* and I didn't know what I was doing. 'Clean This House' sounds pretty Clashy too, I think. I'm a big Joe Strummer fan."

Post by Paul Kelly (1985). This acoustic album was a breakthrough. A series of loosely connected songs about (in Kelly's words) "a guy recovering from some kind of a heroin addiction or something," the album is far more than the walk on the wild side that theme suggests. *Post* is a moving evocation of the low end of the rock 'n' roll life. Anyone who kept playing for a living into his 20s will recognize the broke musician ashamed of being supported by his girlfriend, the rationalizations for screwing up again and again, the painful nostalgia for teenage fun by a still-young man who can't see any future. Five of the 11 songs were re-recorded with full band treatment for Kelly's U.S. albums, but *Post* is unbeatable.

Gossip by Paul Kelly & the Coloured Girls (1986). There are nine more songs on the Australian double album than on the U.S. version (two of them appear on the U.S. CD) and three others were remixed on the A&M album. Most of the songs deleted from the American version are off-beat: a tipsy jazz ditty titled "After the Show," a ballad with strings that bears the album title, a C&W two-step called "The Ballroom." The most striking track is "Maralinga (Rainy Land)," a haunting song about the abuse of the Aborigines. And yes, it was A&M's idea to change the name of Kelly's band before coming to the States. "I'd been a bit nervous about it anyway," Kelly says. "It was a joke name that stuck."

Under the Sun by Paul Kelly & the Messengers (1988). By now Kelly's two continents were pretty well coordinated. Scott Litt remixed three of the songs for America, and Kelly substituted "Little Decisions" for a tune called "I Don't Remember a Thing." "The American *Under the Sun* is a better record than the Australian," Kelly says. The Australian CD includes a cover of Woody Guthrie's "Pastures of Plenty," which Kelly tried unsuccessfully to get on the U.S. tribute album *A Vision Shared*.

Will A&M eventually release this material in the States? "Oh, I would hope so," Kelly says. "I think it would just depend on what the demand was. We're probably at the point in Australia where in a year or two we could put together an album of rarities, B-sides and outtakes. Certainly down the track I can see that here, if A&M think there's enough people who would buy it." Till then, Kelly's albums are available in Australia from Mushroom Records, which is distributed by Festival Records. Mushroom's address is 9 Dundas Lane, Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 3206.



"I said, 'Well, I got *paid* to come back.' It caused a little consternation in the family too—the bit about the great aunts. I've got a big family. I had this vague childhood memory of these great aunts who were a little eccentric. They weren't *insane*. I said, 'Look, it's just a song, I made it up.' See, that's a good example of what we were talking about. That is a song in which nearly all the facts are true. My father had Parkinson's disease, so his arms used to shake. He did die when I was 13. I was an altar boy, I rang the bells. I did have these eccentric old aunts. It's all true. But to say the song is all autobiography is a mistake. I tried to get across a mixture of affection and wanting to get out of a place. I wanted it to be about growing up in any small town and wanting to go someplace else. At 17 or 18 you just want to get the hell out. I wanted to get that across. But the reason it's sort of soft in the first verse is because I wanted to make it an affectionate song as well, with the way it's sung and the tune of it. But to say that song expresses the whole range of my feelings for Adelaide is not true. It's like taking one emotion and then enlarging it and making that the song. That's the danger of saying that song's autobiographical.

"One part of your heart might be murderous. You could blow that up and make it a song as well. You can take a dream you had and say, 'I pulled that out of myself.' That's true, but it's *distorted*. The process of making a song means you're gonna magnify some things and put others in the background." He sighs. "So I get a bit of flack in Adelaide about that song. But it's fairly cheerful."

At the risk of going a little deeper into this autobiography that isn't, the fact that Kelly says his father died must be related to all the dead or missing dads in his songs. Most songwriters draw on powerful emotional memories to kickstart their creative engines.

"I must be doing that," he nods. "Even though 'Going About My Father's Business' and 'Before the Old Man Died' are much further away from autobiography than 'Adelaide.' 'Going About My Father's Business' is more a song about being a father than about my own father. The idea for that song was when you find yourself doing with your own children what your parents did with you. 'Don't talk with your mouth full! Keep your elbows off the table! Hold that knife and fork properly! Hey! I remember this!'"

"Before the Old Man Died" is grim, like a Sam Shepard play made to rock. It contains sentiments like, "For the way he ruined our mother, not enough blood can run. We had plans, me and my brother. Every day I cleaned the gun." Even that second verse in "Adelaide" is pretty rough, saying young Paul felt nothing at the funeral.

"Although that was more of a physical description than saying it didn't mean anything to me that my father died. When someone close to you dies you don't feel the full effect of it till later. When your grief is very strong you go numb. While the great aunts are bawling their

eyes out. Weddings and baptisms and burials are rites. Ceremonial rites. It's hard to feel what you're meant to feel at those times because they're so stylized."

Kelly says his father, a lawyer, was noticeably ill for about three years before he died. His parents were devout, going to mass four or five times a week. "But we were also broadminded. Strong Catholics but not narrow-minded. There was a big clan of us. And both Irish and Italians are known for their hospitality."

Which sounds pretty nice. One imagines that after his father died teenage Kelly must have felt a great sense of having been ripped away from an idyllic childhood.

"No," Kelly says evenly, "I don't have happy memories of childhood. There was always food on the table, we weren't poor. There were a lot of kids—it wasn't like we asked for something and we got it. We were brought up strictly. So all that stuff was fine—but the brothers and sisters fought like cats and dogs. I found out later it was normal! I thought we were the only ones who did. We were pretty savage. Also,

◆ As a boy, young Paul learned to hold his tongue. ◆



I remember I worried about things a lot. My mother used to tease me for being such a worrier. Childhood to me was a whole series of humiliations. The adult world seemed incomprehensible. I remember not understanding, insecurity, worry. I don't mean to be making any big deal of this. I just don't have cherished childhood memories. In some sense I do—I felt a strong sense of love there as well.

"This fits in with your idyllic theory: The love between my mother and father seemed to me—and still seems to me—almost a perfect thing. I realize it couldn't have been. It was very, very strong. Maybe my father died before I got time to see them as a couple with arguments and tensions. I never saw them fight. *We* got yelled at. So that relationship between my mother and father—I'm sure maybe I've idealized it

but—it seems to me it was very strong.

"Now, as a parent, I imagine the way my son is brought up is totally different. He's one child instead of eight, his parents aren't together, his father moves around. He goes back and forth between us. But his mother and I are still good friends. That's one thing I would never want to lose, for things to go bad between us." Kelly sits silently for a moment. "Definitely, that's the thing I got from my parents."

Suddenly several long-haired men appear, rolling heaps of video equipment past us. It seems Scott Litt and the band have cooked up

A man in a call center setting, wearing a headset and holding a guitar, is silhouetted against a window with blinds. The blinds are partially open, allowing light to filter through. The man is looking towards the right, and his hands are positioned as if playing the guitar. The overall mood is one of frustration or longing, as suggested by the text.

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World Radio History

Scott Litt's Light Touch

R.E.M.'S PRODUCER GIVES PAUL KELLY A PUSH

PAUL KELLY & the Messengers' new album, *So Much Water So Close to Home*, is surprisingly spare. Kelly's voice is at the center of the production, which boasts simple, clear guitar lines, B3 organ and old-fashioned hand percussion—tambourine and maracas. There is little in the instrumentation to lock *So Much Water* into any particular year after 1969, which is appropriate for wide-open songs like "Cities of Texas" and "Moon in the Bed."

"If there's a focus to the album it probably came from Scott Litt's involvement," Kelly says. "Scott was always throwing ideas at us. It was a new experience for us, working for someone who became a sixth member of the band. He talked a lot about the record holding together. I'd never really worked like that. *Posi* was the only record I'd done that had a conscious sense of unity about it. So that sense of unity is from having Scott pushing us."

"My style is sort of like *truth in advertising*," Scott Litt laughs. "Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't." Litt is in New York for the New Music Seminar, and he's shellshocked from that annual convention's bombardment. An engineer (he remixed three songs on each of Kelly's two previous U.S. releases) with a poet's sensibility, Litt produced Jules Shear and the dB's before hitting the big time with his production of R.E.M.'s *Document* and *Green*. He's also had an unexpected hit this year with the Indigo Girls' debut.

The new Kelly album, though, makes Litt a little defensive. Or maybe he's just feeling battered from his experience at the NMS producer's panel. Anyway, Litt seems anxious to justify his mission. "Paul's other records did not sell," Litt says. "They got really great reviews, but reviews only get you so far. It's a drag to make music that people don't hear. There's always this fuckin' panel at the music seminar and all these people talking about how R.E.M. sold out and the Cult sold out. And it's all these overweight guys with long hair wearing Metallica T-shirts and saying that big record companies suck and this sucks and that sucks and the Flaming Buttucks are the greatest band. Meanwhile nobody hears that music except people like them."

"I don't think it was my intention to make a *straighter* Paul Kelly record. It sort of came out that way, but I think it's the songs that ended up that way, more than the production. I did want to make a record that had a bigger sound, and I wanted to make each of the songs different from one another. You're saying that the other records had a lot of different styles, but those different styles never really meshed into a band feeling for me. There was no significant style except that

it was a bunch of styles. I felt that was something that should be worked on. I wanted each song to be significant in itself. I didn't want in any way to confuse one song with another. I wanted to make sort of broader strokes. I want the focal point to be the vocal and the singing, and not little *sounds*. Paul needed to make an album where the vocal was not just laid in there with the rest of the instruments. I wanted it to sound like it started with a guitar, and the other production was added to that. But his voice was the thing. I don't think that really came across on his other records.

"I wanted to make each of the songs kind of concise, and I didn't want to waste any notes. It might sound kind of clean, but that's sort of my style. It might not sound like an R.E.M. record, but in fact it kind

of is. If you listen to an R.E.M. record that I've been involved with, there's not a lot of atmospherics. "The One I Love" is a good example; it sounds like the drum, a guitar, a voice and a bass. I like that, it's not *indulgent*. Here's the song, here's the feel, here's the attitude. Here's the person getting it across to you. There's nothing going on that's not central to the story.

"I never consciously made a record that I thought would be cool on rock radio. When we did 'The One I Love' I knew that was going to be a hit song because I could hear it next to Whitney Houston. 'The One I Love' could be played next to all these other things because it was really clearly defined.

"If radio wants to play 'Careless' there's room for that. If they want to play 'Moon in the Bed,' that will work. There's room for 'Can't Take It with You,' too.

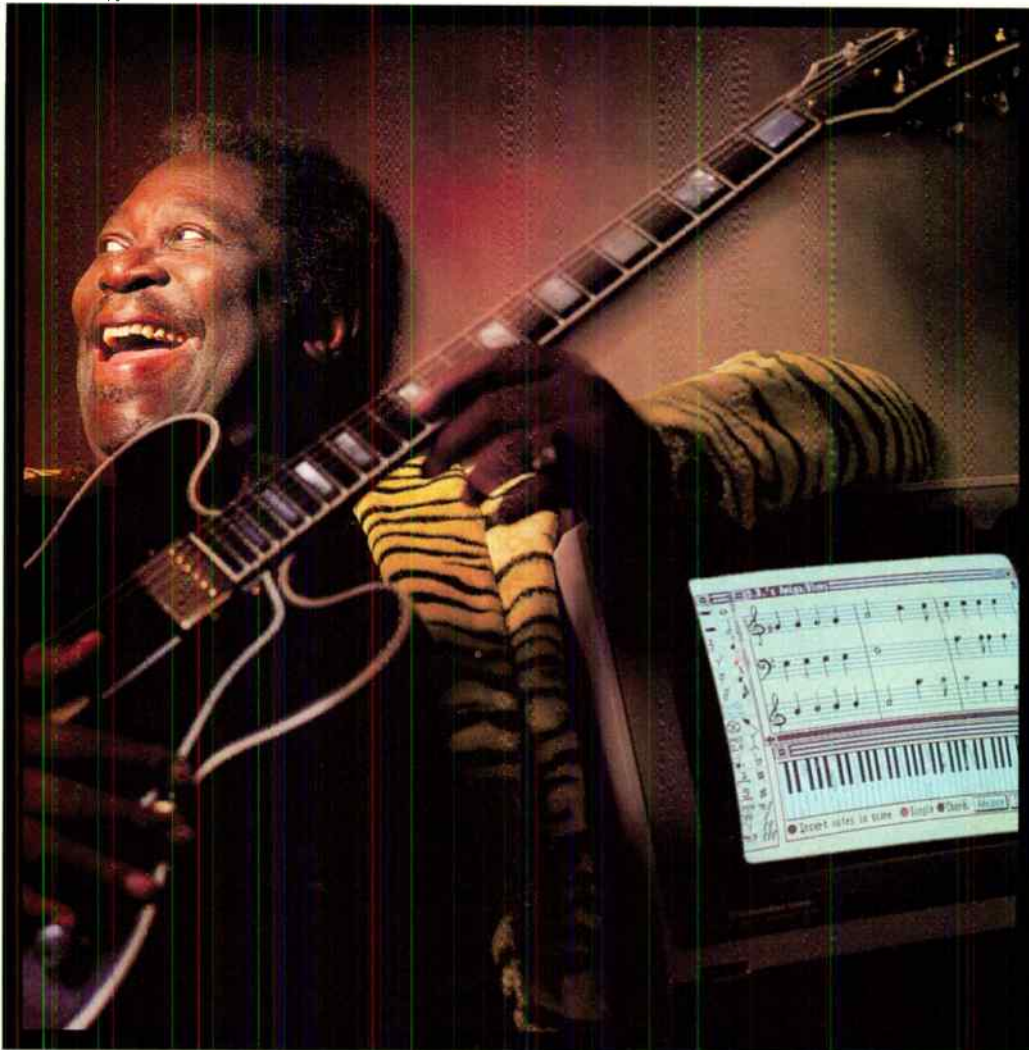
There are ample ways of getting Paul Kelly on the radio. I'm not sure you could do that with the other records, which had interesting things on them, but which I don't think you could play on the radio without the songs sounding like they didn't really belong.

"Paul might get beat up on this one. They'll call it more American, they'll call it AOR. But it was really time for the players not to be scared of their instruments, and that includes Paul's voice. It's like a *boldness*. Working with R.E.M., when I put Michael's vocals way up there, the lyric had to be a little more—I don't want to say *mean*—[cont'd on page 68]



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an idea for a video for Kelly's new song, "She's a Melody"—they are going to edit it to footage of the great Alfred Hitchcock movie beauties—Grace Kelly, Ingrid Bergman, Tippi Hedren, Janet Leigh. Litt has used some Hollywood connections to borrow the necessary gear. It's a great idea, and the perfect pretty-but-tense song for it. Unfortunately, once it's done Kelly will discover he can't afford to pay the movie copyright holders for its use. After all, we are sitting here in Hollywood, belly of the American record industry, where the profound (love and death) intersects with the goofy (the video idea) at the bottom line (A&M's proximity).

Was recording this album in L.A. instead of Australia a political move? "It's good politics," Kelly says. "With the other two records it's been, 'Here's the record, put it out.' Steve Ralbovsky, the A&R guy, has been down a couple of times, and brought label people down."

So how will Kelly's *American album* differ from the previous five? You can guess what he's going to say: "I always think my songs sound too much like *me*. When I'm writing a song I'm trying to get *away* from me. I'd like to write with less words—that's a real art. I'd like to write more dance songs."

But Kelly has some great dance songs—joyful backbeat ravers like "Darling It Hurts" and "Dumb Things" and, come to think of it, the greatest parts of *Gossip* and *Under the Sun*. He's also got plenty of ska and reggae, some punk, even an upbeat C&W number or two. What more could he want?

"I'd like to write 'My Prerogative.'"

Some people are just never satisfied with who they are.

"There is a song called 'Hard Love' which is more of a funky dance song," Kelly says. "We play it live and it's great, but we're having a lot of trouble putting it on tape, getting that precision. We might be going the wrong way with it. So far it hasn't worked. We're gonna try cutting it again next week."

FOUR MONTHS LATER: It's July and Kelly has delivered his album to A&M. "Hard Love" did not make it. After much sweat, many rearrangements and several attempted mixes, the dance track got the ax. In its place Kelly substituted a beautiful piano ballad. That had an unexpected effect on the mood of the whole album. The ratio of slow songs to fast changed from five to six to six to five (the twelfth song, "Moon in the Bed," falls in neither camp; it's Beatles '66 acoustic pop with handclaps). The songs are perfect vignettes, the production as open, clean and breezy as an Arizona mesa. But if anyone expected a Scott Litt-produced, L.A.-made Paul Kelly to be his AOR breakthrough, his "Stand," his "The One I Love," they're going to be disappointed. This is Paul Kelly's *Rubber Soul*.

"It did turn out a little slower than we anticipated," Kelly says in his hotel room the morning after returning to Los Angeles from

Australia. "We pulled 'South of Germany' off the reserve bench. I like the song, but there was 'Cities of Texas' and 'Everything's Turning to White' and 'Most Wanted Man.' When I was making the record I thought, one of these has to go just for the *balance*. But we ended up thinking we'd rather put 'South of Germany' on than 'Hard Love.' It seemed to just tip the scales, to make it a different record to what we thought we were gonna make. Or what A&M thought we were gonna make."

What's A&M's reaction?

"They all like it."

Hopefully that's true, and hopefully they can sell it. Certainly *So Much Water So Close to Home* is the sort of album that, if one song makes it to radio, three more will follow. The problem is, the mighty mastodons of American FM must be lured to the watering hole by familiar sounds, sounds even their tiny brains can recognize. *So Much Water* does not have an obvious HIT SINGLE. It just has 12 wonderful songs.

It also has a weird title. "So Much Water So Close to Home" is the title of a Raymond Carver story," Kelly says. "It's a story about a wife—the wife sings the song—whose husband's going on a fishing trip with a few friends. They drive about a hundred miles, up to the mountains. The first night they go down to go fishing and there's the body of a young girl in the water. She's been murdered. Instead of reporting it straight away they say, 'This river's really cold, the body is well preserved, let's just fish and report it on Sunday when we come down.' The wife feels outraged and that's what the song's about. It's to a really pretty tune. It's macabre, it reminds me a bit of 'Incident on South Dowling'—but it doesn't have that much humor."

"Incident on South Dowling" is a song from *Gossip* in which Kelly, with campy

back-up singing from the Messengers, describes how his girlfriend turned blue and died in front of him and now folks mock him because his baby "sleeps with the worms." The distance from the mundane ghastliness of "Everything's Turning to White" to the spook-show sentiments of "South Dowling" defines going from the sublime to the ridiculous. But that's typical of Kelly. From the grisly to the silly, he writes about subjects rarely approached in the blue-jeans-and-T-shirt bar-band tradition. Maybe that's the thread connecting his early work with his new women's songs: Kelly's not afraid to express

LITTLE DECISIONS

WHILE I WAS in L.A. I bought a 1938 Martin D-18 acoustic guitar," PAUL KELLY says. "I've also got a Les Paul Signature; it seems to be a rare guitar, everybody comments on it. It was just made by Gibson between '74 and '78. Steve and I both use D'Adario strings. I've got a Mesa/Boogie I'm using onstage, but I'm looking for a Vox. And I used a Hohner Marine Band harmonica for my first harmonica solo on record. STEVE CONNOLLY's been using a Stratocaster. He hired a '54 Tele for a few songs. Steve uses a Vox amp onstage. PETER BULL's using a DX7. Live he uses a Roland 300 for his acoustic piano sound. We used a Hammond B-3 organ on some tracks. JON SCHOFIELD plays a Fender Precision bass. On 'No You' he used a Gibson fretless prototype—the only one of its kind in the world. He uses Rotosound strings." The bass amp was an Ampeg B-15.

Paul does not recall which drums MICHAEL BARCLAY rented for this Los Angeles adventure. SCOTT LITT—the renter—says, "Vintage Pearl drums, with Zildjian cymbals." Okay, Scott, take over—what sort of microphones did you use? "Basically stock Sennheisers. 421s get used a lot for the drums, and Shure SMS7 microphones for the snare drum. I use the Sennheiser 441 for the bass amplifier. On guitars I use SMS7s as well as some condenser microphones—a small Neumann KM84 and a U87. Close to the amp I use a directional microphone right on the cabinet. If I want more ambience, I'll bring the mikes away from the cabinet and use an omni-directional pattern."

And for voices? "I think our two favorites were the Neumann U67, which is a tube microphone, and an AKG C12. Those were from the Beach Boys days. The studio we recorded in—Ocean Way—used to be United Western, which is where the Beach Boys worked. A lot of the stuff is left over. Those C12s are total Beach Boys mikes. That sort of inspired 'Moon in the Bed,' with its overlapping background parts and lots of oohs."

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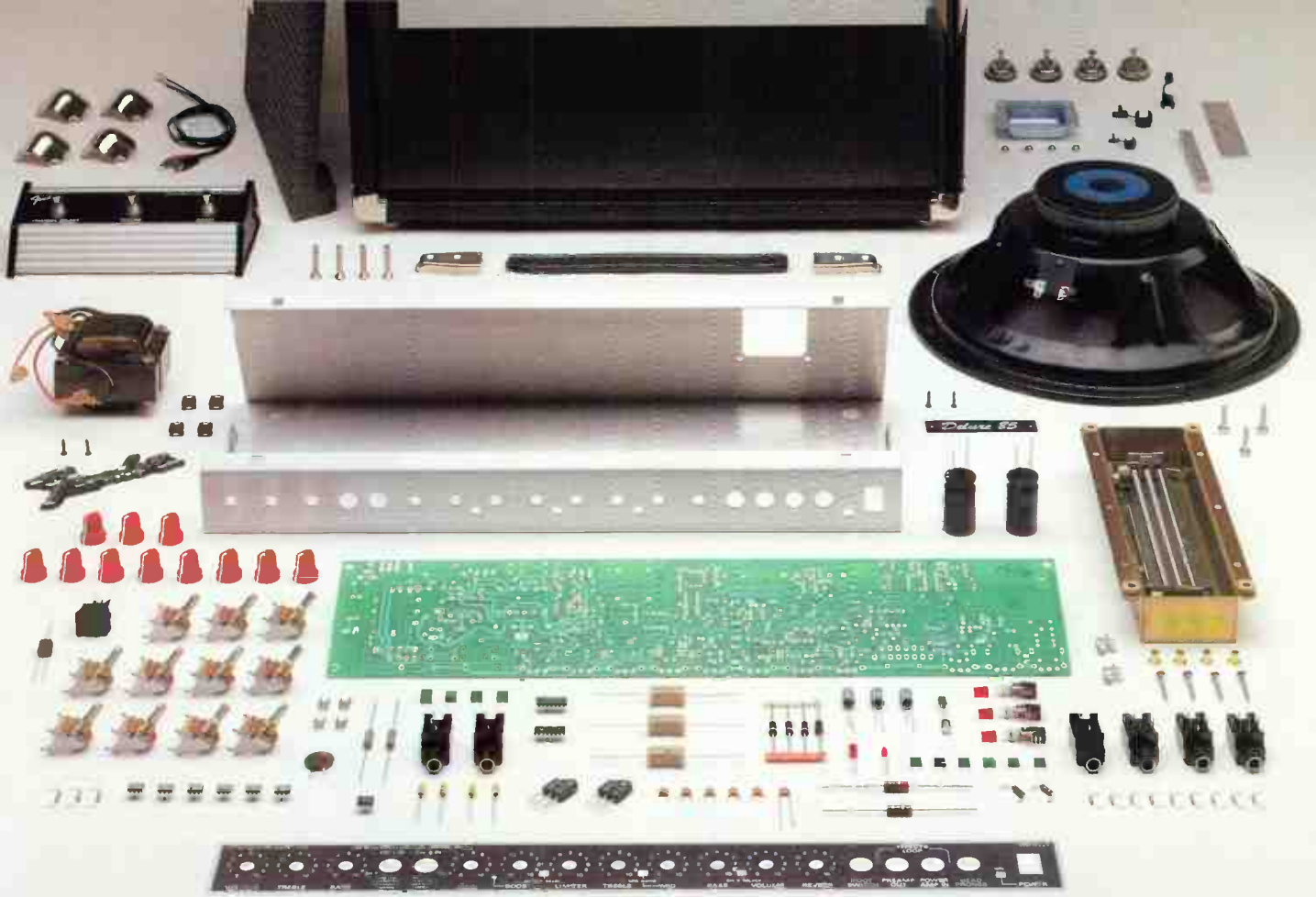
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sentiments everyone's fascinated with but most rock 'n' roll songwriters are nervous about articulating. "Don't Stand So Close to the Window" is the rare rock song in which a man expresses guilt and fear about illicit sex. ("Me and Mrs. Jones" is another, but there ain't many.) Kelly hits territory that's not well traveled.


Even "Careless," the most straightforward young man's rock song on the new album, has a non-macho message—"I was careless, I lost my tenderness." Kelly and the Messengers are flipping over what we expect from

blue-collar, meat-and-potatoes rock 'n' roll.

"But the other thing that's happened," Kelly notes, "with some of the other songs is that I've actually become more *cliché*. I've always wanted to write songs like 'Most Wanted Man' and 'Moon in the Bed' and 'She's a Melody,' which are direct love songs without any great twists. They are set nowhere, they don't mention details about children or drinking or quitting jobs or all that stuff. They're straight love lyrics, which I've always attempted to do. I always *start off* trying to write such a song, but these other

things creep in."

Those other things—from songs about sitting in the jungle waiting to be murdered to tunes about smothering one's wife with a pillow—sure gave Kelly's previous rockers some unique colors. Any regrets about any of them, Paul?

"There's a song on *Post* called 'Satisfy Your Woman' which tends to reinforce stereotyped attitudes between men and women. We've always argued about that song." See, his mom was right, he is a worrywart. But no song that's just too ugly to put into the world? "I felt that a bit with 'Incident on South Dowling,'" he admits. But surely the jokiness of the arrangement helped break the savagery of the subject. "That humor side of it makes it sicker," Kelly says. "I thought it was funny when I wrote it. I liked it. It's like the last verse of 'Everything's Turning to White.'" He sings the sweet waltz melody: "The newspaper said that the girl had been strangled to death and also molested." Kelly pauses for emphasis. "You write that and then you think, 'God, that sounds a little sick to me.' You stop for a minute. You stand back and say, *wooo*. And then you carry on." Kelly cracks a shy smile and reveals his motivation: "Deep down I'm a sick man." 

LITT


[cont'd from page 62] *ingful* but he had to put a little more into it. And he rose to that challenge, he went for that. That's why Michael's gotten into a whole other thing with his lyric writing and the way R.E.M.'s music has gone. Again, there's always the fans that go, 'Oh, we really loved the early records! You've really lost something! It doesn't have the texture!' All that stuff. But meanwhile it doesn't sound like work that's *scared*. It's work that's bold. And I'm into that. They're not scared to make statements. Because they're the people that they are, they meet a challenge. It has nothing to do with selling five million records, that doesn't interest them. It interests them to make a statement and if they see something wrong to try and make it right. And, yeah, in my shortsighted way that's how I view it too.

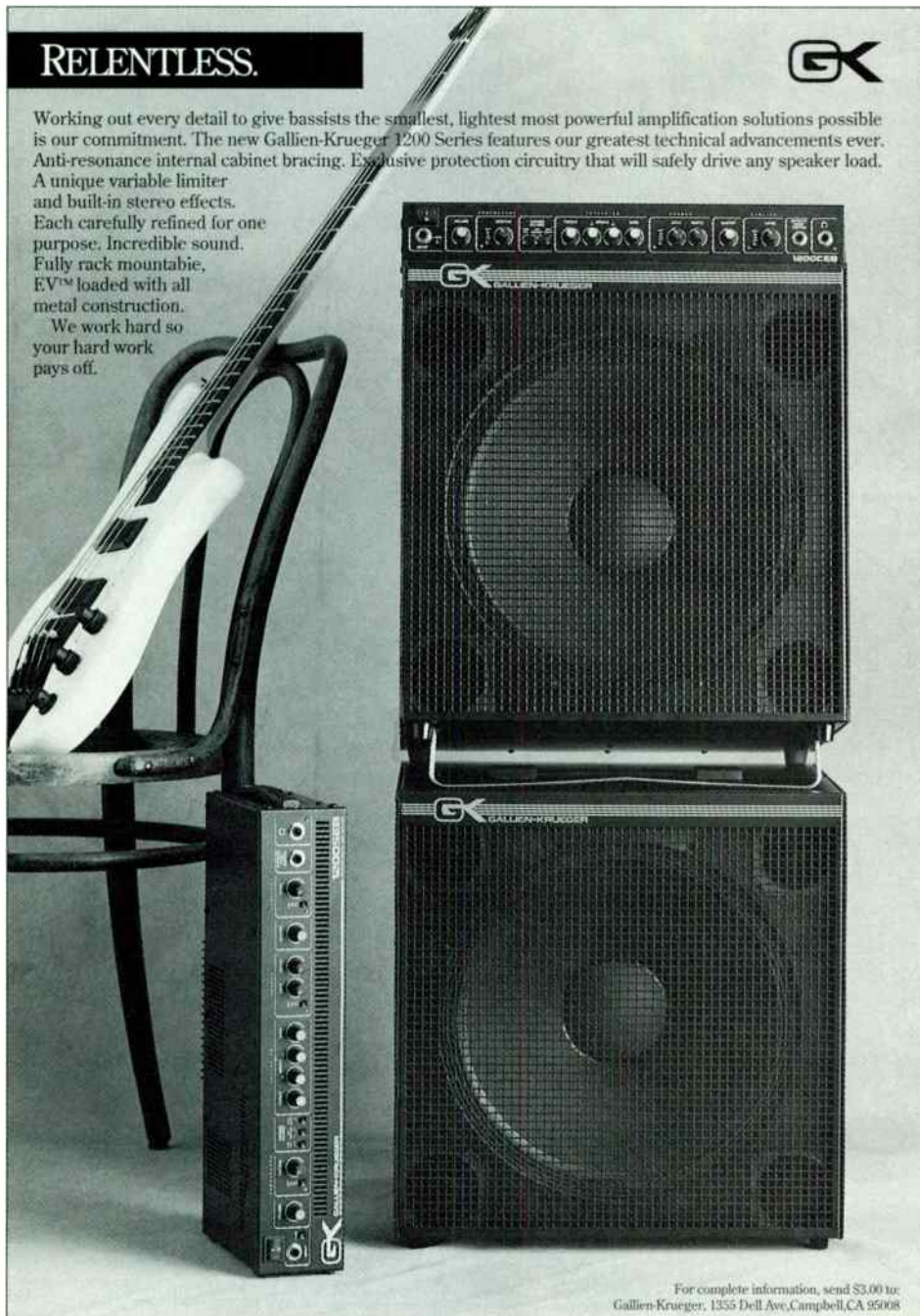
"I saw them open the Work Tour in London right after we finished *Document*. The first song was 'Finest Worksong' and it knocked me down! How powerful it was. Then everything made sense to me. I realized you can be really powerful. So that's sort of my thing in producing now. I started out as an en-

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gineer, but the little sound things don't really matter to me anymore. It's nice to make a record sound good, it's important, but you've got to somehow issue a challenge. And sometimes that doesn't work. It worked with the Indigo Girls. I don't know if it worked with Paul. But I think he's in a place now that's different from where he was and I think that's good. I think other stuff will come out of it; I think he'll approach making music in a different way."

Who can argue with a speech like that? Who would want to? The one small nitpick, though, is that while R.E.M.'s early work cried out for emboldening, Kelly & the Messengers are out of a foursquare, straightforward bar-band tradition.

"That's why those early Paul Kelly records don't have such a big influence on me," Litt says. "I have pretty different musical tastes. That bar-band feeling you put your finger on—I never got off on that shit. That may be a live thing, but it's not record-making. You can do it *once* to make a statement, but then you've got to move on. I feel about a guitar just the way I do about a voice: That's why the guitars sound really clean. It's not enough to turn up the feedback and find some atonal dissonance. That was fine five or six or eight years ago, but I think every note of every instrument should be concise. Then you know what you're dealing with. Next time you want to make a powerful guitar sound, know that it's not just turning up the distortion and moving the amp away, it might be something completely different. It could be tracking the part 10 times, it might be hiring five guitarists for that one chord.

"If there had been a lot of songs with the same theme, I could see making a record that sounds alike, like Lou Reed's *New York*. You get the same players, put one guitar on the left, one on the right, get the same sounds, roll tape and go for it. That works great. But you wouldn't treat an album like Paul's that way. This was trying to flesh out little stories. We tried to make each piece a very broad stroke. It's really straight. And we will live or die on how the songs are perceived." M

YOUNG

[cont'd from page 102] Young and Drayton leaned into a microphone and screamed the obscene refrain—then broke apart while Young stamped his foot on the stage, whirled around and played a guitar solo to rival his very best. Young in the throes of his muse is

always riveting, but this performance went beyond the usual St. Vitus dance. It was as if the guitar had come to life in his hand and Young was trying to wrestle it to the ground before it killed him. He choked the instrument's neck, lurching forward almost to the floor, snapped back and tore into another verse and another chorus. "Why do Iiiiiiiiiiiii—keep fuckin' up?" When he was done the crew burst into applause and cheers, "SNL" musical director G.E. Smith jumped up to shake Neil's hand and Elliot Roberts, his manager, attempted to get his ear. Young,

who appeared to still be on the far edge of his impulse, demanded a couple of stage details be changed and plowed toward the door. Roberts saluted, smiling, and said, "Yes, captain!" Young didn't notice. He was too far gone. M



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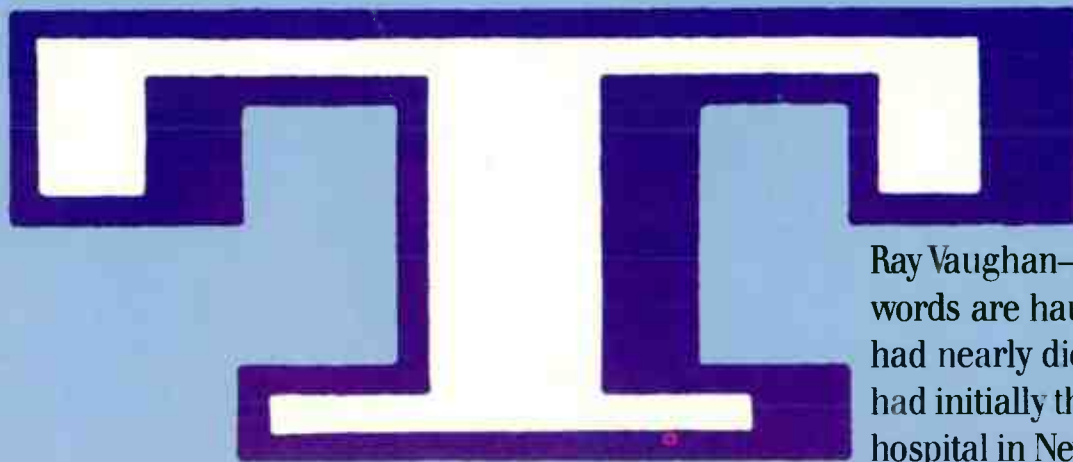
WORKING MUSICIAN

PRAYING THROUGH THE
GUITTAR





**Stevie Ray
Vaughan**
INTERVIEWED BY
Larry Coryell



*A wall of denial is fallin' down
It's fallin' so hard down to the ground
Never knew something so strong could be washed away by tears
But this wall of denial was just built on fear*

HIS IS THE FIRST verse of “Wall of Denial” by Stevie Ray Vaughan—a song—a *blues* song—about human revolution. The words are hauntingly close to me because eight years ago, when I had nearly died from another bout of battering myself with what I had initially thought to be creatively beneficent substances, I sat in a hospital in New Jersey crying my heart out over the possibility that I

Photograph: Lisa Seifert

could never smoke another joint. I thought grass and all the other stuff that went along with it (not including crack, which came on the scene later) was a necessary part of life. As it turned out, for the type of person I am, it's a requisite for death.

*We've all had our demons from the garden of white lies
Dressed them, amused them, pullin' wool over our eyes
Go so far as to love them to keep from letting them go
All the while they were killin' us but we couldn't let it show*

Right on, Stevie! Honesty! I know exactly what you're talkin' about! That stuff became my boss, my lover, my guru, my main squeeze—it told me what to do, when to do it—it ran my life and ruined my life, destroyed my core and killed my music.

*No matter what the trouble
We carry around inside
We're never safe from the truth
But in the truth we can survive
When this wall of denial comes
tumblin' down
Down to the ground*

When you realize the truth about yourself and accept it by starting to change you create a new structure in your life. Inside of that structure you can establish a new kind of freedom that far surpasses the old, besotted concepts of so-called "liberation." You feel a lot better, too.

I felt a lot better after this talk with Stevie. What a wonderful man, a seeking spirit, a giant in his field—the modern blues. Something funny though—when I arrived in his hotel room he said he liked my tune, "Put It Where You Want It." I thought he was referring to a title, "Park It Where You Want It," that I had done

years ago on a record called *Standing Ovation*. It turns out he did the whole interview under the assumption that I was Larry Carlton! Later that evening, at home, the phone rang and it was Stevie. He told me about the confusion. We both got a big laugh out of it. A day or two later he called from his Dallas home and pointed out to me that we had a couple of mutual friends in Texas. "Oh yeah, I remember that guy, how's he doin'? He's in there now, eh? Well, gimme his address and I'll drop him a line and encourage him. I'll be glad to let him know that there's life—positive, vibrant, true-tempered life—after 'denial.'"

CORYELL: *I would like to know when you first started getting into music; who your early influences were . . . if you can stand answering a question like that.*

VAUGHAN: No problem. I was born in South Dallas on October 3rd, '54. As far as I can remember I got my first guitar on my birthday in '61. It was a Roy Rogers made out of masonite with the little stencils on it. It wouldn't tune, so we took half the strings off and made it into

a bass. I kinda played bass behind my brother Jimmie. He started playing first. He got a guitar and the first day he made up three songs. And I saw that. Part of it I'm sure was being a little brother and watching big brother play and going, "Wow, me too!" But it was a real inspiration to see somebody pick up something and just floor it. And I saw how hard he worked at it, how much fun he was having doing it, and how good he was. Within a couple of years he was the hottest guitar player around.

He was in a band called the Swinging Pendulums first, then the Penetrations, and then the Chessmen. They changed the name to Texas, then changed it to the Storm. And in between all these things he was backing up people like Freddie King.

CORYELL: *Did you ever do anything like that?*

VAUGHAN: Not near so much as Jimmie. Very few times. Jimmie would go on the road with them and it's obvious that he learned a whole lot by doing that and I missed some things. At the same time, it was also a blessing for me because I ended up having to look for my own thing. Not that I think Jimmie doesn't have his own thing. He's

got his own thing as much as anybody I've ever heard. He got a lot of insight into rhythm playing and relaxing and holding back and playing in the right places. He got a lot from it. And a lot of mine is kind of florid—with guesswork.

CORYELL: *Yeah, but you're such a virtuoso.*

VAUGHAN: So is he.

CORYELL: *I've heard him and he's good, but you have what an Itzhak Perlman, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Charlie Parker or Jimi Hendrix had. You're a virtuoso. You can get around on an instrument just about better than anyone. Were you aware that you had this thing or did it just develop in the course of your love for the instrument?*

VAUGHAN: See, I'm still not aware of a lot of that. I'm just reach-

ing for things that sound right to me. Sometimes I find them, sometimes I don't. What I do is whatever really feels most comfortable right then.

CORYELL: *Was Jimmie your teacher?*

VAUGHAN: At first, Jimmie was my teacher because I was around him a lot and really respected what he was doing. And records . . . sitting there listening to records and playing along with them, going to see people, watching them.

As soon as Jimmie would get the idea that, "Oh, these people are just using these roots," he would go and immediately bring home all the old records. He had this knack for finding the real deal. So we were listening to the Beatles and Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy and B.B. King and Albert King and Freddie King and Lightnin' Hopkins and Kenny Burrell and Wes Montgomery and all kinds of stuff at the same time. And also the Stones and the Bluesbreakers and the Yardbirds and the Who and Hendrix. The way I perceived it is it was all just good music. And since I heard them all within a few years of each other, I never really noticed that this one was before that one. I



◆ Author Coryell and Vaughan discussing Bo Diddley ◆

just saw it as, well, all these different people from all these different places are playing this related kind of music.

CORYELL: *When I first heard Charlie Christian, I said, "Oh, he plays like Barney Kessel." And when I got older and was more interested in the chronology, I realized that Kessel got all this stuff from Christian. What was really funny in the '60s was that the white pop audiences got more of a kick out of seeing Mike Bloomfield playing like B.B. King than they did seeing B.B. King! When you're that age, you really don't care what came first. You just love the music and you're like a sponge absorbing all that stuff. Besides your brother Jimmie, was there any other musician who sat down and worked with you on the details of blues technique?*

VAUGHAN: No. I would sit down and listen to something and if I couldn't find it on the neck yet, I would learn how to find it *singing* it the best I could. Trying to find the sound with my lips and my mouth, doing some bastardized version of scat singing. Then I would learn how to make the sound with my fingers that I was making with my mouth. Now I seem to have lost that connection somehow.

CORYELL: *How long were you in Austin?*

VAUGHAN: Fifteen years.

CORYELL: '72 to '87.

VAUGHAN: Yeah, or '86, I guess. That was when I collapsed. We were on a tour in Europe. I saw it coming. I collapsed and had every kind of breakdown a person can have. And went and got some help and moved back to Dallas. Because by that time almost everybody I knew in Austin was who I got my stuff from, you know. Or hung out with because they had it. That's what happens with addiction of any kind; you just envelop yourself with that whole deal. I moved back to Dallas because it seemed like a new playground for me, even though I grew up there. And I wasn't surrounding myself with all the drugs or drinking or anything. I figured I'd spent a lot of time running away from myself and my family and that was a great way to get back to that. My mother still lived in Dallas. I figured I could be close by her and learn to know her again. And it's really helped me. It was a real neat thing to *tell* her that I needed her and for that to work out.

CORYELL: *I see a lot of what you're talking about in the lyrics of "Wall of Denial."*

VAUGHAN: Yeah. I had a real good time being able to write those songs, being part of writing them. The person who wrote the songs along with me, Doyle Bramhall, and I go way back. Doyle was the drummer and singer for the Chessmen.

We would sit down and talk about where we were in life in general and what had gone on all this time and where we were at now. We would boil it down, and then we would write it down and see how it fit with the lyrics that one of us had put together already. It kind of capped off the ideas that we already had going, and in some cases changed the whole root of it. But really, with the songs we were trying to show spirit, strength and hope.

CORYELL: *The line about the truth, I've never heard it said like this and I really like it: "We're never safe from the truth but in the truth we can survive." I think a lot of people can relate to that.*

VAUGHAN: That's something that I'm trying to learn. 'Cause it seems to me that I've spent a lot of years—and I'm sure a lot of people

have—trying to hide from the truth.

CORYELL: *In the '60s, once everybody found out who was messing around with drugs, found out that the Stones did it, McCartney was taking acid, we said, "These guys are making millions of dollars off their music. They must be utilizing these mood-altering substances to enhance their creativity, so we better do it too!" Plus, in my case, I remember being told by so many people just a few years older than me, "You don't have any soul, you don't have any feeling. If you're gonna be a good player, you're gonna have to get strung out." Little did I realize that they were addicts and that I was enabling them to get high! A combination of that and the general notion that drugs were good for you really threw an entire generation into a self-destructive pattern.*

VAUGHAN: The only saving thing to me is that some of us had to go through those things to get to where we are now. So that possibly a lot of other people don't have to go through the same things. They can learn from our mistakes.

CORYELL: *We'd better talk about David Bowie. Did David Bowie discover you in Texas? Was that the thing that made you famous?*

VAUGHAN: There's a bunch of different factors that caused recognition to happen. And I can't say it was *one* of them. One of them was a lot of hard work by a lot of different people that opened doors for us. The people that I grew up listening to gave us all this music

that was like a springboard. Then, I have to say this, when the Thunderbirds first got together, there were a lot of us doing just local club gigs in Austin and every once in a while going into Dallas or Houston or San Antonio and playing a little club with five or 10 people in it. And the Thunderbirds went, "Hey, we ain't got no gigs anywhere. We don't have a record deal. We just have a good band. We're gonna get a van and we're gonna put our gear in it and we're gonna find some gigs." And a lot of the rest of the bands around Austin went, "Well, they got balls, man! If they can do that, we can do that too." And everybody started really putting a lot

of effort into it. The Thunderbirds went and they got a record deal and that opened doors for people like myself to say, "Maybe there's a chance." Even though record companies were telling us that nobody wants to hear this crap. It gave us the reason to go, "Well, I don't believe that. You put out a record and see what happens." Now in the meantime we'd gotten a video of us playing a flood benefit in Austin that was seen by the Stones. They got us a gig here in New York at the Danceteria for a private party for them. They were considering signing us to their label, and around the same time, Lou Ann Barton, who used to be with Double Trouble, had gotten a record deal with Jerry Wexler.

We had gone to see her at her record release party. Jerry Wexler was there. We played the next night. He stayed around to see us and got real interested. Between our manager and Jerry Wexler, they convinced the Montreux Jazz Festival to hire us, even though we didn't have a record deal. John Paul Hammond played the festival and recorded us along with a little bit of everybody else and brought that tape back to his father, John Hammond, who got real interested in us. And at the same festival David Bowie and Jackson Browne saw us. Jackson Browne offered us his studio free, to make a record. And while we were doing *Texas Flood*, David Bowie called and asked me to play on his record.

"A guitar makes
more sense to me strung
backwards. The highs are
on the top and the lows
are on the bottom."

CORYELL: *Certain solos stand out in pop music, like Eddie Van Halen's thing with Michael Jackson. And your solo on David Bowie's "China Girl." James Burton's solo on an old Ricky Nelson record. I don't know who played the solo on Connie Francis' "Lipstick on Your Collar." But he was a great musician.*

VAUGHAN: There was a record on Red Lightning out of England. It's a compilation album called *Blues in D Natural* and there's two songs, "Believe in a Woman" and "Boot Hill." The record says, "Sly Williams, California(?) 1958-59(?)" And then it says, "Sly Williams, guitar/vocals; sax/drums/piano/bass, unknown." [laughs] And you know, whoever it is playing guitar, if Hendrix didn't hear this guy, it's hard to believe.

CORYELL: *There's often unknown people who teach you the basics of music. My guy had this record called "Come On" by Earl King, and he was crazy about the fact that the guitar soloist partially arpeggiated in the E minor chord. My guy went nuts because he would play the G natural and wouldn't bend the G natural towards the G sharp. He thought this was the greatest thing that ever happened. And so every band in Seattle subsequently learned that song. And when I met Hendrix in New York in '66 or '67, I mentioned that, 'cause we were talking about songs that were indigenous to Seattle. The next time I heard that song it was on the radio and Hendrix had recorded it. I don't know whether it was at my suggestion or not, but I feel a strong connection from my unknown teacher—who's probably in a hospital somewhere in Spokane, Washington, dying of alcoholism—who was so adamant about teaching me the basics of blues. While I was listening to Wes Montgomery and John Coltrane and using that stuff as a foundation for what I wanted to do, he stayed right there in the earth part. Great virtuosity in that area of music which is roughly known as blues and rock 'n' roll never really changes, 'cause the minute you go out of it, you're into fusion or something else. Anyway, the David Bowie thing probably catapulted you into large-scale recognition. How did you feel about it?*

VAUGHAN: The only part that was hard to deal with was that we made the record and then there was to be a tour. But different business aspects of things really got in the way, and all the relationships ended up with the wrong people having to butt heads. And I was right in there. It ended up where friendships got sidelined and business crap got in the way. We recorded and we did rehearsals. And the whole thing blew apart two days before the tour was to start. And I really didn't like the position that that put either the band or myself in. And I wanted to play with the band that I'm with, Double Trouble. They were gonna be on the tour and it wasn't working out and it ended up where I had to finally really look at it and given the situation . . . I wanted to play with my band anyway. No slight meant to anyone, but I'm in Double Trouble 'cause it's about my favorite band. And I'm still with this band because I still love this band, more than I

ever have. We've grown more and more like a family. And it continues to grow stronger and stronger.

CORYELL: *The singing that you do on In Step is great. There's one phrase that you sing where you go [sings] tonic, dominant seventh, fifth, fourth and then to the minor third and then bend up. That's a hard one to sing.*

VAUGHAN: It's real hard. I still don't have the pop between those notes like I would like. I listen to Bobby Bland or B.B., and Little Willie John and Johnnie Taylor, on and on and on and on. And Wolf, of course. I don't get the chance to get home very often 'cause we're on the road a lot. I'll walk in the house and I'll look at my records. I'll just thumb through them and I don't even necessarily have to put them on at first. Just looking at the covers I can remember all the feelings. It's like, "Okay, I'm home, here's my books. And here's my roots." And then I'll put something on and it's like being rejuvenated. If my singing or my playing's improving it's because I'm growing and of course I'm gonna keep trying to get that to happen.

CORYELL: *When you put the octaves in "Riviera Paradise," the thing that I notice that separates you from someone like Robert Cray—who I have tremendous respect for—is your ability to go beyond the boundaries of the structure that you set up. And to invoke the spirit of Wes Montgomery. And the octaves were in tune and the phrasing was great. You did something on the interlude where maybe you're hitting the guitar or something, what is that strange thing?*

VAUGHAN: That was me missing the chord. [laughter]

CORYELL: *You don't have to divulge any secrets. That was great.*

VAUGHAN: It's funny, I knew that we were going to play the song once and that's it. Why do it again? To me the song was a much-needed chance to turn the lights off in the studio and basically, I don't know

any other way to put it, pray through my guitar.

CORYELL: *Ah, man, that's an excellent way to put it.*

VAUGHAN: And be able to express some of the things to some of the people that I don't know how to talk to right now about what I need to talk to them about, say the things that I wish I could say, to become willing. Okay? And that's what I was doing. And it's funny, everybody else was in a separate room. I was in an isolation booth so I could be with my amps. They were all in the big studio with a window. And I just turned the lights off in my room. They couldn't see me. The drummer was tuning his drums while we were playing. I had my back to the engineer and the producer, Jim Gaines. They were in the control room going completely nuts because the tape was about to run out. And it was funny because none of this ever crossed my mind. I just knew we were gonna play the song once and it was all gonna be just fine.

CORYELL: *You mean to tell me that "Riviera Paradise" is one take?*

VAUGHAN: Yeah.

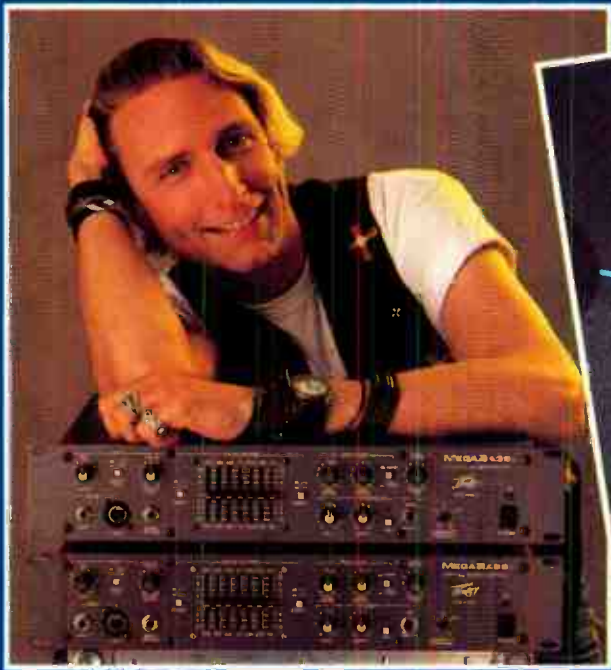
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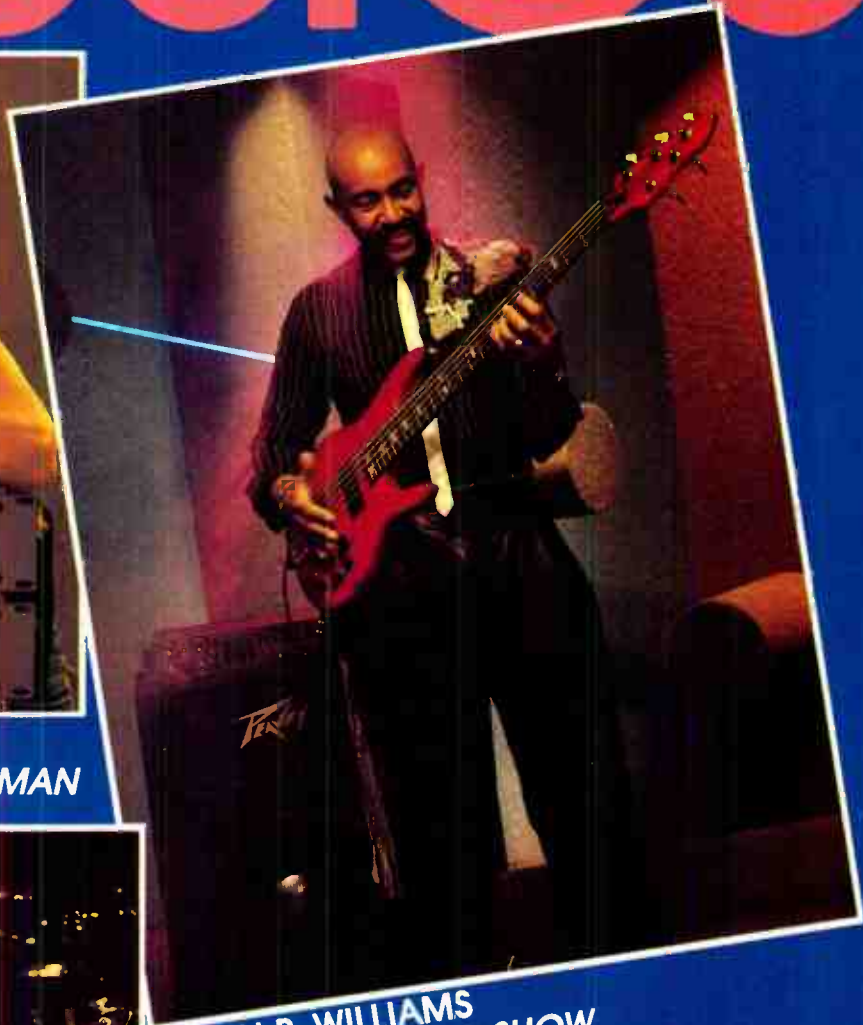
◆ Stevie and hero Jimmie: "Yeah, but you're a virtuoso." ◆

Late night

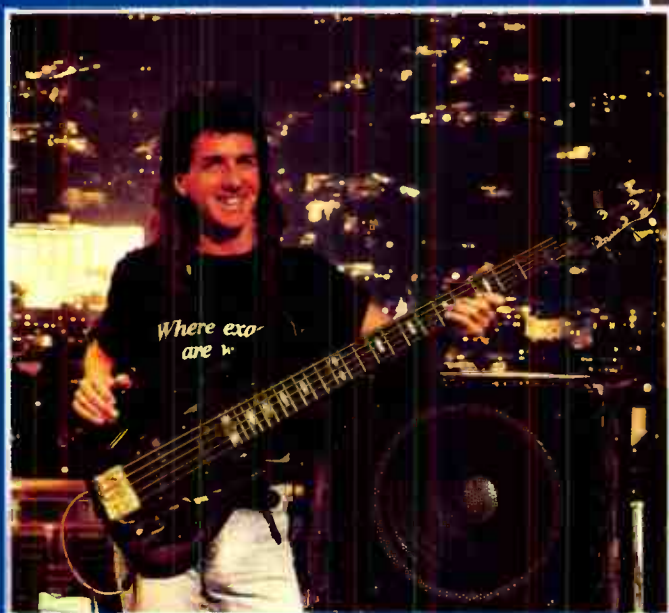
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but it cuts through.

VAUGHAN: That's the point.

CORYELL: You think tuning down a half step helps with that?

VAUGHAN: I think it does. I do like to tune to E as well. I like to tune to D.

CORYELL: "Let Me Love You Baby." That's Willie Dixon.

VAUGHAN: See, I'd always known that song and "Leave My Girl Alone" as Buddy Guy songs. And when we tried to turn it in that way, the Library of Congress told us that it was a Willie Dixon song. They both claim that it's their song. The way I've always heard it, it's a Buddy Guy song. Willie Dixon does one as well. I don't know if they're the same song. I don't know. I respect them both, very much.

CORYELL: Did you play at the opening of Buddy Guy's new club in Chicago?

VAUGHAN: Yeah, I did. It's a real challenge to go play with Buddy Guy because he's Buddy Guy and I love how he plays. He's not the technical player that some of the other ones are. He doesn't play as clean, but he plays from a place that I've never heard anybody play. A place inside. And as much as I respect B.B. King and Albert King for how perfectly they play, Buddy Guy's style is just as important to me. And as in tune and perfect as someone else might be, there are also times when nobody could dare get out of tune as cool as Buddy Guy. It makes it a whole new world. Not that he always plays out of tune, but when he gets out of tune, it's wonderful!

CORYELL: When I saw B.B. King in L.A. he was really out of tune. But he sounded fantastic.

VAUGHAN: And the way he sings, that's where I really get into trouble with Buddy Guy. We'll go and play and egg each other on and play this and that until we turn into guitar players from Mars or something. And then he starts singing. He'll sing a couple of lines and stick the mike

in front of me and, of course, what are you gonna do? [laughter] On top of all that, he's laughin' at you. But we always end up playing a couple of hours. The same with Albert Collins. Same with Lonnie Mack. Lonnie Mack's another great big influence on me. Albert King.

CORYELL: Who has the best vibrato, do you think?

VAUGHAN: Oh, God.

CORYELL: That's not a fair question.

VAUGHAN: That's not, 'cause there's so many different kinds.

CORYELL: I loved Clapton's vibrato.

VAUGHAN: I did too. That's one thing that I practiced.

CORYELL: And then Hendrix was even more refined.

VAUGHAN: Yeah, Hendrix's touch was incredible to me. He was very much an influence on my whole life. I don't know why he died and I'm still alive, going through a lot of the same problems. I don't see how his life was intentionally destroyed. I don't know that he wasn't trying to stop the destruction. I may be wrong. Listening to his lyrics, it seems to me that he was reaching up.

CORYELL: In a very spiritual direction. Towards the end of his life

Hendrix was gonna do some stuff with Miles and some other people. And everybody says that Hendrix would have become a jazz musician. Do you think so?

VAUGHAN: I think he would have done that, too. I don't see that he would have had to put an end to one side of him and play the other. Maybe for short periods of time. I think he would have ended up incorporating it all.

CORYELL: Do you feel any kind of responsibility to carry on the advancing spirit of his musical tradition?

VAUGHAN: I do. I'm not always sure what it is about my feeling of responsibility for that. But I try to. And it has always been that way. It's got to do with all of the influences that I've had and that I see in other players and other musicians, other artists. That seems to be what inspired us all—and why leave them behind? It's not necessarily just hanging onto the past, but it's using all that influence and all that energy and all that feeling to further things.

CORYELL: If Hendrix had survived his drug addiction, he would have probably written a song like "Wall of Denial" with a very

humanistic, positive message. Because during the '60s when we were all out there, we had really impossible dreams. We were shooting for things that maybe weren't even there. And because so many of us were so heavily stimulated or sedated or anesthetized, life was pretty crazy. But there was still the desire to be very, for want of a better word, cosmic. And that abstraction was reflected in his lyrics. And of course the last song on the Band of Gypsies album, where the amp is distorting so much that his guitar sounds like a synthesizer, was very abstract. And what I see in your playing and Jeff Beck and Johnny Winter is a lot less of that abstraction simply because it's not a valid area to go into at this point. With you and Johnny Winter, I really see a reflection of the culture



◆ "I'm still trying to learn what to leave out." ◆

that you grew up in. With Jeff Beck it's an expression of the culture that he admired. And of course in my own thing, because I love jazz, this is an expression of the culture that I admired. I was not of that culture. I was just another middle-class person. I grew up in a very bland area of the United States after I left Texas.

VAUGHAN: Jeff Beck and I will be touring together in November.

CORYELL: Unbelievable! I can't wait to see that!

VAUGHAN: I can't wait to do it. I just talked to him earlier. The last time we played together it was my brother Jimmie and Jeff and me on guitar. We all met up in Hawaii to do this CBS convention. And we rehearsed a couple of times and smoked cigarettes and went crazy and then went and played! And just had a blast.

CORYELL: He can make that guitar talk. Whooo . . .

VAUGHAN: Yeah. He did this solo in Hawaii that night that was unbelievable. It actually took me watching it on videotape for about a month to really grasp what he played. And whether he's pulling our leg and he really knows what he's doing before he does it, I don't know. It doesn't really matter. But he finished this solo and got this big grin

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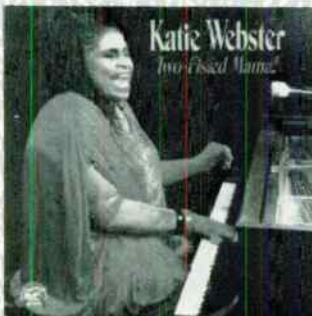
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—ROLLING STONE

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on his face and stuck his hand in his pocket and stood there for a while like, "You can put that one in the bank." It was amazing.

CORYELL: *I love the way all you guys play but I hesitate to go to your gigs unless I'm sure I can be pretty far away from the actual source of the music. 'Cause it's really loud. Is that necessary? 'Cause I really believe in order to get a certain kind of sound, you've gotta turn it up.*

VAUGHAN: For me, that still seems to be the case. However, a lot of times now, I'm using a plexiglas shield in front of the loudest amps.

Sometimes I use those JBL lenses that used to be on their PA cabinets. They're high-end diffusers, or something. Sometimes I use those on some of the speakers so that it's not so blunt.

CORYELL: *My friend Al Di Meola really has qualms about going out with another electric band; he's got tinnitus. Do you wear ear plugs?*

VAUGHAN: No, our keyboard player, Reese Wynans, does.

CORYELL: *Let's talk about him! He's just fantastic.*

VAUGHAN: Reese does one of the most amazing things that I've ever seen and I cannot figure out how he does it. He's got a MIDI piano, with a pitch change on it. And a lot of times he'll change the piano keyboard to where he's playing a tune just like I am. And he'll leave his B3 and his other one tuned regular. And he'll be playing both of them at the same time a half step apart from each other! The first time I saw him do that, we were playing overseas and the power was down, so his B3 was a half step slow. And he was playing all these runs, harmony runs, together in two different keys! He was just playing his ass off, but he was playing different; it was new ideas. And I said, "What's happening, man? Where'd all this come from all of a

sudden?" And he went, "Oh, you know, this was going on over here and this was going on over here and it was just kind of a new challenge. It was real fun!" [laughter] I went, "Wow!!"

CORYELL: *You mentioned playing with two other guitarists and you were all in different keys; who was that?*

VAUGHAN: Lonnie Mack, Albert Collins and me. Albert King tunes a little bit different, too. He'll have you hit an E6 chord and he'll tune his little E to your B string fretted and then on down. I'm kinda slow sometimes; it took me a long time to figure out if you move your finger down three or four frets to the C sharp, it's the same thing. And if you tune there, these bends that he does are real easy.

CORYELL: *He tunes his B string to what?*

VAUGHAN: Hit an E6 chord. He tunes his little E to your B string fretted, which is a . . .

CORYELL: *C sharp.*

VAUGHAN: Yeah. And then his B string to your G string. And then, of course, it's upside down. And that's another thing I practice a lot. In fact, a guitar makes more sense to me strung backwards.

CORYELL: *Really? Do you ever perform that way?*

VAUGHAN: Not very often. But I go through phases when I can play that way. And it makes more sense to me that way. The highs are on the top and the lows are on the bottom. And I can see patterns a lot easier. And I'm not so restricted to my usual patterns.

CORYELL: *Your control of bending strings is so much better than just about anybody else's that you can sound like a slide. You're able to bend the second string and sometimes the first string more than a*



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minor third. I only ever saw Albert King . . .

VAUGHAN: That's where I got it.

CORYELL: . . . bend a string up to a fifth and down to the tonic. You understand these terms, right?

VAUGHAN: Kind of.

CORYELL: I hope you don't read music. I would be disappointed.

VAUGHAN: No, I don't. I tried to learn before and nobody would teach me.

CORYELL: Don't!

VAUGHAN: That's what they said.

CORYELL: Don't. Maybe I'm wrong 'cause I'm kind of old-fashioned but I think that you really are carrying the banner forward for blues. I think you really should keep that. If you get too academic then you're gonna get more into jazz, 'cause you're coming very close to jazz now. This "Riviera Paradise" is really like a jazz piece. My son saw you at Radio City Music Hall and told me it was the best performance he had ever seen.

VAUGHAN: That was right after a treatment. It was a good feeling to know that I didn't need all the crap to keep going.

CORYELL: On the contrary, it actually ruins you. People who knew Charlie Parker say that at the end he couldn't play! He sounded terrible! I know for a fact that just about no musician can continue to play good on the stuff. Not even the most inveterate ones. Not even the ones who make jokes about "The reason I can play loaded is because I practice loaded." Because it is a disease and first your values go, and then your mind goes, and then your body goes. A musician can be

amoral if he chooses to be, but once his mind and his body stop working for him, then that muse, that magic spirit which permeates both the inner and outer worlds of the artist, is gonna turn on him.

VAUGHAN: Yeah, the obsession with the quick fix becomes not just a crutch, but everything to us. And then what really matters gets pushed out the window. And I don't like it. It's real obvious to me now and I'm glad that I went through what I did. I learned from it and I'm learning from it now, to this day. I would never have gotten here if I hadn't gone through it.

CORYELL: If you had it to do over, you'd do it the same way?

VAUGHAN: I can't say . . . I don't know. I don't know.

CORYELL: What I'm hearing is because of the pain, the obstacles that you had to overcome, you've gained a lot of strength.

VAUGHAN: Yeah. Yeah.

CORYELL: My son said after he saw you that he had never heard anything like that in his life. He said it was really loud and full of life. And you had a sign on the stage that said, "DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS." You were playing two wah-wahs at the same time. Now, how do you do that?

VAUGHAN: Sit on a stool. [laughter] Well, after a while, I got two wah-wahs and a piece of rack-mount and duct-taped it on top of both of the pedals. I found that you can stomp on one corner in the front and turn one of them on. Or stomp in the middle and turn both of them on. They actually boost each other and cancel certain things. So it's a real neat deal. Or you can have them separate and hold one in a certain place and work the other. Or you can work them both at the

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same time and just be listening, and leave it to chance, and see what comes through. But they tend to boost each other and some really neat overtones and things come out.

CORYELL: *To a young guitarist who's just starting out who loves you and loves Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck, who am I leaving out? Steve Morse, maybe . . .*

VAUGHAN: How could we get them all in here? There's still a lot of the original guys, Hubert Sumlin, for example, and Buddy Guy and Albert Collins.

CORYELL: *Hubert Sumlin did the solos on Howlin' Wolf records. His ability to bend strings!*

VAUGHAN: Isn't he! He's one of those guys that kind of plays slide with no slide. He and Otis Rush [whistles] and . . . Hubert Sumlin's one of the most original guys, one of the most original "styles" you know. But it's hard to say that, in a way. 'Cause, like, look at Bo Diddley.

CORYELL: *He can't play much.*

VAUGHAN: But he sure can!

CORYELL: *Not compared to what you guys do.*

VAUGHAN: Well, it comes back down to what's important.

CORYELL: *He's more of an entertainer.*

VAUGHAN: But if you listen to what he's doing, it's so damn funky.

CORYELL: *Oh, yeah. He's funky and he's original. But if I'm a young guitar player, I'm not gonna emulate Bo Diddley. Bo Diddley is not a strong soloist. And most of the people who take up the instrument want to become soloists. That's just a fact of life. But the question I was getting to was, how important is your equipment? 'Cause when I was*

playing, especially when I was doing R&B gigs, I didn't care what kind of guitar I had; I didn't care what kind of amplifier I had. My attitude was, well, I can get a sound with anything 'cause I love music so much! And I had a lot of problems. Guys would come up and say, "You played great but your sound wasn't so good."

VAUGHAN: You know, I go back and forth on that. Depending on what I'm trying to do, sometimes the most screwed-up guitar and screwed-up amp causes certain things to happen that would never happen if I had my *perfect* rig. And I'm always looking for a better sound. But I'll listen to old Howlin' Wolf or Muddy Waters records and I'll notice that for a lot of things, there's just no way to get that sound or that feeling through a great, perfectly working amp.

CORYELL: *Right. Half the time there was a hole in the speaker . . .*

VAUGHAN: Yeah! Yeah! Like on "Train Kept A Rollin'" . . . I talked to Paul Burlison about all that and he said what really happened was on the way to the studio he dropped his amp and it broke a tube. And that's why it sounded that way. And everybody thought he did all these tricks to his amp!

CORYELL: *We used to take tubes out of our amps to get it to sound more funky. "If you take two out it really sounds funky!"* [laughs]

VAUGHAN: I took straight pins and stuck holes in the speakers . . .

CORYELL: *You really come from the tradition! Let's talk about "live" as opposed to "studio."*

VAUGHAN: I do prefer live recording. I have had fun building a song. And it's funny, the ones that I've built on, in some ways, sound live to me as well. This is an example. The song "Empty Arms" on

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Soul to Soul. Myself and the bass player, Tommy Shannon, were in the studio just kind of messin' around, playing "I Pity the Fool" or something by Bobby Bland. I was just practicing playing drums. And we recorded a song's worth, and then I went back and decided to do "Empty Arms" that way. We had been doing it faster and in a different feel. I played drums, Tommy played bass and I went back and played a rhythm part. Then I played an organ part on my guitar through a Leslie, sang it, played the solo and then had the keyboard player play a piano part on it. We actually recorded the song in C and it was real slow and it didn't feel as good for the song. So we sped it up to D with a Varispeed. And I played part of the song in C and then I'd do parts in D. The whole song is all in different keys and everything and we'd just speed things up and slow them down to record things. But my solo and my guitar parts are all in D and I sang it in D. But just to find things we would go back and forth between the two. That was one of the songs that I really had fun doing that on. And it made me realize that there's something valid that I can use there as well. My favorite way to do things is live, with everybody playing at the same time. And only fixing things that really screw up what everybody else did right.

CORYELL: *What about length of solos live? Do you consciously try to keep them short if you know you're recording?*

VAUGHAN: If I know I'm recording, I try to get to the point. It's hard for me to do. *[laughs]*

CORYELL: *You have a lot to say. You're also able to pack a lot of information into one chorus when you have to.*

VAUGHAN: Well, I'm still trying to learn what to leave out. And I

DOUBLE TREBLE

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN loves his Strats and calls them by name. He's got a '59 that he calls "Number 1" with a left-handed neck and a left-handed tremolo bar. "Stevie's actually broken that tremolo bar right off," says guitar tech Rene Martinez. "He just hands it to me and I put another one on right there at the show." Then there's "Butterscotch." Actually there are two by that name—a '61 and a '62. And don't forget "Red"—that's his '65. Stevie also plays "Charlie," custom-made by the late great Charlie Werz of Dallas. It's got Danelectro pickups and is called the E-flat model. Stevie tunes all his guitars down a half and uses big fat strings (.013-.058). Effects include an old Ibanez Tube Screamer, a Vox Wah and an old Fuzzface built by Roger Meyer, Hendrix's effects man. Roger also provided an HFX—a kind of noise gate—and an Octavia—an octave divider that Stevie loves. When it comes to amps it's "whatever works." Stevie currently travels with two Fender Super Reverbs and two Fender Vibroverbs. He's also got a couple of Vibrotones—a mutant Leslie speaker-type contraption built by Fender. Other amps include Howard Dumble Steel String Singers and Marshall Majors (a '60s vintage P.A. head).

TOMMY SHANNON plays an Austin custom-made bass called an A Bass and a custom from Dallas made by Zak Berry, a former compadre of Charlie Werz. It's called Zak's Axe. His amp is made by A.M.P. and goes through Hartke cabinets. Drummer **CHRIS LAYTON** uses a Tama set with Sabian cymbals. **REESE WYNANS** plays his faithful Hammond B3 with two Leslie speakers, a Roland Digital Piano and a Korg M1.



wanna always at least keep in mind that it's not just, "Go play a bunch of notes." It's what those notes say or what's said through those 12 notes that we use. I have to constantly remind myself that that's really all there is. In our scale, there's only 12 notes with whatever slides between. It's really a lot simpler than I choose to think it is.

CORYELL: *Do you think you play better onstage?*

VAUGHAN: Sometimes. I don't know. There's nights when I feel like I play better and there's nights when I feel like, for lack of a better way to say it, the whitest guy that walks. What do you do? You keep trying.

CORYELL: *Are you conscious about changing something about the performance onstage if you know it's being recorded?*

VAUGHAN: Well, I'm playing it for that day. The way I like to look at it is if that's the last time I ever got to play, I better give it everything I've got. Because it sure would be a drag to look back and go, "Well, blew that one . . ."

CORYELL: *Your playing is great on this record: It's a real gift, to have the essence of virtuosity inside you. But the urgency—God, I*

sound like a critic—[laughs]—the urgency in the playing on "Tightrope" and I think "Wall of Denial" really blew my mind. You seem to dig down deep and pull out even a little bit more. And if you look at the words . . .

VAUGHAN: That's where it's coming from.

CORYELL: *The emotional depth of the playing matches the lyrics.*

VAUGHAN: It was real important to me on those songs especially, to try to make it a special deal, because of what the songs are about to me. It was real important to me to get as much emotion and as much feeling and as much urgency into those songs. It was real important to me that those songs stand out. I didn't want them just to be something with some preaching lyrics and kinda go by the wayside. Because what's going on in those songs, what they mean to me, is why I'm alive



◆ "Sometimes I feel like the whitest guy that walks." ◆

now. And it's a chance to share experience, strength and hope with everybody who's listening. And even those who aren't. Because I know I wouldn't listen for a long time. I couldn't. I didn't know how.



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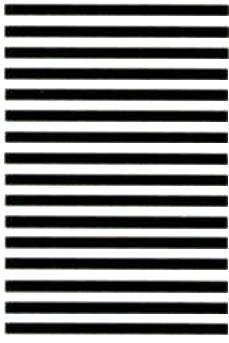
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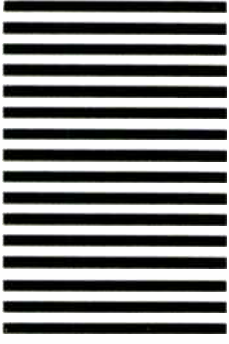
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GRATEFUL DEAD

[cont'd from page 44] You run out of it, finally, if you're like me. The hassle isn't worth it anymore. Really, I needed a break from myself. I was burned out by the '70s, burned out on myself, on what was happening . . . It happens to me periodically, just like it does musically. Several waves of burnout caught up with me. That sort of malaise you get when your friends are dying around you. You start to wonder, 'What the hell am I living for, exactly?' Things don't seem to be moving. Fortunately all the personal things were passing, not permanent. I don't think it makes you play any different. If anything it makes you think that you have plenty of time to play anything you want to play. So either you can do a lot in there, or not much. If anything, the worst part is that you start to tune shit out; heroin is a little too good for that, it's the ultimate comfort drug. I understand perfectly why people use it. It would be a nice old-age drug. But it's definitely wrapped up in itself; it doesn't let you go anywhere.

"The junkie space is so protected . . . you get into having everything covered. The idea that you don't have to take a stash with you, you don't have to worry about where you're going to score, frees you. Which is the same reason you get into it; you want to have all that stuff

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under control, all under one roof, all your desires in one place. It's like a maintenance thing, really. Here's a way to maintain myself emotionally and physically, it's all right here. It's a lazy person's way of doing something. So when you take the lid off it, you're freeing all the wild things that were there to begin with. It may be an artificial shot in the arm, but there it is. It makes you think, 'Hey, I think I'd like to jump out of an airplane' . . . something really weird. You're ready to take on different shit."

So what's the point of music?

"People need celebration in their life. It's part of what it means to be a human. You need music, I don't know why, it's probably one of those Joe Campbell questions, why we need ritual. We need magic. And bliss. And power, myth and celebration and religion in our lives and music is a good way to encapsulate a lot of it. Which brings us back to our fans. There is something religious about our thing, but the notion of what religion is has gotten sadly rarefied in that it's a part of the basic human experience, like eating now. The desire on our fans' part is to have some high moments in your life, some mystery. So we've made an effort to not contextualize our material. To leave it ambiguous, on purpose. We've talked about being more and more inexact. We have made an effort to make the lyrics as obscure as possible. In a lot of situations we've eliminated what sense there was in a song in favor of the shades of ambiguity. We're not explicit about anything, politics, meaning, anything. If all of us in the band could agree about any one thing," Garcia laughs, "we might conceivably come to a conclusion about something." M

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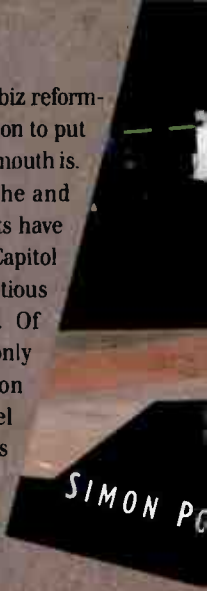
ONE OF THE FEW positive things about the music business in the past few years is that it has gotten back to artist development," declares Tom Whalley, Capitol Records' vice president of A&R. "I think three, four, five years ago it was a real atmosphere of immediate gratification. You had to sign an act, put a record out, have success and only then you could move on. And if you didn't have a hit, you didn't make another record."

To Whalley, the task of A&R is creating careers, not merely hits. What's the difference?

"You can have hits and not have careers—any given record company at any given time can probably push a record into being a hit, but that doesn't mean the act's going to be around again. And that situation has changed a bit in the business.

What I'm trying to do is to have careers with our acts."

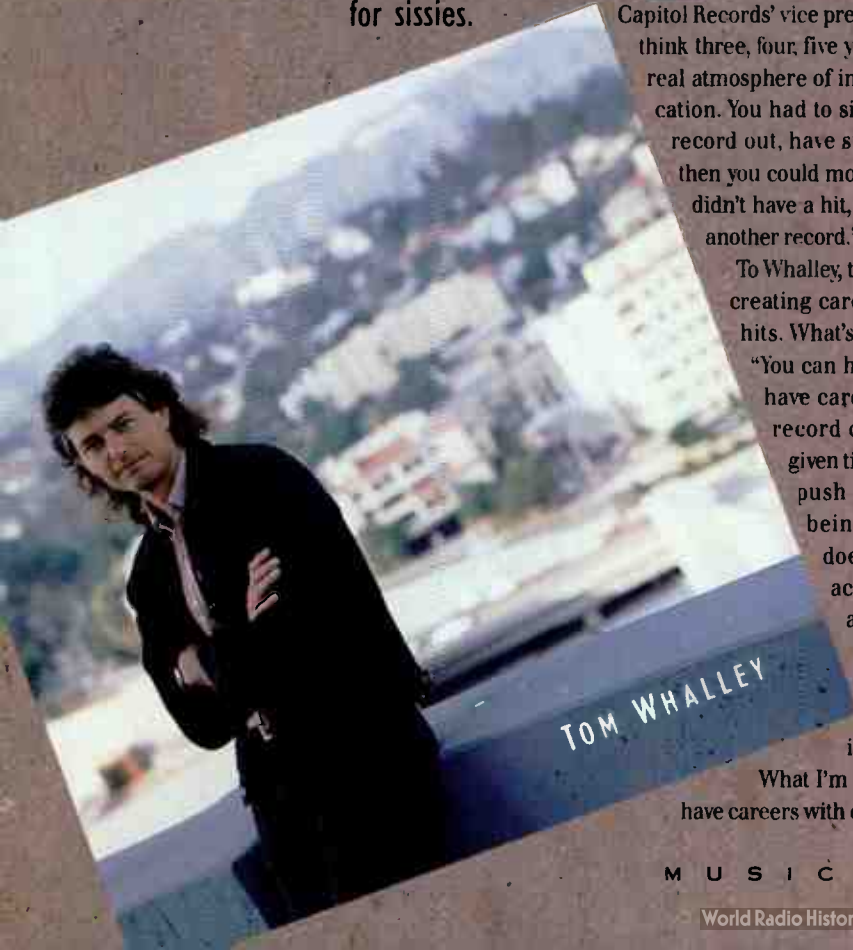
Unlike many would-be music-biz reformers, Whalley has been in a position to put his company's money where his mouth is. For two-and-a-half years now he and fellow vice president Simon Potts have been running the A&R show at Capitol Records and have begun an ambitious artist development program. Of course, Whalley isn't serving up only newcomers—he brought Poison and Crowded House to the label and has lately cut deals with vets

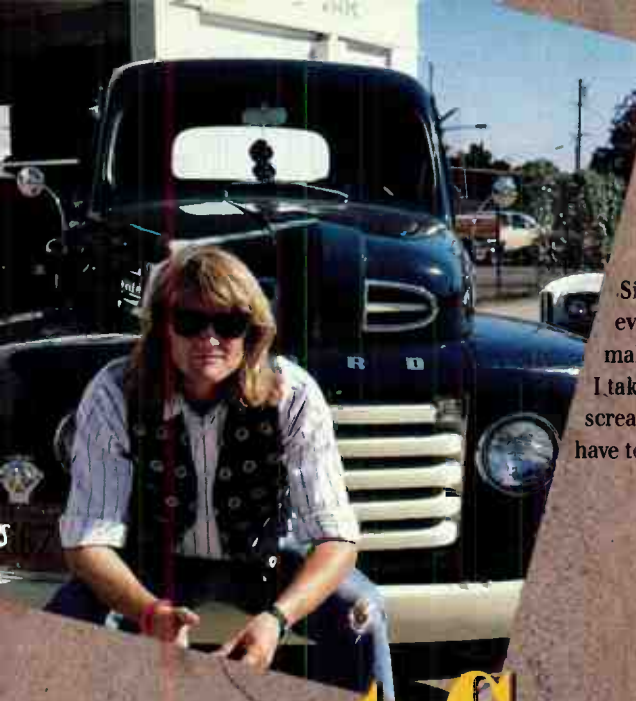


Bonnie Raitt, the Cocteau Twins, Carole King and Richard Thompson. "One of the things we wanted to do at Capitol was to create a real diverse roster with a lot of different musical tastes," Whalley says. "To me it's that combination, that balance, that can make a great record company."

Both still in their 30s, Whalley and Potts are part of a generational changing of the guard at many major labels; in fact, each of them entered the business just over a decade ago and has enjoyed a fairly meteoric rise to power. As talent scouts, both have demonstrated certifiably golden ears. Whalley with Poison and Crowded House and Potts through his signings of the (English) Beat, the Stray Cats, the Thompson Twins and Simply Red, among others. And according to Whalley, scouting is still the meat and potatoes of A&R: "That obviously entails listening to tons and tons of demo tapes that are sent in every day, going to clubs every night and hearing bands, or traveling to see bands. That's the basics of what goes on in most A&R people's lives. That and returning phone calls."

But though the Starsearch aspects of the job are most prominent in the public's eye, Potts says, "I believe that signing the artist is only 15 percent of the job." Some of A&R's other duties? There's corporate liaison:





ars at Capitol

"After a record's done, most of the good A&R people I know don't let go," Whalley insists. "They're very involved in the marketing and promotion of the artist, making sure the company understands your vision of the act, why it was signed, where you want it to go in the future. You've got to be there all the time, and most of the A&R people I know—especially the good ones—do that. When things are difficult it's important to have that A&R person there pushing."

How involved in the creative process do A&R people get? "Each A&R person does it differently," says Whalley. "You have people who are very hands-on, who get involved in the songs and decide when and how long to go into the studio, etc., etc. Other A&R people are a little more hands-off, or take a little more passive approach to it and allow more of the natural process to take place. Where they obviously get involved with the producer choice, they probably won't hang out in the studio every single day, but would be

around to make sure things are going well. I probably take the latter approach. I like to find great songwriters and then believe the talent will make it work."

Potts' A&R style is less laid back. Simply put, he'll do anything and everything. "Whatever it takes to make the best record is the approach I take," he smiles. "If it involves me screaming at the artist, I'll do that. If I have to take him out, walk him around

the block, give him a joint, whatever it takes."

Potts' activist A&R career has included many hours advising his bands on everything from finances to TV taping. He has had to bail one of his signees, Fela Kuti, out of jail a few times, and has even had to talk his discoveries into doing their best songs. "Mick Hucknall didn't want to record 'Holding Back the Years' for the first Simply Red album," Potts recalls. "In fact, he downright refused to. It was a six-year-old song he had recorded in a previous incarnation, in a punk band in Manchester—an extraordinary version if you can imagine it. He didn't want to sing it. I had to cajole him into it: 'Mick, this is the song I signed you for!'"

The 39-year-old Potts began his music-biz career in 1977 as a \$5,000-a-year field salesman for a small London-based label, Anchor Records.

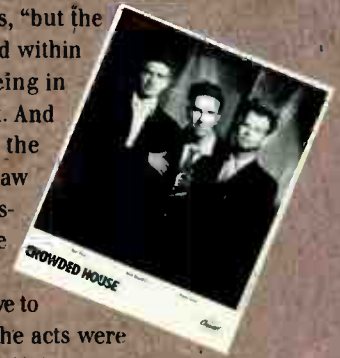
Within nine months, he was asked to move to London to work the promotion desk, and six months after that he moved over to the U.K. branch of Arista Records. On his own time he got involved with a punk band named the Ruts a close friend of his was managing, helped sell 70,000 of their first record and saw them

signed to Virgin. Then he recommended to the guys in A&R they sign a new group named the Specials, which they called too parochial. A few weeks after the Specials went number one he was asked to leave promotion and join the A&R department.

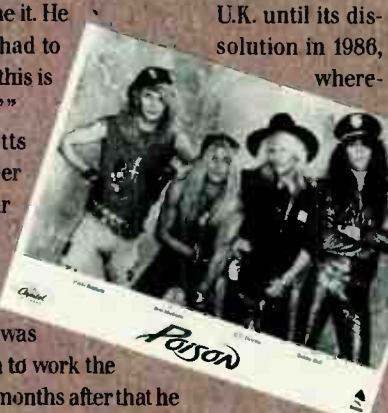
"I don't know whether I'd kissed the Blarney Stone or had the Midas Touch or whatever," laughs Potts, "but the first group I signed within three weeks of being in A&R was the Beat. And the second was the Stray Cats." Potts saw the latter in Long Island as Brian & the Top Cats and convinced them to move to London. Though the acts were huge hits for Arista U.K., Arista's U.S. head Clive Davis passed on the American distribution, only to see them become hits for other U.S. labels. After kicking himself for losing a third Potts-signed hitmaker in Wang Chung, Davis decided to pick up the rest of Potts' discoveries (which included Haircut 100, the Thompson Twins, Shriekback and Fashion) and even consulted him on licensing other U.K. acts like A Flock of Seagulls.

In October of 1983, Potts was offered a spot as managing director at Elektra Records U.K. He spent some time developing a weird band he'd found named Frankie Goes to Hollywood, but he wound up passing on them. He did ink Simply Red and When in Rome to Elektra U.K., and labored to break the Cars and Yello in the U.K. Potts also feels he deserves half the credit for signing 10,000 Maniacs. He stayed at Elektra U.K. until its dissolution in 1986,

where-



SIMPLY RED



upon he traveled the world for a year before taking the job of senior v.p. of A&R at Capitol in the spring of 1987, a free-floating position from which he would continue to roam the world looking for new talent while Tom Whalley ran the rest of the A&R department

THIS IS the first installment in a new *Musician* series about the A&R departments of major record labels. Our first subject was Capitol Records and its co-stars Tom Whalley and Simon Potts. Over the course of preparing the story, Capitol had an internal shake-up. One of these A&R executives ended up departing while the other was promoted.

WHO'S WHO IN CAPITOL A&R

CAPITOL RECORDS has one big A&R section for pop and rock, directed until recently by TOM WHALLEY (v.p. of A&R) and SIMON POTTS (senior v.p. of A&R, dealing more with international matters). Capitol also has a separate black music division with its own head, STEP JOHNSON, and its own A&R chief, SCOTT FOLKS. And there's BRUCE LUNDVALL's revived Blue Note label in New York for new jazz releases. But the main A&R action is at the Capitol Tower in Hollywood; the staff there were all hired by Whalley. In general, different musical genres are handled by different people, with all the A&R people reporting to the v.p.

RACHEL MATTHEWS, manager of A&R, specializes in heavy metal. She used to be a buyer for the Wherehouse retail chain, working a lot of alternative product. One night she ran into Whalley at a club and gave him a hard time. He promptly brought her up for an interview and hired her—this is not a crew of yes-men. TOM VICKERS is Whalley's "song doctor," a one-time song-plugger and writer he used to fortify the Repertoire part of the operation. TIM DEVINE Whalley brought over from a marketing post at MCA; he handles much of the "new music" area. Then there's NIGEL HARRISON, the old Blondie bassist, whom Whalley wooed to get a more seasoned musical perspective. And MITCHELL FROOM, producer of Crowded House, is on the payroll as well. TIM CARR is the only surviving member of the old A&R regime, but he's been on leave for several months writing a book.

There's another Capitol listening post in New York, led by former *Rockpool* editor CLAUDIA STANTEN. Her tastes run towards the English underground scene. JOSH DEUTSCH is a scout out of the Big Apple office, haunting the clubs nightly. And Bruce Lundvall chips in his two cents. As for Simon Potts, he traveled light until his promotion, using only an A&R rep in his London office named ALISON DONALD and a personal assistant in L.A. named NANCY STEWART. His plans for the main Capitol staff in the wake of Whalley's firing are unclear, but Potts has let it be known he might like to see more of a field presence. He will definitely be needing advice about heavy metal, "an area in which I don't consider myself an expert by any means. In fact, I hate the bloody music!"

from Los Angeles. Potts definitely feels his instructions were to rock the boat: "There's been a big change at Capitol Records. Certainly the Capitol that I perceived as an outsider was a giant corporation that acted like a headless chicken. They just reacted to sales, they never broke new groups. But certainly now it seems to be a label that's more focused, with more direction, getting into artist development."

Clearly Potts' career as an A&R man stands or falls on his "taste," some elusive, quasi-mystical ability to judge musical talent and foresee its undeveloped market possibilities. With so much riding on his opinions, Potts must have some secret personal measurement and evaluation system to fall back on, just like pro baseball or football scouts, right? "Not in the slightest," shrugs Potts. "I'm completely controlled by my gut, by if I like it. If somebody asked what made me sign the Thompson Twins, I couldn't answer. Except for Simply Red: I heard a guy's voice that sent shivers up my spine. That's probably the closest I would ever come to articulating it."

Is a strong voice a big head start in getting signed? "I think a distinctive voice is very important," nods Potts. "Having a hit is one thing, but what's really hard is keeping longevity. If you've got something distinctive, particularly about the vocal, which is the focal point of every record, then the chances are you might repeat. Because people are attracted to that individual kind of sound. I mean, in America particularly, there seems to be a certain amount of cloning of George Michael's voice. It seems to go a long way. I'm not interested in signing an artist that reminds me too much of somebody else. I take great pleasure, I suppose, in somewhat dictating fashion as opposed to following it."

For both Whalley and Potts, song quality is crucial—especially for Whalley: "I always go on songs—it's the first thing I look for. If you get excited about something, usually you know that someone's written a good song. And then from there I'll pay attention to the voice and the style of music and take a look at the band, see if a lot of the elements you'd like to see in any band are in place. But I always start with the songs. Always. I think the people who write their own usually have the most interesting and long-term careers."

Guessing wrong is a part of every A&R career. "You have to be brave," Potts admits. "To get it right you have to be prepared to get it wrong."

Can Whalley think of any big fish he let get away? "Warrant's a band that I passed on," smiles Whalley ruefully, "mainly because I thought they were very close to doing what Poison was doing and we already had a band like that. I'm real happy for them, but it certainly makes you look back and think, 'Well, a million and a half records, I probably could've lived with them being like Poison.' And I saw Living Colour and passed, because nobody, myself included, thought that a black rock act was gonna sell records. I look back at that and it seems when you put rules on it, that's usually when you have problems and you usually do something wrong."

How about you, Simon? What were your biggest A&R gaffes? "Oh, Shriekback," he offers. But *they* had a hit . . . "Well, they didn't recoup," he grumbles. "They always lost money. I thought Shriekback was gonna be the biggest group I ever signed. I thought they were the English Talking Heads! And I passed on UB40. I'd picked up the Beat by this stage, and Ranking Roger told me to check out this band from Birmingham. I went up and saw them and said, 'Eh, just another reggae band.' I always justify that to myself by saying maybe the Beat wouldn't have been as big as they were if I'd had UB40 as well, but that's probably wrong. And I walked away from Sigue Sigue Sputnik."

Music-biz legends are full of tales of competing A&R staffs whipped into a bidding war frenzy. True? "I know that does happen," nods Whalley. "And if a band's ready and you've got to pay the money to get them, you do it. If I believe in an act, I'll certainly step in. But I don't enjoy it, and I won't jump in just for the sake of jumping in. I'd rather try and sell the act on what the label and myself can do for them over the course of their career. At a certain point the money can get in the way, and it certainly isn't going to make them a success or not a success if they get more money."

The big advance is now standard fare in England, reports Potts: "Everyone's put so much money into our little island that it's now twice as expensive signing a group in England as it is here. And it's getting worse! I think Disneyland After Dark cost a million bucks! Texas, £300,000 . . . I mean, a half a million before you even make an album! It's so odd. I don't know what it is. Maybe some people in the record industry need their opinions endorsed—that someone else is interested, therefore they must be good."

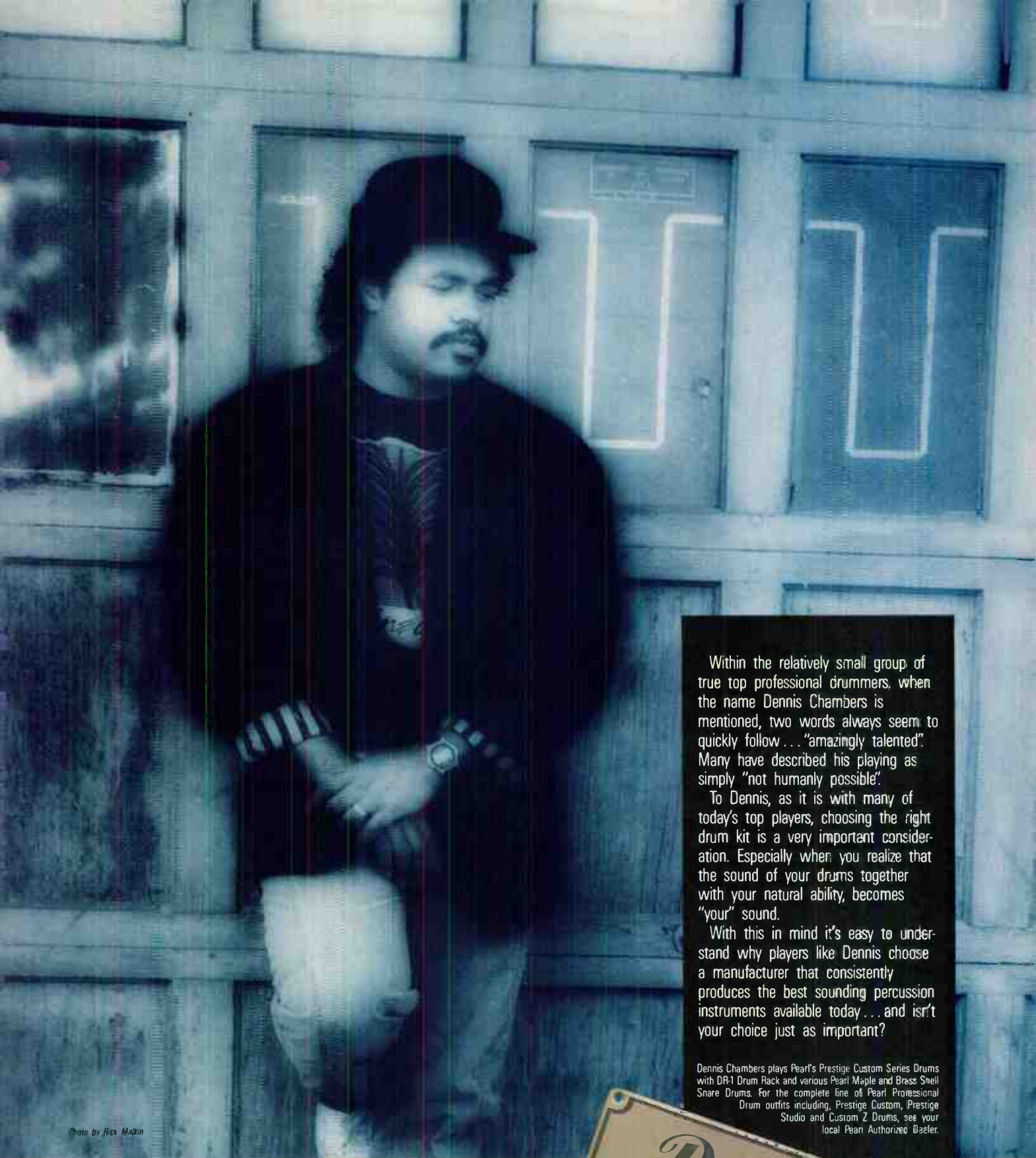


Photo by Rick Matkin

Dennis Chambers has performed with such diverse artists as; Parliament-Funkadelic, John Schofield, Special EFX, Bernard Wright, Thomas Dolby, Michael Brecker and David Sanborn.

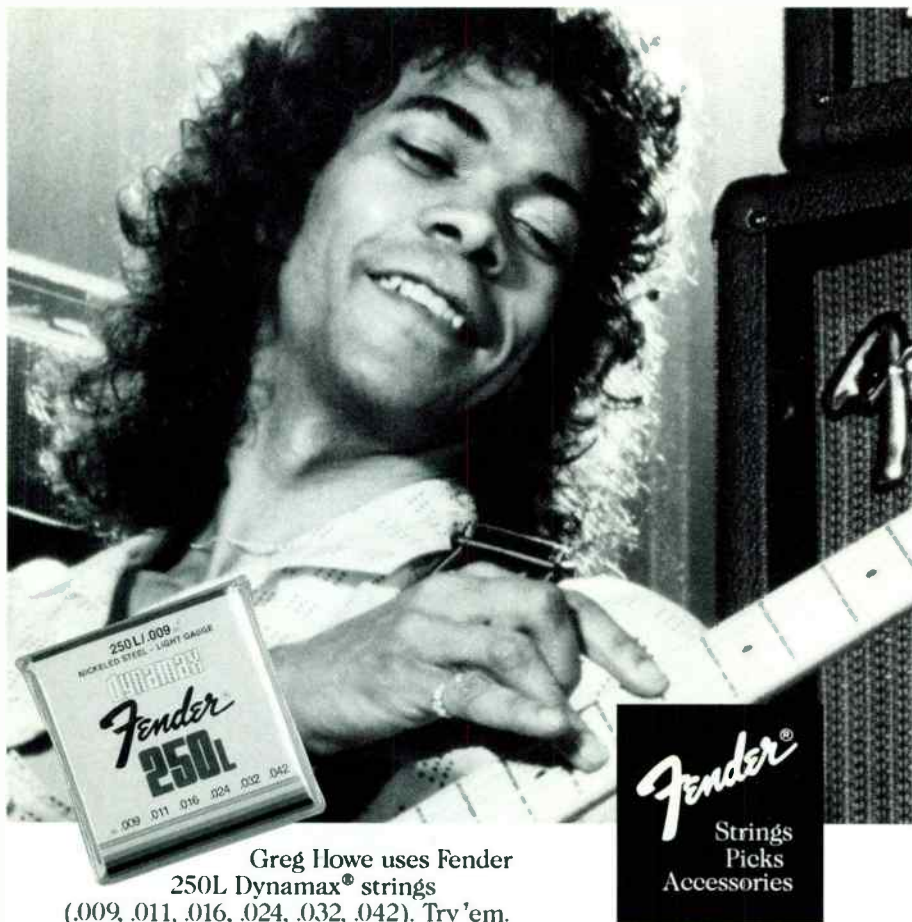
Within the relatively small group of true top professional drummers, when the name Dennis Chambers is mentioned, two words always seem to quickly follow . . . "amazingly talented". Many have described his playing as simply "not humanly possible".

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Therefore they sit on it and bid against one another and the price goes up unnaturally high. And in a country where I come from that loves the underdog and hates the rich and the fatcats, that really can be a problem when the record comes out."

Other than the advance, how much *does* it cost to launch a commercial act today? "Well, you're figuring a quarter of a million dollars for the record," Tom Whalley calculates. "Tour support should be a hundred thousand or more. Videos these days are 75 to 100 grand minimum. If you do two on a record, that's close to a couple hundred thousand there. Then you have advertising. Add it all up, you're easily at three-quarters of a million to a million dollars."

Gulp. Can't thinking about the money at stake freeze you at the moment of decision? "Well, it *doesn't* freeze you," replies Whalley. "You get to a point where you have to stick with your instincts and your belief in the talent and music. That's what you go on. If you start throwing all those other things in there all the time, you confuse what it is we're supposed to be doing. And *that's* when I think you don't do good work. You have to be aggressive about it."

What musical trends would Capitol like to further invest in? Potts notes that house music is the current rage in the U.K. and admits he'd sign some house acts if they were "doing something individualistic," but on the whole he frowns on trend-following. Whalley agrees: "What I hate more than anything is playing catch-up. The fact that we've done so well with Poison is in large part due to the fact that we had already an act of that genre when all of a sudden everything exploded. I would hate to be in a place where I had to run out and sign five metal acts because that's what's selling. By the time you sign them and get a record out, nine to 12 months have passed and everything could change. But if you're looking at trends, I think the obvious stuff is that the rap world is going to get bigger and this whole metal explosion that's going on isn't going to change. It's certainly flooded right now and it'll probably stay that way for a while, but the cream will rise to the top and those bands will have careers."

No matter what kind they are, it's doubtful they'll be as Horatio Algeresque as Tom Whalley's rise to the head of the Capitol A&R department. Rutgers-educated and a one-time high-school teacher, Whalley came to L.A. in 1978, discovered everyone in town was

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trying to get into the music business the same way he planned to, and decided instead to tone down his résumé and take a job in the Warner Bros. Records mailroom. Then, much like the star of the musical *How to Succeed in Business . . . Without Really Trying*, Whalley worked his way out of the mailroom into retail promotion, got busted back down to the mailroom in the 1981 record-biz swoon and then convinced someone in A&R to give him a chance scouting some bands. She liked his reports, then said, "Come on."

"She took me down the hall," recalls Whalley, "and she opened this office which was literally filled with boxes of demo tapes, and said, 'They're all yours!' So after I got done in the mailroom during the day, I'd walk up there and grab a box of tapes and take 'em home to listen to. It took me a year from that day to listen to them all." Out of the many thousands, Warners did pay attention to a handful and flirted with signing one. In reward for cleaning the Augean stables, Whalley was offered a job on the A&R staff as a rep in 1982, staying three years. Responsibility for signings was spread around at Warners, Whalley notes, but he feels the Blasters, Modern English and Michael Sembello were acts he was particularly involved with. In 1985 he came over to Capitol to work under A&R v.p. Don Grierson in the job of A&R director.

Whalley got on a hot streak. His first Capitol signing was Crowded House. He then negotiated a deal to distribute releases from the indie label Enigma and through that deal brought Poison and later the Smithereens directly to Capitol. (More recently Capitol has also purchased a significant interest in Enigma, as well as ailing Chrysalis Records.) A rising A&R star by '87, when Crowded House had hit big, Whalley was offered the keys to the department when Don Grierson left to go to Epic. Grierson is known as something of a conservative in A&R circles. "He was conservative," agrees Whalley. "There's no question about it. He's one of the best song guys I know as an A&R person. And the balance we had was a good one because I think he relied on me to a degree to bring in new acts, so he could pay attention to people like Tina Turner. But he was changing his approach by the time he left."

Whalley also felt the winds of change blowing through the Capitol tower. "It was needed here. Not necessarily as an A&R staff,

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because by 1987 we were doing reasonably well, but in terms of the label at large it was needed. It was a place that had been doing it the same way for a long time, and it wasn't totally working. It needed a new face."

Whalley proceeded to create a brand-new A&R staff of his own, retaining only one rep from the Grierson regime, and began a more long-term artist development program. Whalley's particularly pleased with the arrangement he worked out with Fetchin' Bones, in which Capitol invested small sums early on for several albums and now has a

bona-fide home-grown rookie possibility. But knowing he needed time before his new signings came on-stream, Whalley also cut savvy deals with free-agent veterans like Bonnie Raitt, the Doobie Brothers, Donnie Osmond, Richard Thompson, the Cocteau Twins and Carole King. In the case of the first three, he's rolled and won: "When we started here two and a half years ago, Capitol was a reasonably good-sized record company with a lot of things in place: distribution, marketing, promotion . . . a lot of machine, if that's how you want to put it. But we didn't have an

artist roster to support it. And if everything we did was strictly new acts, if every day the promotion people were walking into radio with another new name, it was going to be extremely, extremely difficult. So I felt the way to get things going was if mature artists were there and we believed in them enough, we'd try to bring in some names. Like a Bonnie Raitt—I heard a tape of her and she came in for a meeting and played me a song she'd been working on and I just heard how wonderful she was singing! And there was no reason why she shouldn't be making records today."

Other acquired talent coursing through the Capitol pipeline includes Simon Potts' U.S. licensing deals with hot British acts like the Kane Gang, the Go-Betweens, Goodbye Mr. Mackenzie and Martin Stephenson & the Daintees. "There's less bread in it, of course," shrugs Potts on the delicate art of licensing, "but if the dollars make sense, you can only lose so much. And if you think the record or the artist, more particularly, has got a great upside, then I think you go for it."

For A&R, though, the real payoff comes when you hit with one of your own, and Whalley and Potts are ready. Whalley and his main Capitol A&R staff of eight are bullish on the Hangmen, North Carolina's the Veldt (which Robin Guthrie of the Cocteau Twins is producing), a metal group called Exodus and a young singer named Amy Sky. Whalley's also big on Flesh for Lulu's second record. As for the roving Potts, he's pulling the cork on three new discoveries: East of Eden, Peter Blakeley and Hugh Harris. (Potts calls Harris "astonishing—the most talented artist I've ever signed!")

Working with a crop of new bands, the A&R person must execute another vital job function: picking the producer. "It's a very important part of the job," nods Potts. "But sometimes you get so wrapped up in that, you think yourself to death. What I tend to do is introduce characters to each other."

That includes the usual litany of famed British producers, whom Potts must know quite well. "Sure. Well, in many cases, I've fallen out with some of them," he laughs. And in bypassing the usual producer galaxy, Potts has come up with some big scores. He convinced Chris Blackwell's engineer, Alex Sadkin, to try his hand at producing pop with the Thompson Twins, and Sadkin went on to big-budget glory before his untimely death in 1987. Potts also took a "down-in-the-dumps" American R&B [cont'd on page 108]

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T-BONE WOLK: BOTTOM TO THE TOP

A bassman steps into his producer shoes

By Bill Flanagan

THE TWO PEOPLE who always meant the most to me in my life are James Jamerson and Paul McCartney," T-Bone Wolk says. "I've always tried to edit myself, if I get in trouble when I'm playing something, by saying, 'What would Jamerson do here?' and 'Would Paulie approve?' I even love people who play bass out of tune! Half of McCartney's recorded career is out of tune. I walk a fine line sometimes."

Between Jamerson in Motown and McCartney in the Beatles, those two bassists were not only intensely creative—they prob-

ably made more hit records than the CBS pressing plant. T-Bone Wolk is a disciple on both counts, having played on a bunch of Top 40 hits as part of Hall & Oates' '80s band and stretched the creative envelope with work on Elvis Costello's *Spike* and *King of America*, and T-Bone Burnett's *The Talking Animals*. Wolk moved into the co-producer's chair with Daryl Hall's 1986 solo album *Two Hearts in the Happy Ending Machine*, Hall & Oates' *Ooh Yeah* and Carly Simon's live LP. Now he's signed a production deal with CBS and has turned in his first full-fledged T-Bone Wolk production, Paul Carrack's new *Groove*

Approved. That's a hearty career for any musician, but today he's back at his *job*. Tonight is the beginning of Wolk's fifth season in the "Saturday Night Live" house band, with his old Hall & Oates cohort G.E. Smith. Every time "SNL" cuts to a commercial you get a few moments of G.E. (of the tight hair and wide face) and T-Bone (of the pork-pie hat) playing the blues.

Looking for a quiet place to talk, Wolk, 37, wanders from the studio (where stagehands are raising tonight's sets) through the corridors (where cast members are greeting each other and running around half-dressed) into the green room (until it gets too loud) to the men's room (where TV mogul Lorne Michaels is convening a conference). The general mood in NBC studio 8H is tight-lipped frenzy, but Wolk is laid back. He seems delighted to be here.

He says, "The funny part is that in '85 Daryl and John let us know they were stopping for a while. They had saturated the market, done as much as they could do. We took it seriously when Daryl announced he was going to England to make a record with Dave Stewart and taking me with him and nobody else. It got a little weird for a while. G.E. was thinking, 'Gee, I spent all this time with these guys and now T-Bone's off with Daryl.' None of us knew what was going to happen. But at the same time, G.E. got a call asking him to do the TV show. He called me up. I said, 'Why aren't you calling Will Lee or Neil Jason?' He said, 'Cause they want new people, they want blues, they want Percy Mayfield to Ray Charles to Louis Jordan and we kind of play that stuff, don't we?' I went, 'Yeah, I guess we kind of do.'

"I remember the Randy Newman show we did. Anita Baker sounded great. One very special moment for me and G.E. was when Robbie Robertson did the show and G.E. got Robbie to play 'King Harvest' with the band. I brought in my Ampeg fretless. I'm a Band fanatic, I know every note every one of those guys played. Moments like that stand out. What it is for me is being part of some kind of continuity and some kind of history in New York. I always aspired to be a studio musician, but then 'studio musician' became a different thing. So I worked with Daryl and John and got out on the road and made records, but New York is a very special place. This TV show is a wonderful opportunity. I mean, 8H—God, Toscanini was here."

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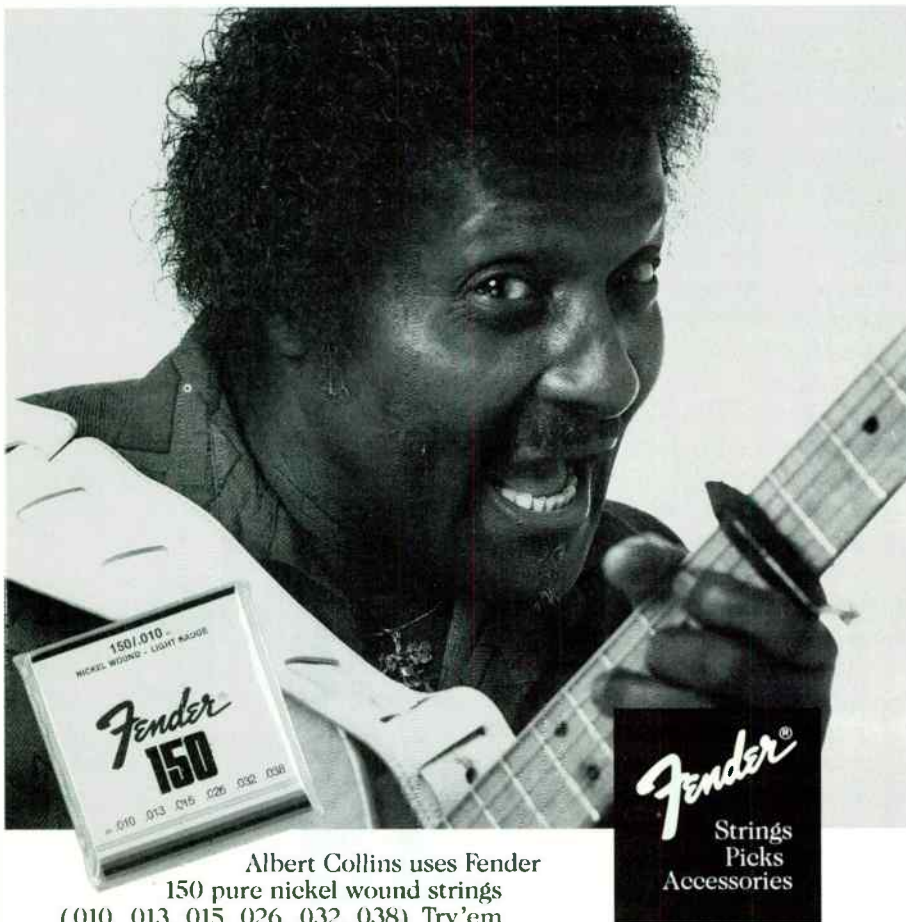
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What's most striking about Wolk's bass playing is the ease with which he goes from the wide but formal pop vocabulary of his Hall & Oates work to the sometimes nutty extravagance he allows himself on some of the "SNL" breaks. His recordings with Costello include the restrained, poetic, *swooping* bass on "Satellite" and "Last Boat Leaving," but when E.C. played "Let Him Dangle" on "Saturday Night" last spring, Wolk was wildly (let's pick a polite word) atonal. He winces and laughs. "Oh, you heard that, huh? It's funny, I didn't hear that at the time, because the energy was so insane, so intense. I went home and listened to the videotape and it was so embarrassing. I shouldn't admit this, I should make you turn the tape recorder off, but I went, 'Christ! I must have knocked the head out as they were saying, 'Ten seconds to air,' then Elvis was whacking away at his guitar. There were so many different worlds with G.E. and Marc Ribot and Michael Blair...we didn't even think about tuning!" Wolk laughs again. "But it did achieve that Southern kind of scary 'Strange Fruit' power. It was pretty wild.

"It's embarrassing as a musician, though. I could quote *Band on the Run* from McCartney, but I may have been more out of tune than *that*."

Wolk gives Costello lots of credit for influence and inspiration. During the *King of America* sessions James Burton was unavailable to play guitar on "Brilliant Mistake" and Costello (told by drummer Mickey Curry that Wolk was a Burton nut) invited Wolk to fill in on guitar. That led to Wolk also playing accordion on the Costello albums, and touring as part of E.C.'s Confederates not as bassist, but on vocals, acoustic guitar, accordion, dobro and mandolin. "It was such a thrill to play with James Burton, Jim Keltner, Jerry Scheff and Benmont Tench from the Heartbreakers. I'd been with Hall & Oates for about six years at that point, and to see the music world from another side *and* to not have to play bass was just a godsend.

"I've always tried to keep in touch with the Elvis Costellos and that side of the music business. Hall & Oates have always represented a very successful pop, slick music side. But I played with Lonnie Mack before I ever played with Daryl and John. When I went to audition for them I'd just come from a gig with Lonnie. I had cowboy boots and a baseball hat on. Daryl said, 'Hey, the guy's bald!' I come from a lot of different sources. As much as I'm an R&B/Motown player, I'm








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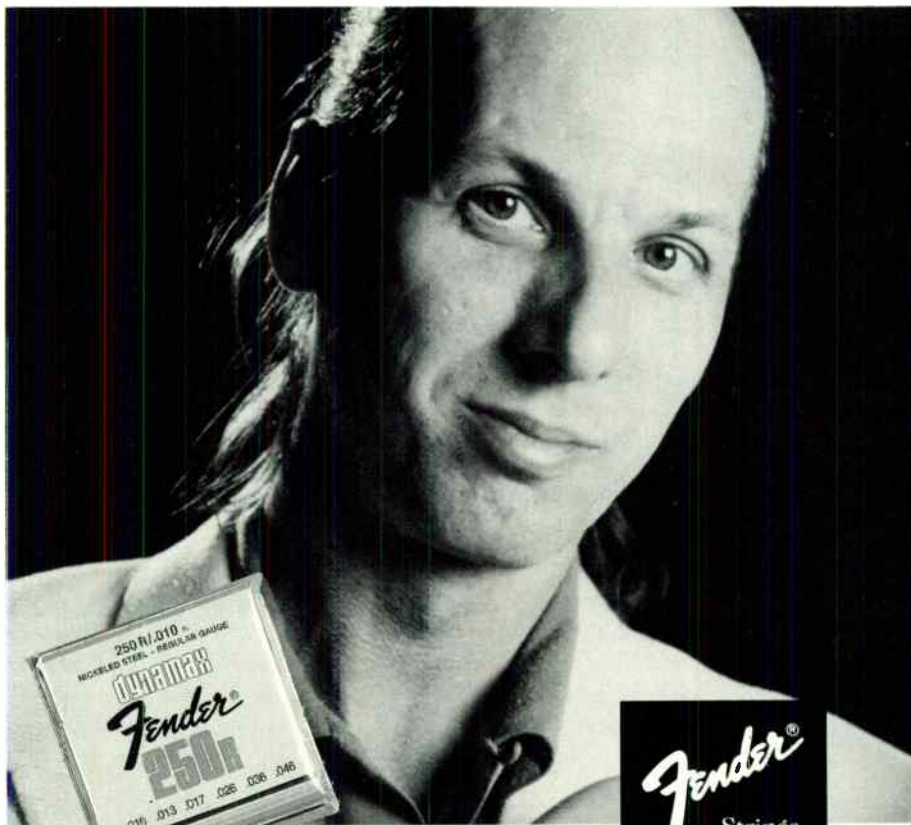
WOLKING THE BASS

MY WORKHORSE is a Fender Precision bass that's not really hot-rodded—it's got a Jazz pickup in it. Lately I've been using a Sadowsky bass, too. Roger Sadowsky is the luthier in town everybody goes to; he makes wonderful basses. I use D'Addario strings exclusively—half-wounds and round-wounds, I split 'em up depending on the song. I've been using SVT amps from way back, like Bill Wyman. In the studio anything goes; you can play through a little Fender, it doesn't matter. But D.I. primarily. I play a lot of keyboard bass, too. If you're making records, everybody wants contemporary sounds; you have to work with that. I play whatever keyboard bass is around—a Kurzweil or a Fairlight or a Synclavier—whatever the record calls for. The Korg M1 is a big tool this year. It's got some good sounds.

"I'm primarily a pick player, although on 'Saturday Night Live' I play with my fingers. My hero, James Jamerson, played with his fingers exclusively, but something happened when we got into arenas with 15,000 seats; I found that I just wasn't cutting through all the noise that was going on in front of me with G.E. and Daryl and John. So I switched to a pick and I felt comfortable. Jack Bruce, Bill Wyman and McCartney all played with picks. To me anything that gets the job done is okay. I'm very flexible.

"I've got a Fender six-string bass that I use on home demos to play bass and—funny enough—rhythm parts. I read a long time ago that Ry Cooder used to do a lot of his rhythm guitar parts capoed up on a Fender six-string bass. The strings are about an octave down, so if you capo up you get quite a unique sound. Otherwise I pick up my Telecaster."

A talented accordionist, Wolk stands up for the squeeze box: "Keyboard magazine had this accordion feature. And I was a little perturbed, 'cause they had 'Weird Al' Yankovic on the front, they were poking fun at it. It's great to have an accordion issue, but they missed a lot. You know the accordion always was and always will be the original American folk instrument. I come from a family of accordion players, so I've got about a dozen at home. I've got these Hohners. I was New York State Accordion Champ when I was 14. I took it pretty seriously. I studied jazz. But when I got hooked on Clifton Chenier—who will always be the king of zydeco—I realized those big Hohners were it. The Germans developed this crazy sound! It's like Little Walter turned sideways."



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also a Beatle kid and a Yardbirds blues fanatic. I did Irish and blues bars in the Bronx for five years. So there's this side I like to bring out and working with Paul Carrack and certainly working with Elvis has just been an inspiration.

"I come from a strange school of bass playing. I come from the era of Cream and Jefferson Airplane and the Beatles. When I was about 14 I was taking Charles Mingus records out of the library in Yonkers, New York. I went to see Mingus and the Modern Jazz Quartet play. For some reason I got very attached to Mingus and Percy Heath. I don't like bass players that play lead bass. I think the function of the bass is to support the bottom of the record. But I'm a huge fan of virtuosic bass players. I was a huge fan of Jaco, I'm a huge fan of Billy Sheehan, Geddy Lee. Things I wouldn't even attempt to do on a record because I don't believe in making records like that—nevertheless the power of their playing is phenomenal." Wolk shakes his head and reflects on his heroes. "Everything from Mingus to Paul McCartney to Jamerson to Jack Casady. I don't own this, James Jamerson owns this—if you want to talk about bass players. The man's dead and he never even got his name on the back of a record."

Wolk's bass on Hall & Oates' "Maneater" was an obvious homage to Jamerson. "Yeah, that was me," he sighs. "I'll never live that one down. But to me it was never a *rip*. The *Village Voice* slagged me about it, but the riff itself can be traced back way before the Motown era; it can be traced back to Lionel Hampton and 'Flying Home' and probably Louis Armstrong. That riff's been going on a long, long time. But it was just one of those moments. Daryl took a song that John had as a bossa nova and said, 'Let's do it as a Motown track.' G.E. and I went in a room with a drum machine and a big fat Tal Farlow guitar and we cut it in one take.

"I was amazed when I started working with Daryl and John how simple their approach was to making records and how easily they were satisfied by a performance. They didn't consider the band performance to be the weight of the record. The weight of the record, as I learned later on, was the power of Daryl's voice—and the power of the song and whatever other little hook they could slot in. Their style was very sparse and very open. I learned an awful lot from that process."

And most of what Wolk [cont'd on page 112]



LAURIE ANDERSON SIMPLIFIES THINGS

An avant-pop drop-out checks back in with some Strangely Angelic music

By John Diliberto

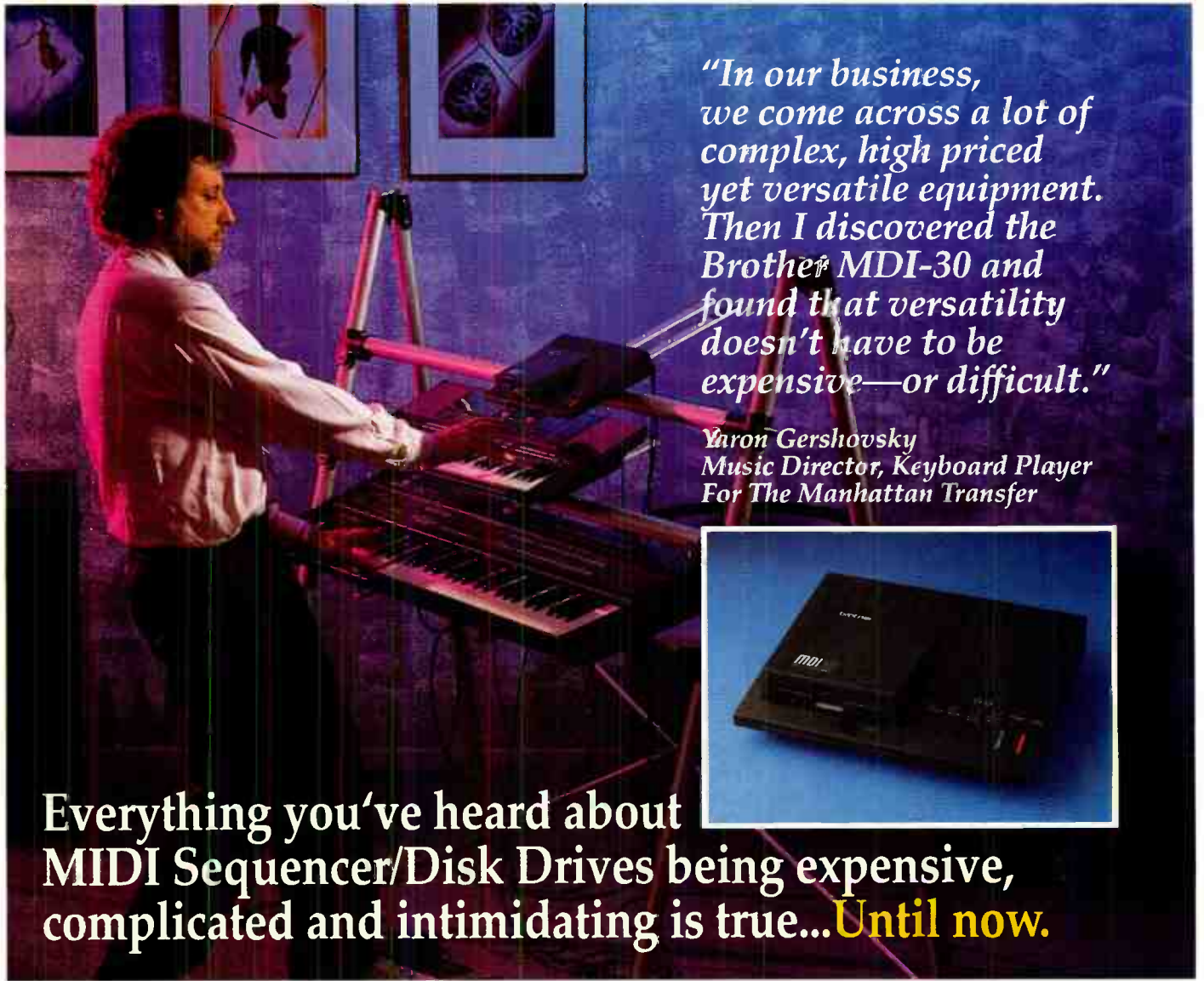
I HONESTLY THINK that what I've always been trying to do is something incredibly simple, which is storytelling," Laurie Anderson claims, "completely ancient, not at all avant-garde. And the things that work best are the simplest, the most direct stories. And that is old. There's nothing new about that."

For more than a decade she's been telling tales from the edges of America and the corners of the mind, all mixed and matched through forms that grew out of the avant-garde but were shaped by pop. After electronically filtering through the pop culture

of the 1980s with her cult hit "O Superman," four albums, the *Home of the Brave* concert film and the mounting of a seven-and-a-half-hour epic, *United States IV*, Anderson dropped out of the public eye just as she seemed ready to break through into some kind of conventional pop legitimacy.

"I was really tired of being Laurie Anderson, real tired," she sighs between drags on her Marlboro. "It felt hard to go out in the street. People wanted to discuss things. I thought, 'Boy, this is really boring.' But the all-time, the lowest point of that was editing the movie, *Home of the Brave*. That was





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excruciating. Month after month of looking at my own picture. That was really, truly a deeply nauseating experience.

"It was getting pretty narcissistic, I'd say," she continues, laughing. "There's a place for narcissism, and there's nothing inherently wrong with that, as long as that is not your only topic. So I really did try to get beyond that and simplify things."

Laurie Anderson is ready to return, though. She's just mounted a one-woman multi-media show at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and has released her first studio album since 1984, *Strange Angels*. The show

is called *Empty Places* and harks back to Anderson's "roots" in the late '70s and early '80s, performance-art concerts where she could be seen madly rushing from the stage to the back of the hall to adjust her projectors, then rushing back to interact with the films. Nowadays she has more behind-the-scenes help, but onstage it's just Anderson, her violin and keyboards and a few alter egos. She evokes a darker landscape, images of derelicts, dirty city streets and neighborhood intolerance. Anderson may be looking beyond herself, but the result is often squirmy and uncomfortable.

Strange Angels has a very different attitude. One song, "Baby Doll," is Laurie Anderson's way of telling herself to lighten up: "And when my brain talks to me, he says: 'Take me out to the ballgame.' It's pretty slaphappy," she says. "That's one of the oldest songs on the record, and it's a song about your brain talking to you, who is just some kind of cartoon character in this case. It had a whole second half in performance. And it came a little unglued as a recording and so it was the only one where I thought, 'AM radio fade.' It didn't need this second half which was a little bit ponderous really."

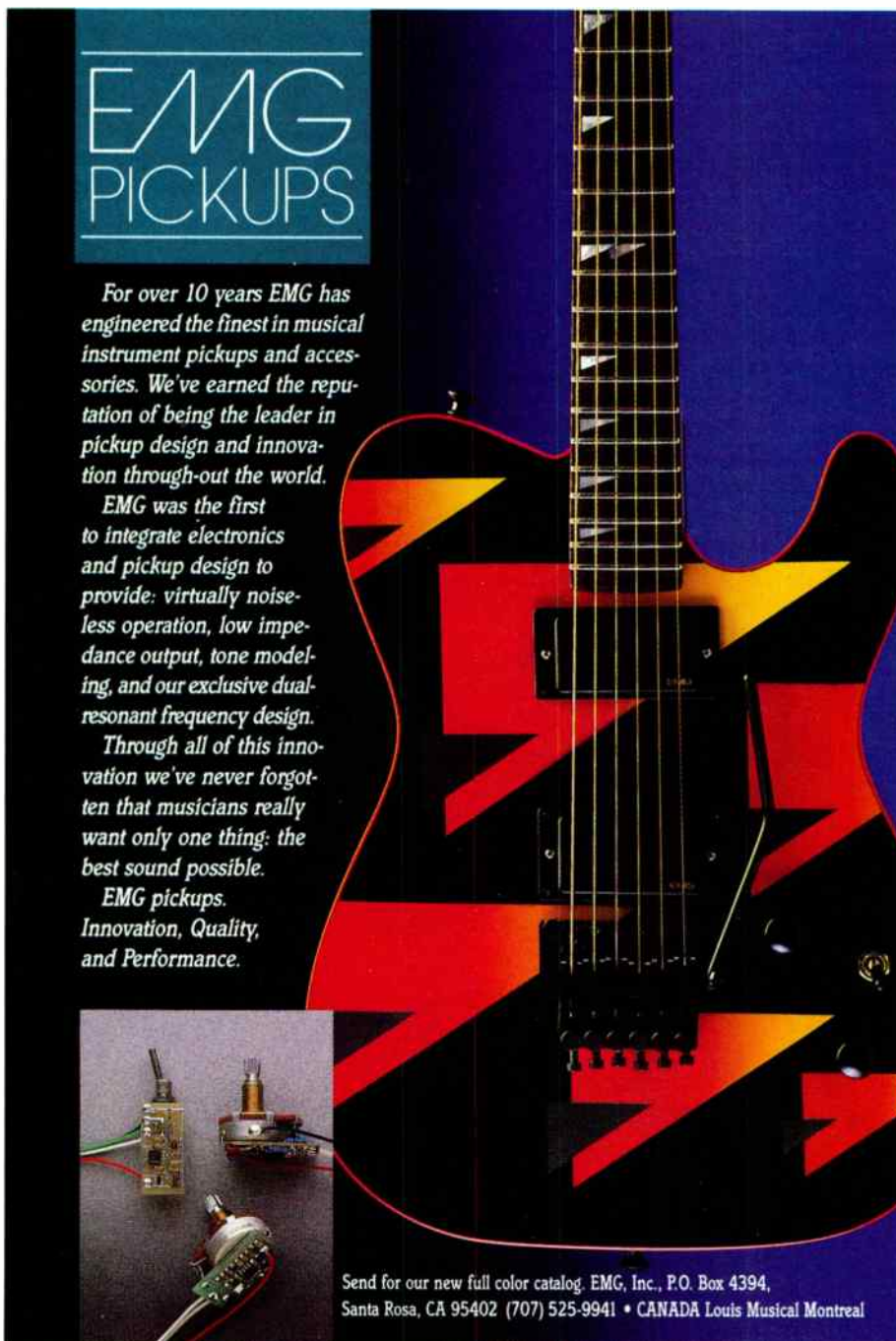
But the biggest change on *Strange Angels* is Anderson's vocal confidence. Only occasionally does she slip into the talk-sing monologue style that made her a digital diva of cool. "Yeah, those singing lessons are paying off," she laughs, her brown eyes sparkling. "I was working on a song that I never released about three years ago, a really complicated song. It was absurd. The backup vocals did their part. It sounded like a real professional song. Then I stood up at the mike and I went, 'Oh no, I don't know how to sing! This should be sung. I don't know how.' And I could either croak along, talk-sing like I usually do, or I could sing it, and I had no idea how to sing this thing. So I started studying with a teacher."

Given Anderson's penchant for using harmonizers to deepen her voice, she was surprised when her teacher told her she should sing soprano. "I said, 'First of all, I don't really want to learn how to sing, 'cause I don't write real sing-song songs,' and also I thought, 'Well, I've got a voice that is probably going to be singing along down here' (she drops her voice). She said, 'No, you are a soprano.' So when I started writing songs for that voice, it was like using a different piece of outboard gear that I couldn't twiddle with."

"One of the things that I like about this kind of singing is really that it's very vulnerable to sing. It's hard in that kind of voice to sing things that are ironic or severely ironic. Slightly ironic, yes, it's okay. But severely ironic, no, it's too hard. So now I had this different voice and so I started writing about really different things, from a more female point of view."

Her unctuous baritone alter-ego is still with us, though. This version she's named "Reagan": "I can't get rid of this guy. I've tried everything, firing him, breaking a piece of equipment he comes out of."

Empty Places is being billed as a work



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about "Man and Electronics." That's been an Anderson theme from the missed communications of "O Superman" to *United States's* tape bow, neon violins and drum machine suit. On *Mister Heartbreak* and *Home of the Brave*, she used her Synclavier for extensive sampling and harmonizers for voice manipulation.

But on *Strange Angels* and *Empty Places*, the technology is less obvious. "That's because of singing, really," claims Anderson. "I decided I'm not going to turn the equipment on right now. I'm just going to try to sing it, to see what would happen."

Which isn't to say that Anderson has abandoned technology, even if her Synclavier looks a lot like a turntable in these post-compact disc days. "It's now piled up with a bunch of stuff on it," she confesses. "I don't use it at all, ever. Frankly, I can't give it away. It can be a terrible, terrible trap to have a system that is too big and too big just means out of your control. The whole Synclavier system is a very powerful one and, if you use it well, it's really pretty amazing. But I found that the more stuff that I had, the more simple that I wanted to be in a funny way. You have to ask yourself what the core of it is and

not what all the decorations are going to be."

Anderson is now in the MIDI world, using a Mac driving MIDI modules that give her the same capabilities she was looking for in the Synclavier. She still has an enthusiasm for technology. Walking into her studio, she quickly begins turning on equipment to demonstrate her new tricks. Loading up her Ultra-Harmonizer and Korg M1, she begins singing into three microphones, each one going through a different chain of effects. She sings lead with the persistent Reagan and a soul vocal backup simultaneously.

"Reagan goes over the edge in this particular show," she says sardonically. "It's great because you can get a whole cast of characters cookin' and then bang on the Octapad and there's a show. A little backup tape and that's it, that's plenty. That's more than you can absorb, already."

"I know I'm supposed to be an unusual avant-garde artist, but I don't care," she laughs, perhaps a little too self-consciously.

ANGEL ARTIFACTS

LAURIE ANDERSON composes and records much of her music in her own studio, which looks through a large plate-glass window onto her rehearsal/dance space. I notice that many of the manufacturers' names are blacked out with gaffer's tape. "I don't like writing on T-shirts and I don't like writing on things," she proclaims.

But underneath the tape you'll find a Zeta FS3 and VC220 harmonizer and pre-amplifier, Akai S900 and S1000 samplers and two Eventide Ultra-Harmonizer 3000s. Her keyboards include a Korg M1, Casio CZ-1000, Roland D-50, an old Roland Vocoder, an Oberheim OBXa and "an old [Yamaha] DX7. As you can see, it's also a tape stand." One of her main keyboard controllers is the Yamaha KX5, although she doesn't sling it around her neck like a guitar. "I hate that," she says disgustedly, "so you can do guitar posing, oh boy." In *Empty Places* she used a Roland Octapad extensively for triggering percussion and melody sounds.

Her console is a Soundcraft from which she goes to an Otari 5050 eight-track and a Soundcraft Series 760 24-track machine. She mixes at home to a Sony F-1. Monitors are Ureis and Yamaha NS10Ms. She composes on a Macintosh computer with Mark of the Unicorn's Performer software. Anderson doesn't play violin on *Strange Angels*, but in concert she saws on a Zeta instrument.

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"I don't even think of myself in that way."

That should be apparent from *Strange Angels*. Anderson has always been a bridge for pop culture into the avant-garde of minimalism and Dada, but *Strange Angels* is as much a rock album as, say, Talking Heads would make: slightly off-center, definitely idiosyncratic and distinctively Laurie Anderson, but pop nevertheless. The title track wouldn't sound out of place on a Dire Straits album. And if you need further evidence, mega-producer Bob Clearmountain was brought in to mix two tracks, the African-Caribbean jaunt "Monkey's Paw" and the gospel-tinged "The Day the Devil."

"It's especially interesting working with Bob Clearmountain and hearing what he did to a song like 'Monkey's Paw,'" she says. "Since it was the last stage of the song, it was fascinating to hear how he put it together. And I appreciated the fact that he built it in a very fluid way. If you listen to the instrumental version of that song, you hear things coming at very, very rapid rates. But if you hear it with the vocal, it doesn't sound like everything is moving around at great speed, which in fact everything is.

"My goal as an artist is to create an atmosphere that you can enter," continues Anderson, realizing the medium is, indeed, part of the message. "In performances I do that with a lot of images and sounds and the thing that is featured is the stories. And on a record the atmosphere has to come from texture and all kinds of things that you can do obviously without pictures. So the goal is actually the same, but the songs when they are performed live, for example, some of them are done half-time with very little going on. One or two bird calls, that's it."

And the moral of all these stories? "Well, a lot of *Empty Places* is about the Reagan legacy if you really want to pinpoint it. It's about how much the world has changed and how we are just beginning to see the results of what has been going on for the last few years in a vivid way. I mean, how different it is to walk out of your door now. At least for me. My street is a dormitory for about 10 guys who sleep out there. And I want to address that in a very clear way. Not a clever way. So *Empty Places* is more than anything about suffering and there's no point in being clever or double-edged about suffering.

"You know, I decided to write a poster. I've always claimed that I didn't know what to do and I'd never tell anybody what to do because I didn't have the right. And [cont'd on page 129]

PERFORMANCE OF THE MONTH

ROCKIN' THE TV WORLD

Neil Young melts the picture tube

By Bill Flanagan

NEIL YOUNG'S BEEN ON a creative rampage lately, burning with the sort of musical fire that he has claimed would destroy him if he tried to summon it all the time. Such grand claims sound pretty silly, but when he's lit up like this Young makes you believe that he really is drawing on inspirations too dangerous to ignite too often. Young hit New York twice this fall. Both appearances were tied to TV shows, and both involved more fireworks off camera than on. On September 6th Young did an acoustic show at New York's Palladium. He sang and played through wireless microphones while prowling the stage like a hungry bobcat. Young did not rework his acoustic songs—from "Helpless" to "Too Far Gone"—as much as he sang them with renewed attention, even desperation. Dedicating "Ohio" to the Chinese students killed last summer, he made even his most time-bound lyric sting as if it were new. Long into the concert Young glanced up at the video screens that give sight to those hiding in the disco's dark corners and said that after he was done playing everyone was invited to hang around "and watch some TV." People laughed but Neil wasn't kidding.

Three thousand miles away MTV's video awards show was under way, and Young's "This Note's for You" was nominated for video of the year. When word came that Young's anti-corporate sponsorship/anti-MTV anthem had pulled an upset win, the cameras appeared and Neil thanked MTV, his old nemesis, politely—a gentleman in victory. In fact, the TV network's audio

was out, so home viewers didn't know that Neil was being gracious about the whole thing. One more reason going to hear music in a bar is better than watching it on television.

On September 30th Young appeared on "Saturday Night Live," screaming through "Rockin' in the Free World" with the X-pensive Winos' rhythm section—Steve Jordan and Charlie Drayton—and Crazy Horse Frank Sampedro on rhythm guitar. What "SNL" viewers saw was startlingly intense—Young at full-tilt wail, leaping onto the drum riser, ripping out a fierce guitar solo and spurring his band as close to abandon as a group can get without smashing their instruments. He came back half an hour later to play an acoustic "Needle and the Damage Done" as intro to an electric version of his new "No More." His graceful soloing on that song was



brother to the lyrical, South American guitar trance of "Cortez the Killer." Young's always moved easily from rock to folk (less easily through some of his '80s side-trips) but the range from the Palladium to "SNL"—and the total dedication he displayed at both—suggested that Young is chomping at the bit, kicking the stall—pick any metaphor for a

musician desperate to make contact with his audience again.

Still, the most exciting song of the "SNL" visit never got on the air. At the TV show's afternoon soundcheck Young and his trio played a song he had written a couple of days earlier called "Why Do I Keep Fuckin' Up?" As television staffers stood with their mouths hanging open, [cont'd on page 69]



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BERKLEE'S BIG BUILD-UP

The hardware just keeps on coming
at a music education power base

By Jock Baird

YOU MIGHT NOT recognize Boston's Berklee College of Music if you haven't been there lately. There's been a hardware build-up of massive proportions, both in the MIDI/micro workstation arena and on the more traditional multitrack studio front. Wander through the halls of Berklee's main complex and you'll get the feeling the Record Plant, Electric Ladyland and several Unique MIDI rooms have all mated into one big recording

space station.

You want big tape and lots of sliders? There are six multi-track studios (three of them 24-track), all in continuous service during the regular term. A new Music Production and Engineering major, supervised by Don Puluse, is founded on the hardware. No, you won't find automated SSLs here—despite a decent budget, Puluse has opted to stock his studios with the more conventional, bread & butter type of gear his students are sure to see when they venture forth into the real

world. And that includes plenty of SMPTE synching capabilities, not to mention the full-service Moviola system the Film Scoring department runs.

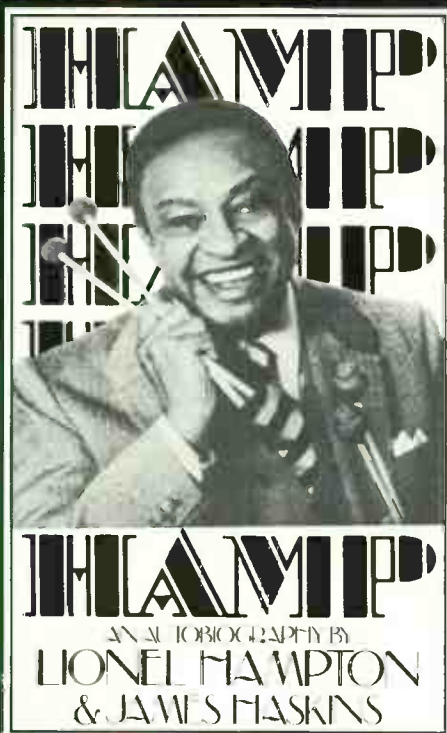
Meanwhile, up on the synth/MIDI level, they've opened their second room of seven Macintosh-based MIDI workstations, tucked across the hall from their first seven-station Mac lab, now four years old, and the large analog synthesis lab which is a veritable museum of aging '80s synths. Music synthesis department head David Mash continually upgrades and swaps the components of his vast MIDI empire, cutting deals with sympathetic manufacturers—Kurzweil has long been a Berklee ally and one afternoon we visited Yamaha was running an all-day



At left: a Music Synthesis major solving a gnarly glitch in the new MIDI lab; above: Yamaha's MIDI Band rehearses at the 1224-seat Berklee Performance Center; below: an engineering class analyzing mixing details on *Sergeant Pepper's*.



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Mash is particularly proud of his closet of sampling horror, into which he's gathered virtually all the off-the-rack sampling racks known to man (well, no E-III or S-770, but maybe soon). Figuring that the individual samplers could be obsolete by the time his students graduate, Mash teaches basic sampling concepts rather than specifics and requires them to learn several machines. They're aided, naturally, by Blank's Alchemy software on a nearby Mac.

Elsewhere on the MIDI level is a new songwriting lab with a squadron of sophisticated four-track cassette recording systems. Two renovated recital halls are now on-line, one a 98-seater with a Yamaha grand in the college's old main building, and a second 81-seat room in a building around the corner that Berklee bought from neighbor and rival the New England Conservatory of Music. Amidst the old-world marble fireplace, arched ceiling and wood paneling is plugged another one of Mash's fully equipped MIDI workstations. But this system is under-

going changes as well in a rather provocative new undertaking: a master MIDI rehearsal room is being assembled which would allow full bands of MIDI musicians to input with a number of MIDI controllers and/or sequencers. Once everything is rehearsed, it is performed in the recital hall using the exact same bank of equipment. All you'd bring is your own personal MIDI controller and your floppy disks. This may bring big changes in how Berklee students conceive and execute their recitals.

Of course, for really big-time displays of musical talent there's the 1224-seat Berklee Performance Center, a comfy, acoustically honed, wood-walled facility that's often rented out for concerts. A phalanx of balanced cable runs go from the stage down to the studios in the basement, making the Performance Center one of the most potent live-recording soundstages in the nation.

The ethos of the college may be changing as all this hardware gets into the hands of more and more students. The strong tradition of jazz and bebop at Berklee is now being augmented by a noticeable interest in contemporary pop. Songwriting is now held in the same esteem as composition—this past spring the college even released a CD of the best student tunes. Not that the quality of musicianship has fallen—chops are still what can make you a BMOC: a Big Musician On Campus. But these days at Berklee, there are many, many other ways to make a musical name—and a career—for yourself. 

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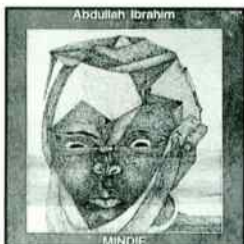
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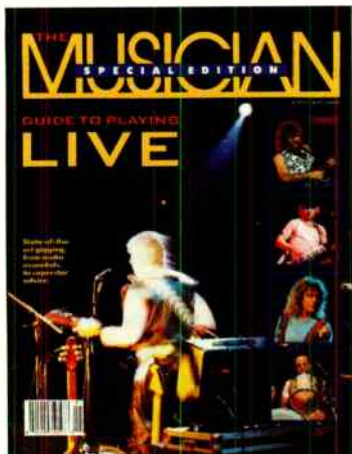
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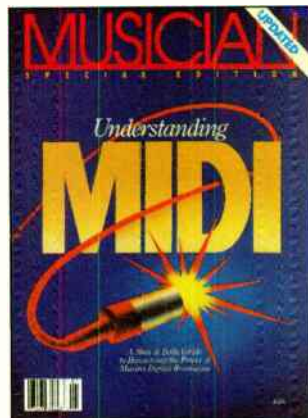
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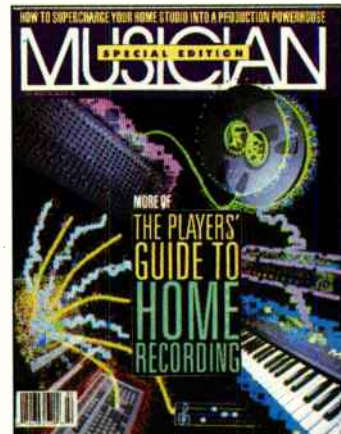
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record was bad. Sometimes it just doesn't work, and a good A&R person who shares the vision of the act will know why it didn't work. And then you'll make that decision as to, 'Well, we did everything right, so let's do it again, we're fine,' or maybe decide the record needs to be harder or softer-sounding or the production wasn't there. 'We didn't tour last time; maybe we gotta get out there this time.' 'The album cover sucked!' Yeah, those decisions are extremely important, and you've *got* to be involved in them."

This isn't all theoretical because Whalley's

meal-ticket signing, Crowded House, has stalled with its second LP. "Yeah, well, that's one to me that's difficult to accept," Whalley nods. "I personally am close to it but I thought the second record was a great record, but we didn't get a hit single so, therefore, we didn't sell as many records. And everyone perceives the band as struggling and all that sort of stuff. But I think there's progression in that record, and to me that's success. I know Crowded House will have commercial success on the next record, because the songwriting is too good for it not

to happen."

Whalley is careful to differentiate between success and commercial success. "You look at a lot of things. If it got critical success, that's success to me. If your expectations for an act are geared more toward college or the alternative marketplace and you go out and do well in that arena, that's success. If you went out and toured well and got to a place where you felt comfortable to launch a second record, to me that's success. And that's artist development."

Perhaps it was this difference in definitions of success that more than anything precipitated sudden changes at Capitol Records. President David Berman resigned on September 22 (reportedly not on his own initiative) and Capitol-EMI Music president/CEO Joe Smith stepped in as interim Capitol Records president. On October 11, he asked Tom Whalley to step down and gave the entire A&R department to Simon Potts. He then left town without comment. Sources at Capitol say that "differences in artistic direction" were the principal cause of the change and that these involved investing more heavily in "the music of the '90s," which was not clearly defined. For Simon Potts, who once used the analogy that his role at Capitol was akin to that of a delicatessen inside a supermarket, there will be new requirements now that he's taken over managing the supermarket as well. But that belief in the superiority of his delicatessen's offerings is an important component in Potts' A&R make-up and won't go away.

"When you've made a record and you've put it out, I'm assuming you've made the decision that it's a *great* record and it should go out. I certainly tend to shelve any projects I don't think are great. There's nothing worse than putting out bad records."


What about okay records? "I don't think there's much purpose," Potts frowns. "Because what you're doing is clogging up the record company's system. I mean, I have a 40,000-album record collection and I would say at least 38,000 of those records I consider to be great records. Now 38,000 of those records weren't hits. I don't necessarily believe that if it's in the grooves, it's a hit. I think hits are made by everybody going for it in a record company, everybody beating down the door. If you don't believe in records when you put them out, then you can't sell them. I remember as a promotion man going to radio with mediocre records and having to promote them. To be honest, I

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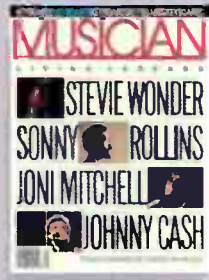
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always worked harder on the ones I believed in. And that happens all the way down the line at a record company. I can't get on the phone with people and say, 'This is the greatest artist I ever signed, you must listen to it!' Because if you cry 'wolf' in this business, nobody takes your next call."

So Potts really believes every record he ever released is great? Surely every one can't be a gem? "Well, probably not, but I might think it's excellent."

What if the band and producer think it's excellent and Potts doesn't? "I'm probably

not right all the time," he laughs. "If everyone within the company has heard the record and they think it's great, then I'm going to admit maybe I'm wrong. I called one of the Thompson Twins' hits wrong. But the most exciting thing about the record business is, there are no rules. Otherwise we'd all be very rich men, correct? I mean, if we could all predict that . . ."

"When you sign a group, you're signing a lot on instinct, often after you've seen them three or four times. Once you've signed an artist, you don't know if they're going to dry

up, if they're going to become drug addicts, whatever. As much as people like to think they are, A&R men ain't visionaries." 

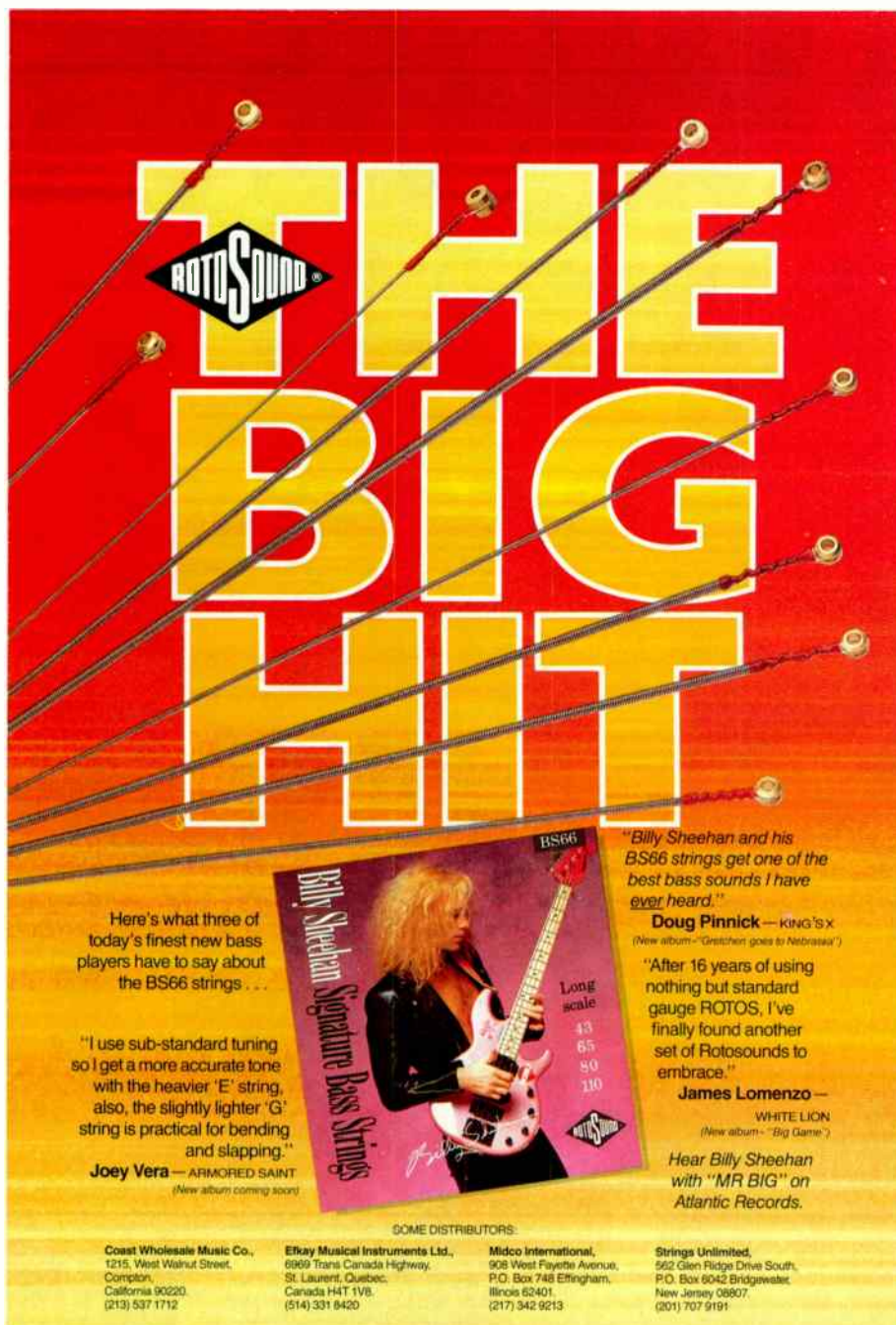
WOLK

[cont'd from page 96] learned has gone into his production of Paul Carrack. In spite of his famous one hit with Ace ("How Long") and his one hit with Squeeze ("Tempted"), Carrack's past solo albums have been mostly hip post-punk R&B tributes (like his Nick Lowe-produced "I Need You")—real good but more likely to be praised in this magazine than added to AOR playlists. After Carrack's recent AOR success as singer with Mike & the Mechanics, Wolk had the challenge of making a Paul Carrack album that would be more than a cult favorite. *Groove Approved* should do the job. Playing most of the instruments themselves, Carrack and Wolk layered the sound with synths and organs and guitars and voices. It's slick, it's thick, it's ready for radio and all those Mechanics fans. Interestingly, as the record plays out, more and more of Carrack's personality emerges, until by the last track an R&B rhythm is bouncing under fiddles, accordion and mandolin, a country/funk combination that recalls Wolk's beloved Band records.

"We sequenced the record in that way," Wolk says. "Hit 'em with the obvious pop singles and then as the album goes on you see this other side of Paul developing. It was wonderful to see him really open up, particularly as a songwriter. I don't think people are really aware of that—if they know 'How Long' from Ace they don't know that he wrote it. When we cut that last track Nick Lowe came in and went, 'Wow, this is great! Fiddles and mandolins!' We could have very easily made a whole record like that, but it wouldn't have been right for Paul in America right now, because people still want to hear a Mike & Mechanics kind of thing and we still want to give it to them."

"We were going for a record that would be a continuation of 'Don't Shed a Tear,' to keep him in the American market. I wanted to feature Paul's playing. On the last record he made he didn't play a note. Everybody knows what a unique voice he has, but I don't think people realize that he's a brilliant Hammond player, he's as rooted an R&B and rock 'n' roll musician as Steve Winwood and Billy Joel. It was time for people to find out there's another side to Paul Carrack."

While they discover the several sides of T-Bone Wolk. 



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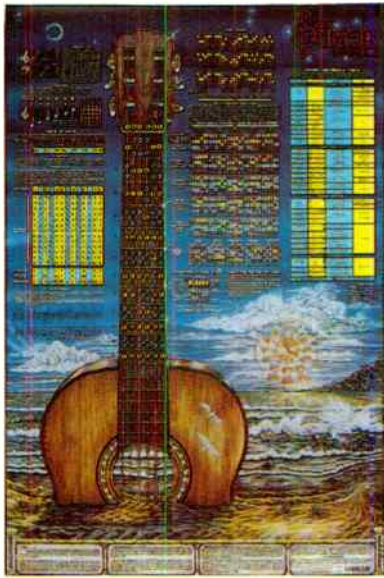
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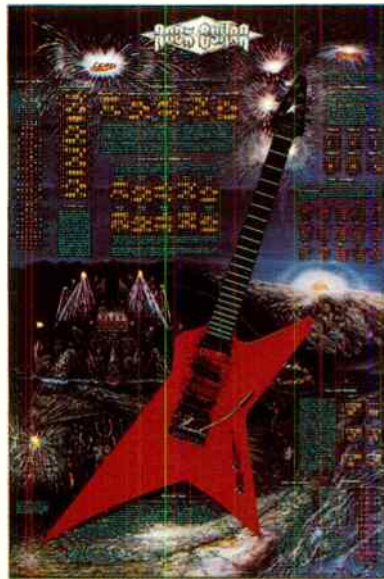
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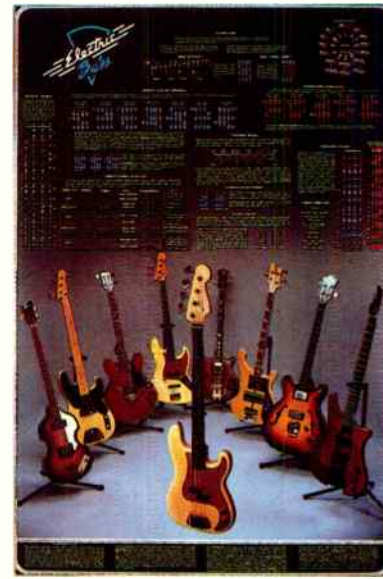
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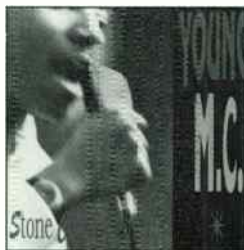
(Delicious Vinyl/Island)

SLICK AND appealing, Young M.C. plies his trade so gracefully that it's tempting to call *Stone Cold Rhymin'* a simple case of brash pop-rap, circa '89, and move on to the next contender. Claims of matchless mike prowess and awesome sex appeal, irreverent but dangerous attitudes—haven't we encountered this jive before? You bet, and we'll continue to hear it, as long as audiences thrill to the spectacle of egos in bloom. Right now, though, nobody epitomizes rap's rapprochement with the mainstream, its synthesis of cool-guy posturing and Top 10 accessibility, better than young Marvin Young.

Exhaustive semiotic analysis of these brisk, breezy jams reveals little to offend even your average mom or dad, in fact. Like DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, gabby Young M.C. chronicles the

anguish of the middle-class teen, supported by agreeably funky beats. The rockin' breakthrough single "Bust a Move" encourages aspiring Romeos, highlighted by clever imagery ("Don't hang yourself with a celibate rope"), while "Principal's Office" echoes Fresh Prince's "Parents Just Don't Understand," presenting a mock-tragic look at the perils of offending high-school authorities. Lest anyone object to this flip saga of victimless crimes, he also includes the somber "Just Say No," bringing familiar sentiments to a persistent problem.

Most of the time Young M.C. celebrates the pure mechanics of rapping, reveling in a bounty of verse and tireless verbal dexterity. "When you say Young M.C. you're saying more rhymes," he purrs, displaying ad-agency potential (should the show-biz gig go sour). Barely pausing for breath, Marvin slings



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enough deft insults throughout to impress Jackie Mason, cheerfully observing, "My lip service/Makes you nervous." This potentially tedious boasting is hardly routine, however: If, like most rappers, Young M.C. is in love with his own voice, he's also clearly infatuated by the sound of language itself. The words tumble lightly from his mouth, offered with a coltish fervor that transforms ritual bragging into a joyful romp.

Above all, our man prizes speed. Imitating a supersonic auctioneer on the breakneck, one-minute "Fastest Rhyme," he mocks less fleet peers in "Pick Up the Pace," slowing down the tempo—and mimicking his predecessors—to comic effect. A dismissive reference to the rap pioneers of "four score and seven years ago" betrays an unseemly eagerness to send the old guard packing and install a new regime, meaning you-know-who, of course.

Departures from the standard moves hint at a goofier sensibility, to be explored further down the road, perhaps. "Know How," featuring a pithy sample of "Shaft" guitar, contains the immortal lines, "I'm chillin', never illin'/ In my mouth I've got two fillings/Whatever!" Say what? Elsewhere he touts the funky fresh rhymes coming out of his gizzard, which might intrigue the medical establishment, and retreats behind a copy of *Sports Illustrated* when confronted with a risky relationship.

Like Tone-Lōc, Young M.C. belongs to the Delicious Vinyl posse. He co-wrote most of the tracks with Delicious honchos Matt Dike and Michael Ross, as well as co-authoring Tone's monster smash "Wild Thing." Marvin Young's less sensational chart success—so far—should mean less pressure, and more freedom to grow, the next time around. *Stone Cold Rhymin'* has style to burn, but silver-tongued Young M.C. may be hiding greater surprises within his def self.—Jon Young

Neil Young

Freedom
(Reprise)

MANY ROCKERS knock around the territories these days, passing through metal or country or technopop before reaching their true destinations. But since he made his first solo album 20 years ago, Neil Young actually has backed away from the rough, often impecca-

ble blendings he achieved in the '70s, and moved into recordings determined by specific styles. Young has seldom been applauded for this, but then the intent of his '80s work has been frequently misgauged. A punk-metal set such as 1981's *Re-ac-tor* or an outing in minimalist electronics like 1983's *Trans* testified not to Young's apathy or confusion, but rather to his career-long sensitivity to form.

Still, Young's '80s records have begged for some grand conclusion, and *Freedom* offers exactly this: a return to synthesis. *Freedom* is pure Neil Young music, with all the eccentric and frayed guitars, circling melodies and tense singing harvested into a dozen tightly wrapped songs.

Significantly, the album opens with an acoustic rendering of a song called "Rockin' in the Free World" and closes with a driven, electric expansion of it. In between he



plumbs the daily realities of the widening economic divisions that anyone who walks a city street, watches TV or reads a paper sees all too plainly. This is true not only when Young addresses the plight of the homeless and adrift—such as in the hypnotic long groove "Crime in the City (Sixty to Zero Part I)," or a dark reading of the Drifters' "On Broadway" that emphasizes continuing strife over eventual stardom—but when he gives poignant twists to love songs. In one, a couple are "Hangin' on a Limb"; throughout the inconsolable "Wrecking Ball" a man seems to dream of an evening with a certain woman, wishing that she'd "wear something pretty and white." Although there's some humor scattered across *Freedom*, the situations Young details are more often tragic.

"Don't that bother you, pal?" Young wondered sardonically on "This Note's for You." *Freedom* takes a step beyond that, tackling already charged themes with several of the most emotionally compelling songs and arrangements he's fashioned in years. It *wants* to bother you, pal.—James Hunter



Various Artists

Jazz Piano, a Smithsonian Collection
(Smithsonian)

EVERY JAZZ LABEL of any size issues a piano anthology. Martin Williams at the Smithsonian Institute has sampled many catalogues and assembled what is probably the definitive compilation. Weighing in at four CDs and 42 pianists, it's a companion piece to Williams' other master thesis, *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*. With such a large task at hand, there are bound to be missteps; most, fortunately, are small.

Williams is orthodox in his pre-bebop choices of artists. All the important pianists are represented, along with lesser but still notable players like Jimmy Yancey, Meade Lux Lewis, Pete Johnson, Avery Parrish, Billy Kyle, Jess Stacy and Nat Cole.

You could quibble with their apportionment: Allotting five tracks to Art Tatum befits his status as the colossus of the keyboard, while Earl Hines gets four, and Fats Waller three. But only two tracks for Duke Ellington? Considering Duke's lasting influence through Monk and Cecil Taylor, he's being shortchanged. Limiting Basie to one track is equally thoughtless.

It gets stickier. The transition from swing to bop is ignored (Ken Kersey or Clyde Hart would have fit the bill), though bop itself is well-documented. Bud Powell is heard on four tunes, while Monk and Erroll Garner take three apiece. Jimmy Jones, Lennie Tristano, Dodo Marmarosa, Ellis Larkins, Dave McKenna, Al Haig and Jimmy Rowles each get a taste, which is fair, but poor Oscar Peterson is cut down to one two-minute excerpt. And while Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan are indeed present-day standard-bearers of mainstream jazz, do they really rate two tracks apiece and a duet together? Where's Barry Harris? Where the hell is Cecil Taylor? As much as anyone, Taylor led the charge into the experimental 1960s, yet he's nowhere to be heard on this collection.

Williams, who's been taken to task for neglecting recent developments in his *Jazz Collection*, does bow to the '60s with tracks by McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett and Herbie Hancock. He also has the good sense to sample the latter three before electric schlock, ECM pretentiousness and overboogie, respectively, set in.

So what do we have? Jelly Roll Morton offering a blueprint for small-band polyphony, Willie "the Lion" Smith's luminous "Echoes of Spring," Waller nodding to his main man, James P. Johnson, on "Carolina Shout," Hines wriggling out of more knots than Houdini, Basie recalling his stride roots at the end of his life, Tatum's crystal cathedrals of sound, Ellington's positively *avant-garde* "Clothed Woman" from 1947 (!), Cole's surgical exactness juxtaposed with Garner's maverick tangents, Powell's raging furnace on "Tempus Fugit," Tristano pointing a way out of bop, McKenna's updated stride, Rowles' take on Debussy, Monk overhauling standards, Horace Silver on a rare ballad, Herbie Nichols diagramming a way out of standard chord voicings, a somber spiritual by Randy Weston, tender ballads from Bill Evans, Tyner's percussive modality, Corea synthesizing his influences and Jarrett from his quietly spectacular *Facing You* LP. Even with its faults, this set is not likely to be improved upon for quite some time. (Box 23345, Washington, DC 20026)

—Kirk Silsbee



Kate Bush

The Sensual World
(Columbia)

ALL IT TAKES is a single listening of *The Sensual World* to understand why it's been four years since Kate Bush released an album; a song cycle as rich and deep as this takes a while to mature. An overnight sensation who became a star at the age of 19, Bush, now 31, has proven herself an artist whose vision yields new and unexpected rewards with each record, and she

executes several stunning turns on this, her sixth LP. Her original use of rhyme and meter, the wide frame of reference she draws from as a composer and her inventive and fearless approach to singing fall into perfect sync on nearly every song.

Often dismissed as self-consciously precious, Bush counters that criticism here with 11 songs of such wisdom and poetry that only the most hardened cynic would write them off as conceits. Centering on the eternal struggle between male and female, the album kicks off with a title track inspired by James Joyce's *Ulysses*. A celebration of the idea of giving oneself over and embracing all that life offers—textures, tastes, experiences—"The Sensual World" is an extraordinarily erotic song, and Bush's breathless vocal style perfectly complements the theme. Next up is "Love and Anger," an anthem of faith in the notion that, despite the overwhelming fear that pervades planet earth, human beings are capable of knowing and being known by one another. "The Fog" explores that theme further by celebrating the leap of faith that love demands, while "Reaching Out" looks at how we're instinctively drawn to both danger and comfort. Every track on the album offers something different to think about, and Bush's point of view on the subject at hand is usually as smart as it is sweepingly emotional.

An atmospheric, ambitiously produced tapestry of sound, *The Sensual World* has a massive, orchestral quality about it (one number features backup vocals by the Trio Bulgarka—in case you missed it, Bulgarian folk is the hot ethnic music of the moment). Despite the elaborate trimmings, Bush's music remains profoundly human, earthy and moving. Her songs seem to reside in that waking dream state where deeply rooted fears and desires intermingle with the concrete reality known as the world; as painted by Bush, that place is the essence of life itself.—Kristine McKenna

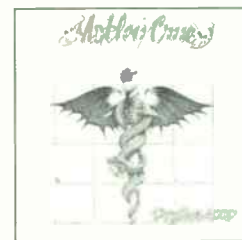
Mötley Crüe

Dr. Feelgood
(Elektra)

THIS RECORD is noteworthy because it sounds pretty good. Whether Mötley Crüe actually learned to play their instruments after sobering up, or producer Bob Rock is the next career-saving techno-

wizard, I do not know. I do know that the Crüe put forth not a short hair's worth of musical inspiration on their previous albums and now they have crunch and punch to spare. I enjoy listening to several songs here, especially the title cut.

This record is also noteworthy because of Nikki Sixx's lyrics. In the tradition of glam metal, Sixx would have no interest in women if they weren't attached to vaginas. Although reminding Americans that Jesus won't smite



you for getting an erection is a worthy message, vagina worship as an exclusive area of thought evinces a certain narrowness of world view. Take this observation from "Sticky Sweet": "Now when I've done good/She slaps me on the ass/It takes more than 10 seconds/To satisfy this lass." As a character study of a particular female, the song falls short of revelation. Are there *any* females who can be satisfied in less than 10 seconds? And if there are, why would you want to? How long does Sixx think it takes to satisfy a woman? "Gee, Nikki, let me slap you on the butt. You lasted almost twice as long as 10 seconds."

On the other hand, Sixx's long obsession with premature ejaculation (remember "Ten Seconds 'Till Love" on *Shout at the Devil?*) inspires confidence in the listener that he is speaking about a subject with which he is familiar. When he writes about crime ("Dr. Feelgood") or revolution ("Time for Change"), the songs don't resonate with the same authenticity. Maybe next album he'll spend up to a full minute thinking before he writes.—Charles M. Young

Agnes Buen Garnås Jan Garbarek

Rosenföle: Traditional Songs from Norway
(ECM)

EARLY MUSIC FANS adore the archaic. Rummaging through a repertoire so musty it makes Bach sound like a

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- What Andy Williams and Ozzy Osbourne have in common?
- Which music video was the first ever aired on MTV?
- The title of the album recorded by Charles Manson?
- Alvin and the Chipmunks were named after what major record executives?
- The date of Bob Dylan's bar mitzvah?
- What famous band was named after their gym teacher?
- What band made the *Guinness Book World Records* for the world's loudest concert?



- 1981 *...Gypsy*
John Lennon & Yoko Ono (Columbia)
- 1982
4
Foreigner (Atlantic)
- 1983
Business as Usual
Men at Work (Columbia)
- 1984
Can't Slow Down
Lionel Richie (Motown)
- 1985
Born in the U.S.A.
Bruce Springsteen (Columbia)
- 1986
The Broadway Album
Barbra Streisand (Columbia)
- 1987
Slippery When Wet
Bon Jovi (Mercury/PolyGram)
- 1988
Faith
George Michael (Columbia)
- 1989
Don't Be Cruel
Bobby Brown (MCA)

- 1985
"Down Under"
Men at Work (Columbia)
- 1984
"Owner of a Lonely Heart"
Yes (Atco)
- 1985
"Like a Virgin"
Madonna (Warner Bros.)
- 1986
"That's What Friends Are For"
Dionne & Friends (Arista)
- 1987
"At This Moment"
Billy Vera & the Beaters (Rhino)
- 1988
"Got My Mind Set On You"
George Harrison (Dark Horse)
- 1989
"Two Hearts"
Phil Collins (Atlantic)

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7	8	9	10	11	12	
14	15 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday					

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KENNY GARRETT

prisoner of love

Multi-instrumentalist Kenny Garrett may be a newcomer to Atlantic Records, but he's no stranger to the jazz scene. In his short career he's backed Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw and Dizzy Gillespie, and was part of last year's Amnesty tour. For the last two-and-a-half years he's been a prominent member of the Miles Davis band.

With *Prisoner Of Love*, his solo debut, Kenny shows that his skills as writer, arranger and producer easily match his ability as a player. Spiritual, soulful, and always swinging, *Prisoner Of Love* will capture the hearts and minds of jazz fans everywhere.

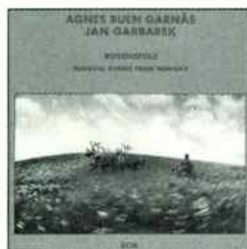
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cultural terrorist, early music fans are happiest when hunkered down in the fourteenth century, deciphering ancient scores and meticulously reconstructing long-forgotten instruments and performance practices. Yet if you hear the recordings that have resulted from these research projects, what's most shocking isn't the music's otherworldly primitivism, but how uncannily modern much of it seems. Listen to the Early Music Quartet's 1967 recreation of songs from the Carmina Burana, or the Studio der Frühen Musik's albums of medieval dance music (both featuring the redoubtable Thomas Binkley), and what stands out is a relationship between rhythmic urgency and melodic directness that's not far removed from the beat-driven sound of our own dance music.

All of which makes Jan Garbarek and Agnes Buen Garnås' thoroughly modern settings of medieval Norwegian folksongs seem appropriate. Though by no means a



historical reconstruction, the album maintains a good bit of the early music aesthetic, balancing Garnås' crisp, clear soprano—she's a singer not given to clutter or ostentation, and her voice rings with an almost monastic austerity—against Garbarek's ghostly backing tracks.

How Garbarek fills in behind Garnås, however, is much more modern than medieval. Taking full advantage of contemporary technology, his instrumentation, though sometimes eccentric, is stunningly evocative. "Margjit og Targjei Risvollo," for instance, obtains its eerie aura from tabla, synthesized strings and whispering tenor saxophone, while "Stolt Øli" builds tension from a layering of synths and hand percussion not unlike some of Peter Gabriel's rhythm tracks. In fact, Garbarek's settings are surprisingly pop-informed; note how the thudding electro-percussion in "Lillebroer og Storebroer" recalls Kate Bush's *The Dreaming*. Still, their greatest charm lies not in their accessibility but the way they supply context, creating color and drama behind these stark melodies in a way the lyrics (all

left in impenetrable Old Norse) can't.

For all Garbarek's contributions, *Rosenfole* is really Garnås' album, and what ultimately drives it is her complete command of the material. From the dissonant incantation that runs through "Innferd," Venelite" and "Uttferd" to the catchy sing-song of "Stolt Øli," she doesn't merely bring these ancient melodies to life but makes us believe they never were anything *but* alive. And that, as any ancient music fan will tell you, is the truest test of a classic performance.

—J.D. Considine



James McMurtry

Too Long in the Wasteland
(Columbia)

NOVELIST LARRY McMURTRY has been proving for years that he is no mean storyteller, e.g. his Pulitzer Prize-winning epic *Lonesome Dove*. Now his son James shows us on his debut album that the musician in the family can spin a pretty fair yarn himself.

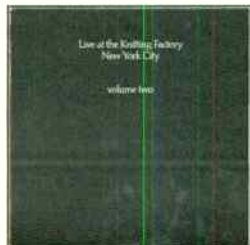
Too Long in the Wasteland is distinguished by bracing compositions notable for their highly literary lyric technique and keenly delineated detail. As a writer, and sometimes as a vocalist, Texas-bred McMurtry resembles the John Prine of "Sam Stone" and "Hello in There." He sings in a flat, unaffected drawl, and his characters are drawn with sympathy and poignancy. Those characters are often the dispossessed, disaffected and disoriented men and women of the Southwestern flatlands. Portraits—of a reform school kid courting violence in "Terry," a ne'er-do-well bargeman in "Song for a Deck Hand's Daughter," an oil wildcatter's neglected wife in "Crazy Wind"—are somber yet true.

The first-person narratives are no less potent. "Outskirts" is a tale of a failed reunion with an old lover that's so adeptly sketched it almost makes you cringe with unease. The album's title track considers isolation on the Texas prairie with such

impact that you can fairly hear the hot wind groan and the tumbleweeds rustle.

McMurtry's almost casually tuneful melodies receive superior dressing from producer John Mellencamp, who holds the oft-bombastic tendencies heard on his own records in close check here. The Little Bastard brings along a cast of players, including Joe Ely's guitarist David Grissom and non-pareil skinman Kenny Aronoff, who can whisper or howl with equal efficacy.

His first time out, James McMurtry has created a wasteland that is worthy of your repeated habitation.—Chris Morris



Various Artists

Live at the Knitting Factory, Vols. I and II
(A&M)

SMASH YOUR COFFEE TABLE into angular chunks. Set out a bowl of corn nuts, dim the lights, grab a beer, and for chrissakes take down them damn St. Pauli Girl posters. Ya got any Haring? Only nice stuff here, 'cause we're trying to simulate the Knitting Factory, that hip art-performance dive on the cusp of Soho that everybody's been yappin' about for a couple years now.

Or you could just close your eyes and slap on these two records featuring artists who are regulars at the club. Drift away on Myra Melford's solo safari through piano bluesology, get pinned by guitarist Sonny Sharrock's pealing improv slam, or let Chunk bang one of its all-percussion melodies into your skull. This is music with a capital M, and that stands for marvelous *and* messy.

The marvelous? Well, besides Sharrock and Chunk and Melford, there's Gary Lucas, the ex-Captain Beefheart guitarist who works out Albert Ayler's "Ghosts" on slide dobro; and Miracle Room, three Austin, Texas transplants who howl about heart surgery while banging on junk metal. Bern Nix does his pretty thing, chasing an acoustic guitar melody any way he pleases. Odd Job slices "Foxy Lady" like a street punk with a rusty shiv—imagine Hendrix as a yelping

schizophrenic leather-babe with homicidal tendencies.

The messy? Performance-geek Alva Rogers' babbling "Pizza Party" is a bust; Fred Frith, Mark Dresser and Ikue Mori's "Orbital Inversion" is disappointingly earthbound; Glen Velez's quartet never breaks the new-age mold (though the flute on "Ramana" nimbly dances through the pampas and a few dark Aztec caves); and Scanners' jamming has drive without any real destination. Somewhere between these two M-words are a half-dozen others, like post-bop jesters the Jazz Passengers, drum-nut Joey Baron and rock extemporizers Curlew and Bosh.

M also stands for Manhattan, which is what—besides a yen for improvisation—these bands and the Knitting Factory have in common. In little more than two years the modest room on Houston Street has become a haven for New York City musicians on the lonely creative fringes of rock and jazz. It's the haunt of perennial innovators like Cecil Taylor and downtown toughguys like Elliot Sharp largely because of owners Michael Dorf and Bob Appel's eclectic tastes and booking *glasnost*. Dorf in particular has become a Ché Guevara for the sort of risky, courageous modern music he and Appel champion. And it's largely his efforts that have yielded spinoff festivals in New York, Holland and Boston, a radio series and these two live recordings. Yo Michael, viva la revolución!—Ted Drozdowski



The Rolling Stones

Singles Collection/The London Years
(ABKCO)

ONCE UPON A TIME, long, long ago, the Rolling Stones were a singles band. That means they appeared not once every three or four years with an album but every two or three months with one song considered good enough for mass consumption. Incredible, isn't it?

Singles Collection/The London Years (named for the band's U.S. [cont'd on page 129])

MIKE STERN

PUTS ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER ON JIGSAW

With *Jigsaw*, guitarist Mike Stern has made one of the most personal albums of his career. Long hailed as one of today's most brilliant guitar players by critics, music lovers and his peers, Stern's new album takes him to the farthest edges of melodic expression and soulful playing.

Pick up *Jigsaw*, the brand-new solo recording from Mike Stern. Special guests include Bob Berg, Michael Brecker, Dennis Chambers, Peter Erskine and Jeff Andrews and Jim Beard. And there's a bonus track on the CD.

Jigsaw—it's an album that fits in any collection.

Produced by Steve Khan

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SHORT TAKES

SO MUCH MUSIC, SO LITTLE TIME

ROCK

By J.D. Considine

Graham Parker

Human Soul (RCA)

AS AN OUTSIDER looking in, Parker's American songs never managed the biting familiarity of his best Brit-rockers. Until now, that is. With *Human Soul* Parker truly feels at home with these United States, and that's enough to make his outrage a tad more credible, his jokes a little more laughable. How else could the mocking "Big Man on Paper" seem as accomplished as the angry "Green Monkey's"? Moreover, as "Soultime" and its ilk show, Parker's reggae-fied rhythmic sense has finally found a workable American groove, one that is not only radio-safe but delivers all the impassioned aggression of his classic early work.

Linda Ronstadt

Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind (Elektra)

HER FIRST MAINSTREAM rock recording since the lamentable *Get Closer*, this seems just more of the same at first: the obligatory soul oldie, a few soul-baring ballads by Jimmy Webb and Karla Bonoff, and the usual assortment of no-sweat session players. Listen past that well-polished surface, however, and you can hear how much Ronstadt learned from her dalliances outside the rock world; not only does she hold her own against Aaron Neville on four of the 12 songs assembled here, but she understands how to get a larger-than-life effect without over-singing. Now if only someone would wean her away from those syrupy string arrangements....

Bad Brains

Quickness (Caroline)

BACK WHEN hardcore was a novelty and thrash was still a verb, the Bad Brains were the fastest band in punk. These days, though, the Brains are pursuing a more spiritual sort of

quickness. Just what that entails, exactly, is hard to say—this band's lyrics would be impenetrable even without the semi-Rasta patois—but what it amounts to musically sounds edgy, unrefined and gloriously metallic. With a noise that nasty, who needs speed? (114 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001)

Deborah Harry

Def, Dumb & Blonde (Sire)

UNLIKE HER OTHER solo efforts, which tried hard to recast this blondie as a dance-club diva, *Def, Dumb & Blonde* puts the emphasis on songs, plain and simple. It works, regardless of whether our Deb is crooning softly (the eerily lovely "Brite Side"), turning exotic (the Braziloid "Calmarie") or, yes, riding a dance beat (the funky "Get Your Way"). In fact, she hasn't sounded this good since *Eat to the Beat*—and what's dumb about that?

The Stone Roses

The Stone Roses (RCA)

BECAUSE JANGLY guitar groups are all built around the same set of sounds, what matters most are the subtleties—how sharp the hooks are, how the band handles its psychedelia, and so on. Which is where the Stone Roses shine brightest, from the dreamy drone of "Elephant Stone" to the understated charm of "Waterfall."

Johnny Otis

The Capitol Years (Bug/Capitol)

A PART FROM "Willie and the Hand Jive" and "Crazy Country Hop," there's not much here the casual fan is likely to recognize (unless Eric Clapton covers "Castin' My Spell" in the near future). But so what? This isn't a greatest-hits package so much as an evocation of the days when Otis' swinging R&B insouciance typified the groove that became America's musical pulse. On those terms, every track's a winner.

Tears for Fears

The Seeds of Love (Fontana)

NEVER MIND the human-potential crap sprinkled through the lyric sheet; the big

issue on this album is "Where are the hits?" Not here, that's for sure. Though the annoyingly Beatlesque "Sowing the Seeds of Love" will doubtless prove a guilty pleasure for many listeners, every other shot at an easily remembered melody seems to have been crushed under the weight of the album's obsessively fussy production. Next time, how about spending four years writing hooks?

The Hooters

Zig Zag (Columbia)

ANY ALBUM that opens with a plea for brotherhood and closes with a paean to the humble glories of rock 'n' roll is bound to engender at least a little cynicism. Somehow, though, the Hooters cut through the corn to get at the emotion underneath, and when they do—whether with the romantic certainty of "Heaven Laughs" or the rock politics of "Mr. Big Baboon"—it's something to believe in.

Coldcut

What's That Noise? (Tommy Boy/Reprise)

THERE'S SOMETHING genuinely chameleon-like about Coldcut's sound, and it's not just because these mixmasters work mainly with sampled and stolen sounds. For Lisa Stansfield and "People Hold On" they're all disco beats and slick chorus hooks, while their Mark E. Smith collaboration, "(I'm) In Deep," is abrasive enough to make Front 242 seem commercial. Could it be that, even without instruments, the members of Coldcut think like a band?

Astor Piazzolla

La Camorra: La Soledad de la Provocación Apasionada (American Clavé)

PIAZZOLLA'S FONDNESS for chamber-music dynamics might give his recordings an arty resonance, but their power stems from his ability to compose music that sounds as spontaneous as laughter or a bar fight. Which is why this music, as it outlines the traditions of *guapo* honor, makes its point not through exposition but flashes of action and emotion—the kind of passion improvisation might suggest, but composition alone can deliver.

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World Radio History

Bonham

The Disregard of Timekeeping
(WTC)

SURE, THE ZEPPELINISMS are his birthright, but what's really cool about Jason Bonham and his band is that they're so casual about it all. To hear them play, you'd think Led Zep was essentially a groove band, not the apotheosis of white blues bands. The funny thing is, they may be right.

Gorky Park

Gorky Park (Mercury)

IF THIS is the Soviet Bon Jovi, no wonder Gorby is worried about the future of perestroika.



JAZZ

By Chip Stern

WOULD YOU BUY A USED RECORD REVIEW FROM THIS MAN?

"It's the most mature and assured statement to date from any of today's young jazzmen."

Chip Stern

(From a review of Branford Marsalis' *Trio Jeepy*)

Musician #130, August 1989

"Such feeble attempts at Black slang and references to what is and isn't 'niggerish' should be reserved for writers like Chip Stern, who honestly have no idea."

Branford Marsalis

(Letters to the Editor)

Village Voice, September 5, 1989

JOHAN SNYDER'S RETURN to A&M's reconstituted jazz division is as incongruous and stunning a development as Nixon's trip to China. For jazz listeners this sudden 180 means the digital revival of the A&M Horizon Series (featuring Snyder's obsessively detailed packagings), a thorough reissue of old Don Sebesky materials and some finds from Snyder's subsequent Artist House days. These include fine recordings by George Benson, Wes Montgomery, Jim Hall, Charlie Haden and Chet Baker, with new releases by Cecil Taylor and Max Roach/Dizzy Gillespie rumored to be on the way. Among the most exciting new finds is a fresh batch of tunes by the **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Quartet**. Rarely have jazz standards received a more oblique yet lyrical interpretation, as the cornetist and drummer lead pianist Harold Danko and bass master Rufus Reid on a merry chase through the changes like some sort of cubist Count Basie. As usual, the aural production values are superb.

Uptown String Quartet

Uptown String Quartet (Phillips)

SOMETHING VEDDY interesting here. The Uptown Strings have been honing their skills as an integral part of Max Roach's innovative Double Quartet, to the point where that group is beginning to take on a warmer, more fluid orchestral flavor. Standing on their own, Eileen M. Folson, Maxine Roach, Lesa Terry and Diane Monroe are on the verge of a genuine artistic breakthrough. More than just a stylistic echo of a classical-string quartet, the Uptowns have dug deeper, much deeper, into some of the pre-jazz roots of American musical tradition. The results can be rhythmically startling (the bumptious metric overlays of "Extensions," which evolved from Max Roach's solo drum composition "Billy the Kid"); charming (Joplin's "The Easy Winners"); and deeply moving (several superb interpretations of traditional material, with their echoes of spirituals, work songs and ancient American string bands). They've created their own swinging ensemble style, and are developing a repertoire all their own. They're also starting to step out as soloists with the kind of graceful élan that would make Ray Nance, Eddie South and Ray Perry proud.

John Zorn

Spy Vs. Spy (Elektra/Musician)

YEAH, I KNOW this was supposed to be a thrash album, a jazz response to hardcore. Like, you got punk rock, we got *raw jazz*—short, violent outbursts of speech, punctuated by the infrequent thematic nod and wink to the Ornette Coleman tunes they're presumably pillaging. About two-thirds of the way through, when you've given up all earthly hope that they'll ever trot out a tempo below 200 or a texture that hasn't been julienned into shards of tortured taffy...they oblige. Like its predecessor *New York Eye and Ear Control*, *Spy Vs. Spy* be a sometime thing, subversive programming on select college radio hollers notwithstanding.

Cindy Blackman

Arcane (Muse)

HERE'S AN INCENDIARY young drummer with a world of talent. Joined by Wallace Roney, Kenny Garrett, Joe Henderson, Buster Williams and Larry Willis, *Arcane* showcases Ms. Blackman's considerable chops and refined writing in a mode more than a little reminiscent of Tony Williams' work on *Miles Smiles*. Doubting Thomases should exercise patience, because this is her maiden voyage and she obviously has a lot to prove. But once she comes out from under Tony's considerable shadow and develops a more relaxed

approach to the ensemble (as in when to kick ass, and when to simply let it happen around you), she's going to be a major force.

Jon Faddis

Into the Faddisphere (Epic)

SPEAKING OF coming out from under the shadows, here's an artistic model for the most underrated trumpet player of our generation. Jon Faddis spent a good deal of his adult life performing as mentor Dizzy Gillespie's stunt double, and as one of the first-call first-trumpet mainstays in the studios, in the tradition of Snooky Young (uplifting musical spirit, chops always on, perfect intonation to lead a section). As *Into the Faddisphere* makes clear, it's a privilege to hear Faddis finally get a chance to speak for himself after playing John Alden all these years. Outside of Cat Anderson, who isn't making too many gigs these days, you won't hear a lot of brassmen spike the high notes like Bad Fad (oh excuse me, am I breaking into slang again?) does on "Retro Blue," "Ciribiribin" or the title tune. But he can get down to the ground, too, as his ballad "At Long Last" demonstrates. Ralph Peterson Jr., Phil Bowler and Renee Rosnes give him a strong modern context to play off and Faddis' bravura approach takes care of the rest.

James Morrison & Adam Makowicz

Swiss Encounter (East/West)

THE PHENOMENAL Australian brassman (trumpet and trombone) is far better served by an acoustic quartet than he was by the pleasant but generic techno-reach of his debut. This is jazz festival jamming of the highest order, and one has to hope that the vigorous spirit of exploration and interplay Nesuhi Ertegun captured between Morrison, Makowicz and the rhythm team of Buster Williams and Al Foster won't disappear from Atlantic with Ertegun's passing.



INDIE

Philip Tabane & Malumbo

Unh! (Icon/Nonesuch)

WHEN THEY ELABORATE on the Africa/blues connection, they're stating the obvious, give or take a shuffle or two. But if Ali Farka Toure is Hooker, then South African Tabane is surely Taj, with enough pop craft, folk subtleties and jazz swagger to make this fairly stripped-down session, essentially a trio, flow and flow and flow. That has to do with Tabane the guitarist's percussive ploys. With an extraordinarily warm tone (Wes Mont-



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gomery was an early Western influence), the leader plucks as much as he strums, and what he plucks are irresistible melodies. The drummers are on the same case; thick and earthy, they give the thematic material lots of gracious bumps. Despite the title (a classic, yes?), this thing overpowers with understatement.—*Jim Macnie*

Various Artists

Fiesta Vallenata (Shanachie)

COLOMBIA'S taking punches from everybody these days, but this sampler of accordion-heavy, Vallenata-based pop is an export that few

should quibble with. Especially if your feet are at the end of your ankles. Here "pop" means that the radio plays it and people listen; thousands of miles away, it sounds more like folk music, and you have to go a long way—Nairobi cornersides or JB's jail cell—to hear complex rhythms working in the service of such irresistible tunage. At the risk of overstatement, this veers toward the introductory perfection of *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto* LP a few years back. If that's not enough of a purchase provocation, perhaps the fact that the chorus to Jimmy Pedrozo's "El Loro" sounds like "make a yuppie yowl" is. (37 East Clinton St., Newton, NJ 07860)—*Jim Macnie*

Bobby Bradford/John Carter Quintet

Comin' Through (hat ART)

MASTER CLARINETIST Carter has devoted most of the decade to his elaborate recounting of the black experience in North America (incarceration, transport, auction block); it's left him little time for blowing sessions like this one, whose open pieces offer plenty of room for ensemble extrapolation. Extended anything might seem anachronistic in these curt jazz times, but as co-leader/cornetist Bradford toys with texture, Carter emits quicksilver trills and the rhythm section (Richard Davis, Andrew Cyrille, Don Preston) push, push, pushes, the wide-open spaces get filled royally. No narratives, no chamber constrictions. Just heads, five-way interplay with plenty of exclamation points, and gone. (Box 461, Therwil, Switzerland)—*Jim Macnie*

Fred Lane

From the One That Cut You (Shimmy-Disc)

BACKED BY Ron 'Pate's swinging Debonairs, Lane hacks a jaunty swath through material bound to please the cocktail-and-acid crowd. Sure pick to click here is "Rubber Room," in which the singer stylishly disposes of his wife without wrinkling his suit. Aside from the big band, there's a guitar-based instrumental ("Danger Is My Beer"), a marimba solo ("Meat Clamp Conduit"), an unaccompanied vocal ("Oatmeal")—in short, something for the whole family from this well-rounded entertainer. (Box 1187, New York, NY 10116)—*Scott Isler*

Various Artists

The Bridge (Caroline)

THIS RELATIVELY CAREFUL compilation is a noisy new generation's salute to Neil Young. The exceptions are covers by guitarist Henry Kaiser with David Lindley and his strong-voiced daughter Roseanne, plus Victoria Williams & the Williams Brothers, who follow Soul Asylum's rousing "Barstool Blues" opener with a calm reading of "Don't Let It Bring You Down." Groups like Sonic Youth, who lay out "Computer Age" from *Trans*, and Dinosaur Jr., who thrash "Lotta Love," enjoy Young's 20-year championship of the ragged, the apparently unconnected and, of course, the unslick. Some proceeds from the album are going to San Francisco's Bridge School, which helps mentally and physically impaired children.

—*James Hunter*

Various Artists

Everyday Is a Holly Day (Emergo)

THIS COLLECTION of Buddy Holly covers proves two things, neither of which is big news: The Brits have always understood Holly

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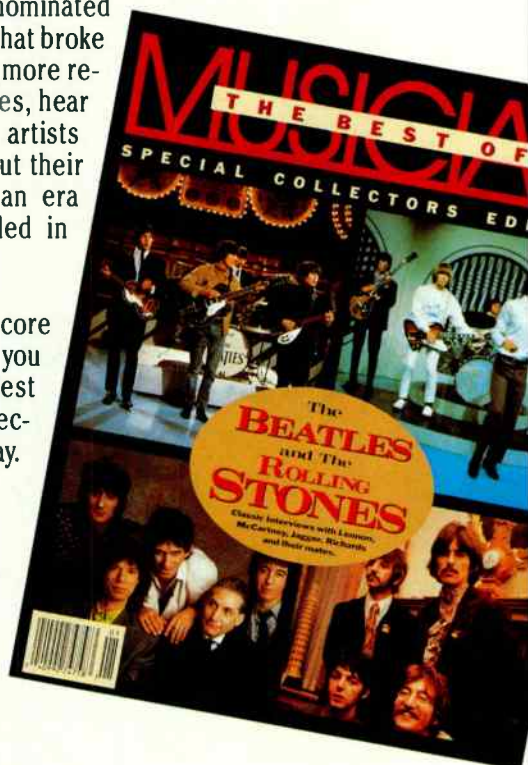
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better than his countrymen, and it's hard to improve on the originals. While top honors must go to Shoes' gorgeous "Words of Love" (which draws on the Beatles' version as much as Holly's), Angloid types Chris Spedding and Chris Bailey make "It's So Easy" and "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" sound as perfect in the late '80s as they surely did in the late '50s. Other tracks are respectful if not particularly revelatory. OFB and Red River bring out the garage-band glory in "Oh Boy" and "Rave On," and Imitation Life's original "Hey Buddy" has an engaging if unexpected snarl to it. And it all sounds a long, long ways from Lubbock.

—Thomas Anderson

CHILI PEPPERS

[cont'd from page 18] that much in L.A.'s largely segregated neighborhoods, so the Red Hot Chili Peppers' collision of punk and funk—along with contemporaries like Fishbone and Thelouious Monster—makes them an anomaly here.

"We play music there are no categories for," says Anthony. "The record company doesn't know what to do with us.

"But, with each new record, we get closer to the sounds and intensity we want. Music

like Parliament-Funkadelic, Miles Davis, Defunkt and Grandmaster Flash excited us. From punk came the raw animal magnetism we also incorporated.

"Growing up in Hollywood gives you a lot of tension, aggression and frustration because there's so much sensory input . . . the people, the traffic, the lights, the movies, the palm trees, the ocean, the breeze, the hills—the police helicopters landing on your eyeballs. They're all there barking down your face day and night. What can you do but regurgitate it in your music?"

REISSUE

Harry Nilsson

All Time Greatest Hits (RCA)

IF YOU REMEMBER early-'70s pop radio, then you remember Harry Nilsson. Even when "Without You" broke hearts and the still fresh "Coconut" started parties though, Nilsson was a hard singer/songwriter to figure. Less experimental than Van Dyke Parks but still risky, less literary than Randy Newman (an album of whose tunes he recorded in 1970) yet funny and knowing all the same, Nilsson wrote Three Dog Night's silvery "One" and hung out with John Lennon. This slightly nostalgic, slightly wry CD sequences eight Top 40 hits alongside 12 other rockers, ballads, strollers and jaunters from Nilsson's albums. They're the lasting work of a modern guy who draws on pop from the '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s with a hard-headed charm.—Jim Hunter

Chet Baker

Baker's Holiday (PolyGram/Emercy)

AS SINGERS, Baker and Billie Holiday had a lot in common, including the ability to wring heartbreaking shades of pathos from a thin timbre and a breezy standard. This tribute, comprising interpretations by Baker of songs associated with the late, great Billie, doesn't make that clear. Recorded in the '50s with orchestral horn arrangements and an ace rhythm section (Hank Jones, Connie Kay, Richard Davis), Baker's voice is too mannered in the style of Sinatra or Tormé to plumb the depths where Lady Day pretty much lived—as Baker would himself in years to come. It's the instrumentals—versions of "You're My Thrill" and Holiday's "Don't Explain"—that shine, as Baker's flugelhorn evokes with exquisite fragility the emotional essence of both artists.

—Mark Rowland



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY MAYER

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STONES REVIEW

[cont'd from page 121] label at the time, London Records) is a boxed set gathering every Stones track released on 45 through 1971 in England and the U.S., and a smattering thereafter. This may or may not be all the Rolling Stones you'll ever need, as they say on late-night TV commercials, but it's a logical way to slice the group's repertoire. On three CDs the 58 cuts tumble one after another—there's rarely more than a second between selections—giving the music a relentless inevitability. In the '60s, at least, one submitted to the Stones or got out of the way.

Only the more dedicated Stones fans will be familiar with everything here. *Singles Collection* rigorously includes the band's first (non-U.S.) record, "Come On"/"I Want to Be Loved," and some originally non-LP B-sides ("Sad Day," "Long Long While," "Who's Driving Your Plane?") of variable quality. But the *Collection* raises some questions about methodology. The first stereo Stones 45 didn't appear until 1971. Here "Lady Jane," from 1966, is in stereo—okay, no big deal—but so are the first three notes only (!) of "Heart of Stone" and the first four seconds of "Honky Tonk Women." (Both songs have solo-instrument intros, so this "stereo" is clearly remastering trickery.) Of the seven other pre-'71 singles here in stereo, "Street

Fighting Man" varies most from what came out on 45. That difference, though, pales in comparison to the two versions of "Time Is on My Side." The one on *Singles Collection* is not the one yanks bought on 45 (different key!) but a more available re-recording.

The set ends with a definite whimper, trailing off with the few post-'71 Stones singles to which ABKCO has rights: out-of-time esoterica like Mick Jagger's demo for "Out of Time," and a 1976 B-side reissue of "Sympathy for the Devil." Unfortunately, Stones CD fans won't be surprised by the generally murky sound quality throughout. The extremely cheesy book that accompanies the recordings, however, is another matter. For \$45 to \$60 you might expect more than a slapdash arrangement of song lyrics and picture sleeves, none reprinted in color. You'd be wrong. But at least the music is still very right.—Scott Isler

ANDERSON

[cont'd from page 102] I kept saying, 'I'll present a picture, you make up your mind.' And then I thought, 'Now, wait a second, I know what to do about this. I'm just going to say it,' and it was scary. It really was. Because I felt like, 'Okay, what right do I really have,' and then I felt, 'Well, plenty of people are piping up. I'm going to pipe up.'"

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BACKSIDE

THE MUSICIAN GUIDE TO HEAVY METAL VIDEOS

A LOT OF people think that being a heavy metal rock star only entails getting a hair weave and humping a guitar while your high fashion model girlfriend struts around in her lingerie in front of a fog machine. But there's more: You also need a tattoo.

	Aerosmith "Love in an Elevator"	Bon Jovi "Born to Be My Baby"	Bon Jovi "Livin' on a Prayer"	Alice Cooper "Poison"	Lita Ford "Kiss Me Deadly"	Great White "Once Bitten, Twice Shy"	Guns N' Roses "Paradise City"	Scorpions "Rhythm"	Warrant "Heaven"	Whitesnake "Is This Love"	Winger "Headed for a Heartbreak"	Adolf Hitler "Triumph of the Will"
Leather pants/Stevie Nicks hair	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉
Winking, mugging and otherwise goofing around with the cameraman	👉	👉	👉			👉			👉	👉		
Fog	👉			👉	👉			👉				👉
Musician displays his/her sedate, offstage contemplative side							👉		👉			👉
Shot of tour bus and/or private jet						👉	👉		👉			👉
Various and sundry explosions with intermittent destruction of property			👉	👉	👉			👉	👉		👉	👉
Prominent display of tattoos		👉			👉	👉	👉		👉			👉
Roadies set up instruments/stadium gradually fills to overflow		👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉		👉			👉
Musician humps mike stand and/or guitar	👉		👉		👉					👉	👉	
Drummer twirls drum sticks	👉		👉									
Lead singer fondles genitalia	👉				👉	👉						
Musicians oblige fans with autographs							👉			👉		
Artsy video segments shot in black and white		👉		👉			👉		👉		👉	👉
Lead guitarist sports silly hat		👉				👉	👉					
Neat car/neat motorcycle						👉		👉	👉	👉		👉
Prominently displayed crucifix or peace sign		👉		👉						👉	👉	👉
Crazed fans in need of restraint			👉				👉		👉	👉		👉
Prominent displays of lead singer's purported fashion model girlfriend*	👉			👉				👉	👉	👉	👉	

*whose wardrobe consists entirely of lingerie. As a rule, the lover's spat between this woman and Rock Star X is resolved by the end of the video—courtesy of the rock star's irresistible charm and raw sexuality.

—Les Firestein

Illustration: Dennis Irwin



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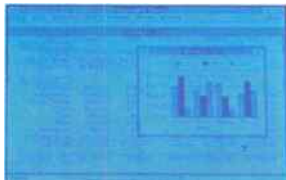
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