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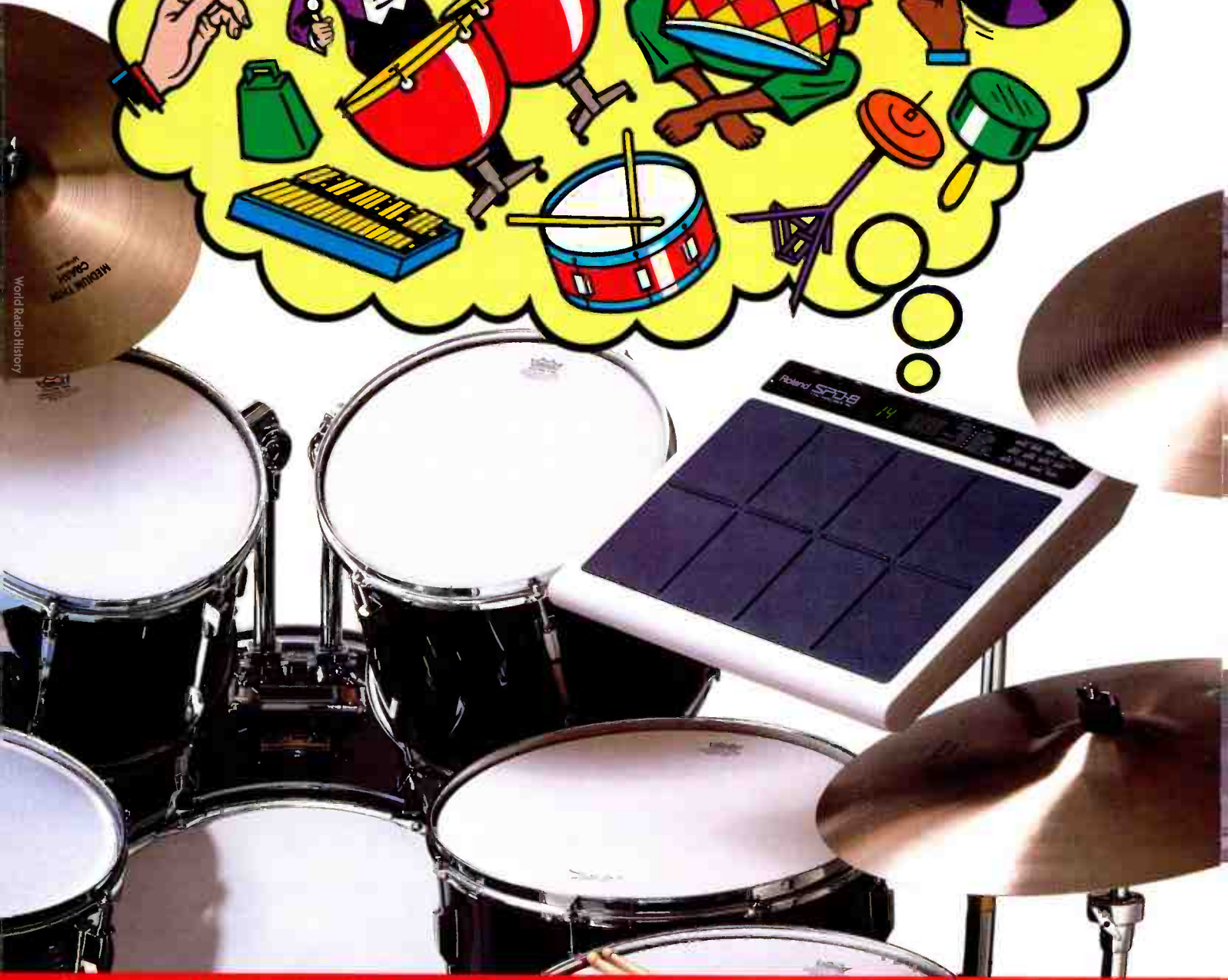
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# CONTENTS

MUSICIAN MAGAZINE • MARCH 1992 • ISSUE NO. 161

**7 Front Man John Lee Hooker**  
It's in him and it's got to come out: The king of the boogie talks about Bob Dylan, Howlin' Wolf, how to save your money and lots more. By Tony Scherman

**27 George Harrison & Eric Clapton**  
Like Bob Hope and Bing Crosby before them, the two old pals roam through the exotic East, singing songs, telling jokes and trying to explain their humor to translators. By Bill Flanagan

**30 The Senders** Imagine the Clash's "Brand New Cadillac" crossed with CBGB-era Mink DeVille. That's the sound of the Senders, the kind of New York City rock 'n' roll band you thought they didn't make anymore. By Charles M. Young

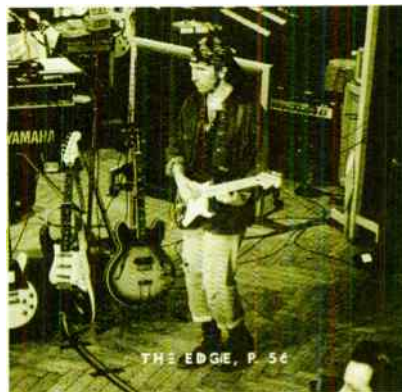
**32 Virgin Records A&R** Are you as good as Steve Winwood? How about Neneh Cherry? Paula Abdul? Well, if you think you are, then maybe you want to get signed by Virgin. Here's how you do it. By Dave DiMartino

**36 Little Village** Ry Cooder + John Hiatt + Nick Lowe x Jim Keltner = a supergroup that really is a group. Any music bigger than the sum of these parts is mighty big indeed. Meet your new favorite band. By Mark Rowland

**46 Dizzy Gillespie** The other man with the horn turns 75. Reflections on Bird, embouchures and striving to maintain musical innocence from jazz's foremost surviving trumpeter. By Chip Stern

**56 The Edge** The silence around U2 is broken as the band's musical mastermind recounts the life, times and development of the most popular rock group in the world. We hook up with Dave Evans in Ireland and talk all the way to America. By Bill Flanagan

**98 Backside: Musician's Digest Condensed Books** We save you the work of wading through a lot of rock books by excerpting the really stupid parts.



## Working Musician

**69 Special Report: The Business of Songwriting** A guide to the byzantine workings of the music publishing world. The Rules of the Game By Fred Goodman  
The Road to Success By Stephen Morcone  
The Publishing Deal By Bill Stephen

**77 Guitar Soundgarden**  
The alternate guitar tunings that roared: a primer in hard rock twin-guitar assault from Kim Thayil and Chris Cornell. By Josef Woodard

**80 Bass Joey Spampinato**  
NRBQ's bassist talks about making the electric sound like an upright with Keith Richards, Chuck Berry and other upstarts. By Peter Cronin

**82 Piano Marcus Roberts**  
Practice regimens to take baby steps into stride piano from the young hotshot. By Rick Mattingly

**85 Performance Living Colour Redux**  
While Living Colour is between bassists, Vernon Reid and Will Calhoun play some fusion with Eye & I's Melvin Gibbs. By Jim Macnie

**86 Developments**  
How come Japanese drum machines have those samples that sound like Sumo wrestlers? Sometimes technological barriers are easier to overcome than cultural differences. Plus, MIDI gets hooked up to the light board—it's like John Henry's hammer all over again. By the Musician Androids

## Departments

- 10 Letters Miles, Robbie
- 15 Faces Luka Bloom has the devil's right hand and Willis Alan Ramsey reappears after 20 years.
- 24 Charts Michael Jackson passed by Garth Brooks? Nirvana at number one? Can someone please explain the new *Billboard* chart system? We can.
- 80 Recordings Greenwich Village regular Mark Johnson leaps out of the pack with a breakthrough album. Plus Keith Sweat, Steve Forbert, Sonny Rollins and more.
- 92 Short Takes Reed, Shear, No Man  
Also: Masthead p. 8, Reader Service p. 97

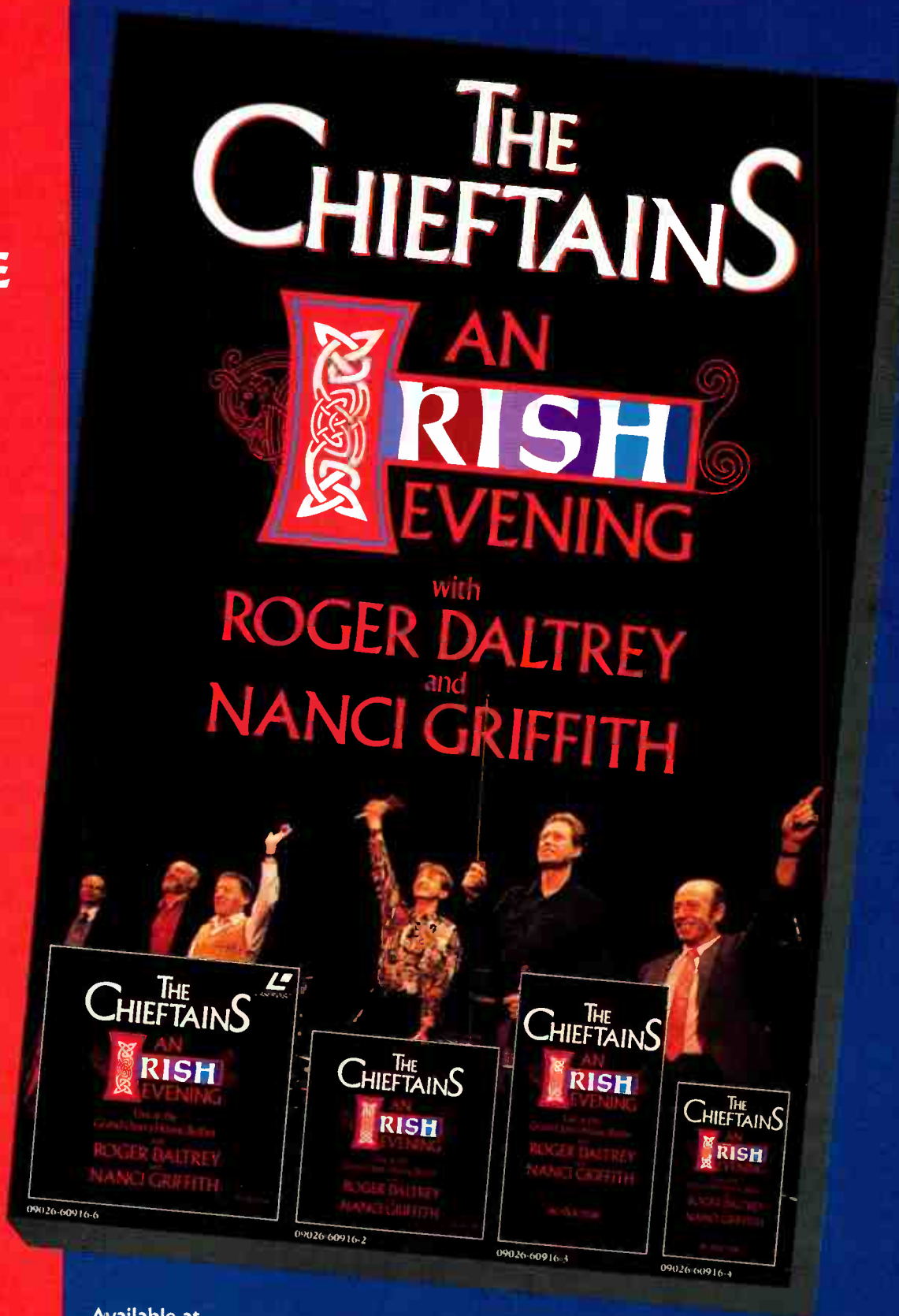
Cover: The Edge photographed by Ritchie Smyth, Dublin, Ireland, January 1992. This page (from top): The Frank Driggs Collection, Patrick Harbron, Anton Corbijn

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# John Lee Hooker

**O**n Mr. Lucky, *did you cut live? Because you can be pretty hard to play with.*

I'm not hard to play with. Yeah, I'll jump changes—I do that on purpose. I feel good, I'll outjump anyone. But if I want to

play perfect, I can. I can play direct. But I'm known for doing it the other way, and I sticks with that, and they have to follow me. We cut live, yeah. One, two takes and we finished, we done. Me and Johnny Winter, we did our two songs in about an hour.

*But it sounds to me like there are times with Johnny where you fool him and his bass player—you change chords and they go "Whoops! We better get with him!"*

You must be a guitar player. No, I don't lose 'em, 'cause I don't play a lot of changes. I don't know to explain it to you. You keep sayin' it's hard for them; I really don't get it. Because that album is *perfect*. We fit like a glove together. You ever heard me and my band? I got seven pieces and we fit together like the glove on your hand. But a lot of these big bands, these rock 'n' roll bands, go over and over and *over* and over. That's nonsense. I get in and get out.

*What's your favorite cut on the album?*

"Stripped Me Naked." I like the lyrics. It's got a lot of meaning to it: "She took my house, she took my Cadillac, took the money I had in the bank, she stripped me naked. It was a mean old judge." Now, that makes sense. A lot of people can relate to that. Lemme tell you this—a lot of musicians, Tony, they got really nice technique. Fast playin', fast fingerin'. Ain't got a feelin'. I'm not puttin' 'em down; lot of 'em play a ring around me. But so many of 'em sound alike. When you hear one you heard 'em all. But nobody sound like John Lee Hooker. That's the reason I'm so successful. I

don't play a lot of guitar, not at all. I just got a big sound. If they hear me once, they know it's me.

*On Mr. Lucky's title song, the one you do with Robert Cray, you say at the end, "I feel better now"—*

Yeah—"I feel better now, let's loosen

market.

*What was Howlin' Wolf like?*

Nice person. Kinda strange. Set in his ways.

*Was he as scary as people say?*

Yeah, he was frightnin'. He was huge. Wasn't nobody mess with the Wolf, wasn't nobody could tell him nothin'. Set in his ways like a stubborn donkey. I *love* Wolf. Got him in my car right now, on CD.

*Was Sonny Boy Williamson as tough as people say?*

Yeah, he was mean, he'd fight, carried a knife. He was a mean ol' coon.

*What do you remember about Bob Dylan?*

Aw, boy! We go way back. I'm the first person put him onstage, at Gerde's Folk City. It ain't there no more. Back then nobody heard of Bob, he used to come down see me all the time, get on the bandstand.

*Did you hang around with him?*

He hung around with me. At the old Broadway Central Hotel, which is no longer there. Bob would come up to visit me. We'd sit around and drink and play together. He'd 'bout blow on his harmonica. He's in L.A. now. Every time we get together we just hang out.

*Financially, you're doing okay?*

Oh yeah. Very well. So many musicians, first thing they do with money is whiskey and women. They forget a rainy day is comin'. This music business is the most up-and-down thing in the world. I'm makin' more now than I ever made in my life. I make lots of money, I pay lots and lots of tax. But you got to learn how to reserve and spend money. Sure I like women, but it's a limit, you know. After this year, I'm gonna retire.

—Tony Scherman



*"A lot of these rock 'n' roll bands go over and over and over. That's nonsense. I get in and get out."*

up." I was already warmed up but I got much *more* warmed up after that. That's when I said, "Gonna take it deep." I really got into really gettin' down. I got down with the blues. I did the thing I *really* wanted them to put on the record, but they didn't! "The Same Old Blues Again," what we call "Sunshine." "Sunshine, sunshine, let it shine on me"—oh, *funky*. Ask 'em to send it to you, just don't put it out on the



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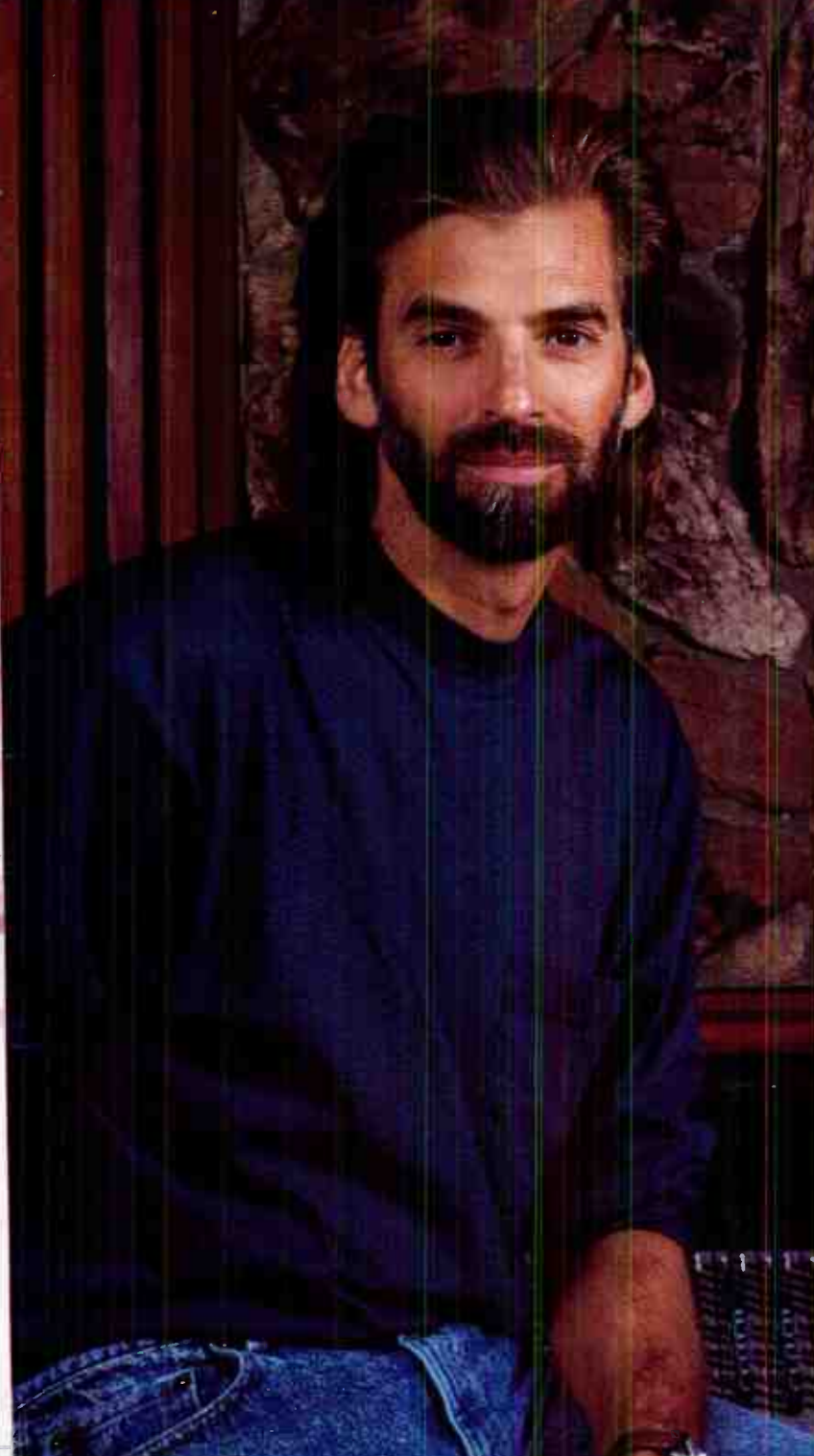
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## Miles Remembered

WHAT SETS *MUSICIAN* APART FROM other music magazines is your emphasis on what his fellow musicians had to say about Miles (Dec. '91) rather than what a particular writer's opinion might be. The excerpts from the various interviews with him were enlightening, to say the least. Anyone who plays or listens to contemporary music owes a debt of gratitude to Miles.

Michael Versaci  
St. Louis, MO

MILES DAVIS' PASSING MARKS THE end of a career which changed the face of music several times. Always the innovator, Miles taught us how to search for new ways of expression. He will be missed.

Randy McElligott  
CIHU-FM, Ottawa, Ontario

MILES DAVIS WAS SUCH A COMPLEX artist. We shared the bill on several festivals, the last being in Spain, and his playing was inspirational and his concert of Afro-Cuban music was impressive. I doubt we will see another like him!

Mario Grillo  
New York, NY

IT WAS GOOD TO READ ABOUT PEOPLE/ musicians who have known Miles and who were close to him in your December issue. Although, at this point, I don't know if anything can fill the void I'm experiencing with his death. We met in the early '60s, and I have loved him since then. I loved his music before we ever met. I stayed in touch with him until his death. In January of this year, I received a card from him, letting me know he'd not forgotten about me. I don't know if others who knew him received a copy too, but it means a great deal to me because, in his unusual kind of way, he validated our love.

Ercell H. Hoffman  
Compton, CA

## Storyteller

I GROANED WHEN I RECEIVED THE December issue of *Musician* and saw yet another story about Robbie Robertson. But I was delighted. Robertson's admiration for Levon Helm, the stories about Bo Diddley and Sonny Boy Williamson through a 16-year-old future legend's eyes. It was a revelation. Congratulations to Tony Scherman for a new angle on an old story.

Richard Brown  
El Paso, TX

ROBBIE ROBERTSON HAS HELD FORTH in other publications at other points in his career, but seldom as revealingly and in as much detail as in Tony Scherman's piece (*Musician*, Dec. '91). Thank you for allowing him to demonstrate that his storytelling powers are not limited to the recording studio.

A. Richard Dooley  
New York, NY

AT WOODSTOCK I VOWED THAT ONE day I would write the definitive biography on the "J.R. Robertson Medicine Show." I suppose I had better change my mind and let Tony Scherman handle it. That sublime presentation of Robbie's early career was awesome.

It's great to have you back, Robbie; I just wish that Richard and the king of harp players, Rice Miller (Mr. Sonny Boy Williamson II) were still playing with you. What a team!

Scot Dennin  
Fall River, MA

## Drumwork

THANK YOU FOR THE INSIGHTS OF Ginger Baker and Ronald Shannon Jackson (Dec. '91). We are all richer for the rhythmic traditions of Africa, which have liberated western drumming from the confines of mil-

itary and orchestral traditions, however rich they may be.

The George Lawrence Stone book referred to was misidentified. Its proper title is *Stick Control*. First published in 1935, its longevity as a basic text for drummers of all styles is a testament to its efficacy as a methodology.

Jeff Sussmann  
Santa Fe, NM

## Bono's New Clothes

ON ACHTING BABY (RECORDINGS, Dec. '91) no amount of distorted guitar can hide the fact that the songs are more of the Same Old Thing—the same riffs, the same rhythms. True, the singing is great and the words are arresting, but if you couldn't speak English, you'd have a hard time telling the songs apart from each other.

I'm waiting for the critic who will be bold enough to stand up and say, "The emperors have no melodies."

Paul Agostino  
Holbrook, NY

BILL FLANAGAN ACTUALLY SU DIED *Achtung Baby* the way it was meant to be. Finally, someone dared to not only explain U2's work, but to put it in print for others to agree or disagree with.

Rob Peterson  
Dubuque, IA

## Oh Canada

I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH J.D. CONSIDINE'S two-line critique of the new Bryan Adams album. That is a critic's prerogative. But to say that Adams is "Canada's idea of what a rock star should be" shows Considerine's complete lack of knowledge of the Canadian music scene.

How dare you berate an entire nation of music fans? And you had the nerve to do so in the same issue in which you ran stories about

Bruce Cockburn and Robbie Robertson. Canada's idea of what a rock star should be is: Blue Rodeo, Crash Test Dummies, Mary Margaret O'Hara, Tragically Hip, Junior Gone Wild, Barenaked Ladies, Colin James, Jane Siberry, Sue Medley, Spirit of the West, Dream Warriors, Grapes of Wrath....

Bryan Adams is not what Canada's idea of a rock star is: He's America's idea of what a Canadian rock star is.

Eric Rosenbaum  
Edmonton, Alberta

## Wood to the Wise

IN RESPONSE TO STEVE PICOU'S December 1991 letter: Don't condemn guitar makers or anyone else who uses exotic woods for their craft. They only use five percent of the endangered tropical woods that are cut. Condemn the people who waste the other 95 percent of the wood cut so that they can raise cattle for fast food chains. Why condemn those who make such good use of so little of what is cut?

Ed Schulz  
San Rafael, CA

## Errata

IN HIS "BIG DEALS" COVER STORY IN our January issue, writer Fred Goodman implied that Janet Jackson does not write her own songs. In fact, Jackson solely wrote "Black Cat" and co-wrote six other songs on her album *Rhythm Nation*. Jackson was named "songwriter of the year" at the 1990 BMI Pop Awards.

Due to a production error, the end of a short review of *The Best of Lefty Frizzell* album (Feb. '92, p. 96) was omitted. The entire review appears on page 95 of this issue.

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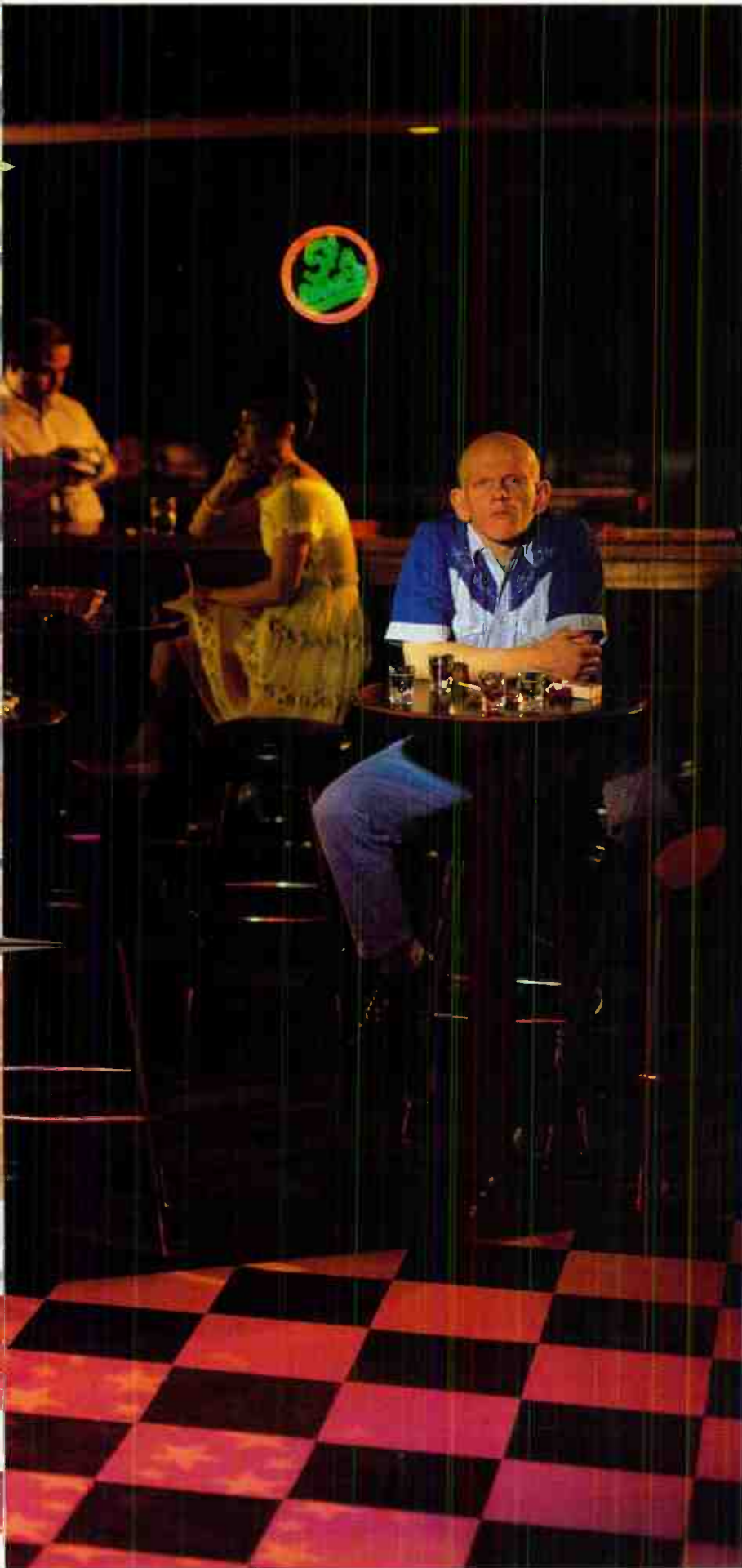






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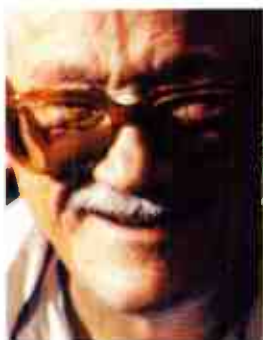
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# F A C E S

## TOOTS THIELEMANS

### *Toots Suite*



Yeah, Toots Thielemans is the guy who recorded with both the introspective Bill Evans and the outrospective Jaco Pastorius, the guy who once had the only thing he can't stand the taste of—garlic—rubbed all over his instrument right before a solo, the guy who has made a very extended career out of playing jazz on the harmonica.

"Some people will agree that a harmonica player can be a good musician," says Thielemans. "But many will also tell you that they just don't like the way it sounds. Anybody who listens closely should appreciate it, however, because music transcends the instrument it's played on—whether it's a harmonica or a broomstick."

Whenever there's no garlic on his chromatic (a Cal Tjader prank from the '50s), the 68-year-old improviser finds a way to wax lyrical, as he does on last spring's *Footprints* and the recent *For My Lady*, with Shirley Horn's trio. Credit not only his chops, but the actual sound of his instrument. "I don't know where you would locate my style," he says with deliberation, "from the trumpet or the sax. I want to play like Miles, actually; I'm partial to his tone. But you say lyrical and I think Pavarotti or Parker."

Bird's name reminds Toots to point out how perplexing it is to play bebop—the speediest music ever?—on the harmonica. "That kind of phrasing is almost impossible because of the layout of the instrument; inhaling and exhaling those runs with any kind of fluidity is tough." Maybe that's why he keeps a harmonica in every room of his Brussels home. The results of such dedication can be heard on "Blues on Time," where Thielemans is accompanied by only a metronome. "The record was originally intended to be a solo harmonica date," he concludes with a grin, "but that's like being naked, and at the very least, I like to have a figleaf to wear."

JIM MACNIE



## LUKA BLOOM

BAND OF THE HAND



Luka Bloom may get up onstage and play heartfelt songs accompanied by only his guitar, but don't call him a folkie. "If you put Iggy Pop, Bono, Michael Stipe and Mike Scott in that category, then indeed I am a

folksinger," says the Dublin-based singer/songwriter. "But I think the sound I create makes that distinction." Sure enough, Bloom puts any potential Dan Fogelberg comparisons to rest with the aggressively percussive sound that he beats out of his electric/acoustic guitar. "That's something I arrived at out of desperation at failing to put together a band in the '80s," Bloom says. "I determined to come up with a sound that was big and brash in a solo context, and I feel I've created a sort of sonic niche for myself. I regard my left arm, right arm and guitar as a band." Traveling with his "band," a soundman and a pair of good stage monitors, Bloom has performed his ethereal songs on all kinds of gigs in the past couple of years, from the smallest of clubs to a giant outdoor show on a bill with Living Colour and Lenny Kravitz. "I was out there on my own in the middle of that festival and the sound was just huge," he says. "I hope to do the Lollapalooza tour one of these years."

—PETER CRONIN

# FACES



## WILLIS ALAN RAMSEY

*A perfect ending to a  
20-year vacation*

**A**T THE END OF WILLIS ALAN Ramsey's only album, a self-titled 1972 Shelter release, the song "Northeast Texas Woman" fades to studio chatter, and the last words you overhear are "That's it!" And that *was* it. Willis Alan Ramsey, who at the age of 21 had one critically praised album under his belt and was considered the crown jewel of Austin's progressive country songwriters, did one

## TALES FROM THE ROAD AND BEYOND.



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FEATURING: "BABY, DON'T."

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of the most mysterious fast fades in the business. As Jimmy Buffett, Waylon Jennings, America, and the Captain and Tennille (who went to number four with Ramsey's "Muskrat Love") made his songs—if not his name—famous, Willis Alan Ramsey became Austin's most fabled recluse.

Courting obscurity would have finished the career of a lesser talent, but in several areas of the South and Southwest Ramsey's one album and intimate club dates made him a legend. In Memphis during the '70s, it was virtually impossible to hear an acoustic performer *not* do a Willis Alan Ramsey song.

The CD re-release of his long-out-of-print album and the gentle urging of long-time admirer Lyle Lovett have paved the way for Ramsey's return. At a recent concert in West Memphis, Arkansas, he performed a set of old favorites interspersed with new tunes

like "Sleepwalkin'" and "Coyote" that are of a piece with the ageless, lyrically mesmerizing songs that made the "progressive country" tag such a misnomer for a musician who dug much deeper musical roots.

Why did Willis Alan Ramsey wait 20 years before re-entering the fray? "At Shelter Records, which had a great creative roster, I was really too young for the whole thing, and I kind of flamed out," he says in his quiet drawl. "I unwittingly became trapped in Leon Russell's Mad Dogs and Englishmen scene. It was a rock 'n' roll kind of label and I was *not* a rock 'n' roll kind of guy. I was like a lot of Southern boys. About half of 'em take to Southern California and half of 'em don't. I didn't, and I retreated back to Texas to lick my wounds, and wound up sitting out the remaining eight years of my Shelter contract."

Ramsey also cites a painful divorce and

the bankruptcy of his Austin recording studio as factors in his recording hiatus. He made ends meet with royalty checks and a movie soundtrack he is loath to name.

And after two decades, a new album is under way. "Yeah, I'm recording right now and have an album's worth of new material I've written. Lyle Lovett says it's about time I did something else. I think people are finally ready again for my kind of narrative acoustic music. I've also been dividing my time between Nashville and the U.K. I'm working on another project that involves the sources of American ethnic folk music that comes from Ireland, Scotland and England."

In the meantime, he's back to captivating small, appreciative audiences with the amiable storytelling of his ballads and with his heartfelt love songs. His fans, 20 years older now, still remember the words.

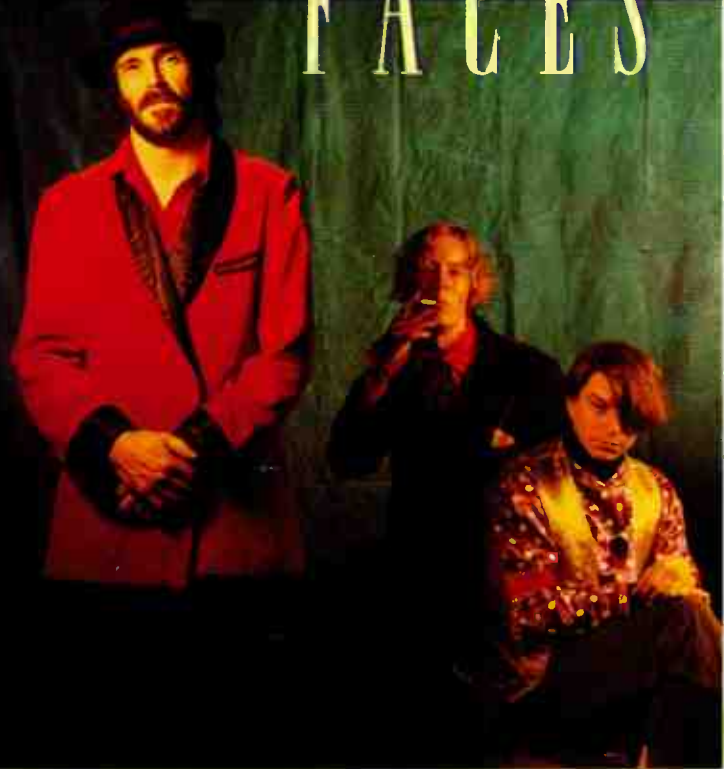
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## THE INCREDIBLE CASUALS

*Cape Cod Pop*

**T**he cartoon art that jumps out from the cover of their record, the snapshots of boys-will-be-boys hijinks inside, and most importantly, the Betty and Veronica pop packing the disc—it's clear that the Incredible Casuals think frisky fun is at the center of the music they've spent a decade refining. "Catching the spirit is the toughest thing about recording," says bassist Chandler Travis, "but I think we've done it."

Eller-vescent pop leaps off *Your Sounds* (Sonic Trout), coming on like the Replacements romping through *Beatles II*. Giving rock a twirl has long been their forte, and with the arrival of rough-edged guitarist Aaron Spade, there's a sense of rejuvenation. Hear it on "I Wanna Play Loud," where guitarist Johnny Spampinato waxes succinct regarding his love for the pop process, and on "Records Go Round," a piece of party music from Men & Volts. It fosters experimentation, too: They've gotten into ska, *Revolveresque* snippets and boo-hoo ballads. "We juice it up," cackles Travis. "We might play our thrash set soon."

JIM MACNIE

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**Photo by Michael Friel**

Pictured at left: Sam Sims  
(Touring with Paula Abdul)  
At right: James Strong  
(Bassist, Musical Director for LL Cool J)

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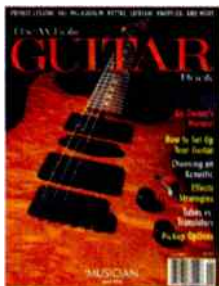
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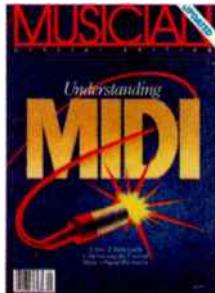
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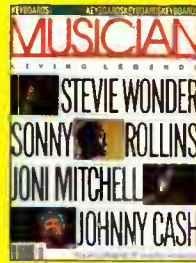


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- 21. Brian Eno, Talking Heads, Weather Report
- 34. Tom Petty, Dave Edmunds, Wayne Shorter
- 36. Grateful Dead, Zappa, Kid Creole, NY Dolls
- 45. Willie Nelson, John McLaughlin, the Meters
- 64. Stevie Wonder, X, Was (Not Was), Ornette
- 70. Peter Wolf, King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
- 71. Heavy Metal, Dream Syndicate, Tina Turner
- 77. John Fogerty, Marsalis/Hancock, Los Lobos
- 79. Jeff Beck, Alison Moyet, John Hiatt—Ry Cooder
- 93. Peter Gabriel, Steve Winwood, Lou Reed
- 94. Jimi Hendrix, The Cure, Prince, 38 Special
- 101. Psychedelic Furs, Elton John, Miles Davis
- 102. Robert Cray, Los Lobos, Simply Red
- 104. Springsteen, The Blasters, Keith Jarrett
- 108. U2, Tom Waits, Squeeze, Eugene Chadbourne
- 111. R.E.M., Year in Rock, 10,000 Maniacs
- 112. McCartney; Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
- 113. Robert Plant, INXS, Wynton Marsalis
- 115. Stevie Wonder, Sonny Rollins, Jori Mitchell, Johnny Cash
- 116. Sinéad O'Connor, Neil Young, Tracy Chapman
- 117. Jimmy Page, Leonard Cohen, Lloyd Cole
- 118. Pink Floyd, New Order, Smithereens
- 119. Billy Gibbons, Santana/Shorter, Vernon Reid
- 120. Keith Richards, Depeche Mode, Steve Forbert
- 121. Prince, Steve Winwood, Randy Newman
- 122. Guns N' Roses, Midnight Oil, Glyn Johns
- 123. Year in Music '88, Metallica, Jack Bruce, Fishbone
- 124. Replacements, Fleetwood Mac, Lytle Lovett
- 125. Elvis Costello, Jeff Buckley, Sonic Youth
- 126. Lou Reed, John Cale, Joe Satriani
- 127. Miles Davis, Fine Young Cannibals, XTC
- 128. Peter Gabriel, Charles Mingus, Bob Mould
- 129. The Who, The Cure, Ziggy Marley
- 130. 10,000 Maniacs, John Cougar Mellencamp, Jackson Brown/Bonnie Raitt
- 131. Jeff Beck, Laura Nyro, Billy Sheehan
- 132. Don Henley, Rolling Stones, Bob/Murley
- 133. The '80s, Daniel Lanois, Syd Straw
- 134. Grateful Dead, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Paul Kelly
- 135. Aerosmith, NRBQ, Richard Thompson, Max Q
- 136. Eric Clapton, Kate Bush, Buddy Rich, Del Fuegos
- 137. George Harrison, The Kinks, Abdullah Ibrahim
- 138. Tom Petty, Lenny Kravitz, Rush, The Sits
- 139. Paul McCartney, Cecil Taylor, Kronos Quartet
- 140. Robert Plant, Suzanne Vega, Soul II Soul, Drums
- 141. Jimi Hendrix, David Bowie, Bob Clearmountain
- 142. Sinéad O'Connor, John Hiatt, World Party
- 143. Steve Vai, Michael Stipe, Mumfrees/McLaughlin
- 144. INXS, Neville Bros., Lou Reed/Vaclav Havel
- 146. Slash, Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
- 147. Robert Johnson, Bruce Hornsby, Soul Asylum
- 148. Pink Floyd, Neil Young, Art Blakey, Black Crowes
- 149. Jerry Garcia/Elvis Costello, NWA, Pink Floyd
- 150. R.E.M., AC/DC, Top/Managers, Jim Morrison
- 151. Eddie Van Halen, Fishbone, Byrds, Chris Bask
- 152. Stevie Ray Vaughan, Morrissey, Drum Special
- 153. Bonnie Raitt, Tim Buckley, Sonny Rollins
- 154. Sting, Stevie Wonder, 15th Anniversary Issue
- 155. Paul McCartney, Axel Rosa, David Bowie
- 156. Dire Straits, Jesus Jones, Paul McCartney
- 157. Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, Frimus, Eddy Fogerty
- 158. Miles Davis, Robbie Robertson, Massive Attack
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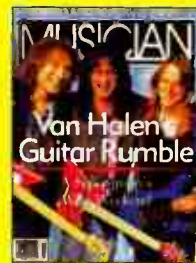
33  
The Clash



115  
Stevie Wonder



130  
10,000 Maniacs



151  
Van Halen



142  
Sinéad O'Connor



132  
Don Henley



104  
Bruce Springsteen



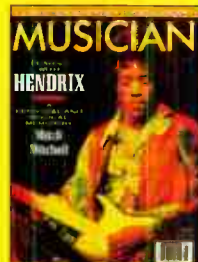
122  
Guns N' Roses



128  
Peter Gabriel



112  
Paul McCartney



141  
Jimi Hendrix



150  
R.E.M.



117  
Jimmy Page



118  
Pink Floyd



113  
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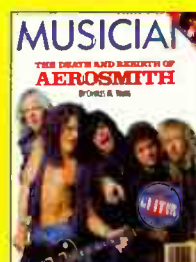
127  
Miles Davis



134  
Grateful Dead



144  
INXS



135  
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36	45	64	70	71
77	79	93	94	101
102	104	108	111	112
113	115	116	117	118
119	120	121	122	123
124	125	126	127	128
129	130	131	132	133
134	135	136	137	138
139	140	141	142	143
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150	151	152	153	154
155	156	157	158	159



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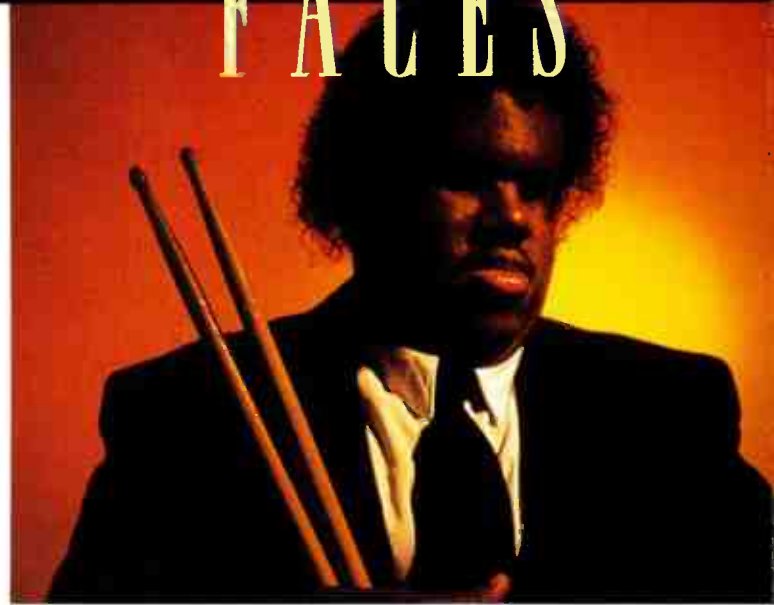
## SEBASTIAN WHITTAKER

### ONE TOUGH TEXAN



ix-foot, 210-pound Sebastian Whittaker would have been a football player, not a drummer, if not for his love of mainstream acoustic jazz. And one other thing—he's been blind since birth. Whittaker is shaking up people's notions of who can be a drummer: "They're surprised all the time, they expect me to be the piano player. I know sighted drummers who drop sticks, drums. It's not about having vision or not, it's about having an awareness of your instrument. Through my blindness, the Lord has given me insight on how to better lay it down." Using an old Gretsch drum kit, Whittaker has cut his second release, *Searchin' for the Truth*, with his band the Creators. Laid-back and groove-heavy, the album recalls '50s Blue Note classics like Art Blakey's *Moanin'* and Hank Mobley's *Workout*.

"When you listen to the early Jazz Messengers' albums, you get a sense of family," Whittaker says. "I hear a lot of great players now, but I think they've forgotten the definition of 'band.' The records coming out of New York sound frantic. I'm



not saying we're better than they are, but I believe people gravitate more towards music they can relax to. I don't mean to appear as a cocky drummer. I just put my sign out there and leave it alone. The truth comes out in the music."

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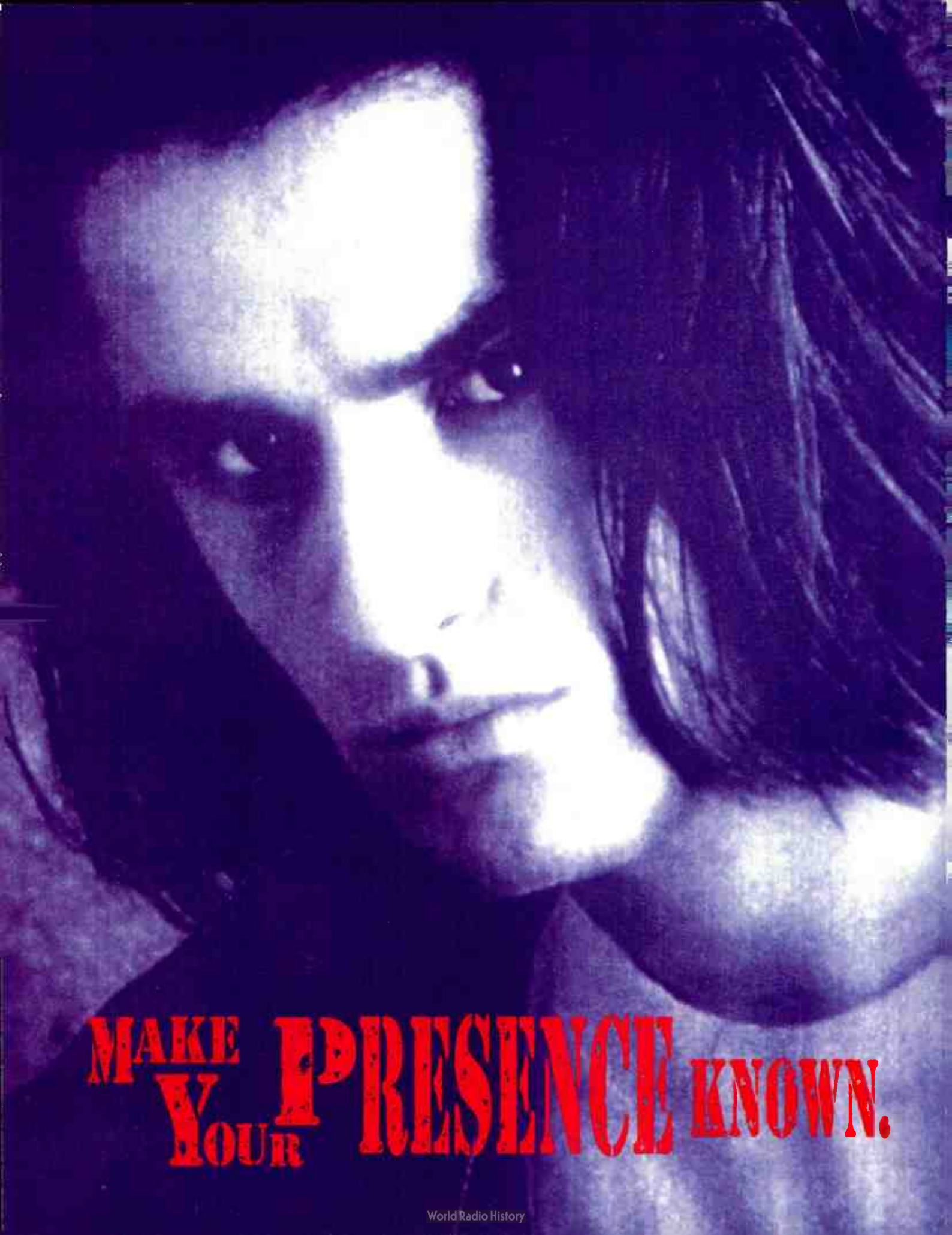


A photograph of Paula Abdul on stage. She has long, dark, wavy hair and is wearing a dark, long-sleeved top. She is leaning forward, holding a microphone in her right hand and a single red rose in her left hand. The background is dark with some blurred lights. The overall mood is intimate and dramatic.

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## Top 100 Albums

The first number indicates the position of the album this month, the second its position last month.

1 • 62	<b>Michael Jackson</b> <i>Dangerous/Epic</i>
2 • 1	<b>Garth Brooks</b> <i>Robin' the Wind/Capitol</i>
3 • 2	<b>Hammer</b> <i>Too Legit to Quit/Capitol</i>
4 • 3	<b>Nirvana</b> <i>Nevermind/DGC</i>
5 • 31	<b>U2</b> <i>Achtung Baby/Island</i>
6 • 7	<b>Michael Bolton</b> <i>Time, Love and Tenderness/Columbia</i>
7 • 8	<b>Boyz II Men</b> <i>Coolerhighharmony/Motown</i>
8 • 13	<b>Natalie Cole</b> <i>Unforgettable/Elektra</i>
9 • 6	<b>Metallica</b> <i>Metallica/Elektra</i>
10 • 4	<b>Guns N' Roses</b> <i>Use Your Illusion II/Geffen</i>
11 • 9	<b>Mariah Carey</b> <i>Emotions/Columbia</i>
12 • 10	<b>Guns N' Roses</b> <i>Use Your Illusion I/Geffen</i>
13 • 19	<b>Genesis</b> <i>We Can't Dance/Atlantic</i>
14 • 11	<b>Garth Brooks</b> <i>No Fences/Capitol</i>
15 • 20	<b>Paula Abdul</b> <i>Spellbound/Capitol</i>
16 • 16	<b>Bonnie Raitt</b> <i>Luck of the Draw/Capitol</i>
17 • 17	<b>Color Me Badd</b> <i>C.M.B./Giant</i>
18 • 14	<b>Bryan Adams</b> <i>Waking Up the Neighbours/A&amp;M</i>
19 • 24	<b>Amy Grant</b> <i>Heart in Motion/A&amp;M</i>
20 • 12	<b>Prince</b> <i>Diamonds and Pearls/Paisley Park</i>
21 • 18	<b>Mötley Crüe</b> <i>Decade of Decadence/Elektra</i>
22 • 25	<b>Harry Connick, Jr.</b> <i>Blue Light, Red Light/Columbia</i>
23 • 21	<b>Various Artists</b> <i>Two Rooms: Songs of E. John &amp; B. Taupin/Polydor</i>
24 • 51	<b>Bette Midler</b> <i>Music from "For the Boys"/Atlantic</i>

25 • 29	<b>Marky Mark &amp; the Funky Bunch</b> <i>Music for the People/Interscope</i>
26 • 88	<b>Keith Sweat</b> <i>Keep It Comin'/Elektra</i>
27 • 22	<b>Reba McEntire</b> <i>For My Broken Heart/MCA</i>
28 • 15	<b>Stevie Ray Vaughan &amp; Double Trouble</b> <i>The Sky Is Crying/Epic</i>
29 • 5	<b>Ice Cube</b> <i>Death Certificate/Priority</i>
30 • 96	<b>Soundtrack</b> <i>Beauty &amp; the Beast/Walt Disney</i>
31 • 27	<b>Jodeci</b> <i>Forever My Lady/MCA</i>
32 • 26	<b>Ozzy Osbourne</b> <i>No More Tears/Epic Associated</i>
33 • 38	<b>R.E.M.</b> <i>Out of Time/Warner Bros.</i>
34 • 23	<b>Public Enemy</b> <i>Apocalypse 91... The Enemy Strikes Black/Def Jam</i>
35 • 28	<b>Naughty by Nature</b> <i>Naughty by Nature/Tommy Boy</i>
36 • 32	<b>C&amp;C Music Factory</b> <i>Gonna Make You Sweat/Columbia</i>
37 • 33	<b>Garth Brooks</b> <i>Garth Brooks/Capitol</i>
38 • 30	<b>Travis Tritt</b> <i>It's All About to Change Warner Bros.</i>
39 • 37	<b>Van Halen</b> <i>For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge Warner Bros.</i>
40 • 73	<b>Enya</b> <i>Shepherd Moons/Reprise</i>
41 • 39	<b>Firehouse</b> <i>Firehouse/Epic</i>
42 • 45	<b>Vince Gill</b> <i>Pocket Full of Gold/MCA</i>
43 • 53	<b>Rod Stewart</b> <i>Vagabond Heart/Warner Bros.</i>
44 • 42	<b>James Taylor</b> <i>New Moon Shine/Columbia</i>
45 • 41	<b>John Mellencamp</b> <i>Whenever We Wanted/Mercury</i>
46 • 36	<b>Bob Seger &amp; the Silver Bullet Band</b> <i>The Fire Inside/Capitol</i>
47 • 43	<b>Extreme</b> <i>Extreme II Pornograffiti/A&amp;M</i>
48 • 34	<b>Red Hot Chili Peppers</b> <i>Blood Sugar Sex Magik/Warner Bros.</i>
49 • 64	<b>Original London Cast</b> <i>Phantom of the Opera Highlights Polydor</i>

50 • —	<b>Aerosmith</b> <i>Pandora's Box/Columbia</i>
51 • 40	<b>Richard Marx</b> <i>Rush Street/Capitol</i>
52 • 50	<b>Queensryche</b> <i>Empire/EMI</i>
53 • 48	<b>Dire Straits</b> <i>On Every Street/Warner Bros.</i>
54 • 56	<b>O.J. Jazzy Jeff &amp; the Fresh Prince</b> <i>Homebase/Live</i>
55 • 47	<b>Luther Vandross</b> <i>Power of Love/Epic</i>
56 • 54	<b>Alan Jackson</b> <i>Don't Rock the Jukebox/Arista</i>
57 • 46	<b>Tom Petty &amp; the Heartbreakers</b> <i>Into the Great Wide Open/MCA</i>
58 • 58	<b>Michael Bolton</b> <i>Soul Provider/Columbia</i>
59 • 52	<b>P.M. Dawn</b> <i>Of the Heart, Of the Soul &amp; Of the Cross/Gee Street/Island</i>
60 • 79	<b>Barbra Streisand</b> <i>Just for the Record.../Columbia</i>
61 • 35	<b>Soundtrack</b> <i>The Commitments/MCA</i>
62 • 44	<b>The Geto Boys</b> <i>We Can't Be Stopped/Rap-A-Lot</i>
63 • 76	<b>The Judds</b> <i>Greatest Hits Vol. Two/Curb</i>
64 • 57	<b>Rush</b> <i>Roll the Bones/Atlantic</i>
65 • 80	<b>Clint Black</b> <i>Put Yourself in My Shoes/RCA</i>
66 • 65	<b>Mariah Carey</b> <i>Mariah Carey/Columbia</i>
67 • —	<b>Michael Crawford</b> <i>Performs Andrew Lloyd Webber Atlantic</i>
68 • 69	<b>George Winston</b> <i>Summer/Windham Hill</i>
69 • 61	<b>Bell Biv DeVoe</b> <i>#BBD—Bootylic! The Remix Album/MCA</i>
70 • 67	<b>The Black Crowes</b> <i>Shake Your Money Maker Def American</i>
71 • 49	<b>Trisha Yearwood</b> <i>Trisha Yearwood/MCA</i>
72 • 66	<b>Soundtrack</b> <i>Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves Morgan Creek</i>
73 • —	<b>Yanni</b> <i>In Celebration of Life/Private Music</i>
74 • 72	<b>Madonna</b> <i>The Immaculate Collection/Sire</i>
75 • 100	<b>Phantom of the Opera</b> <i>Original London Cast/Polydor</i>
76 • 75	<b>Lisa Stansfield</b> <i>Real Love/Arista</i>
77 • —	<b>Carreras-Domingo-Pavarotti</b> <i>In Concert/London</i>
78 • —	<b>Tevin Campbell</b> <i>T.E.V.I.N./Qwest</i>
79 • 87	<b>Gloria Estefan</b> <i>Into the Light/Epic</i>
80 • 99	<b>Roxette</b> <i>Joyride/EMI</i>
81 • 71	<b>Poison</b> <i>Swallow This Live/Capitol</i>
82 • 92	<b>O.J. Magic Mike &amp; M.C. Madness</b> <i>Ain't No Doubt About It/Cheetah</i>
83 • 82	<b>Salt-N-Pepa</b> <i>Black's Magic/Next Plateau</i>
84 • 68	<b>Ricky Van Shelton</b> <i>Backroads/Columbia</i>
85 • 63	<b>Skid Row</b> <i>Slave to the Grind/Atlantic</i>
86 • 74	<b>Eric Clapton</b> <i>24 Nights/Duck</i>

87 • 85	<b>Dolly Parton</b> <i>Eagle When She Flies/Columbia</i>
88 • 70	<b>Scorpions</b> <i>Crazy World/Mercury</i>
89 • —	<b>Paul Simon</b> <i>Paul Simon's Concert in the Park Warner Bros.</i>
90 • 90	<b>Tanya Tucker</b> <i>What Do I Do with Me/Capitol</i>
91 • 60	<b>Digital Underground</b> <i>Sons of the P/Tommy Boy</i>
92 • —	<b>Hammer</b> <i>Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em Capitol</i>
93 • —	<b>The 2 Live Crew</b> <i>Sports Weekend/Luke</i>
94 • 77	<b>Heavy O. &amp; the Boyz</b> <i>Peaceful Journey/MCA</i>
95 • 95	<b>Alabama</b> <i>Greatest Hits, Vol. 2/RCA</i>
96 • —	<b>Soundtrack</b> <i>Beaches/Atlantic</i>
97 • —	<b>The Judds</b> <i>Greatest Hits/Curb</i>
98 • 97	<b>Randy Travis</b> <i>High Lonesome/Warner Bros.</i>
99 • —	<b>Bonnie Raitt</b> <i>Nick of Time/Capitol</i>
100 • 91	<b>Reba McEntire</b> <i>Rumor Has It/MCA</i>

The Musician album chart is produced by the Billboard chart department for Musician, and reflects the combined points for all album reports gathered by the Billboard computers in the month of December. The concert chart is based on Amusement Business Box Score reports for December 1991. All charts are copyright 1991 by BPI Incorporated.

## Duh System

Just about everything's been written in the music-biz press about the Billboard/SoundsScan album-rating system (which Musician uses) except how it works. Writers now bandy phrases like "point of sale" and "actual piece counts" without knowing what they're talking about, so someone might as well explain the system to you. It's confusing, and important, enough for Sony to have invited Billboard chart boss Michael Ellis to L.A. last fall to explain it to one of Sony's hired hands—Michael Jackson.

The research firm SoundsScan gathers data three ways: 1) an album's bar code is electronically scanned right at the register, with sales tallied and reported weekly (this is known as POS, or "point of sale"); 2) tickets are attached to albums, clipped at sale and added weekly; 3) a store's supplier physically checks bins, adding up sales totals for each album. Together, these three methods are now applied to some 57 percent of all record sales in the country, in about 9000 stores. "Rack accounts"—big stores like K-Mart—aside, almost all survey members use the first, POS, method, says SoundsScan's Michael Fine; about a third of the racks are POS-equipped.

So how does SoundsScan project an accurate total sales figure using 50-odd percent of all sales? Well, they split the USA into 100 markets, based on radio-listening areas. SoundsScan has determined the size of each market and what percent of that total is represented by survey members—that's its trade secret. Every week (or two, for some racks), an album's—say, Dangerous—sales are tallied in each market, using the three methods. This number is projected into a total for each market; the markets are simply added. Voilà—the album's national sales total. Projection, in other words, is done market-by-market.

What's in it for the stores? SoundsScan pays 'em, and gives them weekly sales information for their area. Plus they're presumably happier with a more accurate system. Seven out of 60 Tower stores were on board as of January (Tower's been a holdout), and 40 of 300 Camelot stores. Relentlessly, SoundsScan moves on... It's theoretically possible ("very theoretical," says Fine) that every record store in the USA will one day report to it. With ingenuity like this, why are babies still starving? —T.S.

## Top Concert Grosses

1	<b>Rod Stewart</b> <i>Palacio De Los Deportes, Mexico City, Mexico/December 18-20</i>	\$1,549,233
2	<b>Metallica</b> <i>Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, IL/December 5-7</i>	\$1,049,220
3	<b>Rush, Vinnie Moore</b> <i>Madison Square Garden, New York, NY/December 6-7</i>	\$776,190
4	<b>Paul Simon</b> <i>National Auditorium, Mexico City, Mexico/December 11-12</i>	\$614,660
5	<b>Guns N' Roses, Soundgarden</b> <i>Worcester Centrum, Worcester, MA/December 5-8</i>	\$560,700
6	<b>Christmas in America: Kenny Rogers, Mark Chesnutt, The McCarters</b> <i>Valley Forge Music Fair, Devon, PA/December 15-18</i>	\$387,305
7	<b>Rod Stewart</b> <i>Tacoma Dome, Tacoma, WA/December 10</i>	\$351,590
8	<b>Garth Brooks, Trisha Yearwood, Chris LeDoux</b> <i>Charlotte Coliseum, Charlotte, NC/December 14</i>	\$345,480
9	<b>Van Halen</b> <i>The Pyramid, Memphis, TN/December 2</i>	\$340,540
10	<b>Barry Manilow</b> <i>Symphony Hall, Phoenix, AZ/December 12-15</i>	\$314,875



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# KAMAN



# George and Eric Go to Japan

HARRISON AND CLAPTON: FAR EAST MEN

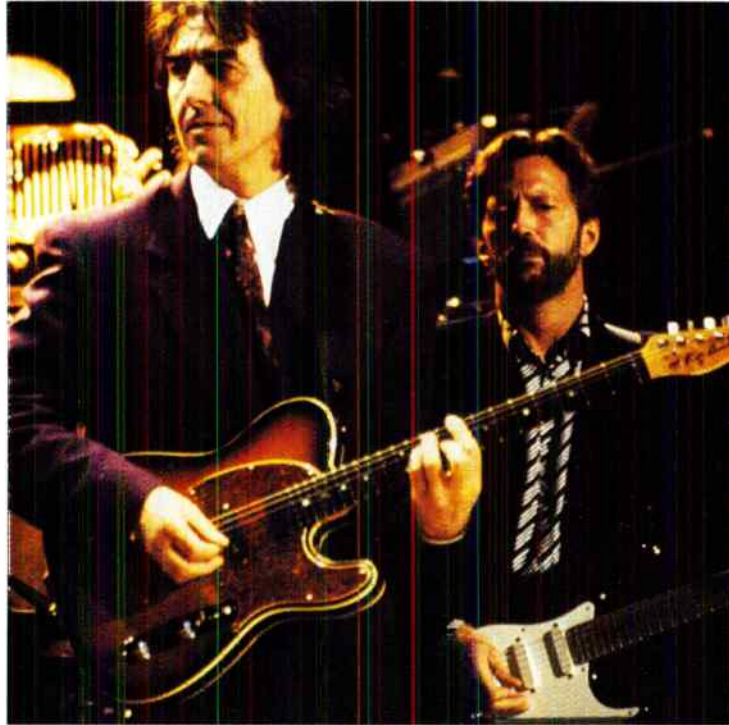
By Bill Flanagan

**T**HE GEORGE HARRISON/Eric Clapton tour of Japan began after Thanksgiving, ended before Christmas, and has now faded into rock legend. Harrison spent the Christmas holidays listening to tapes of six of the concerts for a possible live album, and is considering playing some more shows in 1992. Not with Clapton, though. Apparently the two old friends found working together a little tougher than they anticipated. Though they parted on good terms, insiders say it is very unlikely that Clapton and Harrison will again tour as a team. Clapton is planning his own U.S. shows in the spring.

One bit of joint promotion that the two superstars did during their tour was a press conference for the Japanese media in Tokyo, a slightly surreal scene that at times echoed *A Hard Day's Night*. First, George and Eric were asked why they liked each other. The question seemed to embarrass George a bit. "It's very difficult," he said. "It's simple but it's difficult. What attracts any people together? It's something mutual that you like. Sometimes it's the way he bends the strings, or it's the way he says hello. It's difficult to say. It's an attraction we have, an attraction in our lives. It's also the way he bends the notes."

Clapton said, "George is senior to me by—what? A year?"

"I'm thirty," Harrison replied. "How old are you?" "79," Clapton answered. "I've always thought he's a great songwriter, a great musician, a very unique man. He gave up smoking, I have to respect him for that. I



think he's very brave to come here because he hasn't worked on the stage for a long time. It can be a very frightening experience. But I think it will be rewarding. I've always thought of George as being a little like the elder brother I never had. I respect his judgments, his values. I think he's a wonderful man. I like the way he bends the strings, too. Most of all, he's a fantastic slide player."

George and Eric were asked for their feelings about John Major, the British Prime Minister.

"Very anonymous, I think," Clapton said. "He seems to be okay, but he just seems to be rather bland."

"I don't know," Harrison added. "I've not met him. I've only seen him a couple of times on TV, because I gave up watching television as well as smoking, and I also gave up reading newspapers. So I don't know much about him. But I still think he's better than Mrs. Thatcher."

George was asked how he chose which

songs to play on the tour. "They were chosen by the fact that they were a big single, maybe a hit record, or that it had some kind of feeling for me that it would be a good song to put in. Like 'Taxman.' Regardless if it's the '60s, '70s, '80s or '90s there's always a taxman. So the song seems to fit. 'If I Needed Someone' I sang on the Budokan 26 years ago. The rest were mainly singles or a selection from different albums going right from 1965 till last year."

A Japanese journalist asked in thickly accented English if George would

sing "Row Ova Beethoven."

"Yes," George deadpanned. "It's very popular in Japan."

There followed a long, goofy dialogue, as an earnest Tokyo fan pestered Harrison about why the sheet music to an obscure Harrison song called "Tears of the World"—the fan's favorite—was not included in the *Somewhere in England* music book.

"Maybe it fell out on the way to Japan," George joked. "I don't know, I have no idea."

That joke confused the translator—who turned to George and said, "Mister Harrison, excuse me, is this the title of a song?"

"Yeah, I think so."

Now the translator was really mixed up. "How could a song fall out of a book?"

"I don't know," Harrison sighed. "Write to the publisher of the book and ask him. Maybe you have to buy *Volume 2*."

The subject would not die. The question was restated, in English: "My favorite song is 'Tears of the World' and it's from the

album *Somewhere in England*. I have all of your books and been wondering why the song is not in that book."

The translator asked, "Is he talking about a songbook?"

"It doesn't matter though, really," George insisted, watching his press conference float into the twilight zone. "I took it off the record and put some different songs on to try to make the album better. It may be in the next book! You just keep buying them and I'll make sure it's in one of them."

The next subject didn't give George

much relief. A woman stood up and said in English, "Hello, I'd like to ask you, George, a question. I heard so many times about the reforming of the Beatles. Is it true?"

"No, it's not," George sighed as the woman said *awww*. "It can't be possible because the Beatles don't exist. Especially now, as John Lennon is not alive. Every time Paul needs some publicity he announces to the press it's going to come together again. I wouldn't pay attention to that." Then, sensing a potent sales gimmick, he quipped, "But they'll probably show up at my concert."

The questions continued to spiral into the ozone. A journalist asked if the band would do anything special on December 8th (the 11th anniversary of John Lennon's murder).

"I'd have to look at the itinerary," George said. "We must be doing a concert or traveling to a concert, but no, we won't be doing anything other than singing the songs. We won't be doing anything special. If you mean about John Lennon."

The journalist persisted: "Does the day have a special meaning to you?"

"No," George said, "the day doesn't have any special meaning to me."


Perhaps anticipating a damaging headline, Clapton diplomatically added, "I think the fact that George will be playing is tribute enough."

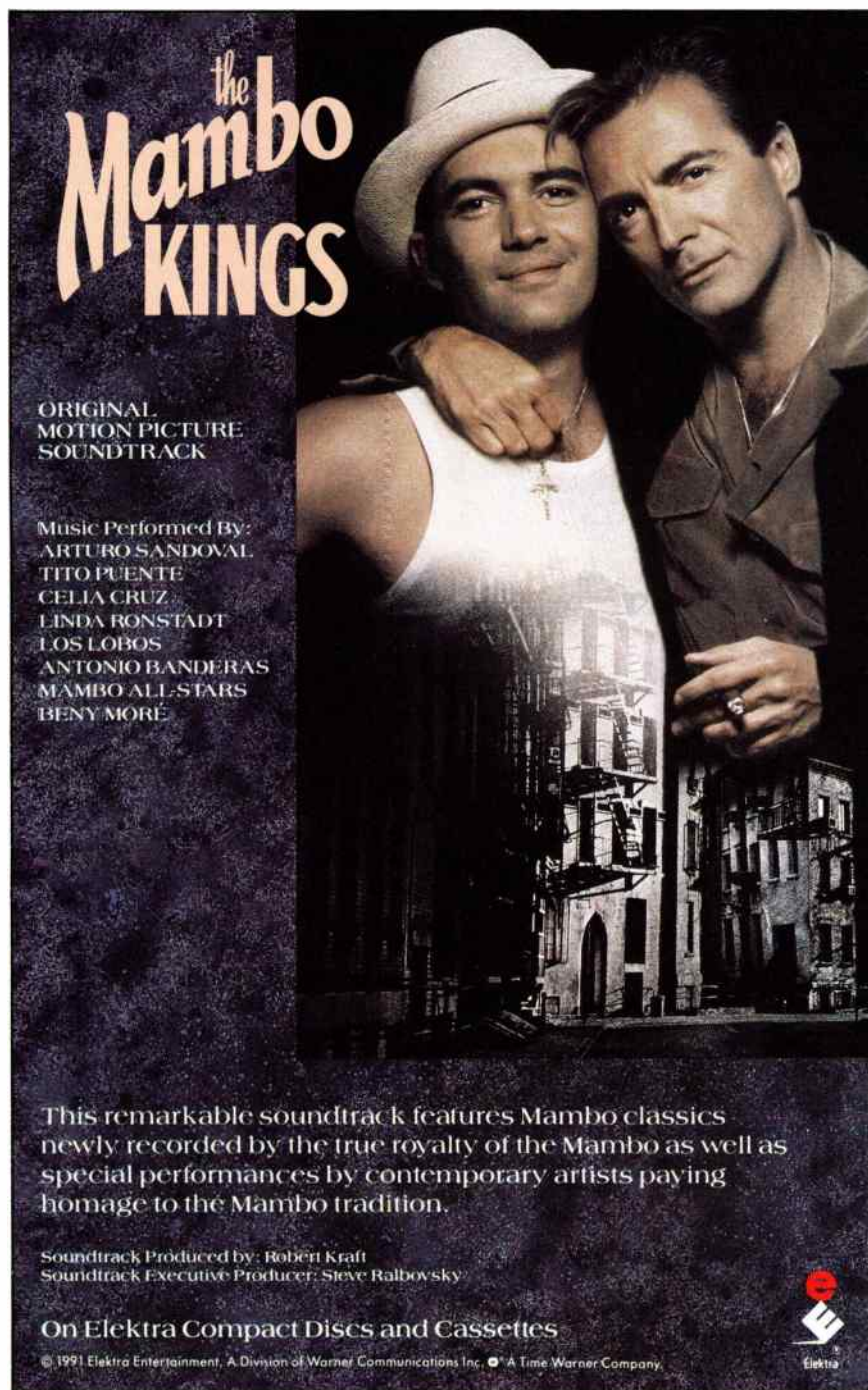
Harrison picked up Clapton's signal. "It's not that I don't respect the day John Lennon got killed," George explained. "I'm just not into *days*. I don't remember my own birthday or anniversaries or anything."

Another reporter took giggling delight in pointing out that Clapton's "Layla" was written about Eric's love for George's then-wife Patti. The assembled writers tittered. Clapton said, "Are we gonna play the song? I don't think so. Unless there's some kind of public outcry that we have to play it. I've played it nearly every show for the last 20 years so it doesn't bother me *not* to play it now and then." Clapton smiled and added, "George has only given me a very limited space so I'm going to try and do a couple of new songs. But it's all negotiable. Don't worry about it."

"I don't mind if he does it," Harrison said.

At the 16 shows, Harrison played his standards, including "Something" and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Clapton performed "Wonderful Tonight," "Pretending" and "Old Love." Among the Harrison rarities dusted off were "Piggies," "Isn't it a Pity," "Old Brown Shoe," "I Want to Tell You" and the Clapton/Harrison collaboration "Badge"—enough to start American fans itching for a U.S. Harrison tour. Even if George and Eric never play together again, Clapton succeeded in getting his old buddy back in the spotlight. That's friendship.

Asked what had changed since he last played Japan—with the Beatles—Harrison said, "*Everything* has changed over 25 years. First of all, I'm much younger now than I used to be. I think I can sing better, I can play better. I can be a happier person. Everything's changed." 



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# God Save the Senders

REAL ROCK FROM THE LOWER EAST SIDE

By Charles M. Young

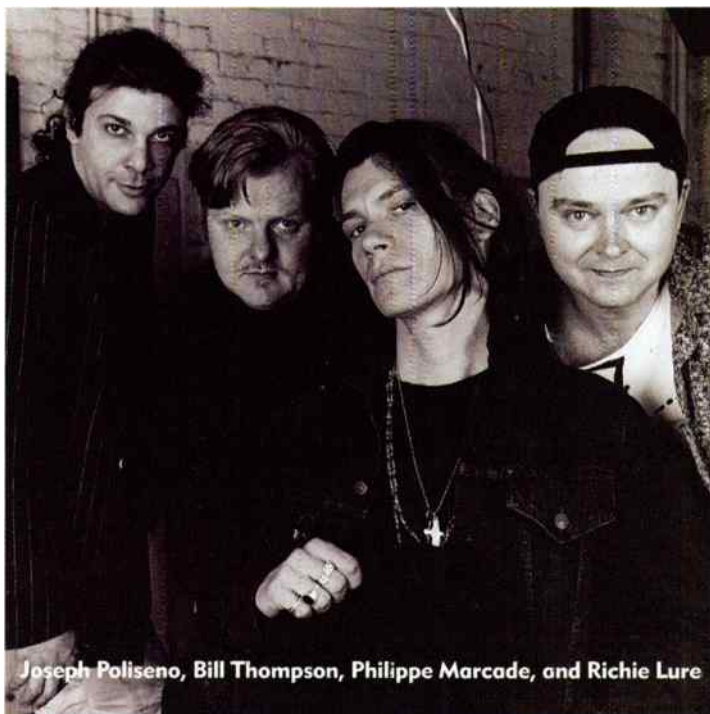
**B**EING THE ONLY Frenchman in the entire history of the universe who can sing blues and rock 'n' roll has not earned Philippe Marcade much respect in his adopted homeland of the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Recently he noticed a kid selling albums on the sidewalk and one of them was *Do the Sender Thing* by the Senders. "Hey, that's my band!" said Marcade. "You're selling it for \$2.00!?!?"

"I'm sorry," said the kid. "I really love the record but I'm kinda broke. Could I have your autograph?"

So Marcade signed the album and went on his way. An hour later he walked by the same corner where the kid was now selling the album for \$2.50.

Marcade roars with laughter after recounting the story, but it does sum up the present situation of the Senders. They've become a terrific pure rock 'n' roll band, one of the best ever to come out of the New York club scene, and they get about 50 cents' worth of recognition. Personally, I noticed them one night at CBGB when my own band happened to be on the same bill. I was about to leave after playing when the Senders kicked into "Please Give Me Something," a super-charged rockabilly cover that caught my ear like nothing has in years. I was thrilled. I wanted to dance. I wanted to laugh. The reasons are fourfold:

1) Philippe Marcade, 32, vocals: a cross between Jim



Joseph Poliseno, Bill Thompson, Philippe Marcade, and Richie Lure


Morrison and Maurice Chevalier. Can snarl, bellow and burn with a hugely exuberant attitude. The guy is, of all things, *happy*—what a concept. Moved here from France in 1975 and has good command of American idiom except for the occasional peculiar pronunciation, like "in the original mo-no." Women like him a lot.

2) Bill Thompson, 35, guitar: Ry Cooder on amphetamines, unafraid to pound away

time to talk to girls.

This configuration is actually the second incarnation of the Senders. The first was prominent in the original New York punk scene from 1977 to 1981. They played Max's until their first bass player, Steve Shevlin, went deaf and embarked on a new career teaching sign language.

"We do an occasional reunion show with him," says Thompson. "He still plays pretty good, but he can't tune so well."

At behest of Midnight Records, they re-formed in 1988 and had so much fun they've stuck together ever since. Their most recent songs have taken them to a whole new level, but they're not recorded yet, so you'll have to check them out live at Continental Divide (212-529-6924) or CBGB (212-982-4052). *Major labels, are you listening?* 

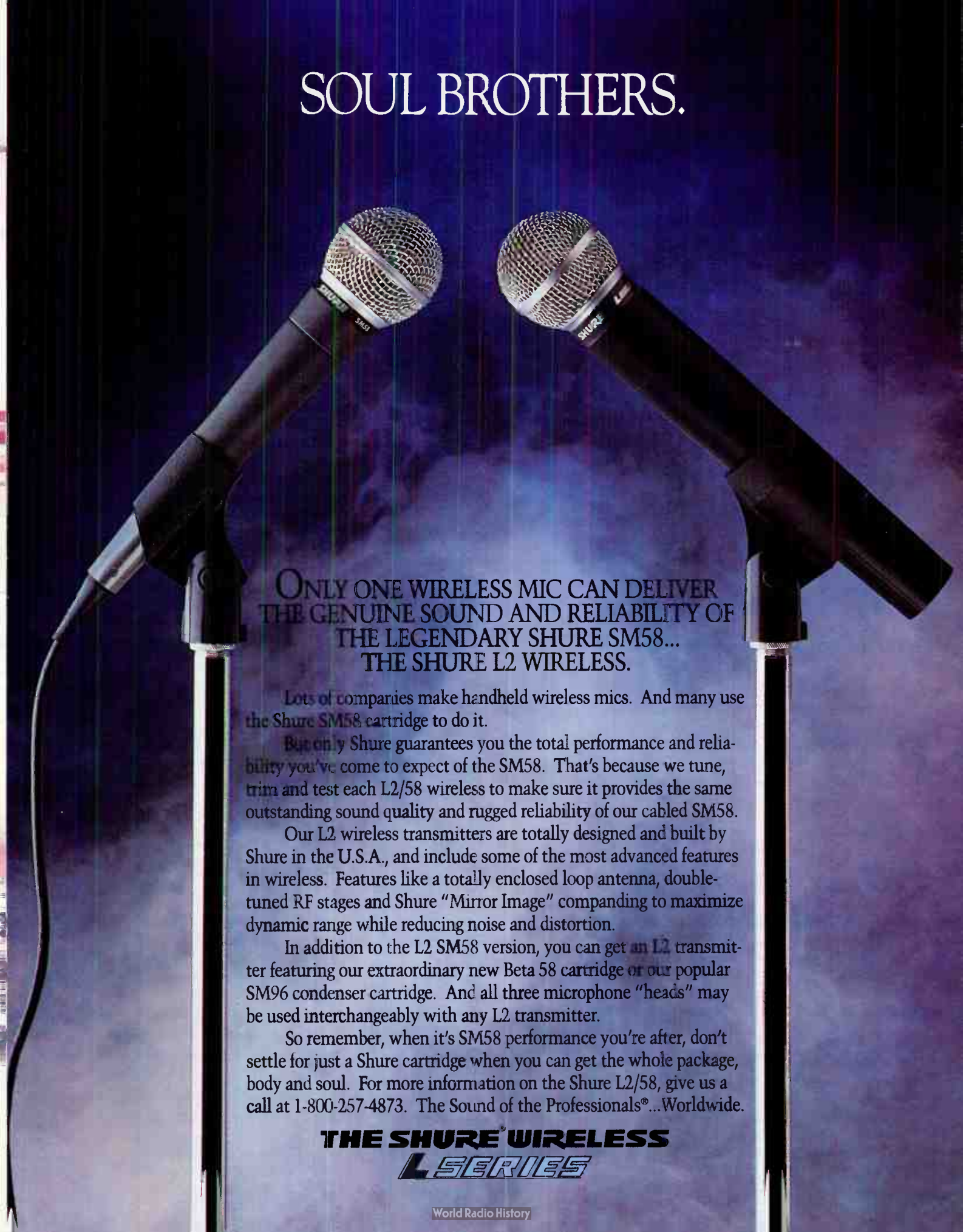
## Re-Tune to Senders

**B**ILL THOMPSON gets his killer tone with a 1958 Gibson ES 335, 1953 Gibson Super 400, 1966 Lake Placid blue Telecaster, 1967 Telecaster with Bigsby whammy bar and 1962 Gibson SG for slide. His amp is an early-'80s Fender Twin Reverb silverface with EV speakers and a fan he had

installed so it wouldn't overheat. He runs a MESA/Boogie Studio Pre-amp through the clean channel with just enough overdrive to get good sustain. This, he says, gives a good approximation of the "clean sort of dirty sound that the old Marshalls had." RICHIE LURE plays a Fender Precision through whatever amp is available. And JOSEPH POLISENO plays a standard Ludwig drumset with two crash cymbals for maximum noise.



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# Virgin America A&R

SCOURING THE STATES FOR TALENT

By Dave DiMartino

**S**INCE VIRGIN RECORDS AMERICA'S launch in 1987, the label has released albums by Roy Orbison, Steve Winwood, Iggy Pop, NRBQ and Keith Richards; soon to come are label debuts by the Rolling Stones, Leon Russell and Joan Baez. Whether those artists still have the audience they once enjoyed is debatable; what isn't is the fact that the late Orbison's Virgin albums were international hits and that Iggy Pop's recent Virgin debut was the biggest record of his long career.

But scoring hits with established artists isn't the real story at Virgin—nor, ultimately, is it the reason the company, founded in England in '74, opened its shutters in America. By the mid-'80s, the company's growth in Europe and Australia brought it talent from all quarters but the U.S. While the machinery was in place for British groups like Culture Club or the Human League to have international success everywhere—including the States, via separate deals with Epic and A&M—there were no corresponding American acts Virgin could easily sign and break. So Richard Branson hired Jordan Harris and Jeff Ayeroff and gave them a company and a mandate: Bring U.S. talent into the fold. Harris, Ayeroff and Virgin America's A&R staff succeeded admirably: Paula Abdul's *Forever Your Girl*, for starters, is the biggest-selling record in Virgin Records history. And there's more.

"I think we've really exceeded expectations—to a point that a great deal of our company internationally depends on the U.S. roster now," says Harris, ensconced behind his desk at Virgin America's Beverly Hills headquarters. "That's saying something—they have a lot to draw from already. Roy Orbison, for as many records as we sold in this country, sold a hell of a lot *more* outside America. Paula Abdul is a huge international star. Iggy Pop is a huge international artist for us. And Ziggy Marley. Joe Jackson, in places like Germany, Benelux and

France, is a very, very big artist. Lenny Kravitz is a much bigger star in Europe than he is here, a bigger star in Australia and Japan. We signed the Divinyls, and they had their first Top 10 record in the U.K., their first number one records in Australia."

That Virgin America signed both Australia's Divinyls and U.K.-born, U.S. resident Jackson indicates the label's growing pull—and, for international artists such as Japan's Ryuichi Sakamoto, its perceived stability. "I think what you find is that for an artist that wants to be an international success, they feel they need to sign with either the British company or the American," says Harris.

"And more so the American company—because success in this market seems to have the greatest impact. It was very important to the Divinyls to be able to sign with the American company. And with Ryuichi, it was the only way he was going to do it." The flipside: It was one of Virgin's U.K. companies that signed hot Detroit house producer Kevin Saunderson and Inner City. Does Harris feel his American A&R team missed the boat? "Not at all. The house sound happened first in that market. That was the market to develop the artist. We had number one records there—and then those imports started coming in, and that makes an impact in *this* market. It's great that we can work that way with our companies."

Virgin's current American roster consists of 30 to 35 acts—"about as far as we want to go," says Harris—and is one of the best-balanced in the business, with no genre especially favored. "There's no area where we've said it doesn't work for us," he says. "The A&R department here, as well as my partner [Ayeroff] and I, we all have slightly different tastes"—that's amply demonstrated by the staff's current projects. Vice-president Gemma Corfield, who just finished overseeing the College Boys' debut, has worked extensively with Abdul. ("Gemma has a great feel for R&B, pop and dance," says Harris. "She can go out and find the right songs, and she's always discovering new engineers and producers—she's brilliant at that.") VP Mark Williams, who delivered Latin rappers Kid Frost and Latin Alliance, just signed the Smashing Pumpkins and finished working on Camper Van Beethoven leader David Lowery's solo LP; VP Aaron Jacoves, who brought Soundgarden and Extreme to A&M while there, signed L.A. bands Asphalt Ballet and Momma Stud. New arrival Darryl Sutton, fresh from SBK, will work R&B with reps Andy Factor and Kevin Curry.

Like other labels, Virgin gets bombarded with demo tapes. Regularly. "Hundreds a



JORDAN'S GANG:  
AARON JACOVES (TOP), GEMMA  
CORFIELD, AND MARK WILLIAMS



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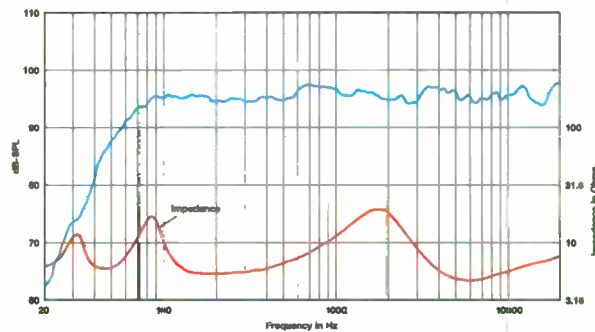
Today's recording studio has evolved into a multi-function facility which simultaneously addresses the specialized needs of music recording, film and video post, and radio production. In this environment, where the most critical listening often occurs in the final mix, close proximity monitors are often more important than the mains. The problem: most console top monitors, unfortunately, were designed for the living room not the control room. Until now.

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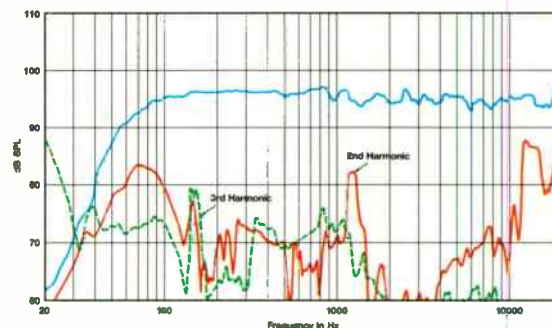
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day, it seems like," says Harris. "And they all get listened to." Be that as it may, if you're looking to get signed—at Virgin or any other major—your best bet may be to get *out there*, establishing yourself as an artist. Harris points to the career base Soundgarden built for themselves on Seattle's Sub-Pop label before signing to A&M; hopefully, new Virgin signings the Smashing Pumpkins are now making similar inroads with their recent Caroline set. "You get that core audience, and then the major record company comes in and takes it to the next level. I

think a lot of companies are looking for that right now. I see a lot of those bands doing very well."


Who you know on the grapevine counts for a lot, too. Mark Williams found the Pumpkins two years ago through a Chicago promoter who'd booked the band, liked what he'd heard and sent Williams (whom he knew) a tape. Likewise, new Virgin signing Mark Curry, a singer/songwriter from Sacramento, came to Williams' attention "because Mark's manager worked for me as an intern a few years back. So I had a relationship with him

there; later, he'd periodically send me tapes and update me on Mark's progress." Williams signed former Hüsker Dude Bob Mould (no longer at Virgin) because he had "a previous relationship with Bob's management," and nabbed Camper Van Beethoven—the object of heated competition among the majors—after they'd established themselves on the indie level. And no, he's never offered a deal to an unknown band he saw in a club merely because they blew his socks off. "It works the other way, unfortunately, most of the time," he says.

What does Williams look for in an artist? Songs. "That's the first thing I look for, no matter what the style of music is. Then I look at where their heads are at, and what they want out of their career. Because if a group is just satisfied in writing songs and putting out their records and that's it, that changes everything about your relationship with them."

Corfield says, "I look for star quality first. Because my stuff is more pop/R&B-leaning, my stuff tends to have more attempted commerciality. Are they a real star? Do they think this and breathe this? Do they care about who they are as an artist? Do they have a strong sense of who they are?"

Harris apparently thinks Mark Curry has both the songs *and* a strong sense of who he is. "He just came in and played, and we were stunned. It's like the first time Lenny Kravitz came in—you just *know* the guy's a star." Curry's debut, due this spring, is a label priority. "It's happened to me only a few times," says Harris. "That kind of, you *know* this is going to work, even if it doesn't fit on any form of radio. You throw all that out the window and say, 'This is a great artist who deserves to make records.'"


Nor, insists Harris, will the big bucks Virgin laid out for the Stones and Janet Jackson—who leapt to the roster last year in a much-discussed big-money deal—put a crimp in the label's future signing budgets. "It certainly doesn't take away from the resources of the label. The size of our roster has not been a financial decision in terms of what we can afford to sign. The size of our roster is a *responsible* one, because we have an obligation to the acts that we sign—and we know if we have too many acts, we're going to be dividing our efforts and everybody's going to lose. We've never taken on the philosophy that if you throw enough things out there, sooner or later something's going to catch." 

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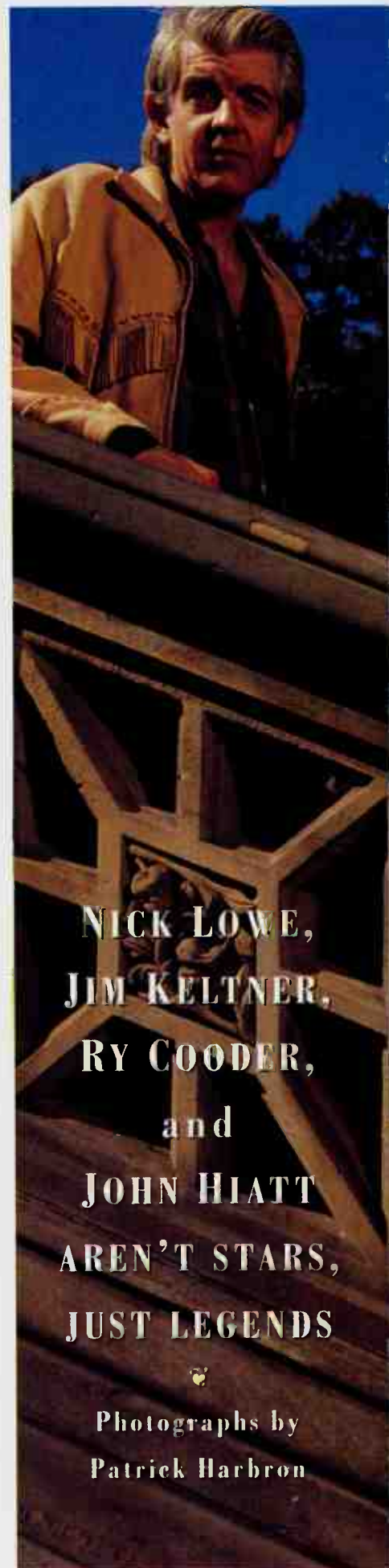


ENNY WARONKER WAS NERVOUS. YOU BETTER come down here, Ry Cooder had told him over the phone. The cats are struggling. Somebody needs to come over and say something.

As president of Warner Brothers Records, getting nervous was part of Waronker's job. He was that rare biz specimen whose interest in musicians was not primarily based on their ability to generate cash flow. Over the years he'd produced albums by Randy Newman, Rickie Lee Jones and of course Cooder, "sensitive" artists who could be damn prickly if you strayed off their wavelength, and though Waronker didn't really produce records anymore—being president of Warners kept a guy busy—he still exhibited the quiet, empathetic manner which had soothed its share of artistic tempests. And he still got nervous. Especially talking to Ry.

Talking to Cooder made lots of people nervous, even if you knew him well—maybe especially—and he and Lenny went back forever. Cooder was intelligent and funny, a guitarist with good taste and great ears and high standards and not much patience for players who couldn't meet them. He'd

**BY MARK ROWLAND**



**NICK LOWE,  
JIM KELTNER,  
RY COODER,  
and  
JOHN HIATT  
AREN'T STARS,  
JUST LEGENDS**

Photographs by  
Patrick Harbron





leave the room if a guy hit a snare too hard. It wasn't arrogance, it was pain. He'd made albums through the '70s that traveled from the Dust Bowl to Hawaii to Memphis and beyond, records that drew critical raves and seemed to please everyone but Ry himself. So he'd spent the next decade writing film scores. It made for better dough and an easier commute, and you could learn some things, but years were going by and Cooder was getting restless. He wanted to twang again, but with who? Jim Keltner on drums certainly—the two had been thick for years—but that was a no-brainer, who wouldn't want to play with Keltner? After that, the list got short.

Warners had just signed Nick Lowe, who was happy to be wanted by the label but bemused enough to wonder why. Waronker had enough taste to feel slightly nauseous at the sound of the word "supergroup," but the success of the Traveling Wilburys had set him wondering: What might happen if you gathered together compatible musicians who maybe hadn't reached that level of popular recognition? For instance, would Nick Lowe be interested in playing in a band with Ry Cooder and Jim Keltner? Lowe, who enjoyed a good fantasy as much as the next bloke, had said fine. Waronker screwed up all his energy and called Cooder.

"Ry," the president of Warner Brothers had begun, "just hear me out for a second. Don't yell." If it's a cool group, what do you lose, he'd argued. If it's no good you get to destroy it, he promised. The worst that can happen is a record that doesn't sell and a good record can never hurt you.

Cooder was listening. The fact was, he and Keltner had been wondering out loud together for years about a band. And Cooder had liked playing against Nick's bass on that John Hiatt record, *Bring the Family*—no small thing for Ry. So, okay—but Cooder insisted on adding a fourth member. No trios. Well, next thing you knew Hiatt himself was calling Lowe to say if you guys are starting a band without asking me I'm gonna be pissed off. Waronker had never really paid attention to *Bring the Family*—it fell behind the cabinet, as Cooder would say—and he knew Hiatt could be as strong-willed as Ry, so the news, well, it made him nervous. But that's who Ry wanted. So there it was.

Two years later, here they were, alchemizing in Ry's garden shed. And calling Waronker to say they were struggling and would he come over and listen to some tracks. And, you know, say something about them.

So Waronker was nervous. On top of which, the studio was a strange sort of scene. Usually guys will stand around and listen to the tracks with you, and you can nod and joke and smile, but here in this little shed there was no contact at all—Ry's sitting against the wall, Nick's outside pacing, Hiatt's in a corner somewhere...

While Waronker was beginning to freak out! Because this song



"Don't Go Away Mad" was completely off the wall. It sounded like none of them individually and had a kind of hi-fi and lo-fi going on at the same time, fancy guitar and this drum thing that sounded like tin cans. It was still really rough, but you could tell, they were doing the things they'd been talking about, pushing the limits. Then came "Big Love," a more straightforward song, and Waronker found himself sucking in his breath. He couldn't believe it. The music had character, passion, songwriting, technology—mixing technology with real musicianship, that was the highlight. He wanted to be careful not to say too much—actually, he was kind of intimidated—but he tried to communicate the support he felt was needed. That they were onto something special; they had to keep going.

The president of Warner Brothers went home that night, but he couldn't get to sleep. Back in the '60s, when he was a young A&R guy, he'd seen the Buffalo Springfield. He'd wanted to get them for Warners real bad, but in the end he'd lost and they'd ended up on Atlantic. Well, he figured, it's taken all these years. But I finally got paid back.

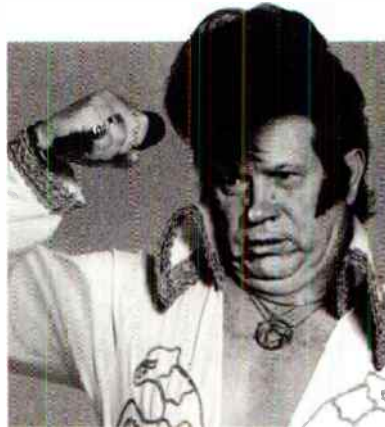
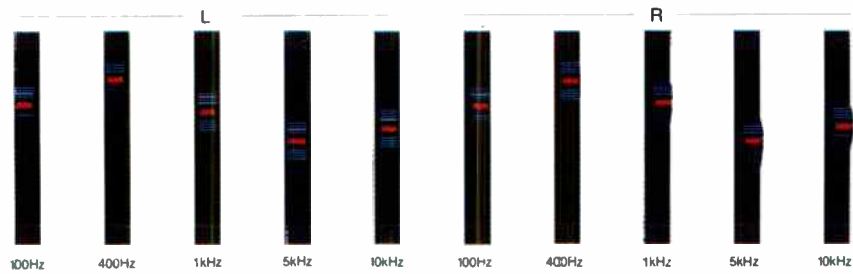
A FEW MONTHS LATER THE RECORD WAS done, and the band was ready to talk about it. They were sitting on couches and chairs in a pleasant West Hollywood hotel suite, looking about as MTV-ready

as four guys from your local gas station, which is to say they showed character. There was Keltner, the weathered beatnik whose sincerity cushioned the room like a hymn; the droll popster Lowe, as angular and pallid as a stork; the storyteller Hiatt, whose eyes seemed to take in everything from a distance; and Cooder, whose youthfully handsome face reflected at once the serenity and restlessness of the Zen traveler.

They had done their work well. The record was the kind you played through a dozen times straight, then savored from time to time like good wine. It was called *Little Village*. That was the name of the band, too. The inspiration was an old Sonny Boy Williamson song, or rather a Sonny Boy rant at a producer who'd been giving him a hard time in the studio: "A little village, motherfucker! You name it what you want. You name it your mammy if you want to!" This pearl of wisdom from the irascible Sonny Boy had been left on his record, to become much prized over the years by blues devotees. Cooder had even sampled it into "Don't Bug Me," a song of quite similar sentiment.

But another group was already using the Little Village name, it turned out, and so far couldn't be persuaded to give it up. The group needed a new moniker. There had been a thousand suggestions, all flattened like road kills. Hurricane Bob. Moula Banda. 2 Guitars, Bass and Drums. The Hollywood Destructors. The Nick Lowe





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Band—"I couldn't get anyone to run with that," Lowe admitted cheerily.

"At one point," Keltner recalled drily, "we were going to call ourselves Full Grown Men."

Somehow it seemed fitting that full-grown men should stumble over something as basic as a name, like rocket scientists who weren't sure how to cash their paychecks. Heck, these guys were legends. If you traced all the roads that brought them to this room, you'd have a detailed map of the highways and byways that criss-cross American music. They'd seen it and heard it and played it. But when it came to naming the band—well, that was a trick. For Cooder and Keltner and Hiatt, there hadn't been many other bands.

"I've been playing a guitar since I was four," Cooder said, "and I know I can play certain things—but what good is it? I've got a house full of guitars and amps; all of them are interesting. But as my son said to me one day, 'You never play anymore. You just get equipment.'"

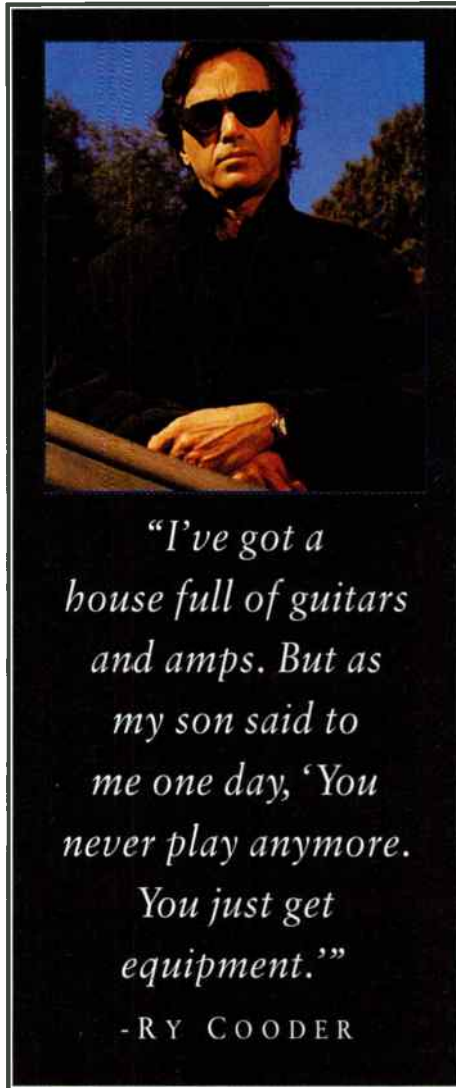
"Now I'd been trying to get together with John Hiatt for 10 years—clearly it was always a good idea. I'd done my thing with strange people, it was interesting, but I didn't want to turn that into a career anymore. You need to move along in a more practical way. I'm 44, and you can lose that thimbleful of ambition to move ahead. With John, I knew we could do that thing I was looking for, a complete potent thing that can rock."

"I have mixed feelings in any sort of group situation," Hiatt admitted. "I think we're the kind of players that, our human development goes along with our artistic development. So it's not just a romp with some knuckleheads. On the other hand, any time you set yourself on a course of development, there's some blood, sweat and tears. And being basically lazy," he laughed, "I don't exactly welcome that. 'Cause left to my own devices, I'd probably just stay in my room."

"I always envied guys in bands, always," Keltner said. "I don't need to be in a band, I can just go on and do what I do, which is play with everybody. But if Ry wants to be in a band, then that excites me a lot. And if he wants to get Hiatt in a band, and if Nick is available, that's even more incredible."

"It's a thing for a young man, really, being in a band," said Lowe, the one with most experience in the matter. "Usually your best bands, in my opinion, are the ones where they all come from the same town or they're all pals and there is one central guy, the wunderkind, and maybe the bass player isn't that good but he's a good guy. As they get on a bit, they kick that bass player out and bring in somebody who's a bit more flash. Something goes and it starts whittling down so it's just the wunderkind on his own. And it ain't a band."

"But *this* is about as band as you can get, for four seasoned old vets. Because everyone has their say—four very forceful characters.



*"I've got a house full of guitars and amps. But as my son said to me one day, 'You never play anymore. You just get equipment.'"*

- RY COODER

And we're dead serious about it."

They'd crossed paths before. Hiatt and Cooder had written some songs together. Lowe had produced half of Hiatt's *Riding with the King* LP. Of course everyone had played with Keltner. And then there was Hiatt's 1987 *Bring the Family*, which brought everyone together at once, for four days anyway.

That had been magic—though Lowe, who'd never met Cooder before, was anxious at first. "Ry regarded me with an enormous amount of suspicion," he remembered, "as he regards most people. At least initially—he's a very nice man indeed. Mainly I think because I was English. I feel doubly blessed because he truly doesn't like English people very much. And I felt like this terrible alien creature, like I shouldn't be there and they'd made some terrible mistake..."

"But I've always been a tremendous fan of Ry's. So I just decided to Keep My Mouth Shut, and speak when I was spoken to. That was the right course. I remember the day we did 'Thing Called Love' and came up with that scuzzy old beat, that inside-out kind of groove—that's the day I remember everyone got very excited. You had this sudden burst of enthusiasm, full of shouting and gabbling at each other and you forgot your place and the pecking order and all that. Then you recovered and went back to being sensible again. But that's the day I remember thinking,

wow, we could really do something here. It's good stuff. Music that sounds kind of familiar, and yet you've never heard it before."

"I had no idea who Nick was," Cooder admitted. "And I had never communicated with bass players very well. But 'tentative' applied to that whole experience. Three or four songs in, I was thinking, 'Well, we're having a good time.' By the time we did 'Lipstick Sunset' a little voice said, 'Pay attention here.' Then when it was done we all said *gosh* and later it was *oooh* and a year later we were still saying that."

So that had been the catalyst, and Waronker's enthusiasm had given it shape. But *Bring the Family* was still a record of Hiatt's songs. The question remained whether such distinct musical personalities could create a sound beyond the sum of their styles. "To write songs with four people, I never thought it could work," Lowe admitted. "Because to do it, you have to unhinge what you know a bit. You have to let it float."

And ultimately, Lowe suggested, to trust in mystery. "We all have different outlooks and very different lifestyles," he said. "But we know one thing, the four of us, we know one damned thing for absolute certain.

"Of course, I haven't the faintest idea what that thing is."

AS IT TURNED OUT, MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER WAS THE NATURAL PART. On the day they first gathered in Ry's shed, up popped an unused riff



Photo by Neil Zlozower

# Marvin "Smitty" Smith

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from *Bring the Family* days that turned into a song, "Solar Sex Panel." Then Ry offered a lovely, Everly Brothers kind of tune he'd dreamed up with Hiatt in mind while working on the movie score for *Johnny Handsome*. That evolved into the ballad "Don't Think About Her." Both songs would end up on the album. Not bad for your first day on the job.

They'd work from three days to two weeks at a stretch, take time off, maybe faxing each other lyrics in the interim, then regroup. Bankers' hours. Once they converged, how-

ever, the studio air soon grew thick. "You could cut it with an axe," Hiatt said. "It was supercharged and runnin' on nitro—for about eight hours, and then we would just fall out. That was about all we could take."

Perhaps the biggest revelation was that the band comprised not three composers but four. Over the years Keltner had been developing a style of composition that involved drum programs, sound samples, chords and notes that suggested rather than dictated musical direction. His hi-tech approach complemented the band's rootsi-

er inclinations, and at the same time seemed to free everyone's ideas about where and how far they could go.

"There was all this instinctual stuff at work," Hiatt agreed, "but also an aesthetic applied over it that we weren't gonna stop at the first bus stop on this little hunt, we were gonna keep going and turn over more stones than we had previously. A couple of these things just spontaneously combusted. 'Take Another Look,' for example, was inspired by one of these percussive things Jim put together, with not only stuff being hit, but melodies implied and structure—"

"Which had all been useless," Keltner declared, "until this particular combination of people came along. I'd tried it before with friends, very talented people I'm talking about, and you could see the confusion mount, and then the instruments would sort of go in the corner. And in my heart I'd be going, 'Ohhh, it's no good. Nobody can get a piece of this.' And here, Lowe plays a bass-line from some planet that's exactly right for it. You've got a guy like Ry who has tremendous ears, he gets a little piece of it and he's gone in some direction, and here's John waiting to receive the ball. And in the end you get a real composition out of it." Keltner shook his head. "Man, that's so thrilling I can't even describe it."

Songs started moving further out. Odd, interlocking guitar figures on "Action" that dug grooves you could plant seeds in. Vocal harmonies on "Don't Go Away Mad" that sounded like fat organ riffs. A chain-gang vamp on "Don't Bug Me" that never bothered to resolve into a chorus. A web of sonic accidents that somehow took on the logic of geometric patterns.

"One day years ago, I knocked a guitar over and it knocked itself into a new tuning," Cooder explained. "I learned to respect that. If you pull it out of the case and it's out of tune, just play it."

"One thing in this group that I hold as a personal gift to myself is that the less sound I make, the more the sound is operating. That means I don't have to think about cover this, cover that. 'Don't Bug Me' and 'Take Another Look' are examples—of not knowing anything! I watch my hand go down and play a riff—whoa, I'm down there. Or, oh, we're going up here. That's a beautiful thing, where you don't fear the loss of the beat or a groove. I used to panic that the beat was gonna go away, and I'd play harder and more strident. I once

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stomped my foot so hard onstage I broke a metatarsal bone. So to cut loose of all that is a real interesting feeling.”

Though a few songs on *Little Village* bore the stamp of one recognizable sensibility, like Cooder on “Do You Want My Job?” or Hiatt on “Big Love” or Lowe on “Fool Who Knows,” what was amazing was how many did not—the best proof of the band members’ oft-expressed admiration for each other’s talents. Their pop sophistication was often miles removed from, say, the Traveling Wilburys’ folksy simplicity. But Keltner, who’d also played with the Wilburys, detected similar strains of selflessness: “Nobody’s trying to play loud, like I gotta hear my part. They’re playing stuff that’s geared for the song, for that little piece of music.

“None of us are what you’d call virtuosos on our instruments,” he mused, “but we’re good, creative, thinking players. If you don’t have that, then all you really can have is a ‘cool band.’ I could probably have been in a lot of cool bands over time, and so could everybody. But I’ve never experienced this before—that I love what we’ve done and yet I love even more what I’m thinking that we’re gonna do.

“I also believe very strongly in fate. I said to myself I wouldn’t get into this subject, but...see, I pray a lot. I spend a lot of time in

prayer. And this, right here, is one of my answers.”

A FEW MORE WEEKS PASSED, THEN A FLASH OF good news. Like a generous duenna, Warner Brothers had struck a deal to buy back the use of the name “Little Village.” Baptism was over. Cooder, Keltner, Hiatt and Lowe were now officially a band.

Meantime, there were other ‘90s rituals to attend to, taking meetings about possible tour dates and promotions and even videos. “These days you have to have a meeting and a

## Village Store

**J**OHAN HIATT’s main guitar is a ‘57 Fender Telecaster received as a gift years ago from Nick Lowe (“a very good call,” says Lowe), through a Bandmaster amp. For *Little Village*, he also played guitars and amps belonging to RY COODER, including an old Harmony hollowbody with a Japanese Tyscope pickup, and an Oahu, an acoustic sold by mail order in the ‘30s. He uses D’Addario strings and sings through a Shure mike. NICK LOWE played a blue Fender bass through Cooder’s Soldano amps, and no effects. “I don’t want anyone to hear the notes,” he explains. “I just want the floor to shake.”

JIM KELTNER’s kit includes dw drums with Paiste cymbals. “My kit consists of drums and vicegrips,” he says. “That way I can be anywhere in the world and find something to play.” Cooder’s “neat batch of junk” includes some of the aforementioned guitars played by Hiatt, and vintage small amps like Airline, Deluxe and Supro. “These things have been messed with,” he admits, “the capacitors and the wiring.” Hand-crafted guitars include a fretless Steve Ripley, and a Ferrington with a split fingerboard, with two bass strings that go longer than the other four, with frets staggered to achieve microtonal intervals: “When you’re playing the bass strings you don’t have any response from the top ones and vice-versa. So you don’t have this thing of all the strings being ‘on’ all the time. I want my thumb to be active playing a part somewhere around Nick’s bass, so you have that sense of stacked frequencies.” And that’s only the half of it. “Each tune,” Ry says with some understatement, “has a different instrumental complexion.”

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memo and a parking space," Cooder sighed. "At least I can park on the lot—that's a good sign. Before I couldn't get in. One time, a security guy followed me into the lobby yelling that I had no business there. Now he shakes my hand and says, 'You haven't aged a bit!'"

The members of Little Village were aware that a pop quartet whose average age was 43 had its chimerical aspect. But they were game. At one point, while mixing the record, they'd even started buffing away their wilder sonic edges, figuring they'd meet radio halfway. "We thought we were

being kind of cool," Lowe chortled at the memory. "Like, 'We don't like it, but radio will. Let's call Lenny down to hear it.'" Fortunately, Waronker had quickly set them straight. "He said, 'Sounds a bit dull to me. Can't you get it cracking?' We said, yes sir, we certainly can!"

It was nice to have the president of Warner Brothers in your corner like that. But sitting in his office, anticipating the record's release and wondering what the response would be, Waronker still seemed...well, nervous.

"It weighs a lot on me because I want

them to do another record! They've just scratched the surface. They haven't even touched certain areas. So yeah, it weighs heavy. We haven't had anything like this in a long time," he declared. "Now we have to be sure it does well."

What *would* the future hold? The other night, Lowe had a dream. Little Village was onstage, playing "I Believe in Miracles" by Hot Chocolate. "And it sounded absolutely terrific—in my dream, that is. But I think all our stuff sounds really hip—it doesn't sound like a bunch of old geezers. If it doesn't get on the radio, though, we can be as hip as a house, and it won't make a scrap of difference. No one's gonna hear the bloody thing and therefore...we won't be able to make anyone happy.


"But," he added brightly, "I think it's pretty likely that we haven't seen the last of each other."

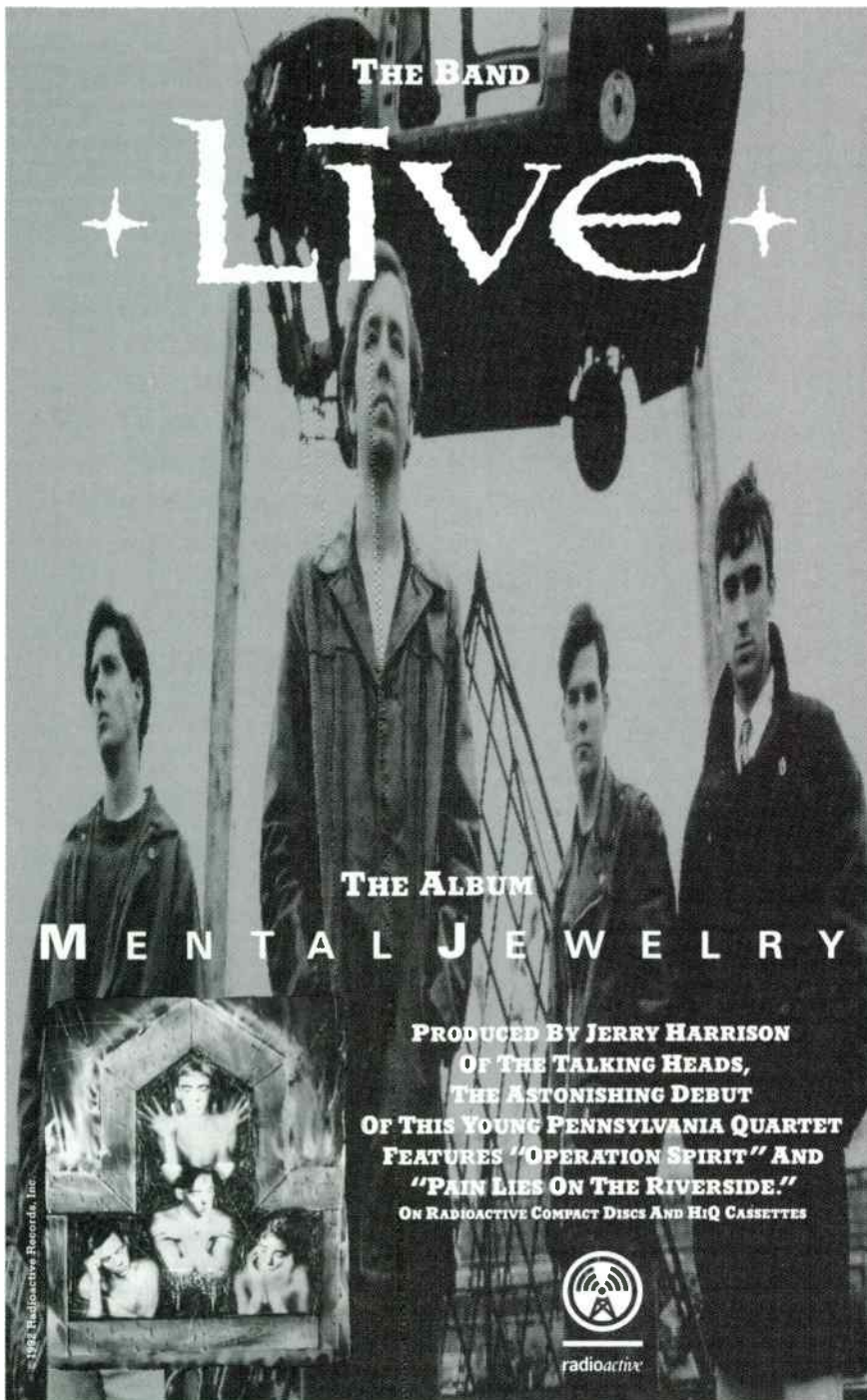
Back in Nashville, Hiatt was in the middle of a working binge, putting together a home studio and cranking out new songs by the dozen. "This has already been its own reward," he said philosophically. "It completely zapped my creative juices. You get in ruts sometimes, and this really blew out the cobwebs for me. I feel like Frankenstein has reawoken here. I'm ready to rock.

"But it's kind of a delicate thing too. It's the kind of music that you feel so good about when it happens, that you don't want to muck it up. You have to take it one step at a time. But, you know, there's been so much skepticism surrounding this project that I feel we're batting a thousand so far."

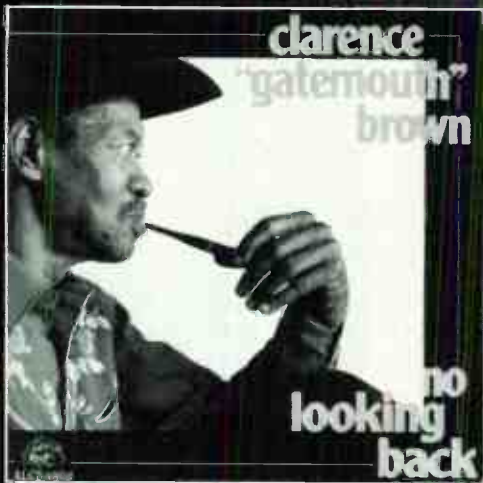
"Events will tell us," Cooder prophesied. "We made the record, now our part is to watch and see. Timing is all. I do think this is the surest piece of 'entertainment value,' as Nick says, that I've ever done, as well as my favorite thing. But you can't predict what you don't know about. You're playing for yourself, finally."

The band had finished recording on a funny note, Cooder recalled. The last song was "Take Another Look" and no one had actually put together the music for it, the song had just sort of...played itself. For Cooder, that seemed like the right place to take a breath.

"It's progress," he said. "You've crossed a certain threshold. You've gone from knowing something to knowing nothing. Because you can't really call yourself a band until you can play songs you don't know. Until then, you're just doing parts. But when you go into the unknown: Then you're a band." 







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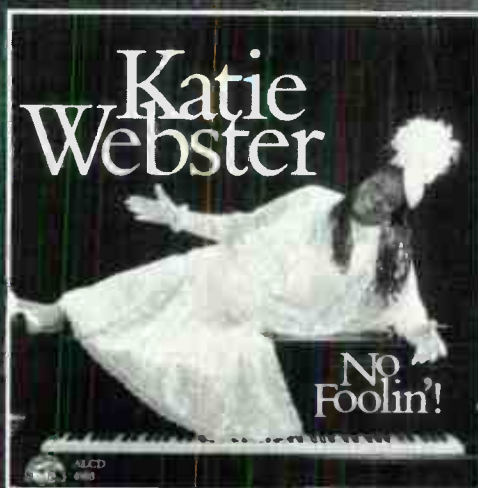
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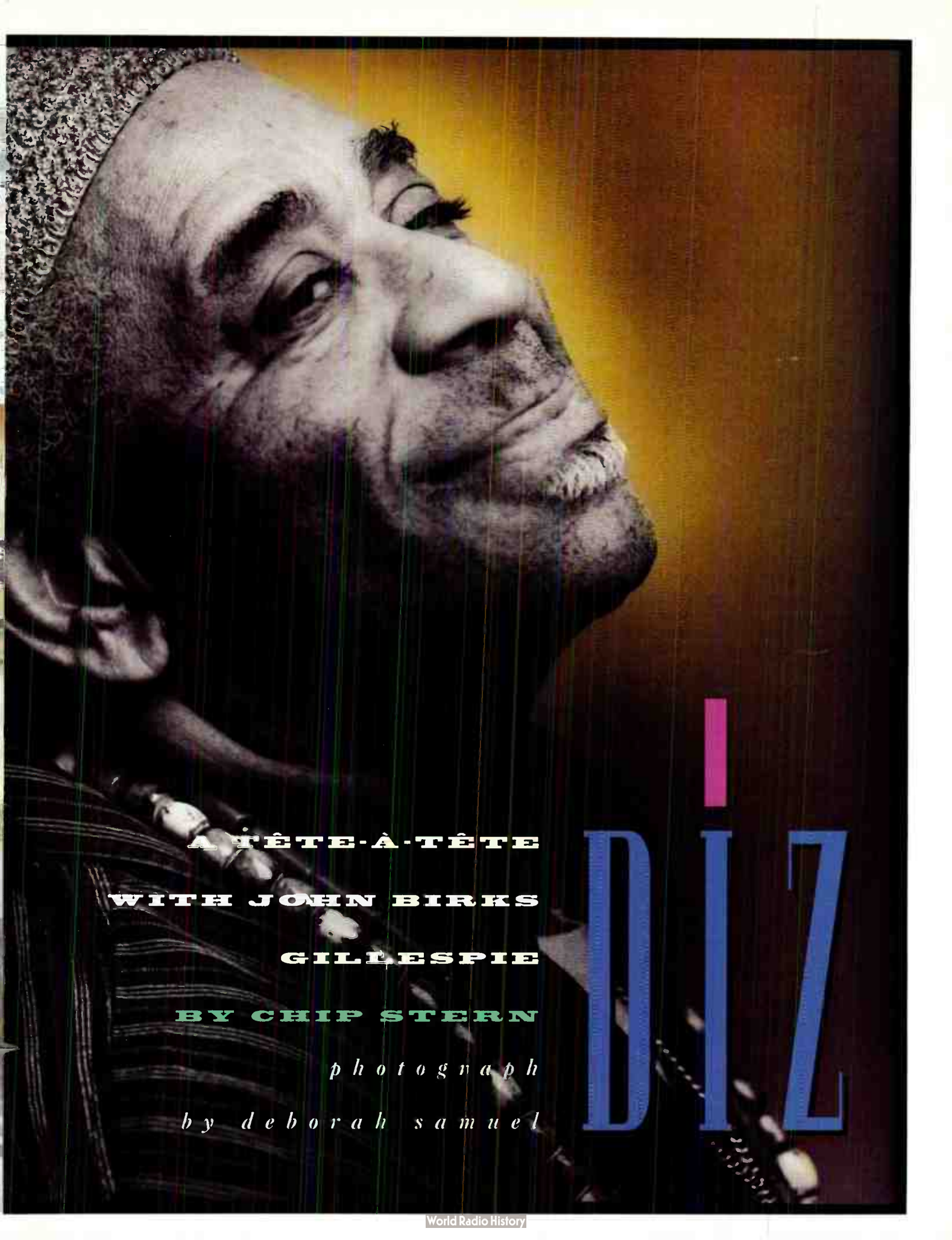
**AND PROUD OF IT.**

WITH ROLLING LAWNS, MAJESTIC DRIVEWAYS AND OBLIGATORY COLLECTIONS OF PRICEY CARS, A series of splendid homes adorns Palisade Avenue, the main drag heading out towards Englewood, New Jersey. Here, where the reet meet the elite, resides one John Birks Gillespie: musical innovator, spiritual catalyst, twentieth-century revolutionary, the road warrior and globetrotting ambassador of America's classical music. Crossing the railroad tracks into downtown, the city appears a healthy tintype of Main Street U.S.A., its center dominated by a '30s public works-style municipal building. The scene brings to mind the considerably humbler environs of Cheraw, South Carolina, where Gillespie grew up, and the many roads since traveled that have brought him to this place. ♣ Leaning against a street sign, I'm comforted to think that at least one of the good guys got a taste, got his due, and that, closing in on 75, he's still going strong. Recent evidence includes such fine albums as *Max + Dizzy: Paris 1989*, an improvised encounter with the percussion master, and *Live at the Royal Festival Hall*, a big band/percussion date that reinforces his stature as both composer and soloist. Not to mention his touring. For Dizzy Gillespie never stops working. Never. "I don't even look at my itinerary," he'd said over the phone. "Ask me where am I goin' and when I'm goin'? I don't know. The most I've been off now that I can recall was four weeks early in January [1991] when I had my cataracts operated on. Other than that, I always go. I take what I want and leave with it." ♣ He'd just completed a week's engagement, sold out, at New York's prestigious Blue Note with his superb working band (featuring tenor discovery Ronald Holloway, who calls forth visions of Johnny Griffin and Sonny Rollins, and seasoned campaigners Ignacio Berroa, John Lee and Ed Cherry). He's already planning a return in January '92 for a month of special appearances, with a different grouping each week, including an all-star ensemble, Latin band and his United Nations Big Band. In between, the road beckons. ♣ Waiting on Birks to show, my eyes alight on a yellow-painted curb across from City Hall, signifying no



# DIZZY





**A TÊTE-À-TÊTE**  
**WITH JOHN BIRKS**  
**GILLESPIE**  
**BY CHIP STERN**

*photograph*  
*by deborah samuel*

**I**  
**DIZ**

parking. The sign above bears a more pointed message: "Dizzy's Place." Now, that's respect. Suddenly someone arrives from behind and snaps at my suspenders. "I'd have come into Manhattan to pick you up, man, but my wife won't let me take her car across the bridge," he says, sounding like a kid who's had his hand caught in the cookie jar. A grin lights up that enormous face, suggesting Jabba the Hutt. It is the face of a man who never forgot what it felt like to be a child—perhaps not unlike his baby brother Miles. Yet where that reflective Mr. Davis seemed to ruminate on the hurts, the exuberant Mr. Gillespie reminisces on the joy. For a few seconds all I can do is stare—this is a boyhood hero—and soon find myself doing a Ralph Kramden routine, a-hum-na-hum-na-hum-na, tongue-tied in his presence.

"You know, Diz, this'll sound funny, but I'm a little intimidated by you, man."

"Hahaha, get outta here," Dizzy chortles, with a good-natured slap on the back for punctuation. "I'm no old whatdoyou call 'em, those guys that sit out in the deserts...old masters. I'm still a learner, just like you."

His car—his wife Lorraine's car—is a Mercedes 250 CES, a classic set of wheels. "I bought this new back in 1966, same time we bought our house. Before that we lived in Corona, Queens for years, a block away from Louis Armstrong." He reaches to the floor and picks up what appears to be a carved walking stick, embellished in a vaguely Mediterranean design. "Open it up," he suggests, and it turns out to be a kind of scabbard, revealing a short, nasty-looking blade.

"The equalizer, huh, Diz?"

"Yeaaaaahhh," he draws. "Sometimes you'll be driving around here, and people are crazy, man, they'll just cut you off and think nothin' of it. One day these guys cut me off and I beep as they go by. When we come to the light, he starts to get out of his car, so I showed him this, you believe it, and that was that."

"Sort of like when Cab Calloway called you out in front of the band," I respond, referring to an incident in the 1930s where the heigh-de-ho man confronted a young Gillespie for allegedly throwing spitballs during his performance. And got his ass cut in the bargain. Gillespie giggles at the memory. "Cut his ass. Shit, I was tryin' to kill his ass. My blade was open before it left my pocket. We're tight now, though," he adds as an afterthought. "He realizes that he was wrong; he was accusin' me of somethin' I didn't do."

Diz turns off Palisade Avenue, proceeding through some wooded areas and along a meandering series of comfortable-looking streets and homes. "See this?" he beams, pointing to a street sign. "Here's Hollywood, and here's Vine. Somebody asks where you live, you tell 'em Hollywood and Vine."

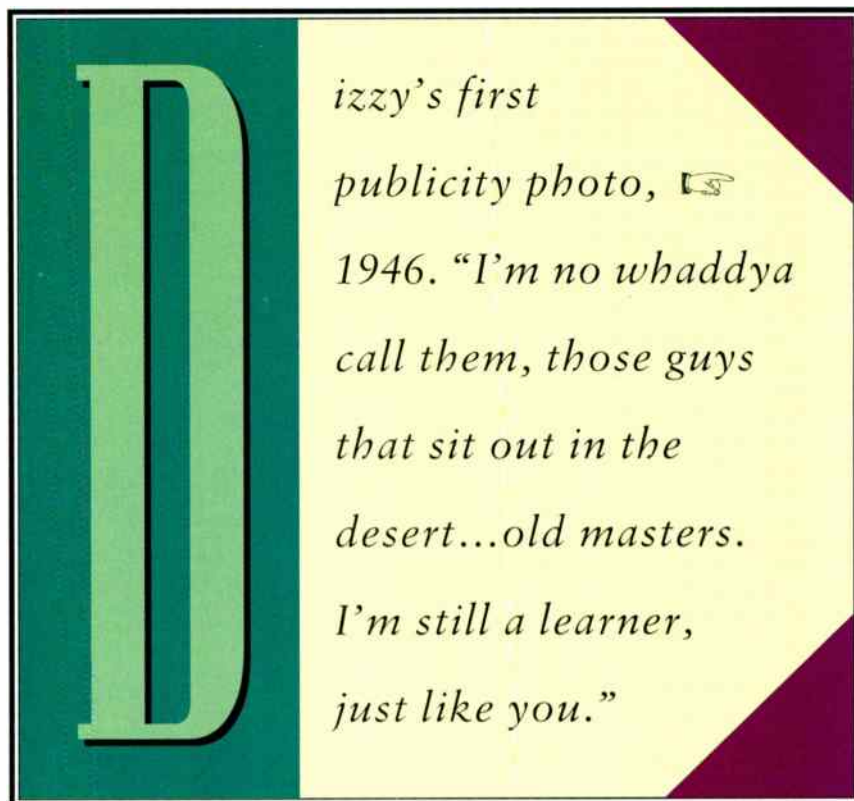
Alright, say something. "Sure is nice here. Do you ever get to enjoy this? Are you afraid if you come off of the road you'll lose your lip or something?"

"No, I'm not afraid. I play every day anyway. Always playin' out and gettin' paid for it, at least 200 days a year. That's why I haven't written anything in a long time. One time I was worried about my jaws,

because when I do this"—Dizzy presses forefinger to embouchure, expanding those famous cheeks to roughly the size of a bowling ball—"there's a strain, and I thought my cheeks might give out. But when I do that—push it in, go on, put your strongest finger here and try and push in." His cheek resists my finger with the tensile strength of a bear's belly. "So, I don't think they're goin' to give out for a long time, as hard as they get."

"Did you always play the horn like that?"

"No, no. I started doing it about 30 years later. Not having had a teacher was the trouble; you try anything. Lorraine say, 'Hmmm,



looks like your cheeks are coming out.' Before I knew it they were out like this.

"You know, the trumpet de-mands your time. Practice: That does it. You need to know exactly where you put your mouthpiece—got to be the same place all the time. That's what I work on. It always kicks your ass. You get a little better, but not too much.

"I have a regimen to warm up, yes. Whole tones. Starting at low G, you go up to C, and you come back down to G. Sometime you do scales in thirds or fourths going up and coming down, sometimes fast, sometimes real slow. The idea is to get the sound of the notes properly. See, I asked a classical musician once, a very famous cat. I said, 'Do you practice?' He said, 'Every day.' I said, 'What if you didn't?' He said, 'Well, after one day you will notice you should have practiced; two days, your compatriots will notice; three days, the whole world will notice.' I don't practice exactly the way I did when I was coming up, but pretty close."

"So you've learned to pace yourself on the horn," I propose, "sort of like Sugar Ray or Muhammad Ali when they got older and didn't have those young legs to carry them. Rope-a-dope, right?"

Dizzy laughs. "You don't look at an instrument as a physical thing of fighting somebody. It's about finesse with this"—he points to his



brain. "You got to work out your ideas. Then there's no telling how long you can play, with the proper feelings.

"Sometimes you surprise yourself, let me tell you," he enthuses, gripping the steering wheel a little tighter. "This past spring I played on that boat ride around Manhattan with my band, like I'd never played before! I'd gone to the dentist and had this tooth worked on; it was loose, and he tightened it up. On that boat ride, everything I *thought* I wanted to play came out." He shakes his head, amazed. "I haven't played like that, boy... I never remember playing like that."

He pulls into the driveway of a long, capacious ranch-style house and eases into the garage, pointing out a white mark on the wall that lets him know when he's in danger of totalling the front end. Along the wall are trap cases bearing his name, packed and waiting—whatcha doing home, man? Entering the kitchen from the garage, I can hear Lorraine's voice in the distance, dishing the dirt about the Clarence Thomas hearings with a friend on the phone. Their living room is laid out to emphasize its spaciousness—the kind of simple understatement only money can buy—and no one needs to say that it is set aside for special occasions. I pull a dozen roses out of my bag for Diz to give Lorraine, as he motions down to the basement.

If the rest of the house is Lorraine's domain, the expansive basement—with its wood panels, small bar, pool table, upright piano, television, synthesizer, drum machine, eight-track recorder and ancient stereo—is clearly Diz's crib, part rehearsal space, part rec room. In one corner is a 28-inch Wuhan Chinese cymbal, a real beast, and a set of golden-chrome Remo drums, compliments of Louis Bellson. There's a JVC compact stereo—still in its box—that someone has sent to Diz, he can't recall who. "People are always sending me stuff," he says simply, and offers his guest a drink.

"I was born October 21, 1917. I always thought I was a musician. Thought I was a musician before I really *was* a musician. At first I had a trombone—I had no trombone, but I had the school's horn, you see. That was the only thing left. I played on it the best I could. I was *little*. I was only 11-and-a-half, and my arms weren't long enough to make that stretch, so I could only reach a few of them positions. Didn't have a trumpet. Boy next door, Brother Hampton, he let me practice on his trumpet. So, by the time I put the trombone down, I could play a little bit in B flat.

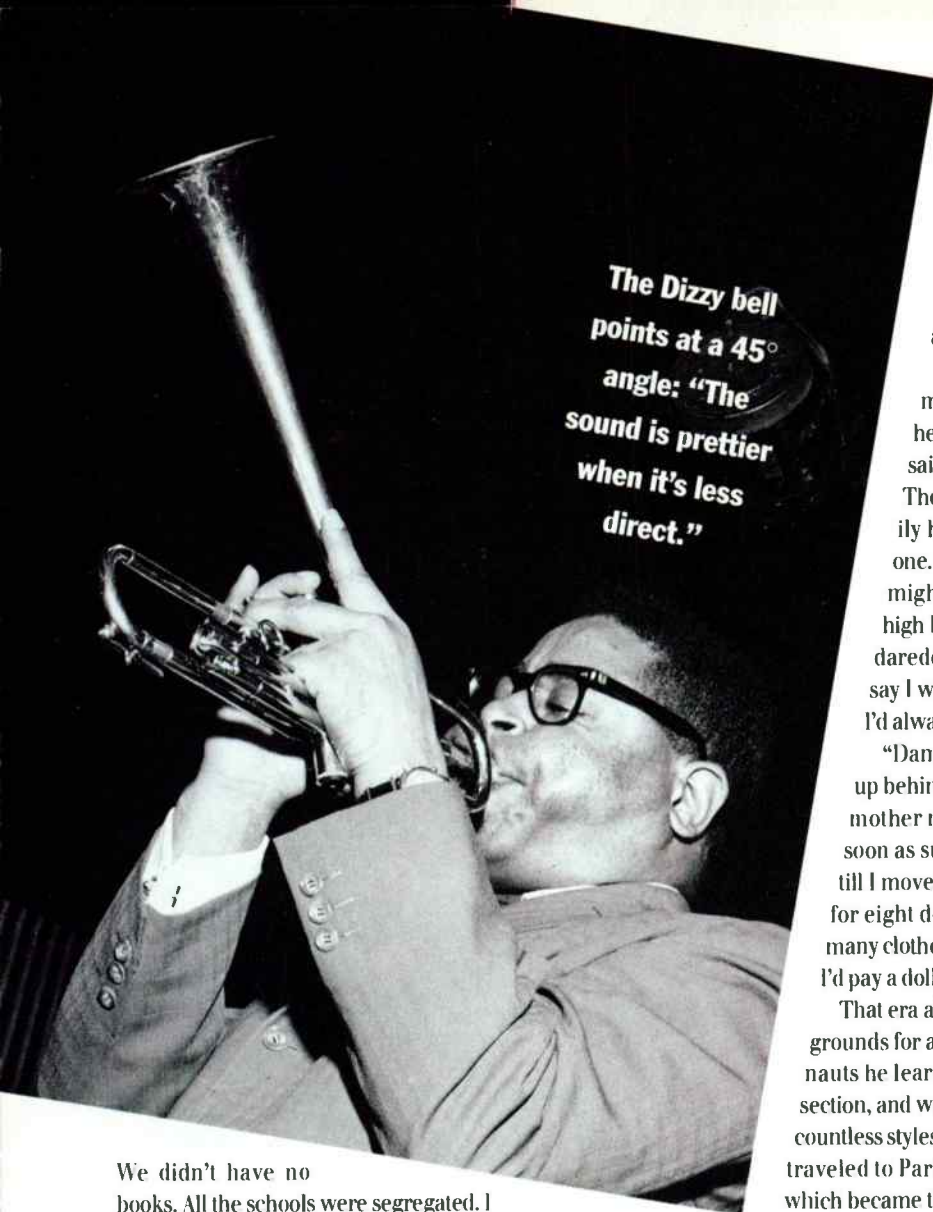
"What happened next, a guy named Sonny Matthews came back

home. Sonny was an experienced musician who took lessons from his mother and he played some piano, too. Well, he knew who I was, because everybody knows one another in Cheraw. And then his grandmother was Miss Bates. We went to the same church, and every Sunday morning I'd be there waitin' to help Miss Bates out with her cane. I was very close to that family.

"So this big guy came and got me: 'Hey, Sonny Matthews wants to see you.' 'Ahhh, yeah,' I said, 'okay.' I'm a little cocky—and here I know only one key. Sonny sat at the piano and said, 'Well, whatta ya wanna play?' I said, 'What d'you know?' He called 'Nagasaki'—but I only know the B flat key, and he calls it in C. Man, I couldn't find one note. He said, 'Something must be wrong.' I was cryin' an' everything, and I thought, 'How'm I ever gonna pick myself up and be a musician?'"

"So I learned how to read. My father had a whole band in the house, almost. He had a piano, a bass violin—only had one string, but then we only played in B flat anyway. I taught myself all the chords and voicings and inversions on that piano, by myself. No teachers.





The Dizzy bell  
points at a 45°  
angle: "The  
sound is prettier  
when it's less  
direct."

We didn't have no books. All the schools were segregated. I learned how to read and started playin' at home. Later, I taught all the piano players how to play the comp—the accompaniment—in our music. But I never tried to really play the piano, I wanted to play the trumpet. I'd heard Roy Eldridge on the radio—on somebody *else's* radio. I was playing a little bit by that time, and I didn't know Louis Armstrong. Roy Eldridge, he was my man—I tried to copy his whole thing.

"The trombone player where I went to school in Cheraw, Bill MacNeil, reminded me of J.C. Higginbotham, real rough, you know, growling cat. He got caught peekin' in the white homes around there." There's a short pause, and Dizzy's voice trails off, grows distant. "They killed him. Bill MacNeil...Bill MacNeil...he must have been about 18 years old then or something, you know."

It's a poignant moment. Gillespie's music has always been a freedom song, pointing to an imagined future of incredible beauty, transcending the ignorance of cracker conventions, even as it signaled black people to get out of the way, too, something new is coming through. Transforming the bluesiness and locomotion of swing-era dances into a deep, dignified modern concert music, it's full of joys and dangers. In Dizzy's hands it's been less a stage for protest than for affirmation. But if he's too proud to wear the scars of Dixie on his sleeve, the memories linger, whispering of how far we've come, how far we have to go.

"I was back in Cheraw for a Dizzy Gillespie Day, and the mayor invited me to a cocktail party in his house," he recalls. "So I thought I'd get a haircut. I went into a barber shop in town, and the guy told me, 'We don't cut colored hair.' Ain't that a bitch? And I'm definitely the most well-known person ever to come out of *Cheraw*. I told the mayor that, and he was shocked: 'He can't do that.' Mmmmm.

"Racism? I grew up with it. I remember it stopped me from playin' with a little boy named John Burrell, he was my little pal then, and his mother and father said, 'Now, look, you can't play with that boy no more.' Then there was a white boy, Kenny McManus. His family had two swimmin' pools: a white one and a black one. It's where I used to swim and dive when I was little, might have been 10, 11. I used to dive for money, off a high buildin' up there, coulda broke my neck. But I was a daredevil. I've been a daredevil all my life, really. They'd say I was 'bad,' you know, but they called me by my name. I'd always get into trouble, fightin' every day in school.

"Damn, when I think how close I came to being hitched up behind a plow, man. I finally got out of Cheraw when my mother moved to Philadelphia my last year in school, and soon as summertime came, I hitched a ride up. And I stayed till I moved to New York in '37. The first week there, got a job for eight dollars a week. Yeah, big money. I don't know how many clothes I bought off that, all Parisian tailored stuff, on time. I'd pay a dollar-and-a-half a week."

That era also provided Gillespie with the best possible training grounds for a young player—the big bands. Within those juggernauts he learned the craft of his horn, how to play lead and in a section, and was tested every night by his fellow trumpet players in countless styles. A few years later Teddy Hill, in whose band Diz first traveled to Paris, began booking a Harlem club called Minton's, which became the crucible for a fiery new musical language known as bebop. Dizzy, of course, was present at the creation.

"Oh, that was some time, boy. We'd go in there and then we'd go to the Uptown House after that, and you'd come out in the daylight. That band was Nick Fenton on bass, Kenny Clarke on drums, Monk was on piano, Joe Guy on trumpet and Kermit Scott on sax. Charlie Christian used to come all the time. He left his amplifier down there when he died. Old guys didn't come down too much, except Roy, he could make it. Me, Charlie Shavers and 'Bama—Carl Wooley—all three of us would jump on Roy, gang up on him," he laughs at the memory. "Of course, Roy'd come through the door hitting high C after high C from the first note, an' he was ready to take on *all comers*. He was the most competitive man you ever met, ooohweeeee!

"Monk was the most individual player who came through. Monk with the minor-sixth with the sixth in the bass: He taught us that chord. We used to change stuff to keep guys who couldn't play off the bandstand. In the daytime I'd call Monk and say, 'Hey, listen to this.' I learned 'How High the Moon' from Nat Cole, who was playin' at Kelly's Stables. 'What's the name of that number, Nat? Play that for me again. Damn, them keys are movin'.' And I hurried to Minton's, showed that to Monk. We would make numbers up, but with standards, we'd change them around, put in new melodies and have a new tune. Like 'Groovin' High' came out of 'Whispering.'

"Somewhere in there I met Charlie Parker. He was with Jay



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World Radio History

McShann, I was with Cab. This was what, 1939, '40? Buddy Anderson took me to see him. We played at the Booker Washington Hotel. When I first heard Charlie Parker play, his style was basically there. He played *tunes inside of tunes*. And the chords were the correct ones, too. Man, he was cute, alright.

"Now you see, my training was a little more sophisticated than Charlie Parker's, harmonically. I showed him a lotta things on the piano. But Charlie Parker had the style of gettin' those notes *out!* And the way that he got from one note to another, the way that he

set 'em up—nobody'd ever done nothin' like that before.

"We were all tryin' to play like Charlie Parker. That's why you can't tell who's who on some of them early records, like that Metronome All-Star date with me'n Miles and Fats Navarro. Even I can't tell who's playing what. All the trumpet players of that time tried to play like him. But Charlie Parker was indescribable... 'You took advantage of my friend, you cur,'" he chuckles, recalling an incident where Bird confronted a red-neck who'd gone upside Dizzy's head with a

bottle. "Mmm, mmm...a spiritual man."

Though Diz and Bird were the priest and prophet of bebop, they went separate ways off the bandstand, and their differing lifestyles pulled them apart at times. "Because Charlie Parker used dope—they said—all the young musicians who wanted to follow Charlie Parker went that way: like Miles, Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, J.J. Johnson, Fats Navarro. They all felt that would help them—hah hah hah. I mean, we were brothers. But he was the one who was interested in that. He never offered me none. And I never saw him do it."

Diz wanders off upstairs to check in with Lorraine, clearly the anchor who helps him stay focused, who kept his other life together while Gillespie led his great big bands of the '40s and '50s and expanded on the Afro-Cuban and Latin innovations he introduced to modern jazz through his association with Mario Bauza and Chano Pozo. When he returns downstairs with a big case, I've started to unpack and set up his new stereo. The technology fascinates him, particularly the compact discs.

"How many of those you get in that little drawer, there?"

"One at a time seems to work best, Diz." He unpacks his case to appraise a new gold-plated trumpet from Martin, engraved with his name and otherwise busy with ornate detail. The Dizzy bell points up at a 45-degree angle. "Don't play no regular horn anymore," he explains. "The sound is prettier to my ear when it's less direct."

He takes out the mouthpiece and begins warming his lip with bends and shakes and long tones that sound like soulful duck calls. Now and then he pauses to pick up and admire the new horn, check out the action; then he returns to the mouthpiece. Finally he puts them together and runs through pedal tones and scales with the mute, finishing with several of his melodies on the open horn.

"Yeaaaaah," he says, fingering the valves, "when she gets broken in, a few weeks down the road, this is going to be a nice horn."

"Sounds like she blows real easy, Diz."

He fixes me with a stagey stare. "Sheeeeeeet. Ain't none of them blow easy," he laughs, and starts in again with more purpose. At times he stops and yawns, then jumps back in; got to stay on that horn. Maybe I'm beginning to wear too, with this "tell me all about 1941" line, and here we are in 1991. I pack up so that he can get on and rest.

It's dark as he backs out of the driveway.

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"Maybe next time I'll get to say hello to Lorraine," I suggest.

"Sure, man," Diz nods. "She really appreciated them flowers. What people don't understand about Lorraine, her being so strong and all, is that she's really very shy. I've always felt comfortable around people, but sometimes I'm too trusting. But Lorraine, man, no one can put anything over on her."

"Does she follow the Baha'i faith also?"

"Noooo," he says gravely. "She's a devoted Roman Catholic. She thinks Baha'i is some kind of weird religion out in the jungle. I just say to her, 'Now you take care of yours and I will take care of mine—'"

"—and I'll meet you at the finish line?"

"Yeah. She believes all of this about Jesus, how he brought somebody up from the dead, and he died and went to heaven and come back. I don't see no sense in making all that happen to make you live a full life. I don't exactly believe in heaven and hell. But I believe that there is a Being somewhere that can create miracles over here and in the outer realms. I'm a believer. I believe in God.

"I was raised Methodist, but I never followed any one religion. I read some of the Koran, like I read the Bible and other books. The Baha'i religion came out of Islam—all religions are similar, but these two are closer together. It originates with this very religious Muslim in Persia during the last part of the past century. He started preaching that now is the time for a new message from God. Well, you know how the Muslims felt about that, because they think God's not going to talk to mankind no more after the Koran. They think that's the last message we're going to get. But I don't know why God would stop now. If God was that intelligent, how could he give you everything he'd want you to know in that little time?"

How indeed? But then, among God's more sublime miracles, John Birks Gillespie must rank up there with sunsets and tax refunds. For Dizzy is all about music and spirit. Simple as that, and if Charlie Parker came down with the word, Dizzy made it into flesh, gave it substance and, for 50 years on, has been performing and teaching it to succeeding generations of jazz musicians. His innovations remain the cornerstone of almost everything they play.

Dimly through these reflections, it occurs that we've been circling these streets for several minutes. "Yeah," Diz confirms absent-mindedly, "I don't do much driving at night. Can't hardly read them street signs."

He tries another route but ends up in the same place. Diz makes a U-turn and doubles back around, cruising past an enormous California-style house, enclosed by high stucco walls.

"You know who's supposed to have bought that house and be movin' in? The Boss."

"Bruce...?"

"Yeaahhhhh. You think that's something, Eddie Murphy's got him like a \$7,000,000 estate up around here that's something else. Oooooweeee!"

Dizzy stops to inspect a street sign and

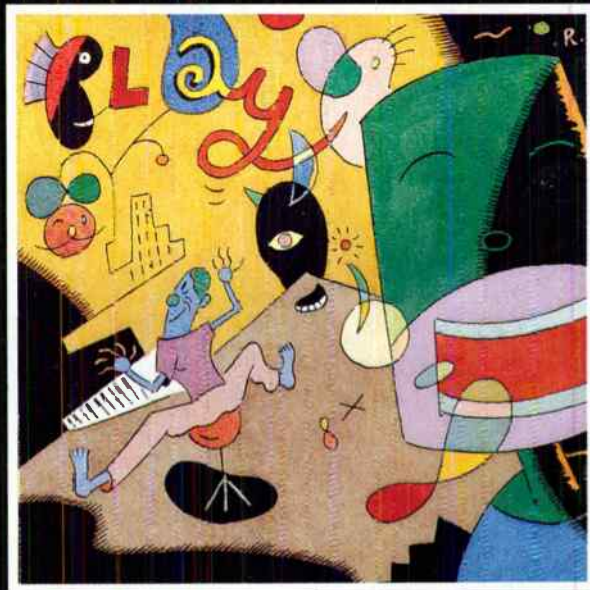
regain his bearings. He clucks his tongue and shakes his head as he makes another attempt to reach Palisade Avenue. At the next corner there's a middle-aged couple out on the street, unpacking their car from a shopping trip. Diz rolls down his window. "Excuse me," he says, beckoning, and there's a giddy glint of recognition in their eyes.

"Answer me this. How can you be driving around only a block from where you live and be so totally lost?"

They double over with laughter. They're still laughing as he drives off. 

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**THE VIEW**

**FROM**

**THE EDGE**

**LIVING IN U2: FROM  
BOY TO ACHTUNG BABY  
BY BILL FLANAGAN**





# H

HERE'S HOW YOU GET IN. YOU RING A BUZZER IN A BLACK DOOR IN A STONE WALL, CLIMB AN indoor fire escape, pass through a security door and desk, go through swinging doors and proceed down a very long corridor. As you walk down the hall the music gets louder and louder. Sort of like "Get Smart." Then you turn a corner, open another door, and there's U2 blasting through "The Fly." Bono's listening to the band, swaying in place at the soundboard and making suggestions to engineer Joe O'Herhhy. Larry Mullen and Adam Clayton are creating a huge, funky bottom. The Edge is stretching out, filling in all the sonic colors of the album version of the song while singing the high counter-vocal that Bono overdubbed on the record. "We've been trying to work out how to get all the *Achtung Baby* sounds live," Bono explains when the song finishes. "Basically, we can do it if Edge plays something different with every one of his appendages."

Why not just add another musician for the live shows? "We seriously did consider it this time," Edge says. "I can't say I have any major reservations against it, other than an almost *sentimental* attachment to the concept of the four-piece."

U2's American tour begins on March first. They will stay out most of the year. At this point—January 14th—Bono

reckons they are one week behind schedule with one week left to go here in Dublin before they pack up all the gear and move to the States. Bono says that the material they have worked on has been so good that he's not worried about running late. Edge is. U2's guitarist, songwriter, keyboard player and first-among-equals says that he now understands how much can go wrong on a tour this big. "In the past," he smiles, "I didn't know. I thought it was easy."

The band pick up their instruments again and begin "Mysterious Ways." Over the opening groove Bono chants, "Who loves you? Who loves you? Who loves you?" (Listening to a cassette of it later he'll laugh and call it "The Kojak Version.") Edge establishes a thick post-wah-wah guitar groove that suggests what might have happened if the Isley Brothers had joined the Manchester rave scene. The news is not that U2 have found their way into new territory, the news is that they have conquered it. The band who made "I Will Follow" and *Boy* in their teens and became one of the most influential acts in the world in their 20s have hit 30 as experienced musicians who can take an abstract idea and turn it into something solid and strong. They are still young men, but they've come a very long way.

At 7:30 rehearsal breaks up and Edge, Bono and Adam head to a nearby pub. Edge has to leave Ireland before dawn so he can fly to New York to induct the Yardbirds—including Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck—into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Edge appreciates both the honor and the irony of a guitarist who has done more than anyone to dismantle the old myth of the *guitar hero* inducting the three men most responsible for creating it. At the pub what started out as one drink turns into many and Tuesday has given way to Wednesday by the time Edge goes home to catch a couple of hours' sleep. When the sun comes up he is on a plane from Ireland to England, where he is met by a car and driven to another air terminal to wait for a plane to New York. At midnight Eastern time (five a.m. back in Dublin) he is on a stage at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, playing "All Along the Watchtower" and other guitar blow-outs with an all-star band that includes—lined up together—Carlos Santana, Johnny Cash, John Fogerty, Jimmy Page, Neil Young and Keith Richards. Watching all these legendary guitarists interact you realize, with some surprise and some satisfaction, that Edge belongs among them. The sound he heard in his head has now been heard around the world, has been absorbed into rock 'n' roll's vocabulary, and will continue to reverberate when he's as old and legendary as the company he's keeping tonight.

This interview, the first any member of U2 has granted since before *Achtung Baby* was begun, was started in Dublin, continued in London, and finished in New York on that longest day. When it was all over, Edge was still going strong.

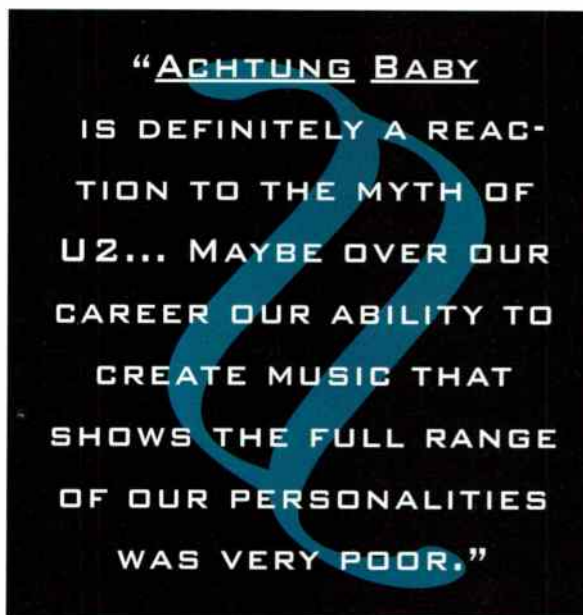
**MUSICIAN:** *You're inducting Beck, Clapton and Page into the Hall of Fame. All of you worked in power trios—one guitar, bass and drums. But the Jeff Beck Group, Cream, and Led Zeppelin grew out of the Hendrix model—a guitar hero blasting hot solos while the bassist and drummer played support. U2 seems to have more in common with the Who model—where all three pieces are equal and the guitar is the glue.*

**EDGE:** I've always had a slight problem with the whole idea of guitar heroes and gunslinger guitar players. I was never really attracted to that. I think Townshend is different from the other players that you mentioned because he's primarily a songwriter. He understands the importance of guitar playing within the discipline of songwriting, as opposed to guitar playing that just justifies itself. I can appreciate, I suppose, guitar players who just get up there and improvise over bass and drums, but it's not something that interests me that much.

**MUSICIAN:** *How did your style develop?*

**EDGE:** I suppose it really starts with picking up the electric guitar,

age 15, and playing a lot of cover versions. Knowing a few Rory Gallagher licks or whatever. Then suddenly you're in this band and there's all this fantastic music coming at you that challenges everything that you believed about what the electric guitar was for. Suddenly the question is, "What are you saying with it?" Not "Can you play this lick?" or "What's your speed like?" It's, "What are you saying with your instrument? What



is being communicated in this song?" Suddenly guitars were not things to be waved in front of the audience but now were something you used to *reach out* to the crowd. If you were in the fourth row of the Jam concert at the Top Hat Ballroom in Dunleary in 1980, when Paul Weller hit that Rickenbacker 12-string it *meant* something and it said something that everyone in that building knew. There were other bands, other guitar players. They all sounded different, but they all had that thing in common which was that there was something behind what they did which was communicating. I had to totally re-examine the way I played. It was such a challenging thing to hold up your style against this and say, Well, what are you saying? What is this song about? What does that note mean? Why *that* note? So much of this bad white blues barroom stuff that was around at the time was just guitar players running up and down the fretboard. It was just a kind of big wank. There was nothing to it, it was gymnastics. I started trying to find out what this thing around my neck could do in the context of this band. Songs were coming through and "Well, that sort of works" and integrating the echo box, which was a means of further coloring the sound, controlling the tone of the guitar. I was not going for purity, I was going for the opposite. I was trying to fuck up the sound as much as possible, go for something that was definitely messed with, definitely tampered with, had a character that was not just the regular guitar sound.

Then I suppose I started to see a style coming through. I started to see how notes actually *do* mean something. They have power. I think of notes as being expensive. You don't just throw them around. I find the ones that do the best job and that's what I use. I





U2 CONSIDERED CALLING THE NEW ALBUM "ADAM," IN HONOR OF THE FIRST MAN AND THEIR BASSIST.

suppose I'm a minimalist instinctively. I don't like to be inefficient if I can get away with it. Like on the end of "With or Without You." My instinct was to go with something very simple. Everyone else said, "Nah, you can't do that." I won the argument and I still think it's sort of brave, because the end of "With or Without You" could have been so much bigger, so much more of a climax. But there's this power to it which I think is even more potent because it's held back.

**MUSICIAN:** *Ten or twelve years into this, you can look out at a lot of guitarists you're influenced.*

**EDGE:** Yeah. Unfortunately when something is distilled down to a simple style, those who copy the style basically are copying something very flat. You take what I do, bring it down to a little short formula and try and apply it in another context, another guitar player, another song—it's going to sound terrible. I think that's probably what's happened to Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. So many of their strong ideas have been taken up by other guitar players in other bands and the result is some pretty awful music. Heavy metal for one.

**MUSICIAN:** *The sound of U2's first album, *Boy*, was really defined by your use of guitar echo. How did that develop?*

**EDGE:** We had a song we were working on called "A Day Without Me" and Bono kept saying, "I hear this echo thing, like the chord repeating." He had this thing in his head so I said, I'd better get an echo unit for this single. I got one down to rehearsal and played around with it with limited success. I didn't really like it. I thought it muddled up the sound. Then I bought my own unit, a Memory Man Deluxe made by Electro-Harmonix. I mean, Electro-Harmonix

made the cheapest and trashiest guitar things, but they always had great personality. This Memory Man had this certain sound and I really loved it. I just played with it for weeks and weeks, integrating it into some of the songs we'd already written. Out of using it, a whole other set of songs started to come out. It gave me a whole other set of colors to use. It also helped to fill out the sound.

**MUSICIAN:** *What's a song written out of playing with the echo?*

**EDGE:** The song "Fire" came out of a soundcheck where we were just playing around and got this rhythm going and everyone joined in and wrote the song around the backbeat and the guitar. But it seemed to me that the echo could become too much of a gimmick if it ended up being used in that way. I realized that was something to be avoided. There are a couple of tricks you can do with a guitar and echo that sound impressive, but I could see they were blind alleys. It would end up being gimmicky tricks and nothing more.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was there any moment when Bono said, "Oh no, I've created a monster! Turn that echo off!"?*

**EDGE:** When the *War* album was coming together we all—but particularly Bono—felt that we should try to get away from that echoey thing. It was a very conscious attempt at doing something more abrasive, less ethereal, more hard-edged. I've always left it and gone back to it. I don't like to use effects in an obvious way. I like to use them so that you're just hearing a single sound. You get sick of the same textures. Variety becomes important.

**MUSICIAN:** *How do you feel about the second album, *October*?*

**EDGE:** I think it suffered as an album because of the lack of time we had to prepare it, but it actually is a pretty good record. There's

some real spontaneity, some real freshness, because we didn't have time to have it any other way. I like "Stranger in a Strange Land," "Tomorrow." "October" was a song that could have gone places, but we didn't have time to do any more with it so we said, "Well, let's just put it out as it is."

*October* is a very European record because just prior to writing those songs and recording the album we spent all our time touring around Europe. We'd never been to Germany, Holland, Belgium, France. We would drive through these bleak German landscapes in winter. Those tones and colors definitely came through in the songs that we wrote.

It was a real eye-opener. *Boy* was written and recorded in the context of Dublin. Four guys get together, decide to be a band, write some songs because they get inspired by this huge new sort of music happening across the water. There's all these albums filtering back: the Jam, Patti Smith's *Horses* was a very big album for us, Television, Richard Hell and the Voidoids. It was an incredibly exciting time. But here we are in Dublin, trying to make sense of the stuff we're hearing from out there, trying to make sense of our own life in the

context of Dublin. Then we end up in the middle of Europe in a transit van, driving down the corridor between East and West Germany, going to Berlin. It just gave us a totally different perspective. In a weird way it was a more Irish perspective, because suddenly our Irishness became more tangible to us, much more obvious, maybe even more important.

*October* was a struggle from beginning to end. It was an incredibly hard record for us to make because we had major problems with time. And I had been through this thing of really not knowing if I should be in the band or not. It was really difficult to pull all the things together and still maintain the focus to actually finish a record in the time that we had. You could hear the desperation and confusion in some of the lyrics. "Gloria" is really a lyric about not being able to express what's going on, not being able to put it down, not knowing where we are. Having thrown ourselves into this thing we were trying to make some sense of it. "Why are we in this?" It was a very difficult time.

**MUSICIAN:** *You, Larry and Bono had doubts about whether it was okay for you as Christians to devote your lives to a rock band.*

**EDGE:** It was reconciling two things that seemed for us at that moment to be mutually exclusive. We never did resolve the contradictions. That's the truth. And probably never will. There's even more contradictions now.

**MUSICIAN:** *I remember being at the Greenbelt festival outside London in the early '80s, and some of the musicians said that U2 had told them they were wrong to publicly label themselves as "Christian bands," that by doing that they limited their potential audience. Did*

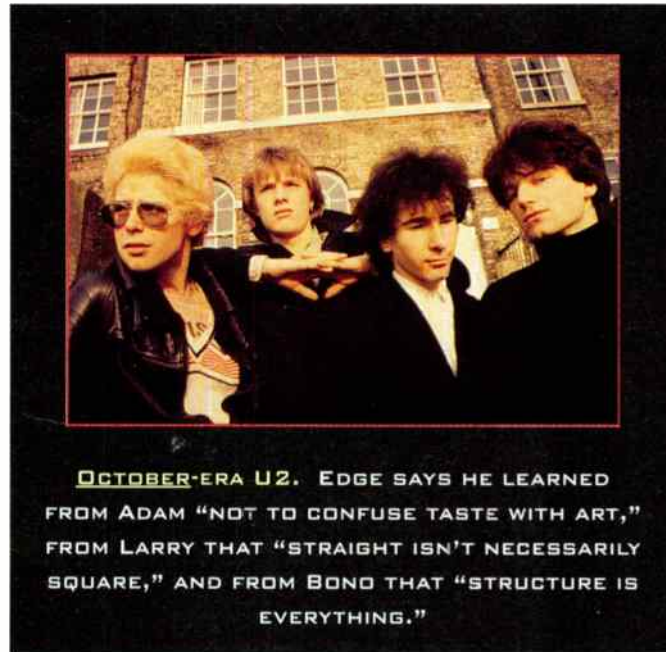
*you make a decision, around the time of October, to go public with your Christianity?*

**EDGE:** No, I didn't change my attitude at all. I was still very nervous about the Christian label. I have no trouble with Christ, but I have trouble with a lot of Christians. That was the problem. We wanted to give ourselves the chance to be viewed without that thing hanging over us. I don't think we're worried about it now. Also, at that stage we were going through our most out-there phase, spiritually. It was incredibly intense. We were just so involved with it. It was a time in

our lives where we really concentrated on it more than on almost anything. Except Adam, who just wasn't interested.

**MUSICIAN:** *A friend of mine had just been forced out of a big band when I brought October home. He looked at the cover photo, pointed to Adam and said, "That guy's going to get sacked, look at how the other three are forming a circle and he's outside it."*

**EDGE:** Well, he was wrong but he was also right. We never considered firing Adam. That would have been completely ridiculous. But I think Adam did feel kind of isolated, marginalized during that period. It wasn't our intention to do that, but I suppose it is in-



evitable he felt a little like the odd guy.

**MUSICIAN:** *Even after Bono and Larry decided it was okay to go on with U2, didn't you quit the band for a couple of weeks?*

**EDGE:** I didn't actually leave the band, but there was a two-week period where I put everything on hold and I said, "Look, I can't continue in my conscience in this band at the moment. So hold everything. I want to just go away and think about this. I just need a couple of weeks to reassess where I'm headed here and whether I can really commit to this band or whether at this point I just have to back out." Because we were getting a lot of people in our ear saying, "This is impossible, you guys are Christians, you can't be in a band. It's a contradiction and you have to go one way or the other." They said a lot of worse things than that as well. So I just wanted to find out. I was just sort of sick of people not really knowing and *me* not knowing quite whether this was right for me. So I took two weeks. Within a day or two I just knew that all this stuff was bullshit. We were the band. Okay, it's a contradiction for some, but it's a contradiction that I'm able to live with. I just decided that I was going to live with it. I wasn't going to try to explain it because I can't. So I went forward from that point on, and it was great because it kind of got rid of all that shit. "That's gone. Right. This band is going forward, there is no doubt in anyone's mind." So we carried on.

I remember walking down the beach and breaking the news to Bono. "Listen, mate, I can't go on unless I really find out about this." He kind of looked at me and I thought he was really going to freak out, but he actually just said, "Okay, fine. If you're not up for it, that's it. We're going to break up the band. There's no point going on." I



think he felt exactly like I did, just wanted to know which way to go. Then once the decision was made that would be it, there would be no more doubt, no more second-guessing. There would be no more taking other people's advice. This was our chosen path.

**MUSICIAN:** *You were 20 then. You're 30 now. Do you feel that the old pieties no longer work as well for you?*

**EDGE:** I suppose we've changed our attitudes to a lot since then. The central faith and spirit of the band is the same. But I just have less and less time for *legalism* now. I just see that you live a life of faith. It's nothing to do necessarily with what clothes you wear or whether you drink or smoke or who you're seeing or not seeing.

**MUSICIAN:** *Most of your albums capture a moment. The Unforgettable Fire is the only one that stands completely outside of time.*

**EDGE:** It's interesting that you say that. We've had discussions about that very point. There is a quality to great work which is timeless. You've got to balance being relevant and commenting on what's happening today with trying to attain that timelessness. *Unforgettable Fire* is probably less fixed to any time, more a work that will mean the same in 10 years as it meant when it was released.

On *Unforgettable Fire* probably more than our other records, the music has such a strong voice that Bono's vocals are almost like another musical element. We got criticized that it was a sort of cop-out, that we weren't writing songs anymore, that this was ill-disciplined work. I could see where the reviews were coming from, based on probably a weekend listening to it, but I knew there was far more to it than just that. It was not U2 going arty, there was actually something there that was really valuable and enduring. I still listen to that record.

**MUSICIAN:** *With that album all the sonic elements of U2 became as expanded as the guitar had always been. For example, different layers of percussion moved around the center. How much of that had to do with Daniel Lanois coming in as co-producer?*

**EDGE:** For the first time, I think, on *The Unforgettable Fire* Larry was working with a producer who was thinking like a drummer. I think that really helped. He enjoyed the relationship a lot. I've seen Danny develop over three records, very definitely. What he's always had is a great musical and rhythmic understanding. Just a sensitivity to drums and percussion. He plays pretty good percussion himself. That style still shows on the things that Danny is doing now. I think it's great, but he's going to have to be careful because it could become just a cliché for him.

**MUSICIAN:** *I'm sure people call him and ask for that spooky feeling he got with Robbie Robertson and Bob Dylan and the Neville's.*

**EDGE:** In *Achtung Baby* he knew he was not going back to the swamp. He knew this was going to be something different. I don't

think he fully appreciated how different it was going to be and how difficult it was going to be for him to adjust. There were a couple of weeks where it was, "Does Danny get this?"

**MUSICIAN:** *What? Did he want to put a mandolin on "Zoo Station"?*

**EDGE:** There were a few moments where we were a little unsure. But Brian [Eno] came in, and Danny and Brian work off each other very well, because Brian is so clear, so opinionated and so dead-ahead. Danny is, by comparison, instinctive. He feeds off Brian's theoretical side, but he's got all this music coming out of every pore. So

Danny was kind of tuning in on what Brian was feeling and thinking, based on what we were saying and playing. Danny really started to get it then, and that was good.

When we started the album in Berlin there were some pretty difficult moments. It really tested everyone very severely. To get over that hump and get on with that record and finish it was not easy. At the end of the final show of 1989 at the Point in Dublin, on the turn of the decade, Bono kind of made a speech. He said we were going away and we had to think it all up again. A lot of people read into that that we were going to break up. Well,

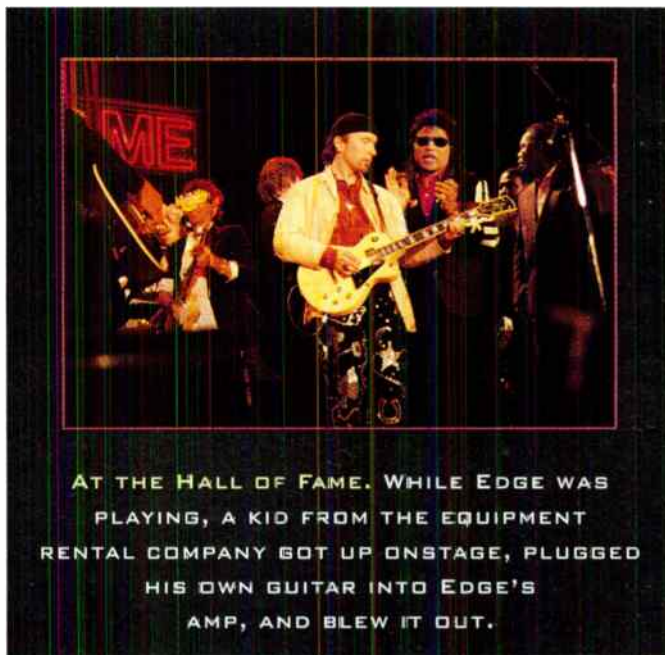
when we got to Berlin it was almost like, maybe that was prophetic, because it was so *hard*. It was so heavy. It seemed for a few seconds like, "Well, maybe this is what we should do, maybe we really have to break up and then see what happens." We rode out that storm and I think it's a great record. I'm delighted with it. Actually I think U2 has got a lot of great records left. I think we're good for another 10 years at least. I think we're getting better on almost every level, and the commitment is still there.

**MUSICIAN:** *What's the kind of tension you had to overcome?*

**EDGE:** It was just a real testing of the way we write our songs, the creative system within the group. When you've been doing this for as long as we have, I suppose in the back of your mind everyone thinks that maybe one day we're going to write together and we just won't have anything to say. Literally there will be nothing more to add. You all hope that everyone knows when that time has come and don't go on and do some completely awful album that everyone recognizes to be a disaster. For a week or two at the beginning in Berlin it was so hard to get things happening and get inspired and get working on the same wavelength. It was very frustrating and difficult. We were looking at each other—and sort of sensed other people were looking at us—and saying, "What the fuck is going on?" And it didn't help that Danny didn't really get it. He was a little unsure about the direction.

To put it in a word, the *magic* just wasn't there. Whether it was the playing, the material, the arrangements, the direction, the studio, the flute sound—who knows why? It just wasn't happening.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was there a moment when you felt it was back?*



AT THE HALL OF FAME. WHILE EDGE WAS PLAYING, A KID FROM THE EQUIPMENT RENTAL COMPANY GOT UP ONSTAGE, PLUGGED HIS OWN GUITAR INTO EDGE'S AMP, AND BLEW IT OUT.

**EDGE:** Yeah. I think when “One” came out. We had a song called “Ultraviolet,” kind of the precursor to “Ultraviolet (Light My Way).” It wasn’t going anywhere; it needed extra sections, and I went to the piano and started working on chords.

This was the culmination of three days’ work. I came back into the control room and I played two suggestions to the guys on an acoustic guitar. Bono or Danny said, “Why don’t you put the two of them together, what would that be like?” So I went out to the piano and put the two together and suddenly Bono just kind of got hit by something and grabbed the microphone and started singing to these changes. Adam and Larry came along and we played those chords for about 10 minutes. Then we listened back and had the basis of “One.” There was a tangible feeling in the room: Suddenly it had gelled. It had clicked and everyone knew it. It’s funny, I think of all the songs on the album that came the easiest. We went in the next morning and cut three or four takes and chose the best one and that’s what went on the album. For me anyway, that was the moment when I went, “Phew!” [laughs] “The roof for the house in the west of Ireland is looking good! I’ll be able to change the car this year!”

An Irish journalist wrote a review of *Achtung Baby* and said, “This is a great album, and what makes it so fascinating is that it’s U2 obviously hell-bent on destroying the myths of U2 and themselves in the process. They will obviously not be around very long, but if that means more great music like this I don’t mind.” It’s not really true—that’s a very melodramatic description of the situation, but one aspect of it is true: *Achtung Baby* is definitely a reaction to the myth of U2. We really never had any control over that myth. You could say we helped it along a bit, but the actual myth itself is a creation of the media and people’s imagination. Like all myths. There is very little resemblance to the actual personalities of the band or the intentions of the band, and *Achtung Baby* balances things out a bit.

**MUSICIAN:** *But the myth has a basis in the personalities. For example, the cartoon image of Bono, love it or loathe it, may be a caricature—but like all caricatures it bears some exaggerated resemblance to the real person.*

**EDGE:** It’s a caricature of one facet of his character. It’s Bono as seen through the songs. But the character of Bono is totally different to that. Maybe over our career our ability to create music that shows the full range of the personalities of Bono and the other members of the band was very poor. But that’s the truth—that guy is totally different to the way most people think of him. He’s far funnier, takes himself far less seriously than most people think. He’s wild, you know, he’s not reserved, none of the clichés that spring to mind when you think of people’s perception of him.

This is not just a problem for Bono, this is a problem for the whole band. Everyone has this sort of caricature impression of what we are like. We just decided that we were going to find out how we could allow the other aspects of ourselves to come through. We’re exploring whole new avenues of music and it’s great fun. I mean, we can *do* it as well, that’s what’s brilliant about it. That’s the good news for us. It’s actually something we can do. I suppose we just

weren’t that interested early on.

**MUSICIAN:** *Is it possible that because U2 were serious and focused at a very young age, you are now going back and going through at 30 what most young men go through at 20?*

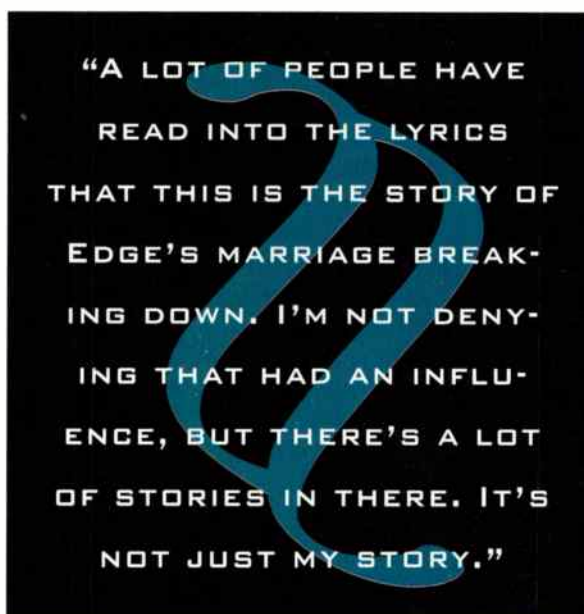
**EDGE:** I think there’s a bit of that, yeah. This is actually quite an important point. Throughout our career we’ve been struggling and fighting for survival: to get out of Ireland in the first place, to get a deal, to just make it happen. And I think we’ve finally got to a stage where we realized we could relax a bit. It’s still not easy, but it doesn’t have to be quite so much do-or-die.

**MUSICIAN:** *You guys are very careful about who you give interviews to, how Anton Corbijn photographs you, how you’re presented to the public. I’m not saying you’ve crossed it, but there’s a fine line between controlling quality and controlling an image and projecting a false image.*

**EDGE:** I’m all for propaganda. [laughter] It is a fine line. And you’re going to get it wrong sometimes. A lot of bands, though, don’t even think that’s important or relevant. I think we’re aware that maybe that is part of why we ended up being the caricature. A little bit.

*Rattle and Hum*, the movie, was an example of that. We were criti-

cized by some people for not revealing more. We actually made quite a conscious decision not to reveal more because we didn’t feel comfortable with it. It is a balance because you have to give up so much more when you reveal all. It’s like you no longer have a private life. But at the same time, if you don’t reveal all, people don’t really get the full picture. So it’s a compromise. With *Rattle and Hum* we just didn’t want to reveal our-



selves. My attitude was, “What? Do you think we’re crazy? Cameras in the dressing room? What do you think we are—STOOPID?”

I love what we do because we control it. Because we’ve set it up where we’re comfortable with it. This is the bottom line: That’s why we *could* do it. If it was done in a way where our private lives were an open book, I don’t think I could be in the band. I didn’t get into the band to become a celebrity. I got into the band because I wanted to play music and write songs and tour and do all that stuff. Some people might object to that, but I say, “Well, fuck you.” [laughs] It’s my life and this is the way it works for me.

**MUSICIAN:** *As U2 gears up to go out on tour again, is the sheer size of the operation intimidating?*

**EDGE:** Yeah, a bit. But what’s actually more intimidating is the expectations. I don’t really worry about *mistakes*. I’ve never had a problem with mistakes. There’s a certain thing that happens to us onstage, a certain spark, a certain electricity. It’s impossible to describe but it’s sort of like, that *is* the show, you know? That’s what the band’s always had. “Chemistry” only describes one aspect of it.





We haven't played for a while and we're assuming that spirit, that spark, will still be there. I don't know whether it will. I remember shows when it *wasn't* there. It scared the shit out of me. It was like, "Oh...this thing can go away!" That was an eye-opener. I suppose if I have any dark fears it's that that thing will have gone.

**MUSICIAN:** You do tap into something powerful onstage. What goes through your head when you're playing "Bullet the Blue Sky"?

**EDGE:** Whoa. "Hope I don't fuck up!" It's obviously an incredibly dark song. We used to call that part of the set "The Heart of Darkness." From "Bullet" to "Exit" was all very, very intense. Sometimes Bono would come offstage in the break and would not have left character. The darkness would still be there with him. Sometimes it was hard for him to shake it off and get into playing the next songs. That darkness has a certain kind of adrenalin.

**MUSICIAN:** "Exit" and "Bullet the Blue Sky" are both from *The Joshua Tree*. What was the band trying to capture on that album?

**EDGE:** I think that record was a great steppingstone for Bono as a lyricist. He was going for something. Points of reference were the

New Journalism, *The Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer, Raymond Carver, the bleak American desert landscape as a metaphor. There's a definite cinematic location, a landscape of words and images and themes that made up *The Joshua Tree*. It's a subtle balance, a blend of the songs and lyrics.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you think that Bono was talking to you in some of the Achtung Baby lyrics?

**EDGE:** I think that what was going on in my life had an influence on Bono and therefore on the lyrics to some of the songs. That's for sure. A lot of people have read into the lyrics that it's the story of Edge's marriage breaking down. I'm not denying that that has had an influence, but I think there's a lot of stories in there and it's not just my story.

**MUSICIAN:** Mat Snow wrote that "Until the End of the World" is sung in the voice of Judas addressing Jesus. Is that true?

**EDGE:** Yeah. There's an Irish poet named Brendan Kennelly who's written a book of poems about Judas. One of the lines is, "If you want to serve the age, betray it." That really set my head reel-

ing. He's also fascinated with the whole moral concept of "Where would we be without Judas?" I do think there is some truth that in highlighting what *is* rather than what we would ideally like to be, you're betraying a sort of unwritten rule, but you're also serving.

**MUSICIAN:** *The man accused of murdering the actress Rebecca Schaeffer has apparently claimed that he was inspired to do it by listening to "Exit." When I heard that I thought of Bono's remark on Rattle and Hum that Charles Manson had stolen "Helter Skelter"*

*from the Beatles. Now a killer's trying to steal "Exit" from U2.*

**EDGE:** Well, what do you want me to say? I think it is very heavy. It gets back to censorship, whether self-censorship or government censorship. Should any artist hold back from putting out something because he's afraid of what somebody else might do as a result of his work? I would hate to see censorship come in, whether from the government or, from my point of view, personal.


**MUSICIAN:** *Bono wrote the lyrics to "The Fly" as a series of truisms.*

**EDGE:** Yeah, it is, I suppose. It's typical Bono in that his greatest gift is his imagination, but it's also sometimes his worst enemy in that to tie himself to one idea is like torture for him. He'd sooner have 10 ideas in a song. I suppose the list of truisms in "The Fly" is pretty close to following the device from beginning to end. But even there, he brings in a character.

**MUSICIAN:** *What saves that song from being just a clever exercise is that the things he says are all very powerful.*

**EDGE:** Yeah. What's amazing is that he gets so many ideas into a song and somehow makes them work.

**MUSICIAN:** *It would have been easy to end Achtung Baby with "Tryin' to Throw Your Arms Around the World." The sun comes up and the character goes home and the night is over. Instead the album makes us follow the guy home and face the consequences.*

**EDGE:** Yeah, it's not a very comforting ending, is it? But that's okay, I think. I suppose that's what we've learned. Things aren't all okay out there. But that's the way it is. 

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An Strat Dubh

**T**HE PILE of guitars at the U2 rehearsal hall contained four mainstays: a white '73 Les Paul Custom, a '76 Rickenbacker 12-string, an '89 Fender Clapton Strat with Lace Sensor pickups and a '68 Strat with a Gotoh vibrato. Edge also has an SG doubleneck and a Washburn electro-acoustic with a Photon MIDI pickup, and assorted vintage guitars. His Bradshaw switching system controls a complex series of effects amplified by four Vox AC30s and two Randall combos: an AMS digital delay, two Yamaha SPX90s, two SPX1000s and a GP50, two t.c. electronics 2290s, an Eventide H3000, two Korg A3 processors, an Infinite Sustain box, the Photon MIDI converter and two Roland SDD-3000 delays; Edge's wireless is a Sony UHF WRR37. On the floor, there's a MOSFET preamp, SD-1, Turbo Overdrive and graphic EQ pedals, MXR compressors and some t.c. preamps and EQs. On the sidelines are a Cry-Baby wah, a DigiTech Whammy Pedal, some chrome slides and an E-Bow. Edge's tech Dallas Schoo strings the guitars with nickel-composite Rotosounds, .011s through .048s.



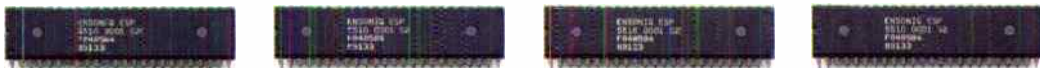
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# “How I discovered the secret to Perfect Pitch”

*A perfect ear for music means knowing how to listen.*

by David L. Burge

I t all started in ninth grade as a sort of teenage rivalry.

I was practicing the piano about five hours daily. Linda practiced far less. But somehow Linda always seemed to have an edge which made her the star performer of our school.

It was frustrating.

*What does she have that I don't? I'd wonder.*

Then one day I ran into Sheryl, Linda's best friend. She bragged on and on about Linda, adding fuel to my fire. “You could never be like Linda,” she taunted.

“Linda's got Perfect Pitch.”

“What's Perfect Pitch?” I asked.

Sheryl told me all about Linda's *uncanny* abilities: how she could name tones and chords—*just by ear*; how she could sing tones on pitch—from *sheer memory*; and how she could play songs after merely *hearing* them on the radio!

My heart sank. *Her fantastic ear is the key to her success* I thought. How could I ever hope to compete with her?

Then I doubted it all. How could she possibly know F# or Bb just by listening? An ear like that would give mastery of the entire musical language!

It bothered me. Did she *really* have Perfect Pitch? I finally got the nerve and asked her if the rumors were true.

“Yes,” Linda nodded to me aloofly.

Perfect Pitch was too good to believe. I rudely pressed, “Can I test you sometime?”

“OK,” she replied cheerfully.

## I couldn't wait to make her eat her words...

My plan was ingeniously simple:

I picked a moment when Linda least suspected. Then I boldly challenged her to

name tones for me—*by ear*.

I made sure she had not been playing any music. I made her stand so she could not see the piano keyboard. I made certain other classmates could not help her. Everything was just right so I could expose her claims as a ridiculous joke.

Nervously, I plotted my testing strategy. Linda seemed serene. With silent apprehension I selected a tone: F#.

(She'll never guess F#!) I had barely touched the key. “F#,” she said.

I was astonished.

I quickly played another tone. She didn't even stop to think. *Instantly* she announced the correct pitch. I played more and more tones here and there on the keyboard, and each time she knew the pitch—without effort. She was SO amazing—she could identify tones as easily as colors!

“Sing an Eb,” I demanded, determined to mess her up.

Quickly she sang the proper pitch. I made her sing more tones (trying hard to make them increasingly difficult), but still she sang every one perfectly on pitch.

I was totally boggled. “*How in the world do you do it?*” I blurted.

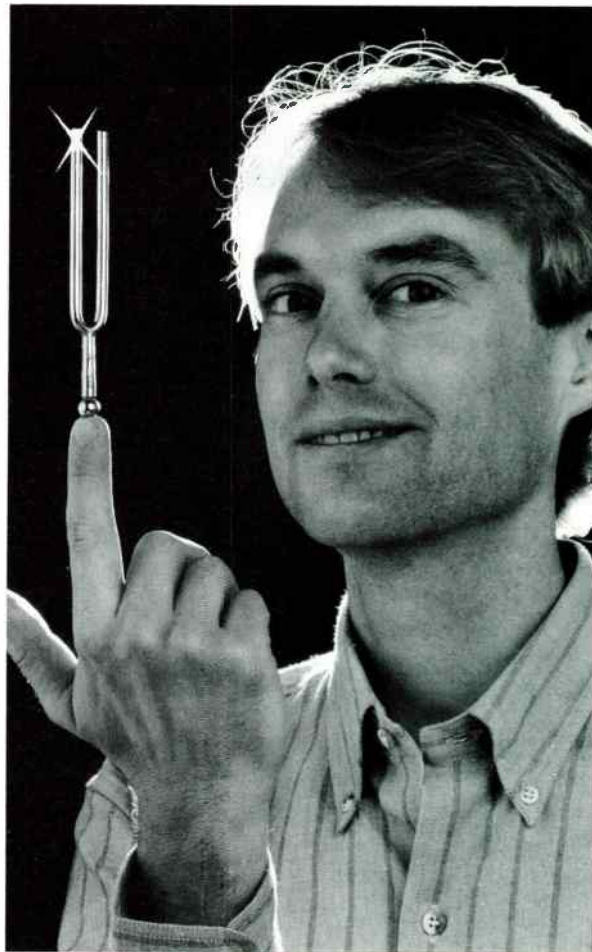
“I don't know,” she sighed. And to my dismay that was as much as I could get out of her!

The reality of Perfect Pitch hit me hard. My head was dizzy with disbelief, yet I now knew that Perfect Pitch is real.

## I couldn't figure it out...

“How does she do it?” I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why can't everyone identify tones by ear?

It dawned on me that most musicians can't tell the sound of C from C#, or the key of A major from F major—like artists who brush painting after painting without



knowing green from turquoise. It seemed odd and contradictory.

I found myself even more mystified than before. Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it myself. I would sweet-talk my brothers and sisters into playing tones for me so I could guess each pitch by ear. Most every attempt failed miserably.

I tried day after day to learn the tones. I tried playing them *over and over* in order to memorize them. I tried to feel the “highness” or “lowness” of each pitch.

But nothing worked. I just could not recognize the tones by ear. It was hopeless.



After weeks in vain, I finally gave up. Linda's gift was indeed extraordinary. But for me, it was out of reach.

## Then came the realization...

It was like a miracle. Once I had stopped *straining* my ear, I started to listen **NATURALLY**. Then the incredible secret to Perfect Pitch jumped right into my lap.

I began to notice faint "colors" within the tones. Not *visual* colors—but colors of *pitch*. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever "let go"—and just *listened*—to discover these subtle differences in the sounds.

Soon I could name tones by ear! It was simple. I could hear how F# sounds one way—while Bb has a different quality. It was as easy as seeing red and blue!

The realization struck me: **THIS IS PERFECT PITCH!** This is how Bach, Beethoven and Mozart could mentally envision music—and identify tones, chords, and keys at will—*by listening for these pitch colors*.

I became convinced that *anyone* could gain Perfect Pitch by learning how to unlock this simple secret of "color hearing."

When I told my friend Ann that *she* could have Perfect Pitch, she laughed. "You have to be born with Perfect Pitch," she asserted.

"You don't understand what Perfect Pitch is," I explained. "It's easy!"

I showed her how to listen. Timidly, she confessed that she could hear the colors too. Soon she also had Perfect Pitch. We became instant celebrities; everyone was amazed.

As I continued with piano, my Perfect Pitch allowed me to progress faster than I ever thought possible. (I would later *skip over* required college courses.) Perfect Pitch made *everything* easier—performing, composing, arranging, sight-reading, transposing, improvising—and it skyrocketed my enjoyment as well. Music is definitely a *hearing* art.

Oh yes, and as for Linda—well, time found us at the end of our senior year of high school, with my *final chance* to outdo her.

Our local university sponsored a music festival each spring. That year, I scored

an A+ in the most advanced performance category. Linda scored only an A.

Sweet victory was mine at last!

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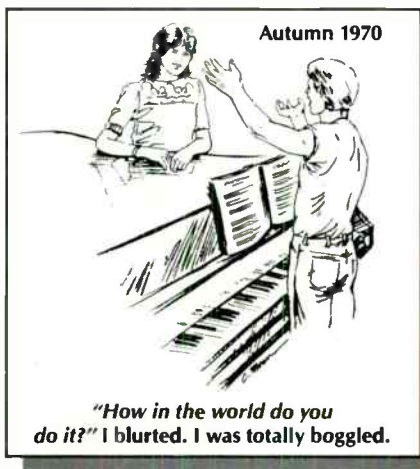
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# THE RULES OF THE GAME

by FRED GOODMAN



Looking down the *Billboard* pop charts, it's easy to get the idea that there are only four professional songwriters in America and that three of them are named Diane Warren. Though a small bunch of successful writers indeed dominates the current songwriting scene in much the same way that Carole King, Gerry Goffin, Ellie Greenwich and Jeff Barry did in the early '60s, it's not for lack of competition: There are probably more songwriters trying to make it today than ever before.

"I learned at a very early age that it was a matter of putting yourself in the line of fire and getting shot down a few thousand times," says Andrew Goldmark, whose broad catalog has been covered by Jeffrey Osborne, Alice Cooper, the Pointer Sisters and Michael Bolton. Indeed, if there were any way to skip a couple of grades at the Songwriters' School of Hard Knocks, Goldmark would have been an ideal candidate: His father invented the LP. Despite growing up on the inside of the music business and beginning his own career when he was 15, Goldmark says it took a long, long time to really learn how to survive as a songwriter.

"First, it took me four or five years to develop my craft beyond my own personal statement—what my ego felt the world was entitled to hear. Then I started getting deals as a staff writer for publishers, and I made an album for Warner Bros. But I was still sheltered because I didn't deal directly with A&R, managers and producers. It wasn't until I was 30 and had lost all my deals and was out on my own that I really got the meat-and-potatoes grasp of the business and how to do it. It's a matter of relentless pursuit."

The truth is, being a successful songwriter needs a good deal more business acumen than a recording artist does. Good looks and a flashy video are of absolutely no consequence when you're trying to get someone to give your song a shot. And while a well-connected manager or attorney can help, it

isn't a guaranteed trump card.

"A songwriter is not well served by a manager unless you're also a producer," says one veteran songwriter. "There's nothing for a manager to do except bug the publisher—and you have to create your own vibe as well as depend on your publisher."

Getting a publisher has become absolutely imperative—record companies, fearful of copyright suits, now reject all unpublished material out of hand. It's the ultimate Catch-22. "It's like trying to get into the Screen Actors Guild," says songwriter Frannie Golde, whose songs have been cut by Whitney Houston, Diana Ross, the Commodores and Heart. "You can't get a movie without a SAG card and you can't get a SAG card unless you've been in a movie."

Publishers aren't unsympathetic to the plight of the beginning songwriter, but any writer who manages to get a foot in the door at a publishing house is in for a shock if he's not already on top of his game.

"From the publishers' point of view, I can tell you that I have to prove my new songwriters," says Judy Stakee, director of creative services at Warner Chappell Publishing. "It's like having a new product you're trying to sell: How do you place a new product in a market where there are already proven prod-

*"Networking is the key. You run into someone who says, 'Oh, one of my artists is going into the studio—do you have anything?' Then it's up to you to take the ball."*

ucts? What I try to do is sign writers that don't sound like anyone else."

Stakee also tries to convince established songwriters to collaborate with her new writers, which isn't always easy: "Sometimes they'll say, 'Who is this guy? If he's not a name, I don't want to write with him.'"

You don't necessarily need a publisher to make that strategy work, though: Golde says an early collaboration with Carole Bayer Sager helped her get her first publishing deal and an important cover.

To make connections, you've got to beat the streets. Stakee

says she signs few songwriters, but finds them in all kinds of places. "I do everything," she says. "I found one writer through a manager who's a friend of mine in Minneapolis. I signed another I'd met when she was a backup singer for Michael Jackson—we'd known each other for years before the contracts were signed. When I was at EMI, Barry Mann had me meet a songwriter that I loved. I'm going to see a writer at a showcase tonight. It just depends. If your mother gives you a tape, you listen to it."

Songwriter showcases are sponsored by BMI, ASCAP and other music organizations all over the country. One of the best-organized is the Los Angeles Songwriters Showcase [LASS], which also gives its members a chance to have their work critiqued by publishers, producers and A&R executives. Deals do sometimes come out of showcases: Golde says she was asked to join BMI as a result of a LASS performance.

A good publishing house will aggressively push its songs to record companies, artists, producers and managers. And while that helps a new songwriter, some established writers say it's easy to get lost in the shuffle.

"Some publishers send out a cassette with 40 million songs on it and nobody listens," says Golde—"it's just another tape. When I send someone a tape, I send one song, two maximum. A publisher can be really helpful—it's like being signed to a

talent agency. If they take an interest in you, if they exploit you and turn you on to the right people, it's great. If not..."

Established songwriters tend to set up their own publishing company and then hire a bigger publisher to administer it. But many young songwriters are well served by staff deals, where writers are given an advance and a weekly salary in return for writing a certain number of songs a year, usually 10 or 12 (collaborations aren't considered one whole song). Staff deals are particularly useful for helping a writer build relationships in the industry: being on staff with a publisher gives a writer access to lots of information about who's looking for songs.

"You have to become ingrained in the community," says Goldmark. Networking is the key, adds Golde: "You go to parties, you're at a concert, you run into someone who says, 'Oh, one of my artists is going into the studio—do you have anything?' Then it's up to you to take the ball and call them."

Getting a foot in the door may seem almost impossible, but that doesn't mean writers should take any deal. "You have to learn to be very selective," says Goldmark. "That's very important: Don't give your songs away to anybody or be all over the map."

"The biggest problem for songwriters is that they tend to give their copyrights away to get started," says attorney Marc Jacobson, an entertainment lawyer well-versed in copyright prob-

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**MUSICIAN**



lems. Jacobson cautions songwriters to limit the duration of their deals as much as possible and insist on a share of publishing fees as well as writer's fees. "Even new songwriters should not give up more than 50 percent of the publishing," he says.

As if breaking in weren't already tough enough, publishers have been spending an increasing part of their budgets on signing publishing agreements with recording artists rather than songwriters. Prices have escalated dramatically; bidding wars are now the norm for any band deemed to be a record company's latest "priority signing." Though the vast majority of the songs these deals bring to publishers will never be recorded again, one hit album—on which the publisher owns all 10 songs—can produce a financial bonanza.

The toughest lesson may be that once you're established, you still have to wheel and deal. BMI's Charles Feldman notes that hot producer/songwriters like Jellybean, LA & Babyface, Desmond Child, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis and Keith Diamond wield a tremendous amount of power. "Some of the producers are also publishers," says Feldman, "and they like to work with their own stable of writers. It's so hard to get outside cuts on an album today."


Even successful "song doctors"—the proven hit-makers with a string of big songs to their credit who are called in to work with artists—are forced to negotiate. "Often an artist and

producer will spark off a writer," says Feldman. "And then when the song is done they'll say, 'We only want to give you 25 percent.' I've seen that happen a hundred times."

Nor are record companies shy about playing their cards. The financial payoff of having a track on an album by an established artist can be huge—even a comparative stiff by an artist like Whitney Houston can go platinum. Competition to get those covers is great, and when they've got the leverage, labels routinely ask songwriters to accept a reduced royalty rate.

Until recently, labels were allowed to pay songwriters three-quarters of the mechanical royalty rate due under law. Although that's history, record companies still try to get the old rate.

"That's the big thing now," says Golde. "Everybody tries to negotiate to get the old rate, but a lot of songwriters just refuse. People were slow to go on the new rate and it was a real bitch."

Finally, you have to have financial staying power. Even successful new songwriters—those who get their foot in the door, find a publisher to work with them and secure good covers—may have to wait a year or two to get paid. Royalty accounting is generally done once every six months, and when your record is a hit in a foreign country, it's going to be a long time before the money finds its way to you. "Until you start writing consistently," says Golde, "you're going to be living hand-to-mouth." 

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# THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

by STEPHEN MARCONE



The road to stardom can be hazardous and confusing to both the veteran and novice songwriter. Few songwriters understand how the different parts of the business work as a system. But most successful songwriters are aware of how risky it is to concentrate solely on the creative aspects of their careers.

The flow chart below represents how the music business works as a system. The diamonds represent decisions that must be made. The rectangles represent steps to be completed. While following the chart, be aware that several steps may occur simultaneously. What follows are descriptions of problems at every decision-making point (represented by a diamond), along with suggested solutions. Adhering to the step-by-step process will increase your chances for success.

**Has material been written?** If you have written a song, ask someone whose musical opinion you respect to listen to

it. Also try to receive an anonymous objective opinion. Does the song contain a memorable line or phrase (hook)? Do the lyrics make sense?

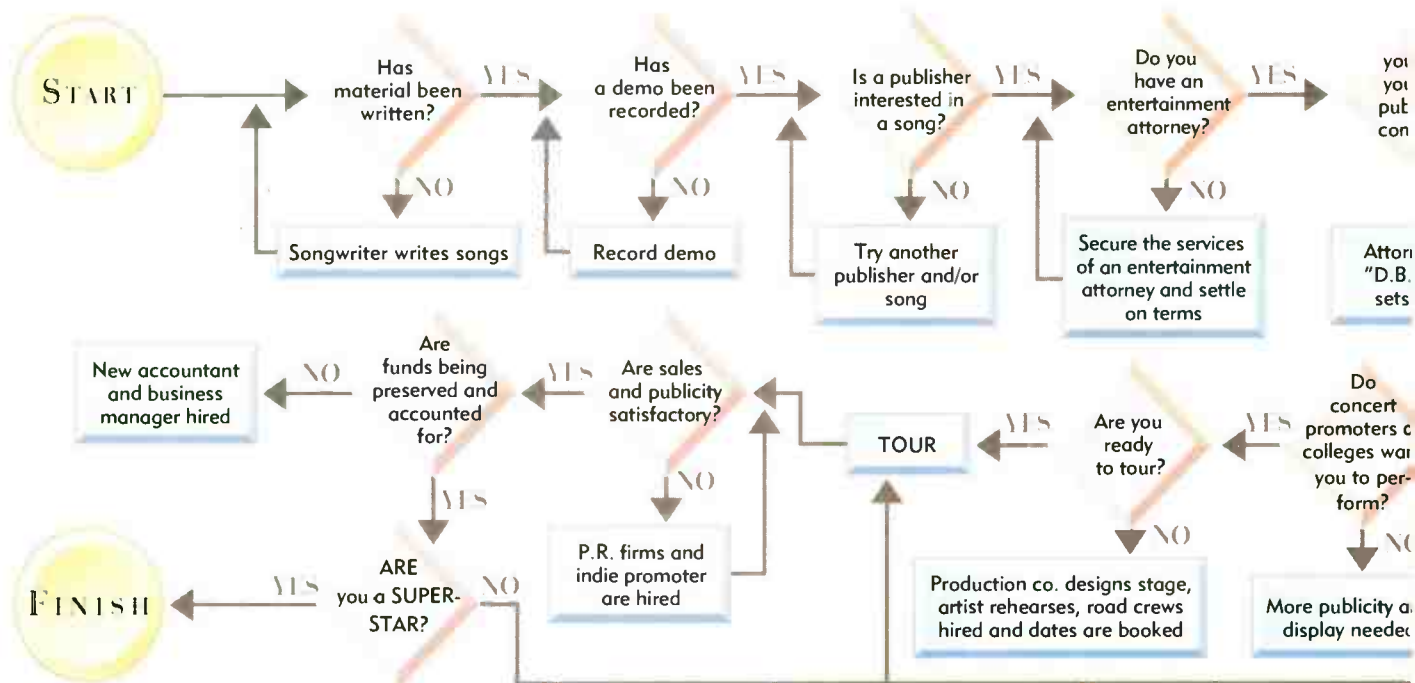
**Has a demo been recorded?** The production of a quality demo is essential. Although the demo does not have to be of master quality, the days are long gone when a songwriter recorded a demo by singing the lyrics into a microphone accompanying him/herself on guitar.

**Is a publisher interested in a song?** Attracting the interest of a publisher is very competitive; mailing a demo tape seldom gets results. For the best results, a song must be professionally shopped. But if you plan to go at it alone, check *Billboard* magazine's annual *International Buyer's Guide* or the annual publication *Songwriter's Market* for names and addresses.

**Do you have an entertainment attorney?** Most entertainment attorneys are based in New York, Los Angeles or Nashville. Songwriters, musicians, as well as other attorneys are good sources of recommendations.

**Do you want to own your own publishing company?** Many songwriters and musicians own their own publishing firms and split the royalties with a major music-industry full-line publishing firm (if the established artist will be recording the song). It's easy to start a firm; it requires filing a "Doing Business As" (D.B.A.) form with the county clerk's office, as well as a few forms with the tax office. Any practicing attorney can give you advice. If

## THE ROAD TO SONGWRITER/ARTIST SUPERSTARDOM





you own your own publishing firm and want a publisher to administer your work, or you are willing to let an established publisher publish the songs outright, your attorney must negotiate the deal. A normal publishing deal is a 50/50 contract; however, there are many details that, when overlooked, can be very costly.

**Are songs copyrighted?** For your protection, the songs should be copyrighted before they are shopped. Songs written after a publishing deal is signed will be copyrighted by the publisher. For copyright registration forms, write to the Office of Copyright, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Are you a member of a performing rights organization?** Under the federal copyright law, as the holder (owner) of a copyright, a songwriter or publisher has certain rights as to the use of his material. If anyone else wants to use these rights, he must get a license from the copyright holder. A performing rights organization acts as a clearinghouse for licenses on behalf of its members. The American performing rights organizations are ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), BMI (Broadcast Music Incorporated) and SESAC (the Society of European Stage Authors and Composers). Write or call them for information.

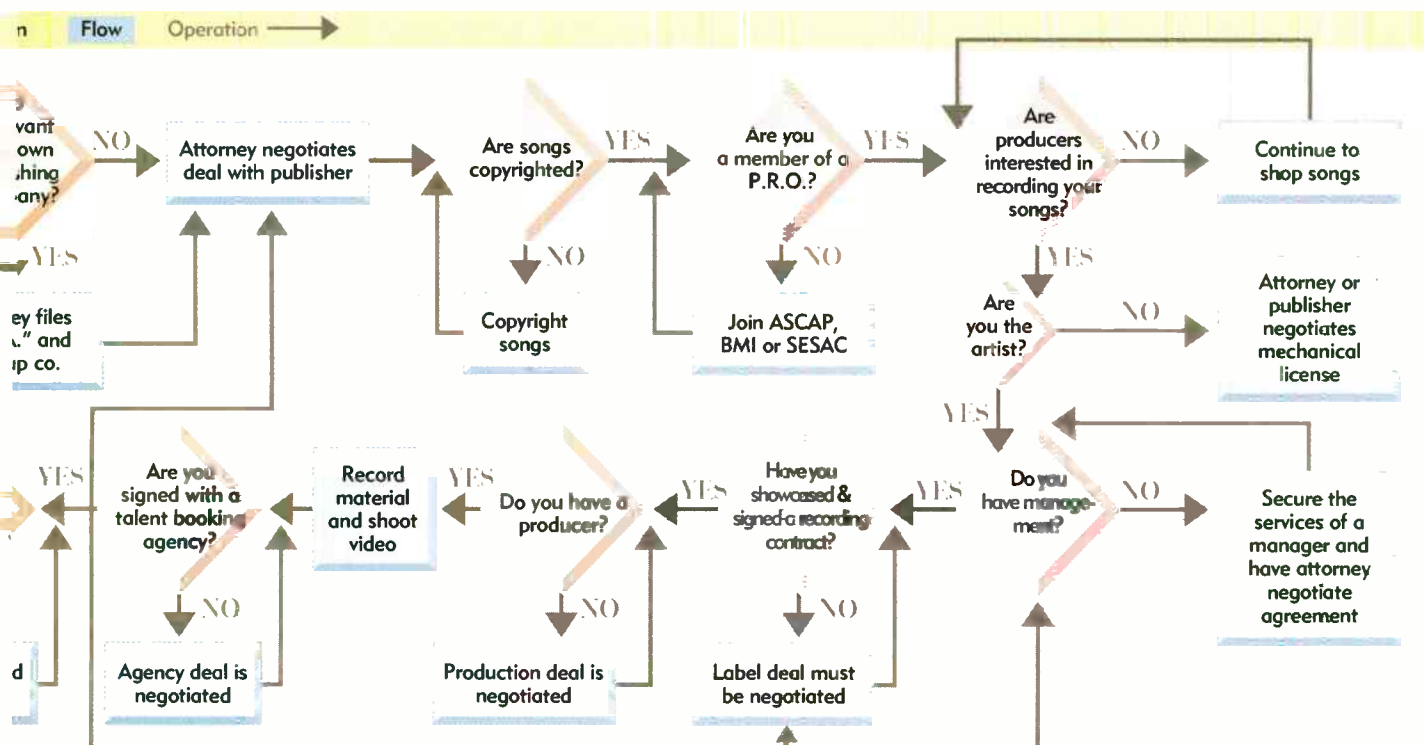
**Is an artist or producer interested in recording the songs? Are you the artist?** If you have written a song that you believe suits an established recording artist, contact his/her

manager, record producer or record company and ask to have the song screened. If an artist or producer is interested in recording one of your songs (and you are not the artist), a mechanical license should be issued. A mechanical license gives a record company the right to record (mechanically reproduce) the song. In return, the record company pays the owner of the song a royalty on every record manufactured and sold. By law, if a record company wants to record a song that has had an initial

*Is a publisher interested?  
Mailing demo tapes seldom gets results: songs  
must be professionally shopped.*

recording, and is willing to pay the compulsory license fee, currently 6.25 cents or 1.1 cent per minute (whichever is greater), you must issue them a license. However, record companies are seldom interested in paying an unknown songwriter the compulsory rate for the right, and a negotiated license (lower than the statutory rate) is usually issued. Most mechanical licenses are cleared through the Harry Fox Agency. The agency takes a cut of the royalties it collects.

If you are the artist you now complicate your career by assuming the search for a recording contract. Follow the chart for the next steps.



# THE PUBLISHING DEAL

by BILL STEPHEN



ublishing is the profit center for any songwriter," says Walter O'Brien, president of Concrete Management, "and in the early days of a career, it's the only place you really see any money." This financial support can come in a variety of ways. Often, a publisher will advance you money against royalties, ranging

from \$10,000 for an unsigned talent to \$50,000 and up for someone with a record deal. Another type of advance is to provide a producer with studio time and the necessary tools to cut a top-flight demo, which the publisher then uses to shop your songs or to generate interest with a record label. "But don't just look at the advance," continues O'Brien, "look at the whole deal."

By establishing yourself with a respectable publisher, you send a signal to industry professionals that one of their peers believes in your talent. But this can also be a double-edged sword. While you now have a bona fide company behind you, you no longer have the right to use your publishing as a bargaining tool in negotiating a record deal.

John Golden, co-owner/president of Centerfield Productions, feels "signing with a publisher before the record deal could make you less attractive to a label." But, O'Brien adds, no label interested in you would kill the deal because they can't get the publishing.

These apparent contradictions prompted one young artist to shop around before making a decision. "I was like everybody else," said solo artist Kris Ingram, who was able to get offers from two publishers. "I was hungry and willing to sign with just about anybody who liked my work. Initially I felt labels would respond to me better and show me more respect if I had a publisher. What I discovered was that everyone wanted a piece of the publishing, and that if I held on to my rights I'd be in a better position negotiating a record contract."

For those of you finding your way around the business, the first things you'll need are an objective ear and professionals in your corner, so turn to the American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers (ASCAP) or another such agency for help.

Although the primary role of ASCAP is to collect licensing fees from such venues as television, radio stations, Muzak, etc., and disperse those fees to its members, it also offers songwriters a variety of services. "ASCAP is an open door for young songwriters starting out," says Lisa Schmidt, Eastern Regional Executive Director of Membership. By joining ASCAP for \$10 and registering your songs, you give them the right to collect the performance right royalties on your material. In return, you can regularly review their list of questionable publishers or "song sharks," attend seminars and make

solid, professional contacts. "The best thing a songwriter can do," says Schmidt, "is research a publisher. Find out who their staff writers are, try to meet with

the creative director and find out their strengths and weaknesses. If you're looking for someone to get you a record deal, find out who is best at making that arrangement."

"It's important to research a publisher's ability to exploit your copyright and make the most money possible," says Dan Karns, General Manager/Director of Publishing for Centerfield Productions. "Part of this includes an ability to collect monies owed. Since it can be very difficult to get paid, it's important to have someone who has clout. A publisher should also have the ability to exploit and collect outside of the United States, which can be a very important source of income."


Once you've hit pay dirt in the form of a top-notch publisher, it's time for the contract, which means getting a lawyer. Anyone not wanting to deal with a lawyer isn't to be dealt with. New York entertainment lawyer Eric M. Berman of Berman & Weissman, P.C., feels the best way to find the right attorney is by recommendation. You get someone whose track record you can check.

"Having a lawyer gives you credibility," says Berman. "Often, publishers *want* to deal with professionals rather than the artist because there's less emotional entanglement."

A lawyer's fee for negotiating a publishing contract should be around \$1000. Some lawyers, of course, will charge more, and others, if they believe in your potential, will even offer their services on a contingency basis, but this may not be in your best interest. "A lawyer may take between 5-10 percent of your publishing as a fee for negotiating the deal," says Berman. "On the surface, this appears good because if he's unsuccessful, there's no charge to you. However, if he is successful, he now owns a piece of your action for a long time."

There are two types of royalties: mechanical and performance. Mechanical refers to a standard 6.25 cents fee per record sold and is paid by the record company to your publisher, who then pays you your agreed share. Performance royalties are paid for the playing of your material. The artist gets 50 percent and the publisher 50 percent, unless the writer owns a share of the publishing.

Knowing what you're owed and when you should be paid is another game altogether. The licensing agency you choose (ASCAP, BMI, etc.) collects fees for songs registered with their agency. This "pool" of money is then meted out based on a survey of performances that ascertains "roughly" how many times a song was played over a given time period. Based on this rotation, a percentage of the pool (after expenses are deducted by the licensing agency) is paid to you for your songs. In effect, that's it. For payout, it's more simple. Publishers get paid by the licensing agency in six months, artists in nine.

The publishing deal can be more important than the record deal and, should you have a hit tune, far more lucrative over the long run, particularly if your song gets covered by famous artists. So, keep your eyes open and your rights close to your chest. It pays. 





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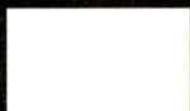
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# Working Musician

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## Guitar

### Soundgarden's Kim Thayil & Chris Cornell

How to grow your own twin-guitar attack ❖ By JOSEF WOODARD

**I**F IT WASN'T COMMON KNOWLEDGE before, the runaway success of Nirvana has ensured that America knows about the big noise out of Seattle that's sweeping down and across America. But in the beginning came Soundgarden, with its big, fat guitar sounds and a revitalized sense of what a riff could be. A choice guitar barrage band with the kick of metal and the smarts of alternative rock, Soundgarden inserts intelligence, not to mention strange tunings and odd meters, where excessive volume and bluster used to suffice.

Among other things, Soundgarden is shaping up to be a refreshing tale of two

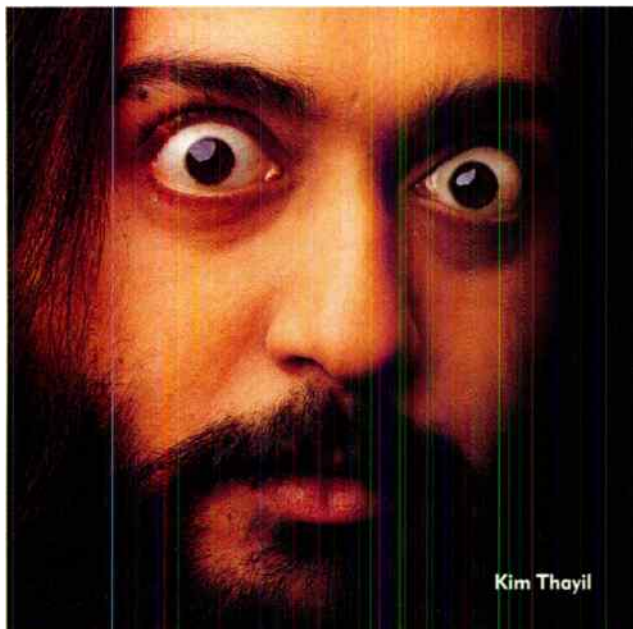
guitarists, with Kim Thayil's primary, primal guitar and singer Chris Cornell's increased guitaristic role.

The band's two-guitar sound bears little resemblance to the standard lead/rhythm hierarchy of rock bands immemorial. It's a chemistry born of the players' separate leanings.

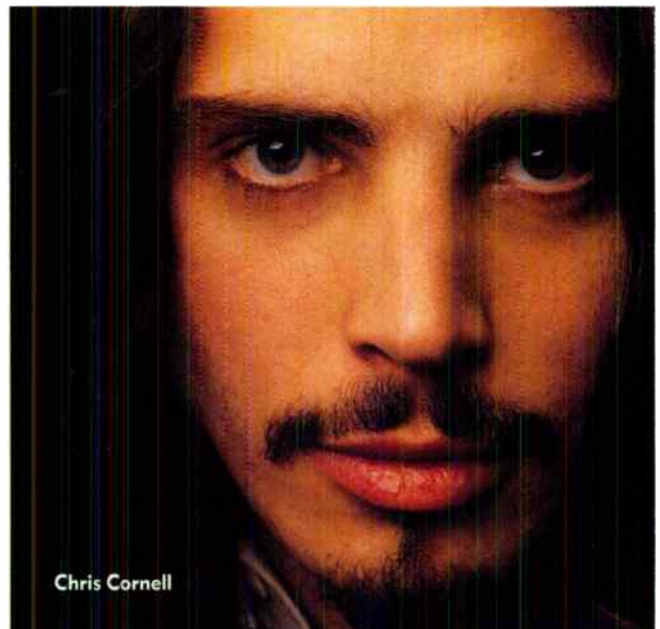
"We're opposite players in a lot of ways," says Cornell. "Kim is a really loose and jagged player; I'm more concise rhythmically." Of the two, Thayil's got far more experience and chops; he was a devoted teenage picker while Cornell only tinkered with the instrument until Soundgarden formed in 1984.

So how do they mesh? "On a song like 'Big Dumb Sex,'" says Thayil, "we're playing harmonies with each other. I actually like soloing a lot better *without* a guitar underneath me. For Aerosmith or regular boogie rock, the chord definitely frames the solo. I don't like that. I prefer to have just the bassline below, because then you don't have a chord hemming you in.

"In some ways, a second guitar will open things up; in other ways it holds things back. But 'Big Dumb Sex' with one guitar wouldn't sound right. Then there are some songs we do with two guitars that would sound fine with one; some have one that might be augmented with



Kim Thayil



Chris Cornell

two for more color."

"We approached this record differently than before," Cornell says of *Badmotorfinger*, the current release. "Kim took the parts that he plays naturally—the big riffs and the bends." In *Badmotorfinger's* "Searching with My Good Eye Closed," for example, "Kim played the riffs and chords and then I added the parts—like that one Beatle-ish part," referring to an exotic melodic riff studded with pull-offs. When Thayil's rhythm parts are doubled, Chris says, Kim did it himself; previously, says

Cornell, he sometimes doubled Thayil's rhythms, but "our feels are different so the parts wouldn't lock in."

Some of Soundgarden's guitar parts are shamelessly, beautifully noisy, full of feedback and ear-tweaking harmonics. "Part of that," laughs Thayil, "is out of inability, and part of it is because I really like bashing the guitar around and the sound it makes. You can't ever duplicate it and it can sound pretty wacky." Thayil likes to wreak ghostly notes by picking the strings below the bridge of his Guild S1. "It makes

a tone and gets captured by the pickup, pretty loud."

Some of the band's sonic girth is achieved by Thayil and Cornell dropping the low E string down to D, or even dipping all the way down to B (as in *Badmotorfinger's* "Rusty Cage," "Holy Water" and "Searching"). On "Mind Riot" every string is tuned to one of several E's, a kind of in-joke on rock 'n' roll's tendency to hang out in the key of E. Thayil: "I'm not sure how functional an idea that is. It makes playing some chords easier. Tuning's a hassle, intonation is a hassle." The resulting sound—six detuned strings flopping, twanging and riffing hard—makes Soundgarden sometimes resemble a mix of Sonic Youth and AC/DC.

Odd tunings are a band weakness: Cornell figures they use seven different tunings, which requires fairly extensive on-stage guitar shuffling. New tunings, Cornell says, can inspire creative energy: "When you sit down with something new like that, you start bursting with all these ideas. Ben Shepherd, our bassist, came up with a really weird tuning for 'Somewhere,' and I've written probably [cont'd on page 82]

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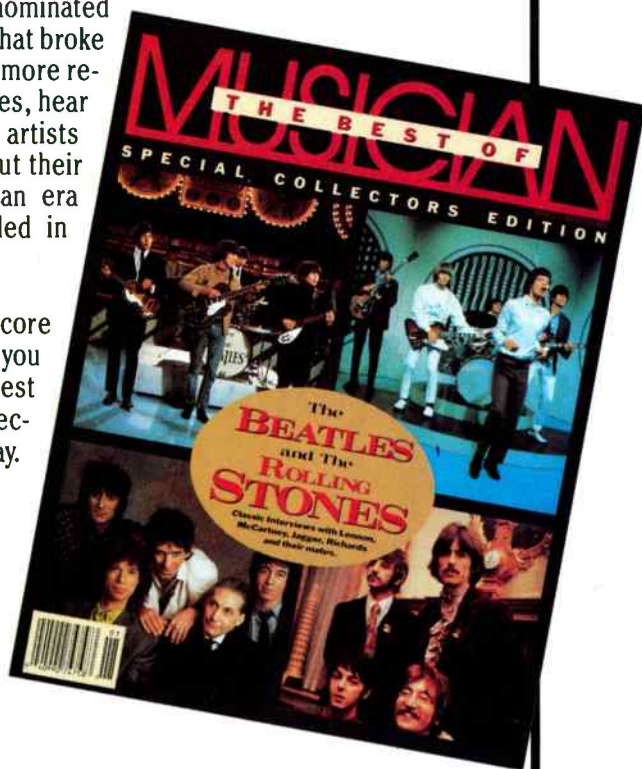
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### Garden Tools

**K**IM THAYIL's main tool is the Guild S1; he uses a Gibson Firebird and a Les Paul for odd tunings. He plays with Peavey VPM 120 amp heads, through Peavey 4x10 cabinets with Celestion speakers. While he stays fairly un-effected, he has a CryBaby wah-wah pedal at the ready and a Boss chorus pedal for occasional coloration. He uses GHS light strings (.009 on top), and Jim Dunlop .60 gauge nylon picks.

**CORNELL** banks on Les Paul Customs "from the '70s, because the wood's heavier," and, in the studio, various Gretsch guitars. He uses Peavey Rockmaster preamps and Peavey Classic 6060 amplifiers, pushing MESA/Boogie 4x12 cabinets. In his home studio, he uses a Peavey Classic 50 amp.

Chris also has a CryBaby wah-wah, which he uses more as a filter than an active effect—the effect responsible for the strange tone on "Rusty Cage." "That's what they were invented for anyway," says Cornell. What—courting convention? Say it ain't so...



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World Radio History

## NRBQ's Joey Spampinato

This bassist is a standup guy ❖ By PETER CRONIN

**W**HEN KEITH RICHARDS needed a more portable, modern-day version of Willie Dixon to play bass in the Chuck Berry tribute film *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll*, he knew exactly where to go: just down the street from his Greenwich Village apartment, where NRBQ was holding court at the Bottom Line and bassist Joey Spampinato was laying down his right-tune thump.

"Playing in the rhythm and blues style, I think Dixon would be the one that I hear in my brain," Spampinato says. "I do try to get that upright sound and I've gotten kind of known for it. It's a technique that's very easy to do. I mute the strings near the bridge with the karate edge of my right hand, and while they're muted I use my thumb to pluck the string. I can let the

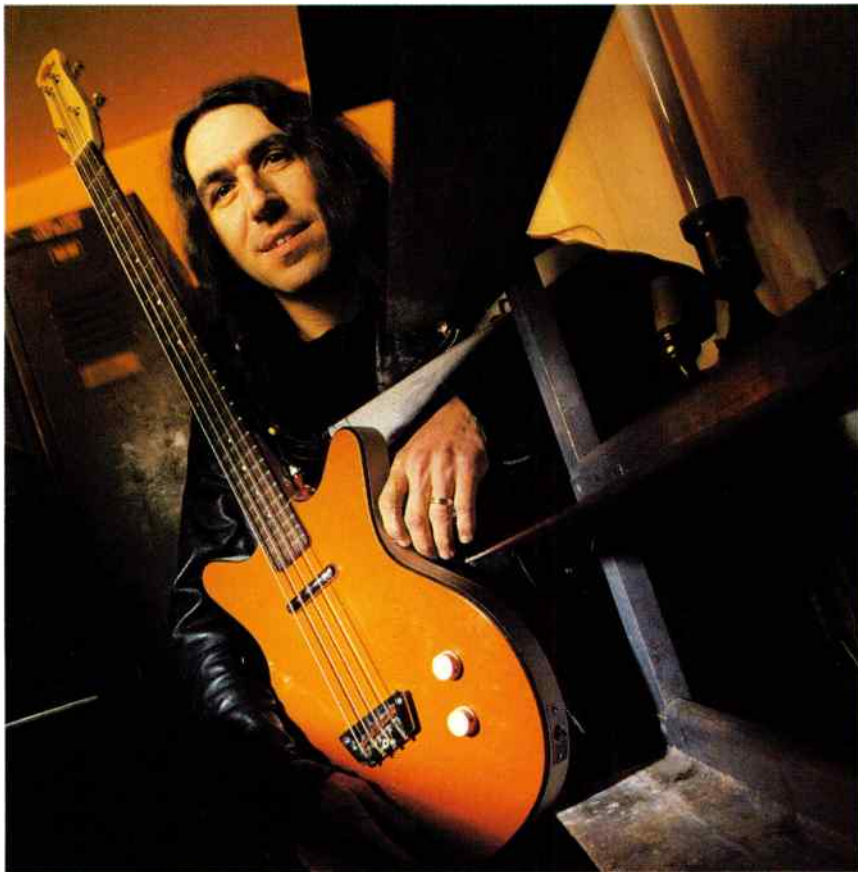
tone ring out as long or short as I want. It all depends on what I hear coming back from the amp. They used to build mutes right into some basses in the '60s. This felt thing would lift up underneath the strings. It would make you slightly sharp, so you had to work with it and learn how to use it."

Like NRBQ, the band he's been with for 20-odd years, Spampinato's Danelectro Longhorn bass is a weird-looking instrument of dubious construction. "It's very light so there's no work involved in carrying it around," he says. "It's got a short-scale neck, but not too short. And in a way, that's the whole thing, because a long-scale bass has got a lot of tension on the strings.

"Because of that tension, whenever I play a Fender I find that the bass starts playing me rather than me playing the

bass. I like a real rubbery sound, kinda loose and kinda crazy. I also use the smooth strings, the flatwounds, and they're harder to find. With the pop and slap style it got very in to get a trebly, snappy sound, and everybody started buying roundwounds in droves. I would love it if somebody would make shorter-scale flatwound strings available because when I start winding my strings they tend to break."

When NRBQ gets all hopped up and drummer Tom Ardolino is whacking that snare so hard he looks like he's about to rock right off his drum stool, Spampinato doesn't seem to be playing notes as much as providing an indistinct rumble that rolls the whole thing over. "Playing in that style there are what I call invisible notes," he says. "When someone plays a boogie-woogie-type line on a Fender bass, all the



### Book 'Em Dano

**J**OEY SPAMPINATO used to feel all alone with his old Danelectros, but these days he's got plenty of company. "A lot of guys are playing this instrument," he says. "There's even a club and a newsletter."

In addition to his vintage basses, Spampinato has been playing the better-than-new Danelectro copies built by Nashville luthier Jerry Jones. "I think the Jerry Jones is a better instrument," he says. "They used to build Danelectros with whatever they had, and when they ran out they'd build them with something else. They were workin' on a budget.

"But I think Jerry took all the good points he found in the Danelectros and tried to incorporate them into all his instruments. They're more consistent." Joey's amp is an Ampeg SVT and, though Joey claims not to know what kind of strings he uses, NRBQ sax player Klem reports seeing Dean Markley wrappers in his bass case.



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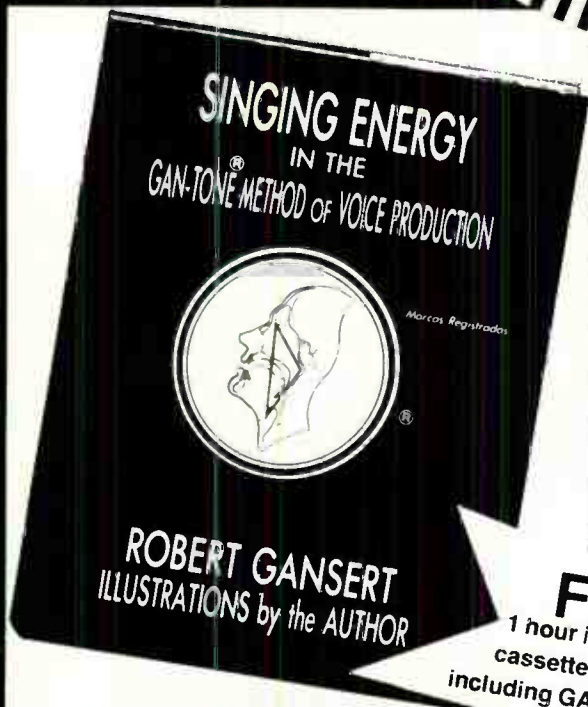
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notes are so defined and solid and exactly *there* that you start sounding like Pat Boone's bass player. There's no mystery in the playing. But with an upright, you *feel* the notes. Some of it is felt rather than heard."

In the past couple of years, Spampinato's uncanny ability to coax that acoustic sound out of an electric has found him squeezing in sessions and gigs with Richards, Berry, Eric Clapton and Johnnie Johnson between his regular duties with the Q. But the climax came during a stay in London, where he was joining Clapton for the 1991 Albert Hall concerts.

"I went over to Paul McCartney's," Spampinato says. "He sent a car for me and my wife Skeeter, and we went out to the country and jammed for three hours. It was thrilling. When we did 'Be-Bop-A-Lula' I was playing in my upright style and Paul came over and asked me, 'What is that you're doing there?' That was a kick for me because he was always such a big influence. I was on cloud nine." 

## SOUNDGARDEN

[cont'd from page 78] five songs in that tuning since then." Just don't press him for details: If Thayil's more forthcoming, Chris likes to keep the tunings a band secret.

Another point of distinction in the Soundgarden oeuvre is its organic approach to odd meters. Many a Soundgarden song defies the conventional 4/4 signature, but without the self-conscious contrivance of prog-rock. As Thayil and Cornell tell it, odd time signatures came as a natural byproduct of creating a new sound. "For some reason," Thayil says, "we always wrote fast hardcore songs that we thought would be great soundtracks for Keystone Kops movies. They didn't really sound hardcore. We were just trying to write them ballsy and fast, but there was something a little wacky about them. Then we found out that the main riff in 'Circle of Power' (from *Ultra Mega OK*) is in 5/4. We didn't know that." (Drummer Matt Cameron has since become the band's mathematician, decoding the other guys' metric oddities.) "I don't push for weird time signatures," Thayil insists. "I often push to get the quirkiness out of things. But if it works and it sounds natural, it's cool." That's as good an acid test as any. 

## Keyboards

# Marcus Roberts Takes It in Stride

Left-handed strength and precision ♦ By RICK MATTINGLY

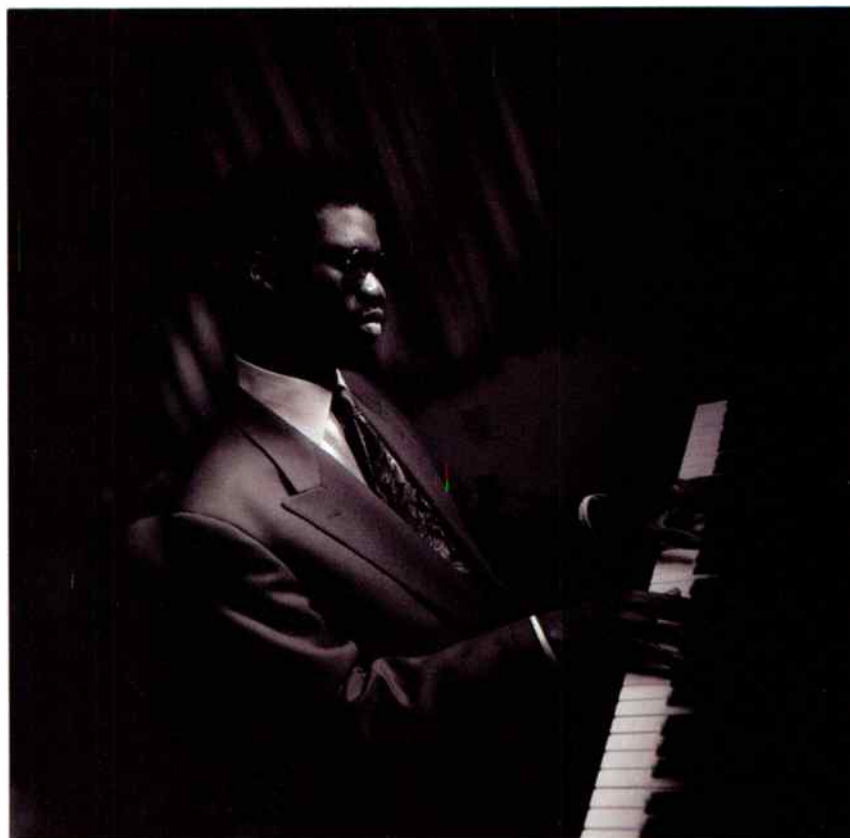
A 13-YEAR-OLD MARCUS ROBERTS was trying to impress one of the girls. He launched into a moderate-tempo tune, approximating a stride-piano background with his left hand. "You got to be able to play that *fast*," said the girl, unimpressed. "Do *what*?" said Marcus incredulously. "Art Tatum and those guys can play that stuff real fast," she retorted. "You crazy," Roberts muttered.

"Man," Roberts says, laughing at the memory, "when you start dealing with stride piano, you have to put in hours of work every day. It's like deciding that you want to run the mile in under four minutes. Okay, you can do it, but you're going to be running a lot every day."

After avoiding it for years, Roberts

finally confronted stride when he ventured outside the Wynton Marsalis band into solo piano concerts and albums. "With most piano players in bands, the left-hand is nonexistent. After the bebop era, people just quit dealing with it. They were content to rely on the bass and drums to supply the rhythmic pulse. But when you listen to a great stride player like James P. Johnson, that is definitely not the situation. He could symbolically orchestrate an entire ensemble with his two hands. His left hand articulated rhythm and harmony very clearly, with equal power to the right hand."

Moving to his old upright, Marcus demonstrates the style. While his right hand plays melody in an upper register, his left jumps back and forth between bass



Photograph: Scott Rex Ely



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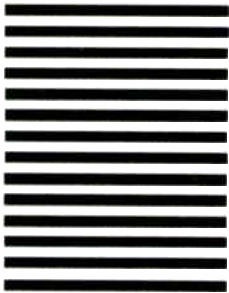
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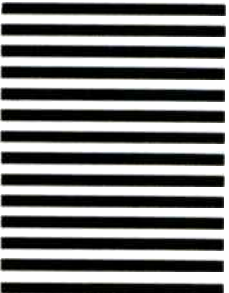
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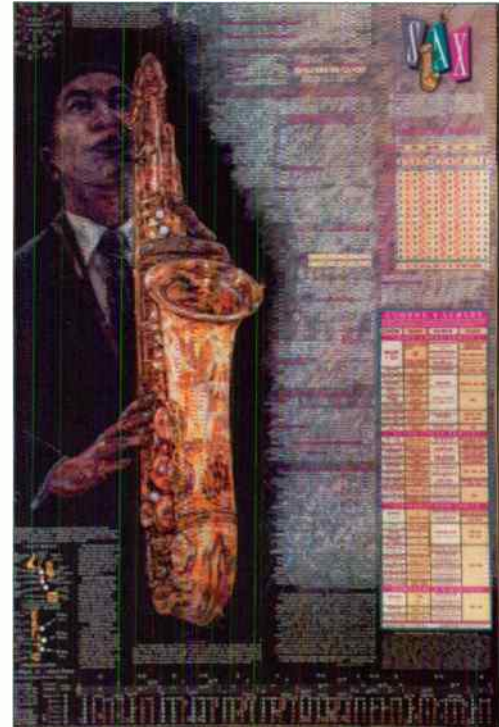
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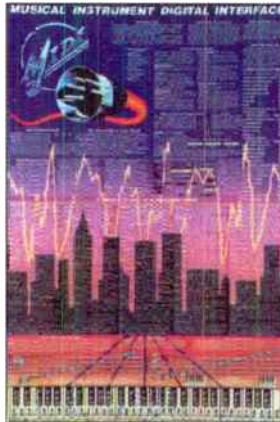


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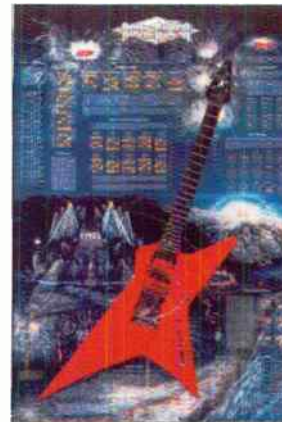
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notes on the beats and mid-register chords on the offbeats. Closing your eyes, you could almost swear two pianists were playing—or one pianist with three hands.

"The first problem is the physical power you need to make it through a song, because your left hand is jumping all over the place on every beat. So the most important thing is to practice with a metronome, and to practice slow—very slow. You need time to gauge the distances between the bass notes and the chords, and to make sure the rhythms are clear and precise.

"I also suggest practicing with the left hand *alone* so that you can focus on making those leaps properly. Don't play in a real wimpy fashion, but don't bang either. Use the natural weight of your shoulders and arms to feel the notes as you play them so that you develop a sense of touch. You want a feeling of passion and power from note to note.

"It's good to work on stride piano playing through a straight 12-bar blues progression—you won't have a million chords to play. Let's say you're playing in B flat; practice going back and forth from the B flat bass note to the B flat triad. Then do the same with the E flat and F chords."

Using only his left hand, Marcus plays a I-IV-V blues. During the first chorus, he plays only the root as the bass note and the basic triads for the chords. On the second chorus, he goes to a root/triad/fifth/triad pattern, using the fifth below the root rather than the one above it. He's playing slowly and deliberately, but the sound is not choppy. There is a slow, sensuous groove.

"Once you develop strength and power in the left hand," Roberts calls out, "you can add simple melodies on top," and as the third chorus starts, he brings his right hand in, playing a simple single-line melody over the bass-and-triad left-hand part. While three registers of the piano are

## Grandstanding

**M**ARCUS ROBERTS' favorite piano is a nine-foot Steinway. "Just tell them a nine-foot Steinway functions for me in the same capacity as a sophisticated woman." His home piano is a Yamaha upright.



being utilized, each is distinct. The sound is full, covering a wide range, but not thick and muddy.


"Even now that's how I work things out," says Marcus, turning away from the piano. "I'm working on James P.'s 'Carolina Shout' and some others, and I have to slow that stuff down and concentrate on the left hand."

To really delve into stride piano, Roberts recommends going back even further than the stride greats. "You should have some knowledge of classical technique, because the piano had a long history before people like James P. Johnson came along. Bach, of course, wrote all kinds of pieces to strengthen technique, and I advise any piano student to play Bach preludes and fugues—which is something a lot of the stride players did. Beethoven piano sonatas are important to play, too, along with basic scales and arpeggios.

"Then get a book of Scott Joplin music and learn five or six ragtime pieces. From there, you can go to people like James P., Fats Waller and Willie 'The Lion' Smith. It takes a long time to study this music properly.

"You also have to have a very thorough knowledge of what they were doing physically. You need a philosophical understanding of why the music was being interpreted the way it was. Ultimately you have to have some kind of spiritual connection to it so you can render it your own way."

Learning stride, Marcus feels, can benefit band playing, not just solo work. "When you go back to playing with bass and drums, the rhythmic strength of your left hand is going to be much greater. That means you'll be helping the bass player and drummer a lot more than most piano players, which in turn makes the other instruments more aware of their actual function.

"A lot of people are content to just get by. They're happy to let someone else in the band address whatever it is they are not doing themselves. But other people want to be the cause of something happening, and they are willing to take on more weight and correct whatever flaws exist in their own character. If you have several musicians come together who are complete within themselves—that's when something great can happen." 

Photograph: Linda Covello

## Performance

### Reid-Only Memory

By JIM MACNIE

AFTER YEARS OF WORK WITHIN LIVING COLOUR'S COMPARATIVELY TAUT POP SONG PARAMETERS, VERNON Reid assembled bassist Melvin Gibbs (another Decoding Society alumnus, currently leading Eye & I) and Living Colour drummer Will Calhoun to attempt some electric improvising. Over a two-night stand at the Knitting Factory, they worked with knotty themes and prog-

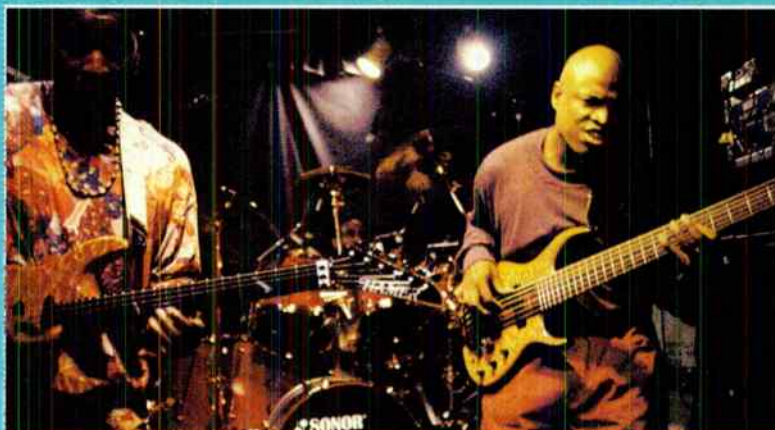
WHAT  
Reid, Gibbs,  
Calhoun  
WHERE  
The Knitting  
Factory, NYC  
WHEN  
December 14, 1991

rock time signatures designed to capture the interest of the thinking listener. The music mixed jazz's flexibility with rock's colossal scorch. Intricacies abounded: rhythmic head fakes, allusions to ghost melodies, ceaseless opportunities to recast form through solos. If you wanted to take anything home with you regarding this stuff, you had to pay attention.


"Well, maybe and maybe not," suggests Gibbs later. "There's an analytical level and an emotional level from which to hear it. Like *A Love Supreme*—you don't need to know the structural specifics to understand or appreciate what's being presented. The best improvisational music doesn't need any explanation. Yet if you did know more about it, your appreciation could be enhanced."

All the marks were hit during the trio's set. But as technically impressive as it was, the music yielded to the constraints of the structural boundaries rather than charging through them. And though Reid's playing is usually able to project an expressionistic fervor, a decided lack of raw emotion put the kibosh on the ensemble's consequence. The team cohesion may have been impressive—all three understood and utilized the pros and cons of each other's personal styles—but the music was hollow.

Part of the problem seemed to be Reid's use of electronics. As melodies and thematic materials presented themselves, they often worked in tandem with the moods created by the guitarist's abundant settings. That's admirable on paper, but as the set unfolded, the tunes seemed to act as wayward offspring of the mechanical parents. Buzzes, drones, harmonizing—the technical resources were plentiful, but they overshadowed



the interplay. Plenty of ideas cropped up, but only occasionally were they wrestled with. However, a passage where Calhoun knocked out a saucy fatback beat brought the ensemble to life, and some Sly references found both Gibbs and Reid energized. The particulars suggested that venerable trad forms still housed the power to inspire. Simple pleasures, right?

"The main thing is that the music has got to move," says Gibbs. "If I'm stretching and the music isn't flowing, what's the point?" Compare the anemic math jazz that made up most of the evening's fare to the robust conclusionary surge and you have a trickle roaring into a river. Here's to a flood next time. 



# LOST IN TRANSLATION: OF JAPANESE SYNTHS AND U.S. PLAYERS

If you use drum machines, odds are you've come across a preset—"Hah!" or "Unh!" or "Ooh!"—consisting of an unmistakably Asian-sounding gentleman doing his very best James Brown. Hmm... funky. What do you do with it? Can't use it—try pondering it.

The bulk of American musicians' electronic instruments are designed and built in Japan. Some are customized for special markets—the Germans gotta have those accordion sounds—but lots aren't. The result: The instruments Americans play are the brainchildren of a vastly different culture. The problems that arise, while hardly fatal, go from the trivial to the genuinely irritating...to the illuminating. For cultural detectives, some of the differences between Japanese and American mindsets can be read right on the controls of any Japanese-made sequencer.

"It may be a cliché," says former Kawai product manager Daniel Sofer, "but it tends to be true—Japanese go out on features; Americans want performance. In America we build a box, program a zillion sounds, keep the coolest 50. The Japanese do the opposite: Start with a list of sounds and keep them all, often without much reference to which are interesting and/or useful and/or sound good. It's like, 'Roland has a pan flute, so we need a pan flute.'"

There's a constant, mostly invisible tug-of-war between linear-minded, orderly-thinking Japanese MI engineers—non-players, mostly—and impatient American musicians. "Japanese have an easier time dealing with a multimenu, structured type of hierarchy in a machine," says former Yamaha product manager Bob Fry. "If you need to get to a parameter and it's a few menus deep, they don't have a problem. But Americans are fast-paced, gotta-have-it-yesterday, we-want-the-button-right-there."

Another Japanese trait: "They're afraid of getting anyone in trouble," says Sofer. "They keep trying to protect the user from himself. One of the things Americans want to do is mix internal and external sounds, the latter from a card. The Japanese engineer will worry, 'What'll happen if the guy doesn't have his card in?' Instead of saying, 'That's his problem,' they make it so that multitimbral combinations can only be *either* internal *or* external. You can't mix internal sounds with sounds from the card. More than one company does it like that."

Sometimes it's the language barrier pure and simple—there's the tale of the Japanese manual writer who, describing how to screw the legs off an electric piano, feared he might be using an obscenity and substituted "fuck the legs off"—"God knows why," says Fry; "I suppose he looked in a thesaurus."

But the problem's usually a lot more complex. "The Japanese," says Fry, "are brilliant engineers. But I don't think they understand the whys and hows of really going out and surveying their market and finding out what it wants. When sampling came on strong in the U.S., they told us, 'We do not understand why sampling is so popular. FM synthesis can do everything. Why do you need sampling?' Obviously they changed—but it sure took 'em a while."

TONY SCHERMAN

## CD LABELING SYSTEM TO BE DISCONTINUED

Know those As and Ds in little square boxes that they put on Compact Discs? That's right: the code that's supposed to tell you whether the record was recorded/mixed/mastered in the analog or digital domain. What you may not have known is that the real name for those little boxes is the SPARS Code, named for the association that thought it up: The Society of Professional Audio Recording Studios.

The code was devised to provide consumer information, but now SPARS has decided to retire it. "The SPARS Code no longer fairly reflects the complexity of the technology we use today," commented SPARS Chairman Pete Caldwell in announcing the Society's intention to retire the code. "Just to label a step in the process as 'D' for digital or 'A' for analog is no longer an indication of much of anything," added another SPARS member. "Analog is much better now [than it was when the code was first devised] and you can't say 'digital is digital' anymore. There are a lot of different storage media, sampling rates, conversion and compression techniques."

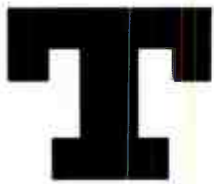
Does this mean the code will disappear right away? "We know the discontinuation of the SPARS Code will be a slow transition," remarked Caldwell. "We can't require the labels to discontinue using it any more than we could require them to use it in the first place. We only ask that they weigh the usefulness of the code and consider our recommendation."

ALAN DI PERNA



# Developments

## LIGHTS, ACTION, MIDI!



The Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) recently added stage lighting to its bag of tricks, with the ratification of the new MIDI Show Control (MSC) spec. (Wow, an acronym within an acronym!) This of course doesn't

change the MIDI we all know and love. It's just that there are a lot of new MIDI commands for addressing non-musical equipment like lighting consoles and laser control equipment. Theme parks! Laserium shows! Looks like the MIDI Manufacturers Association and Japanese MIDI Standards Committee have made a sound financial move in expanding MIDI's domain. But their next play should be of more interest to musicians. The proposed MIDI Machine Control (MMC) spec will make tape machine transports and other non-MIDI recording studio gear addressable via MIDI devices. ALAN DI PERNA

## SOUND BITES

Kawai has achieved a neat feat of miniaturization with its new SX-1 synth module. This half-rack MIDI midget goes for just \$275 retail, but it's loaded up with 64 single patches and room for 32 more user-programmed patches. Patches are built using 128 internal 16-bit waveforms. Up to four single patches can be combined in any of 16 different multi patches. And there's a separate drum section too.... The Biax stereo guitar pickup is an interesting new idea from a California company called SSI (Splitz Sound Inc.). The pickup provides discrete stereo separation for each string. Downpick any string and the signal is panned to one side of the stereo field; pick on an upstroke and the signal flits to the opposite side. Hours of fun for the technically self-conscious.... In other guitar-related developments, BOSS has a new multi-effects pedalboard, the BE-5M. It's got five onboard effects with eight memory locations for storing multi-effect combinations. Retailing at \$450, the design is fairly thorough, with twin audio outputs, an effects loop, tuner and headphone jacks.... Ludwig has added a series of hammered bronze-shell snares to its Black Beauty line. Among the new Beauties are a 14" diameter drum, available in both 5' and 6 1/2" depths, and a 3x13" piccolo. Any of these can be had with either a Ludwig P-85 Supra-Phonic snare strainer or a P-70 Super Sensitive. List prices range from \$595 to \$820... From Black Beauties we turn to Basic Black (sic), the new combo bass amp from SWR. It puts 140 watts into a 15" and a tweeter and boasts a tube preamp, tuner output, aural enhancer circuit, high-frequency attenuator and three-band EQ.



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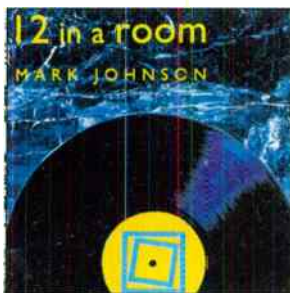
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## Mark Johnson's Quiet Triumph



◆  
*12 in a Room*  
(Thubula Rasa)

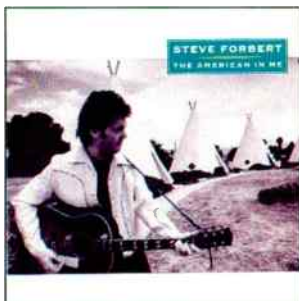
**I**F ONE TAKES THE PROLIFERATION OF PERFECTLY RECORDED MUSIC WITH liner notes as evidence of anything significant, the making and marketing of popular music would appear to be reaching ever greater heights of professionalism. In fact, the only things changing are the price tag and the technology. The essential creative issues of pop music remain the same as they ever were, and its challenge stands untouched by time: How does one create three minutes of music, involving simple language and the same musical notes everyone else uses, that somehow tweaks the soul and seems mysteriously in sync with the most private dreams and longings?

On *12 in a Room*, Mark Johnson offers an able demonstration of how it's done. An East Coast songwriter who's been kicking around New York for more than a few years, Johnson's written songs for the Roches and Dave Edmunds, but apparently that didn't convince anybody to give him a record deal—he made this album at home and released it himself. However, it's hard to imagine how a fat budget might've improved his music—it feels flawlessly performed as is. That's hard to explain

too, because Johnson isn't a particularly distinctive vocalist and his influences are fairly predictable (he travels a road paved by Buddy Holly, Phil Spector, the Beach Boys, the Beatles and Todd Rundgren). And yet using the most modest of means—a true heart and an ear for rhyme—he manages to build the perfect love shack.

Johnson's central theme is, of course, the finding and keeping of love, and he chronicles this quest with a song cycle that goes through wild mood swings. Beginning with an upbeat pledge of devotion called "Earn That Love," the record traverses romantic ecstasy (the transcendently beautiful "Love Radiates Around"), lust ("Through the Void"), sadness ("When a Heart Breaks Down") and utter despair ("Desperate," "Cold Weather"). Johnson wraps up the record with "Little Cricket," an ineffably sweet number that presents love as a force lurking in the bushes and the thickets, waiting to pounce on those alert to its warning sounds and sighs. Like "Love Radiates Around"—a model pop song—"Little Cricket" expresses a yearning so universal and pure that it feels like a hymn.

Throughout the album, the persona that coalesces around the narrator is that of a sensitive shy guy, earnest, idealistic, eccentric and oddly determined. Pop music has served as a haven for these oddball types for decades, but it's been a while since one of them became a full-fledged star—it would be surprising if Johnson were to buck that trend, too. Solidly built though his music is, it is nonetheless subtle—fragile even—when measured against the big, beefy beat currently dominating the charts. Johnson's probably aware of that (bigger stars than he couldn't score hits with his fine material), and that gives his music, which was clearly created with little consideration for the marketplace, an added poignancy. This is a record you'll have to work a bit to find, but it's worth the effort. Mark Johnson's songs linger in the mind like a haunting dream of an old flame. (Box 347, Village Station, New York, NY 10014-0347) —Kristine McKenna



**Steve Forbert**

*The American in Me*  
(Geffen)

HE HAS SEEN THE BEST MINDS OF HIS GENERATION, ripped by recession and crunched by credit rates, run screaming from the country club of life. Now, Steve Forbert—the bard of the

bourgeoisie, the mahatma of the middle class—asks the musical question, "Where have all the good times gone?" Obviously, those who pegged little Stevie as just another sensitive troubadour didn't know him too well. *The American in Me* tells a saga of suburban angst, not the tortured teen fodder of Metallica, but the less-celebrated mom-'n'-dad variety. Imagine Updike or Cheever set to a solid beat, minus the heavier insights.

Forbert sounds like before, thanks to husky sincerity and adequate folk-rock melodies. Only dig his message, beginning with the snappy leadoff track "Born Too Late," a lament of shrinking expectations that sighs, "Everything you love is gone/Everything you know is wrong." That's not Truth and Beauty on the wish list, either: Check the jumpy "Responsibility," where weary toil crowds out leisure, or the title tune, a wry story of consumer debt wrapped in a wistful *Blonde on Blonde* groove.

This is a timely demographic strategy, since Forbert's describing the corporate middle managers now getting socked hard by layoffs. If these white-collar victims have more time to watch him sing their blues on VH-1 as a result, so much the better, right? Just kidding. He's not really crass at all. Forbert shows genuine compassion on "You Cannot Win 'Em All," which even recommends making a will, and "New Working Day," where he wisely concludes, "Boy, what a weird book of rules," and mentions the capital gains tax, which may be a pop-music first.

Granting the artist his subject matter, Forbert depicts his characters' trials thoughtfully. But *The American in Me* seems less an American tragedy than the story of drab folks mired in material concerns. These people harbor grand passions, just like everyone else. When the economy picks up, maybe Forbert will tell us about 'em.

—Jon Young



**Cowboy Junkies**

*Black Eyed Man*  
(RCA)

THE NAME COWBOY JUNKIES SUGGESTS AN addiction to an attitude, and the nodded-out, muted quality of their music—everything, including the drums, Margo Timmins' paper-thin voice and the huge, hollow, ominous bass hum—is quietly obsessional. On their debut,

that lost-in-the-cathedral production seemed to some (i.e., me) too much of a gimmick. With album number three, the signature sound has been compromised by the group's desire to be heard. Like R.E.M. when Michael Stipe stopped mumbling, they've stepped out of the shadows of alternative musicianland. Somewhat.

But it's only from a distance that the Junkies sound like a somewhat conventional, if still anemic, country-rock-type band. Listening closely, you discern the subtly unnerving vision of group auteur (producer/guitarist/songwriter) Michael Timmins. The first nine songs here are his, reflecting concerns with loss and the longing to be somewhere else, as well as that sentimental nostalgia for vanished simplicity most keenly felt by people under 30. What sets them a few significant cuts above the usual for this type of thing is that Timmins' sentimentality is subverted by his clear-eyed realism. "Southern Rain" and "Oregon Hill" are simple but elegant sketches about settling for less; "This Street, That Man, This Life" and "Murder, Tonight, in the Trailer Park" are about two kinds of genuine horror, the first mundane, the second sordid but not extraordinary. The title song is a slice of rural gothic, "A Horse in the Country" about growing old too soon. It's impossible to convey in a short review just how good, in each instance, the lyrics are. They need to be quoted extensively, or perhaps just listened to.

The set does wind down toward the end, with two songs by Townes Van Zandt offering well-turned but more familiar views of the edgy life. But overall, this is an excellent record from a band which makes its strongest impression way after the first; seemingly more corporeal but actually more ghostly, apparently friendly and relaxed but found to be reclining on shards of glass.

—Richard C. Walls



**Sandy Denny**

*Who Knows Where the Time Goes?*  
(Rykodisc)

A SHORT HISTORY OF SANDY DENNY: FOLKSINGER first heard on record with the Strawbs, came to prominence with Fairport Convention, bailed out at the hour of their breakthrough, formed and dissolved Fotheringay, tried a solo career, rejoined Fairport, requit Fairport, did more solo work and died falling down a flight of stairs in



1978. If the bare facts make her seem like another talented flake who couldn't get things together, this archly beautiful three-disc retrospective tells the story more sympathetically.

*Who Knows Where the Time Goes?* presents a sustained musical vision rooted spiritually in both Thomas Hardy's Wessex and the coffeehouses of Greenwich Village, a vision which seems more powerful as the years pass. The digital remastering on this reissue brings out the regal grace of Denny's voice, the prim formality of her piano work and the sophisticated turns of her songwriting. Those songs, often overshadowed by Fairport compatriot Richard Thompson's, are worth rediscovering—concise, folkish gems like "Winter Winds," the blazing anti-war allegory "John the Gun" and should-be pop standards like the title track (here in an otherwise unreleased live version), suggesting that the mainstream acclaim that eluded her (or maybe that she eluded) was certainly due. And if her influence on people like Stevie Nicks went unnoticed 15 years ago, contemporary listeners can easily hear it in Natalie Merchant, Kate Bush and others. So who knows where the time goes? At least, as Fairport told us, it all comes 'round again.

—Thomas Anderson



**Keith Sweat**  
*Keep It Comin'*  
(Elektra)

**Tevin Campbell**  
*T.E.V.I.N.*  
(Qwest/Warner Bros.)

**S**INCE 1987, KEITH SWEAT HAS EXHIBITED THE GRIP and attitude of a classic soul singer, rather than a conventionally powerful voice. He and frequent collaborator Teddy Riley devised New Jack Swing for Sweat to rock up and slow down. That combination, plus Sweat's quick wits, allowed him to reinvent the sound of the love man on 1987's great single "I Want Her" and 1990's *I'll Give All My Love to You*, an album that recognized the world already had a Barry White and a Luther Vandross.

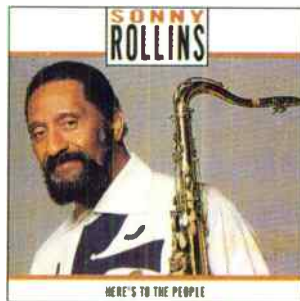
On *Keep It Comin'*, Sweat consolidates. He pulls back a bit from these 10 tracks—mostly self-produced or co-produced—but the loose reality of his voice remains. On the other hand, Sweat's arrangements of tunes like "Why Me Baby?" and "I'm Going for Mine," both ballads, or the title single and "Spend a Little Time," whose rhythms travel faster,

try to preserve in more evenly balanced productions the rawer sensations of his earlier records. Sweat only accomplishes this once, on "I Really Love You," where a feisty string part dashes against a fairly complicated bass-and-percussion groove in a way that sounds easy. Still, Sweat's many fans may just hear him as a few degrees smoother than before. (He's always been interested in smooth.) And they wouldn't be wrong; it's not like he's suddenly turned into Peabo Bryson.

In his early '30s, Sweat might indeed have to figure out how to refine his sound without sacrificing too much immediacy. But he doesn't have to worry, as Tevin Campbell does, that the girl of his dreams will mistake him for her younger brother. On *T.E.V.I.N.*, the careful debut of this powerhouse 13-year-old, Campbell protests and jokes about his underage status on the snappily alert "Lil' Brother," establishing—for now—an identity for this Quincy Jones discovery. The album—produced by Jones, Narada Michael Walden, Al B. Sure! and others—also introduces the awesomely elastic reach of Campbell's Stevie Wonderish voice, even if Jones stars him in an inappropriate one-world anthem entitled "One Song." Much better is "Round and Round," a spectacular Prince collaboration where Campbell gets to wonder whether truth "is right under our hair" and testify throughout the music's tough bounce that "Nothin' comes from talkers but sound."

With lush Walden ballads that don't overwhelm, like Campbell's current "Tell Me What You Want Me to Do" hit, and minor-keyish Al B. Sure! jams such as "Confused," *T.E.V.I.N.* offers a varied hour of the backward-and-forward pop that people love and criticize Quincy Jones for. But Jones and Prince also know that Tevin Campbell, like Keith Sweat, is a real singer. And that he won't be stuck with that little brother stuff much longer.

—James Hunter



**Sonny Rollins**  
*Here's to the People*  
(Milestone)

**E**VER-GI SHING FOUNTAINHEAD OF CREATIVITY? Check. Elder statesman whose capacity to thrill has only grown over the years? Check. A guy who can sell you complex musical notions as captivating baubles of pleasure? All day long. Then how come when serious listen- [cont'd on page 97]

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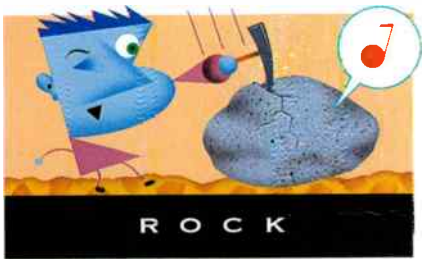
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# SHORT TAKES



## ROCK

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

### LOU REED

*Magic and Loss* [Sire]

If a song cycle about a friend's death from cancer doesn't seem the stuff hits are made of, well...it's not. But what *Magic and Loss* lacks in pop appeal is more than made up by its emotional impact. With arrangements so skeletal they're barely noticeable, the album stakes everything on its songs. Reed makes them work with sly melodic twists and a well-framed narrative, assuring that we not only understand his emotional turmoil, but share in it. Which, in the end, makes this a perfect modern blues: heartbreaking, thought-provoking, involving as life.

### BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO

*On Track* [Charisma]

Where Clifton Chenier was satisfied with bringing an R&B edge to zydeco, Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural has a more ambitious goal—bringing zydeco to rock 'n' roll. To that extent, this album is indeed "on track," thanks to cover tunes that are alternately slick ("Hey Joe," done Hendrix-style), soulful (Solomon Burke's "Cry to Me") and inspired (a strikingly localized "The Midnight Special"). But there's so much more spirit in the zydeco numbers (particularly "Everything Hurts" and the title tune) that you wonder if this really is the track he belongs on.

### TOP

*Emotion Lotion* [Island]

There's nothing new about Brit rockers blending Manchester-style house beats with guitar grunge and retro-psychedelia, but Top manages to put a new spin on the approach. How so? Partly because *Emotion Lotion* treats

those elements as parts of a cohesive whole, not just fashionable flavoring. Mostly because of the songs, delightfully tuneful tidbits ranging from the groovily arch "No. 1 Dominator" to the dreamily infectious "Soul Magic."

### JULES SHEAR

*The Great Puzzle* [Polydor]

In a strange way, the best proof of Shear's strength as a tunesmith is his weakness as a singer—it takes a truly resilient melody to shine through renditions as wobbly as the ones granted "The Trap Door" and "Dreams Dissolve in Tears." Still, this isn't just *11 Songs in Search of a Cover Artist*, as Shear's limitations add weight to some of his songs, particularly the doubt-plagued "Make Believe" and the gently nostalgic "We Were Only Making Love."

### MARC BONILLA

*EE Ticket* [Reprise]

His between-songs inserts may be gratefully cute, but what Bonilla delivers when he starts to play—guitar work that's fusion-smart and Van Halen-gutsy—is reason enough to indulge him. This year's Steve Vai?

### ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

*The Mambo Kings* [Elektra]

Linda Ronstadt and Los Lobos may be the most recognizable names on this soundtrack, but the real stars are Tito Puente, Celia Cruz and trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, musicians who make the mambo scene of the '50s seem infinitely more exciting than the rock of that era. Although Ronstadt's "Perfidia" is pretty impressive, itself.

### SARAH McLACHLAN

*Solace* [Arista]

McLachlan is an art-folkie, but don't worry—it's not as bad as it sounds. Sounding at times like a cross between Sinéad O'Connor and Kate Bush, her music has the feel of unadorned self-expression, with none of its rambling self-indulgence. She's given every chorus and rhyme, guitar fill and rhythm arrangement such careful consideration that each song seems a perfect miniature, so full of subtlety and detail that it's hard to listen only once.

### PETER CASE

*Six Pack of Love* [Geffen]

Case forgets the folk stuff and rocks out this time around, and while the sound isn't as effortless and exuberant as

his Plimsoul period, the results are far more resonant and adult. "Dream About You" is a Lennon-esque cocktail of innocence and lust; "Never Comin' Home" is tuneful and bratty; "Deja Blues" is as edgy and funny as its title. Worth hearing.

### SUGARCUBES

*Stick Around for Joy* [Elektra]

As much as the 'Cubes play off the vocal eccentricities of Bjork and Einar, the band's real strength has always been its instrumental agility. Never more so than here, where the Beefheart undertones of the band's earlier albums come into full flower, from the warped funk of "Chihuahua" to the giddy rhythmic work and guitar splatter of "Vitamin." Stick around? You bet.



## JAZZ

BY PETER WATROUS

### JOE HENDERSON

*Lush Life* [Verve]

I'm not sure what to celebrate here, the first studio album in roughly a decade by Henderson, and the major-label signing that goes with it, or the arrival of a magnificent, well-thought-out record. It also follows two minor marketing trends. First, each track has different instrumentation, solos through quintets, featuring Wyn-ton M. on trumpet, Stephen Scott on piano, Christian McBride on bass and Greg Hutchinson on drums. Second, there's a theme to the album. The songs of Billy Strayhorn. Oddly, if the album has a weakness, it comes from this conceptual brainstorm. Henderson isn't the greatest ballad player in the world, even if he's one of the greatest improvisers in the world. His talent blossoms on more uptempo material, where melody gets thrown out in favor of harmony and texture, where Henderson moves from the well-sanded upper-register sound to the



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barking of his lower register. You also find out how elliptical and rounded his playing has become, as opposed to the forthright music he made in the '60s.

**BILLY PIERCE**

*One for Chuck* [Sunnyside]

Modern tenor saxophone at its finest. Pierce, whose most notable recent gig has been playing with Tony Williams, knows a good line when he plays it, and the album is loaded with snaking and winding phrases that curl at the edges, as if they'd been singed by fire. Backed by a group including Mulgrew Miller on piano and Alan Dawson on drums, Pierce essays a few originals, which sum up the modern mainstream, with literate har-

monies and precise arrangements that underscore their moods. The standards—"From This Moment On" and "Solar," for example—are arranged to give the music an eerie feel, just different enough to take them as new.

**JOHNNY SMITH,**

**FEATURING STAN GETZ**

*Moonlight in Vermont* [Roulette]

A great missing link in guitar-dom, Smith fits in somewhere between, say, Jimmy Raney, Hank Garland and Charlie Christian. Harmonically, he's as imaginative as any of them. His lines jump all over the place, and though he's set up his group (usually with Stan Getz or Zoot Sims) as easy-listening jazz, his own improvisations

are laced with odd and bitter sounds. This album contains the often talked about, and rarely heard, "Moonlight in Vermont," with its famous Getz solo.

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

*Risque Rhythm, Nasty 50s R&B* [Rhino]

It's nice to have a bunch of classic jump and R&B stuff to double-entendre away lonely cold nights, things like "(I Love to Play Your Piano) Let Me Bang Your Box," "Big Long Slidin' Thing," "Big Ten Inch," etc. One great one is missing, though: "Mr. Thrill," by Mildred Jones, who sings about garage problems. The song contains the immortal lines "My Daddy's got a long, long Cadillac..." Well, you get the point.

**DONALD BROWN**

*People Music* [Muse]

Except for one ear-wrecking tune featuring a singer, these pieces, played by a sextet, are up to the level of Brown's last album, which was one of the better mainstream records of 1990. Brown, who plays piano, is better known as a composer, and it's easy to hear why; he's really absorbed the arranging and composing ploys of the last 20 years. The coolness of his writing gets broken up by Vincent Herring's hard-bitten playing, furious and convoluted.

**WALTER NORRIS**

*Sunburst* [Concord]

Smart idea: Team up two idiosyncratic players and let them go at it on fairly familiar material so as not to spend too much time rehearsing. Considering the limitations of the format and backed by a decent rhythm section, they pull it off, arguing the case for improvisation's supremacy over arranging. Joe Henderson is more effusive, full of looping and angular lines, while Norris is a bit more restrained. But the album is uniformly acceptable, a mainstream quartet date made special by the personalities behind the music.



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

*Women of Mali: The Wassoulou Sound* [Stern's Africa]

Women singers make up 90 percent of the vocalists in Mali's Wassoulou region. Not beholden to such hereditary traditions as praise-singing—prevalent in the griot culture found elsewhere in that part of Africa—they sing moralistic, metaphor-rich proverbs and tales of the hunt. The backing on this stunning compilation ranges from the mostly traditional instrumentation (balafon, native lute, etc.) of Sali Sidibe to a more electrified sound favored by the almost-manly-sounding Coumba Sidibe. The life-cycle rhythms are bracing and in the pocket, the voices in-your-face plaintive. You don't need a PA to hear pipes like these, just tolerant ears and a willingness to lose it. (598 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

—Tom Cheyney

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JOHNNY ADAMS

*Sings Doc Pomus: The Real Me* [Rounder]

Johnny Adams, Nawlins' Tan Nightingale, is a sucker for other people's tunes. First came his 1990 album, *Walking on a Tightrope*, a masterful sample of Percy Mayfield plums. *The Real Me* plucks 11 morsels from the late Jerome "Doc" Pomus's songbook, with the help of such luminous figures as Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack, Duke Robillard and Alvin "Red" Tyler. Adams' inexorable soulfulness and uncanny control combine with the all-star hand's nonstop swing to squeeze every last drop of emotion from Pomus' elegantly simple compositions. The emphasis is on ballads, with cuts like "Blinded by Love" and "There Is Always One More Time" brought to a slow boil. Bnt Adams and Co. also jump it up a bit on "I Underestimated You" and "The Night Is a Hunter." Once again Adams has put some class in classic.—*Tom Cheyney*

THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

*Live at Mandel Hall* [Delmark]

The recording studio has often helped focus the Art Ensemble's intrepid rambling, but their sumptuous ritual never sounds more riveting than when they're playing live. This 20-year-old hometown date is exceptional because it captures their moves before the inevitable stylistic sedimentation swiped any of their impact. Each inventive turn—from minimal bass ruminations to collective horn webs—pulses with vitality. The tacit demand for constant surprise (heard at many points here) just might be the essence of their aesthetic. (4243 North Lincoln, Chicago, IL 60618)—*Jim Macnie*

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

*Plutonian Nights: The Music of Sun Ra* [Coppens]

Because Sunny's plumes are so extravagant, his pen is often underestimated. This reeds-only outfit from Boston, which gets wiser with each release, reminds us of that. Ra's memorable melodies are many, and the 12 on this gorgeous disc provide inspiration for a band who—at least for one outing—are more concerned with arrangements than individual solos. This tact further emphasizes the themes, and even if you hanker for a tad more exclamation, their collective articulation is impressive.—*Jim Macnie*

NO MAN

*How the West Was Won* [SST]

Still raving the way he did in Mission of Burma, Roger Miller traffics in corrosive substances: riffs hammered from guitar noise, curt rhythms and bitter, belligerent vocals. However gripping these distress signals, the real thrills result when he unearths the pop sensibility buried in the cacophony, whether taming a screamer like "Cartoon, Cartoon (Where's the Exit?)" or revealing the lyricism in a stream of feedback on "Grabbed Star." Miller comes damn close to resembling a genius sometimes, so why isn't he a bigger star?—*Jon Young*

TIM O'BRIEN

*Odd Man In* [Sugar Hill]

After his big-budget solo debut was inexplicably shelved by RCA Nashville, O'Brien, former lead singer/songwriter for bluegrass stalwarts Hot Rize, picked up the pieces

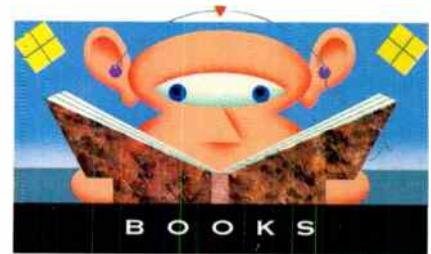
and made this indie-label version of the same record. Thank God (or RCA), because this self-produced gem, recorded mostly live with a stellar crew of his pickin' pals, sounds brighter and more real than much of the overdubbed, formulaic "tradition" currently coming out of Music City. Not surprisingly, given his background, O'Brien shines on guitar and mandolin. His songwriting, however, reflecting influences that stretch effortlessly from Bill Monroe to the Beatles, is the real star. Kathy Mattea took his "Untold Stories" to the top of the charts a couple of years ago, and these songs, from the middle-age meditation of "Like I Used to Do" to the syncopated lyricism of "One Way Street," are proof enough that it's time O'Brien got some hits of his own.—*Peter Cronin*

LEFTY FRIZZELL

*The Best Of* [Rhino]

Such was the magic of Frizzell's voice that he could turn material as hokey as "Always Late with Your Kisses" into not only hit records, but country classics. Such are fame's quirks that the hits dried up a year later and Lefty looked like a has-been by his mid-20s. Eight years on, his reading of "Long Black Veil" not only revived his career, but remains one of the most perfect recordings in all of country music. Both of the above are included in this collection, which stands—even with its omission of his early-'70s work—as the best anthology of one of the greatest voices to grace the honky-tonks.

—*Thomas Anderson*



POSITIVELY BOB DYLAN

Michael Krogsgaard [Popular Culture, Ink.]

After 10 years this invaluable (to Dylan freaks) reference work is finally published in the U.S.—and revised through February, 1991 as well. The book simply lists every Dylan recording conceivable: official studio sessions, media appearances, audience tapes of concerts, etc. There are a lot of them. Over a dozen indices slice and dice the information in various useful ways. A sprinkling of photos and print advertisements throughout doesn't hurt either. (Box 1839, Ann Arbor, MI 48106)

—*Scott Isler*

FIRST PRESSINGS: THE HISTORY OF RHYTHM & BLUES

Galea Gart, ed. [Big Nickel]

Like any good journalist, compiler/editor Gart goes to the source: His multi-volume R&B history consists of trade-paper ads and rewritten period news articles. It would be nice (for researchers, at least) if he credited his

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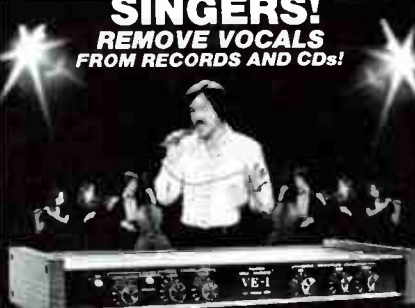
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sources, but that doesn't hinder *First Pressings'* sheer entertainment value. The latest volume is the earliest chronologically, covering the year 1951. As with the others, a thorough index makes it more than a nicely laid-out scrapbook. (Box 157, Milford, NH 03055)—*Scott Isler*

### THE ROCK 'N' ROLL SINGER'S SURVIVAL MANUAL

Mark Baxter

[Hal Leonard Publishing]

If you're one of those singers who feels that lessons would "ruin" your voice, this is the book for you. "Rock 'n' Roll" is the key word here. While plenty of attention is paid to the technical disciplines involved, there's also much-needed advice for all you "emotional" singers. Baxter, whose students have included Steven Tyler and Peter Wolf, takes an encompassing approach to the craft without making you feel like you'll turn into an opera singer.—*Peter Cronin*

### DEAD ELVIS

Greil Marcus

[Doubleday]

In which one of our leading pop metaphysicians gathers together mostly post-1977 essays on Elvis the icon. Not surprisingly, the result reveals more about Marcus, and ourselves, than Presley. Since the author is as obsessed as any Elvis fan, his musings are more than academic. The King may have left the building but not this country's collective psyche.—*Scott Isler*

### DARK HORSE

Geoffrey Giuliano

[Plume]

This George Harrison bio was first published in hardcover in 1990, but it was really made for a paperback audi-

ence, particularly those with split-second attention spans. Though it starts out promisingly with some price-less early-Beatle anecdotes, the book soon loses its way. It's understandable, considering the vast amount already published on the subject, that Giuliano would breeze through Harrison's '60s history; what's inexcusable is that he continues his rapid pace after 1970. Occasionally something interesting gets out, but only just enough to leave the reader dissatisfied. Worst of all, he says next to nothing about the music, and isn't that what got us interested in the first place?—*Mac Randall*

## RECORDINGS

[cont'd from page 91] ers want a rousing dose of tenor madness these days, they opt for club dates instead of turning to Sonny Rollins' studio records? Sadly, a syndrome has set in. Call it "My Parents Went to a Killer Newk Show and All They Brought Back Was This Mediocre *Dancing in the Dark* Record."

But a change has come. With the titan operating at almost-full capacity, *Here's to the People* is a Rollins record you can display on the mantle for longer than a month or two. In fact, it's the most vivacious example of how Sonny's improvisations blend poise and caprice, logic and adventure, uproariousness and discrimination, since *G-Man's* spree back in '85. And remember, *that* was a live record.

Only a handful of notes burst from Rollins' horn before you realize *People* has got the juice. His "Why Was I Born?" doesn't sulk in an existential quandary, but bellows out rounded phrases of unflagging optimism: Here's why I was born! Specific weight is put on each turn, a revelation considering that recent discs have found his sprawling pronouncements tumbling into each other. It's a bugaboo: The great man's horn is so dizzyingly forceful that his ensemble yields too willfully. Instead of challenging him to jump hurdles, they wind up throwing him bones.

To a degree, that benign approach occurs here as well, but the boss' constant recasting of melody is so inspired it hardly matters. Lyricism abounds. "I Wish I Knew," a ballad on which Roy Hargrove's piercing trumpet becomes a foil for Newk's gorgeously brusque temperament, offers a scad of unexpected twists. Rollins knots the thread of the theme in such an incisive manner that you don't mind that he has left the rest of the band behind. Hargrove stands tall, however, eschewing bluster for grace.

The substance of Rollins' playing has never been under debate. But at this point, in the studio, a change of faces couldn't hurt (e.g. more Jack DeJohnette, less Steve Jordan). Producer John Snyder might have ideas; his efforts have helped Frank Morgan and Johnny Griffin to blossom of late. Until then, however, *Here's to the People* can be enjoyed as the feisty celebration it believes itself to be.

—Jim Macnic

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First up is *Elvis Costello, God's Comic: A Critical Companion to His Lyrics and Music*. Author David Gouldstone has many canny insights into the development of our beloved Dec McManus, but we liked this one best: "His favorite group as a youngster was the Beatles, demonstrating a lack of originality that fortunately has not lasted through his career. The first record he owned was 'Please Please Me,' which he must have bought when he was about nine. Such precocity indi-

icates the depth of his natural response to the music."

Indeed, old bean! While we're studying that special critical perspective that we Yanks can only call "British," let's take a dip into *Wanted Man*, the second collection of articles from the very entertaining Bob Dylan fan magazine, *The Telegraph*. Here's an interview with Ron Wood, in which the salaried Stone raves about a great unreleased Dylan track that Wood played on, but which Dylan has—for reasons Woody can't fathom—never released. It's called "Mountain of Love," Woody explains, and then sings some of it: "Half a million people...high on a mountain of love." Sounds great, Ron. By the way, have you ever heard that other great unre-



leased Dylan song, "Secret Agent Man"?

But we have to come back to the States for the sort of bare-knuckles reporting most scholars thought went out with the invention of fact checking. We refer to *Call Her Miss Ross: The Unauthorized Biography of Diana Ross*, by J. Randy Taraborrelli. First, J. Randy gives us some historical context for the Supremes' first success by explaining that the group's first hit, "Where Did Our Love Go" was released on June 17, 1964...in the midst of Presley-mania and the first inklings of an upcoming British invasion." Yeah, you had to be a real fortune-teller to get an inkling of the upcoming British invasion in the summer of '64. The author's keen knowledge of '60s icons extends later in the book to include none other than former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. According to Taraborrelli's sources, Diana and Jackie met in the mid-'80s and became close enough for Mrs. O. to tell Miss R. that she wanted to have more kids, but was experiencing "woman's problems." We're no doctors, but seems to us that being 55 years old is one woman's problem no obstetrician has licked. M





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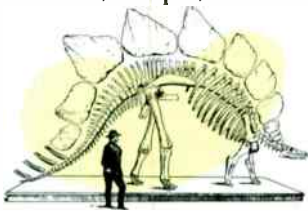
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