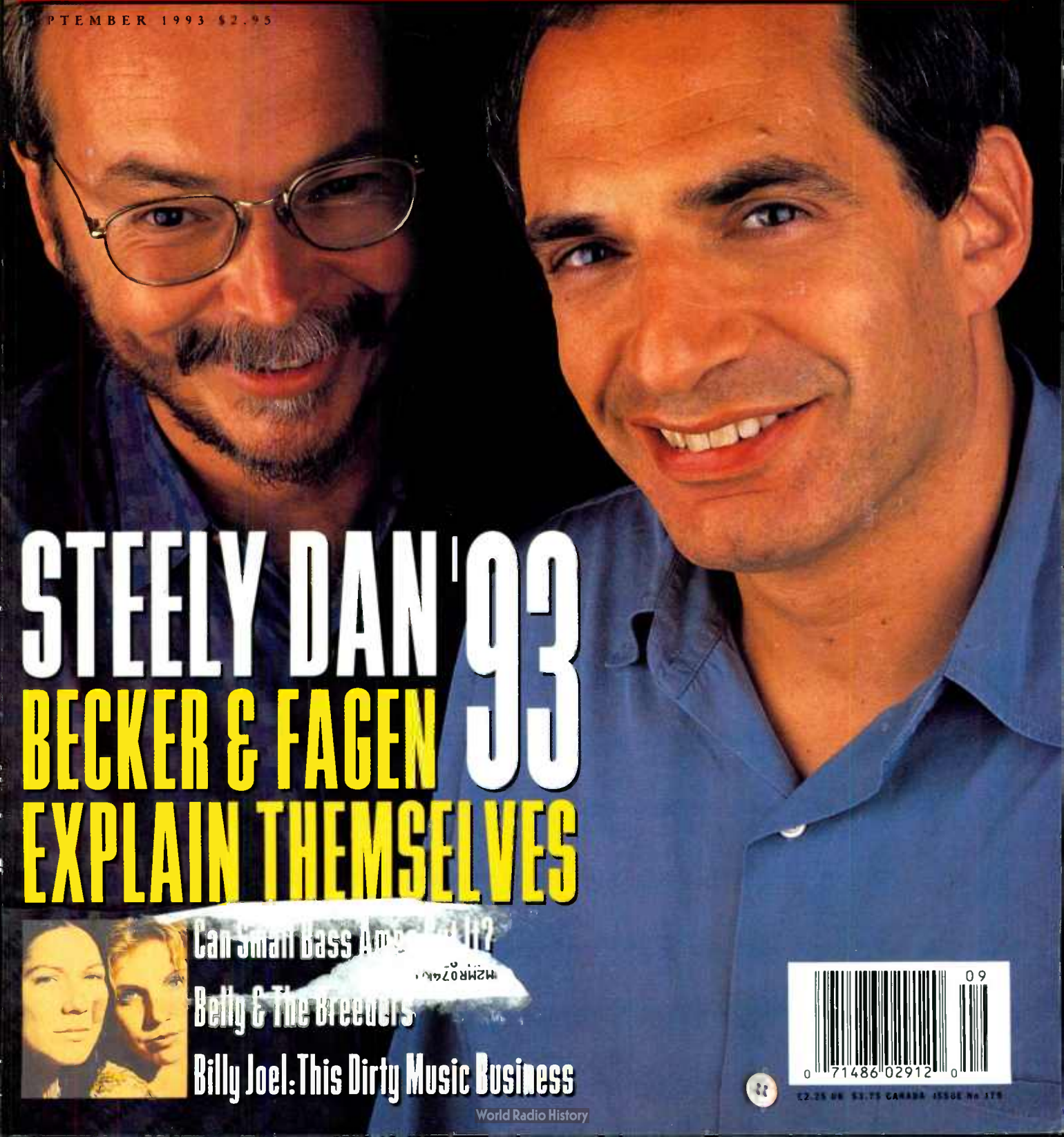


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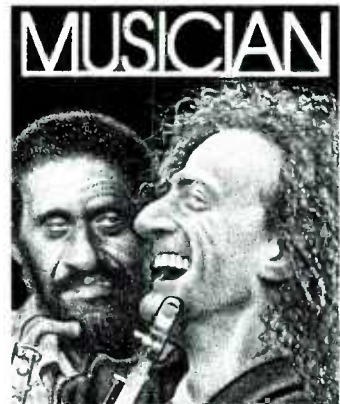
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We have no "Letters" page this month because the package containing all this issue's reader correspondence was (honest) lost in the mail.



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ROD STEWART

The energy level at your shows has been great lately.

Providing the voice is working. I have a lot of trouble with my voice. It's affected by weather conditions, air conditioning, pollen. I'll shake hands with someone who's got a cold and I'll catch a cold and it's fucked, you know? It's a very delicate instrument. Now, in the last five years I've found this piece of equipment where you have two earphones right inside next to your eardrums, as close as you can get. So you can hear everything—you can actually hear yourself breathing while you're singing. That's all you need. The trouble comes when you can't hear yourself. You push too much. Def Leppard were nearly going to cancel their tour. The singer was down to two concerts a week, three at the most. He is now singing five concerts a week. That's what a major breakthrough it is. I saw Phil Collins' earpiece when I was getting measured up for my one. [laughs] Phil's had voice problems.

But all that stuff in the world is not going to help you if you come down with the flu. You're a prisoner of your own voice when you're on tour. Two little muscles bang together in the bottom of your throat. Have you ever seen what it looks like? I've had to. They put a camera up your nose. It goes all the way back down. It really makes you gag. But to see your own throat, it looks just like a pussy. It's exactly the same, the same coloring and everything. A tremendous experience. I have it done every year.

You've stopped kicking soccer balls into your audience?

I keep getting sued. People come to the concert, and I'm sure they scratch their finger at home, and they make out they did it trying to collect the balls. I've got 12 suits pending already, so I've got to stop it. One guy sued me because he said when he reached for the ball, he got knocked down and broke his finger, and he's a writer and hasn't been able to work anymore. Ay-yi-yi. I used to enjoy that so much, too, kicking the balls out.

Did you listen to much folk music as a young man?

Yeah. Derroll Adams was my favorite. Banjo player, used to play with Ramblin' Jack Elliott. I used to love Ramblin' Jack.

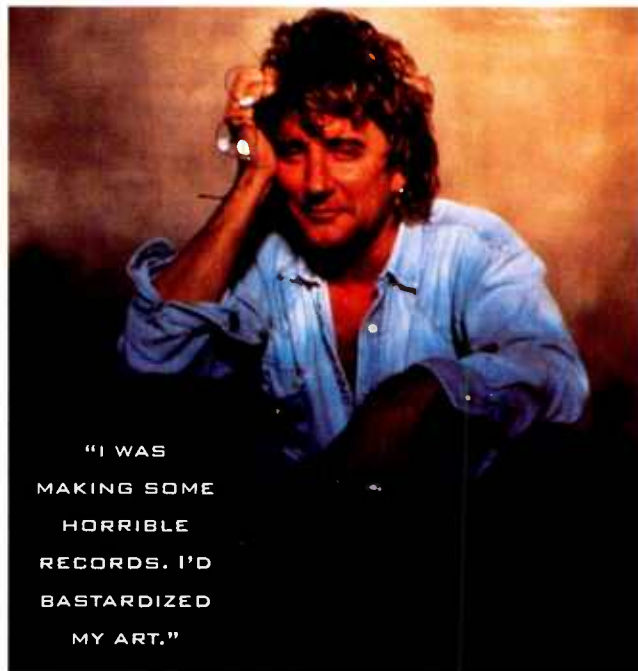
You can hear that a bit in your songs, like the way "Every Picture Tells a Story" rambles on.

Yes. It's the only song ever written where the chorus is right at the end. [laughs] The way we made albums then was so unbridled. Today they say, "Well, you've got two singles, and we'd like another one. Can you go back and record some more stuff?" It didn't used to be like that. You made a body of work, as an album, and it stood up. If there was a single on there, it was an accident. "Maggie May" was an accident. It wasn't meant to go on the album. A mate of mine who I thought had good ears said, "Well, I don't think it's got much of a melody, and it's a bit long, you know?" I said, "Well, I only recorded 10 tracks for this album. There's nothing left over, so it'll have to stay. I've run out of budget."

So I take it this friend is not your manager.

No, no. [laughs] You know what he was? He was a car salesman who wanted to be a rock manager. There's a lethal combination for you. He actually had a number one hit with a song called "In a Broken Dream" in England. That was a demo I did for him. He said, "Will you do this favor for me? Just sing on this tape, because I've got a new singer. I'll play him the tape and he can copy you." I said, "What do I get out of it?" He said, "I'll give you

FRONT MAN



"I WAS
MAKING SOME
HORRIBLE
RECORDS. I'D
BASTARDIZED
MY ART."

a new set of carpets for your sports car." So I did the tape, didn't hear anything of it until "Maggie May" is number one, the following year. They put this out, and it was number one as well. Bastard. Haven't seen him since.

Were you tempted to write anything new for your Unplugged album?

No. No, I didn't want to. I'm not a great lover of writing songs, really. It's a huge income for me. But still, it's hard work. I struggle over every fucking line like it's a jewel. I'm not really a natural writer. Dylan probably sits down and writes five songs a day. And Tom Waits and all those real songwriters. [laughs] I'm sure Shelley and Keats had the same problem, struggling over their art.

I haven't written anything for two years. I've been married two-and-a-half years. And a lot of things have changed. I don't think I'll be writing things like "Hot Legs" again, "Passion," or "Infatuation." I'll be interested to see what I come up with. "Pipe and Slipper Club Blues." [fruity voice] "Bring me my pipe and slippers, darling, will you?"

For all the Rod-bashing, it's not as if the critics didn't like you. What made them mad is you didn't stay as you were when they first liked you.

Well, they were right. Greil Marcus, I think it was, who said, "Biggest waste of one of the finest voices of the twentieth century..." or something like that. When I read that, I felt, "Geez, he's absolutely right." 'Cause I was making some horrible records. I'd bastardized my art. I'd made records like "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?" and "Love Touch." Nothing more than just horrible pop songs. At least I realize I've made mistakes, and I've worked at making all that better now. I caused a lot of that Rod-bashing myself, because I totally believed I was God's gift to women. I was believing everything I read about myself in the papers. But, God. I was so lucky. I think I've come out of it fairly unscathed.

J.D. CONSIDINE

BE-BECK-A-LULA

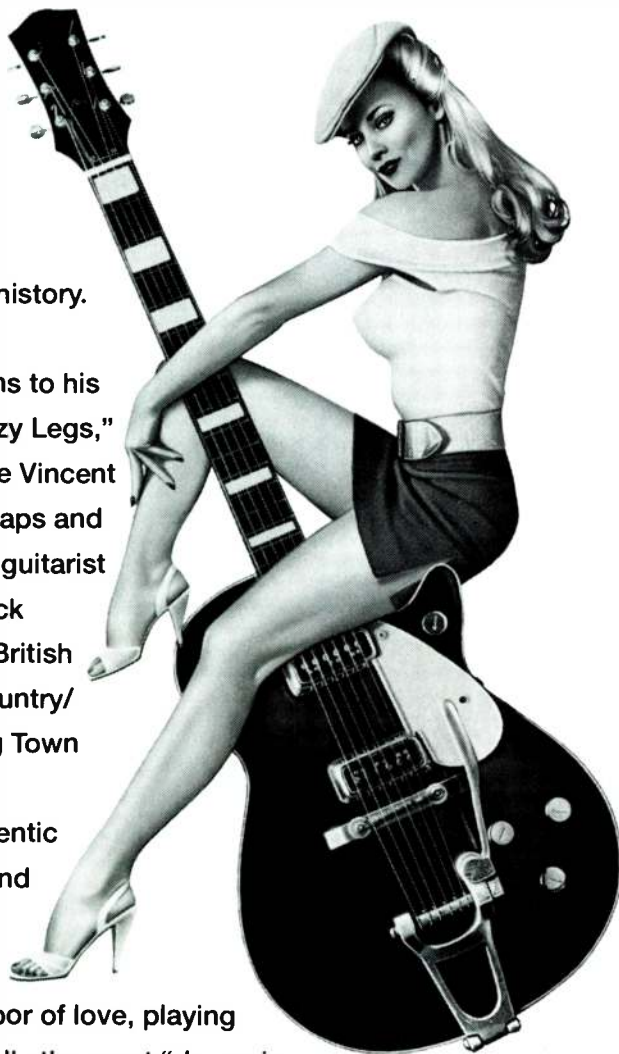
"I started to play guitar after hearing Gene Vincent and The Blue Caps."

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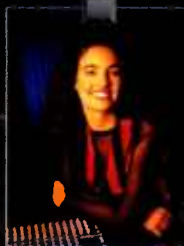
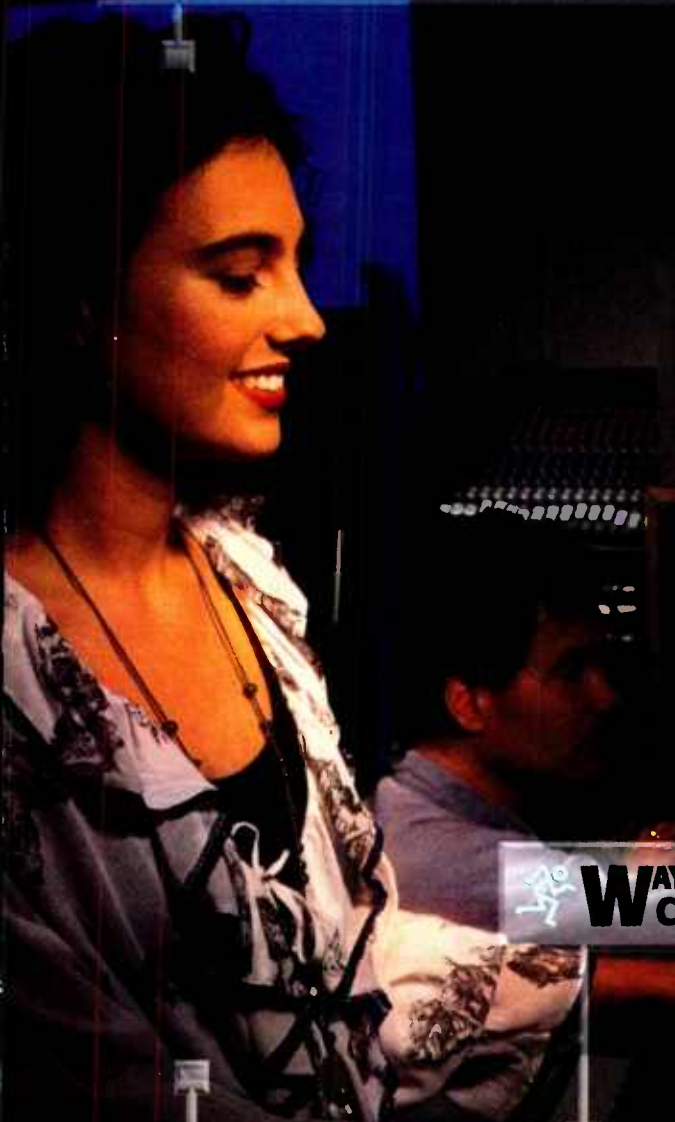
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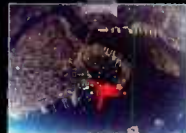
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ABOVE: Starr Parodi and husband/co-producer Jeff Fair in their home studio. Essential equipment includes Akai digital samplers, Panasonic DAT, eight Korg keyboards and of course, two Mackie CR-1604 16-channel mic/line mixers.



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FACES



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Here Comes Sun-60

SUN-60'S brand of rock 'n' roll is a great deal like the architecture of its L.A. hometown, with classic and modern influences—the Beatles and X, Buffalo Springfield and the Jam, the Stones and Talking Heads—existing and clashing side by side. A collaboration between darkly earnest David Russo and willowy, intense Joan Jones (along with the muscular rhythm section of bass player Bret Jensen and drummer Greg Levitz), the group's second self-produced album, *Only*, explores the paradox of the City of Angels, where physical beauty and psychic dislocation are the yin and yang of the mindscape.

"People come here to let their dreams out," explains Jones over the din of a Los Feliz coffee shop. "This appears to be a place that's nurturing, but it turns out to be a desert. There's a harsh beauty that can suck everything out of you and, at the same time, create an environment in which you can grow."

After four years on the competitive local club circuit and non-stop touring with Material Issue, Style Council and Crowded House, the group has honed its live show to a jackhammer edge that belies the more dreamy side of such tracks as "Hold On," "All of the Joy" and "Pressure."

Playing in the Jabberjaw club on an otherwise deserted street in a seedy section of L.A., the group's sweaty single-mindedness and devoted following bring to mind the late-'70s CBGB's scene. But can today's new music regain the cultural impact enjoyed in the '60s and '70s?

"Music is universal and timeless," Russo insists. "It may not have the same role it did 30 years ago, but it still enriches lives. It's important to let rock 'n' roll die, so it can be reborn." **ROY TRAKIN**



MELISSA FERRICK

ONE DAY, Melissa Ferrick was playing for a couple of hundred people in a Boston club. The next, she got a call to open for Morrissey in front of 15,000. "I had no time to prepare or even get nervous," she recalls. "I had to just get in the car and go."

Soon after Ferrick was invited to complete the tour with Morrissey, record companies began paying attention as well. Performing solo with just an acoustic guitar, however, Ferrick was quickly

tagged a folkie, a label she's been trying to shed ever since. Nonetheless, *Massive Bliv*, her debut, marks the first time she played an electric guitar. "(Producer) Gavin MacKillop [Goo Goo Dolls, Toad the Wet Sprocket] put this Telecaster in my hands and said, 'Go ahead.' I started playing and he said, 'You have to do lead lines on this record.' I had no idea what I was doing," Ferrick laughs. She did manage to lay down all the rhythm tracks and five of the leads. With her low, sometimes growly voice, comparisons will be made to Joan Armatrading and Tracy Chapman, but Ferrick is her own woman, as her energetic songs combine insightful tales of troubled relationships with loose, raucous, Neil Young-inspired electric guitar. There's not a folk song in sight. **CHRIS RUBIN**

FACES



LITA FORD

Jane Siberry *All Grown Up*

I'VE CHANGED over the last three years," says Jane Siberry. "There have been long periods of darkness, but now I feel strong. I feel quite rock-like."

Mostly self-produced, Siberry's *When I Was a Boy* offers more of her intense cosmic vistas, at times recalling the likes of Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel, but ultimately sounding like nobody else. Marked by what she calls "a new kind of strength and aggression," the Canadian's sixth LP reflects little of the uncertainty that preceded it.

"I wrote the record three years ago, then threw all the songs out," she recalls. "Then I wrote and recorded a whole new album, but I sensed disappointment from Warner Bros. because they couldn't find a single. I told them I wouldn't release it unless they were enthusiastic, since the last one [*Bound by the Beauty*] had simply disappeared. So I wrote a few more songs, but told them to find me a producer, 'cause I didn't know how to produce a single."

Enter Brian Eno, who'd written the label a fan letter lamenting *Beauty's* commercial failure. Working with Siberry on new tunes for a revamped *Boy*, he wasn't the cool theoretician she expected. "It surprised me: The tracks Brian liked were the most emotional. He suggested I drop the ones that were more musically interesting, but less true to me. The best thing he's done for me is not in the songs, though—it's just having his name there as a vote of confidence."

Siberry's anxious to move on. "I've quit drinking, so now I can get up at 6:30 and work till midnight," she enthuses. "I'm working on a children's book and new video ideas, and I'm learning a computer program to do artwork. I'd like to make a record of choral pieces. Now I'll have to quit sleeping," she laughs. "I feel like I have a fire under my butt!"

JON YOUNG

BUFFALO TOM

★ ACOUSTIC STAGE DIVING

WHEN IT came to the guitar solos, Lita Ford kicked our ass," confesses Buffalo Tom bassist/singer Chris Colbourn. As the band finished up recording sessions at (co-producers) the Robb Brothers' Cherokee Studios, the hard rock goddess was also in recording. But Buffalo Tom weren't intimidated. In fact, on the strength of the band's solid vocal harmonies and organic songwriting, Buffalo Tom have found it easier to shift away from what they describe as that "one-guitar wall of sound"—a progression first hinted at on '91's potent *Let Me Come*



ED STARRS

L to R: Tom Maginnis, Bill Janovitz, Chris Colbourn

Over, and confirmed on their fourth and latest release, *Big Red Letter Day*.

"I think we just got sick of it," says

singer/guitarist Bill Janovitz (drummer Tom Maginnis completes the Massachusetts trio). "One guitar *really loud* is not as interesting to me now as maybe three or four guitars, each doing a different thing."

Buffalo Tom are one of the few bands who can turn a ballad up to 11—and still attract stagedivers.

"Sometimes I like stagediving—I like the energy," decides Janovitz. "But it can also be patronizing, like when they pat you on the back—and it's guys who would ordinarily be beating us up at concerts."

Colbourn laughs. "Usually it's the same guys who shoved me aside at shows in Boston for years. I've even recognized people—it's like, 'Now you're at my show, and you're the guy who knocked my beer into my face two weeks ago!'"

"Now, Lita Ford," he adds. "She could teach us a thing or two." DEV SHERLOCK

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FACES

John Oswald

THERE'S SOMETHING excitingly different about John Oswald's fourth Plunderphonics release: It's for sale.

Canadian composer Oswald defines "plunderphone" as "a recognizable audio quote." In other words, what hip-hop artists do for a backing track, Oswald does for the main course. Heavily manipulating existing recordings—sometimes adding accompaniment, almost always shifting elements electronically—he creates a gloss on musical culture.

To get around the obvious legal difficulties posed by his source material, Oswald distributed his work free. Not even this was fail-safe. The Canadian Recording Industry Association destroyed his undistributed copies of a 1989 CD, charging copy right infringement against Michael Jackson, among others. A 1990 project for Elektra, using only



STYLING: GUY

that company's catalog, was aborted after some artists complained; it barely dribbled out to radio stations.

Now John Zorn's Avant label has taken the Plunderphonics challenge. Avant "quite impractically commissioned me to do a piece," Oswald says. "I tried to think of a practical Plunderphonics project." The result is *Plexure*, which embraces multitudes—"over 1000 sources from close to 1000 different artists."

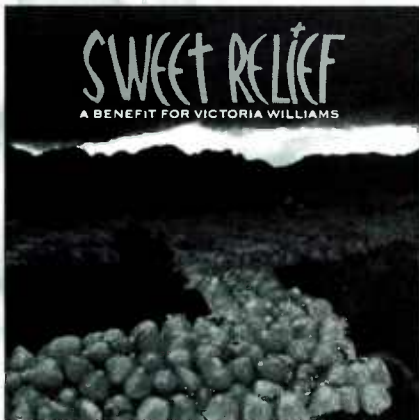
On paper it's a lawyer's nightmare. Oswald's strategy was to snip samples he calls "clones" as short as one-thirtieth of a second and mix dense sonic layers, "morphing" the artists. Oswald and assistant Phil Strong put in nine man-months assembling the 20-minute work. He considers himself one of the few musicians who've

earned the adjective "underground": "If Nirvana is alternative music and is at the top of the charts, then what is alternative music?"

There's more to Oswald than Plunderphonics; he's currently working on his fourth commission from the Kronos Quartet. Those pieces never seem to pique the legal establishment's interest. But there's still hope for Plunderphonics: He's also working on a Grateful Dead retrospective. We'll see what *their* sense of humor is like. **SCOTT ISLER**

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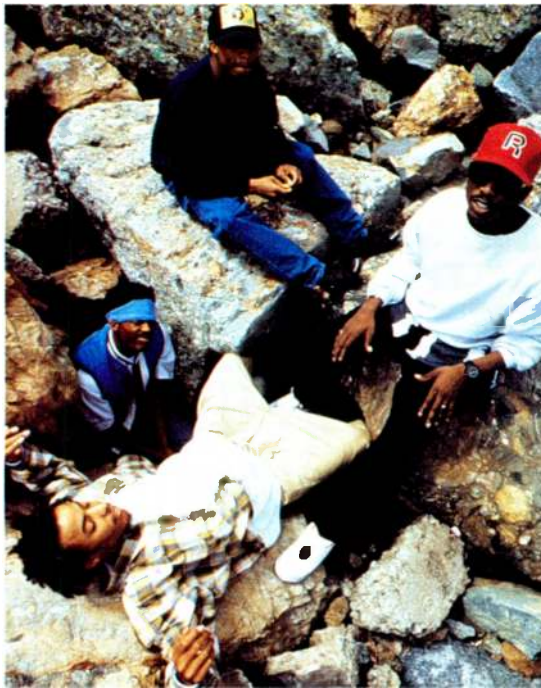


The Pharcyde

OUR GROUP'S INFLUENCE," the Pharcyde's Romye "Booty Brown" Robinson says, "is mainly Whitey's dancers." Whitey's dancers????!! As in Whitey's Savoy Lindy Hoppers? The Harlem teenagers in the '30s who tore up dancefloors and Broadway and Hollywood stages with their kinetic routines?

The answer is: yep. But Robinson's citing is not just an unexpected reply—considering the Pharcyde is a very '90s hip-hop outfit—it's also an honest one. The Pharcyde displays the same acrobatic facility with words as Herbert White's kids did with their bodies. The L.A.-based quartet evolved from a break-dancing group, suggesting further parallels.

What immediately hits the listener of *Bizarre Ride II the Pharcyde*, however, is the group's wiggly sense of humor. The debut album's raps and skits float high above the mundane boasts and squalid scenarios of much of the competition. Whether or not they break new



Clockwise from bottom: Tre (Slim Kid), Romye (Booty Brown), Derrick (Fat Lip), Imani (Darky Boy)

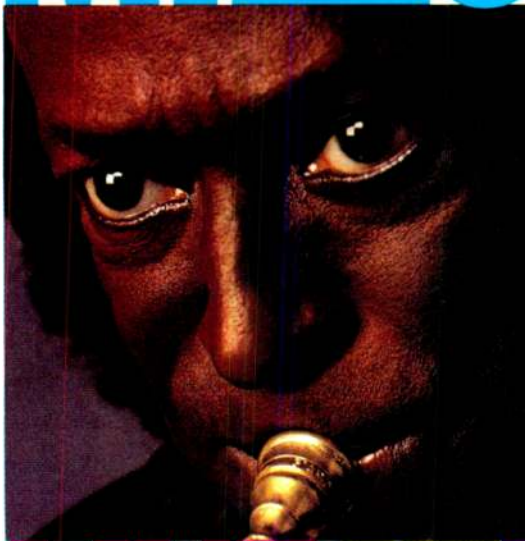
ground thematically, the Pharcyde's jazz samples and sing-songy vocals (shades of Jon Hendricks!) underline an approach that lives up to their name.

Released late last year, *Bizarre Ride* at first seemed to be taking the Pharcyde only to the darkcyde. Robinson says he hates the album's first single, the comic dis-fest "Ya Mama": "If a comedian keeps saying his jokes all the time, it's not funny after a while." A second single, "Passin' Me By," got them off the ground; although a comparatively conventional romantic ballad, the track does end with a belch.


The album's high-spirited camaraderie is less surprising in view of the four Pharcyders' communal living arrangement. If they can get along with each other after such prolonged exposure, it's no wonder their PMA is infectious. Even where *Bizarre Ride* isn't out-and-out funny, its dazzling virtuosity is a joy to behold—like Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. "That's how I want my music to be," Robinson says: "the way they dance."

SCOTT ISLER

MILES & QUINCY



There was only one Miles Davis, and this is the Miles we are fortunate enough to hear in this magnificent and poignant swan song. —Leonard Feather

Miles made it a rule never to look back. But he was one to always break the rules. For this one time, Miles returned to his classic material, complete with the original Gil Evans charts, conducted and produced by Quincy Jones. Featuring Boplicity / Springsville / Maids Of Cadiz / The Duke / My Ship / Miles Ahead / Blues For Pablo / Orgone / Gone, Gone, Gone / Summertime / Here Come De Honey Man / The Pan Piper / Solea Available On Warner Bros. Cassettes and Compact Discs and Warner Reprise Video VHS and Laser Disc. ©1993 Warner Bros. Records Inc. 

LIVE AT MONTREUX

World Radio History

ON STAGE



LOS LOBOS AND FRIENDS

THERE WAS A GREAT OPENING band for Los Lobos at their twentieth anniversary celebration at the Greek—Los Lobos unplugged. Returning to a time when they played the musics of Mexico at weddings and coming-of-age parties, L.A.'s favorite *hijos* filled the soft twilight with 45 minutes of NAFTA-friendly *rancheras*, steamy Veracruz *sones jarochos* and a few originals. Cesar Rosas, who has kept the goatee-and-shades faith all these years, handled lead vocals for most of the early set, often saluting one of his neighborhood friends in the hometown crowd. Whether double-picking on the *reguinto* miniguitar, pumping fire on his button squeezebox or bowing his fiddle like a lost Cajun, David Hidalgo let it be known early on he had come to shred.

The "...and Friends" part of the show came during the 90-minute-plus main event. After a

spooky, three-quarter-speed "Don't Worry Baby," fellow roots revisionist Richard Thompson ambled on. The Wolves acted as his backing unit on a murderous version of "Shoot Out the Lights," replete with guitar turns featuring Rosas' roadhouse stomp, Hidalgo's earth-father blues and Thompson's Celtic modalities.

Two songs later, John Lee Hooker, in a copper-mocha suit and hat, sat in his center-stage chair as the band laid down a formidable choogle behind the blues legend's growls and moans on "It Serves Me Right (to Suffer)." The mojo came to a boil on "Think Twice Before You Go" and overflowed on an extended "Boogie Everywhere I Go," with Hooker stalking the stage like the king of the pride.

Though the appearances of Thompson, Hooker and later John Hiatt (who added vocals to "Will the Wolf Survive?" and "Down on the Riverbed") made for a memorable evening, the on-again, off-again format worked against the band sustaining any spiritual connection. But when Hidalgo strapped on his accordion for an uptempo border boogie—a tumblin' polkatharsis on "Ay Te Dejo

en San Antonio" and "Corrido #1"—even industry schmoozers were forced to shut up and give in to the oompahpah groove constructed by Conrad Lozano on bass, Louie Perez on drums and fellow Garfield High alum Victor Bessette on percussion.

Before finishing off with "Georgia Slop," led by Steve Berlin's baritone sax, the band reeled off a frightening version of "Wicked Rain." As Hidalgo choked the upper frets of his doubleneck, Rosas spit out the kind of lyrics ("There's a storm off in the distance/And it looks like it's here to stay") that had made their *Kiko* album such an eerily prophetic soundtrack when Angelenos wept during the civil unrest of '92. Their choice to encore with Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" underscored Los Lobos' ability to communicate a populist critique of daily life without sloganeering. Hidalgo wrapped his tenor around the melody with clarity and passion in one of the night's most emotional performances. A fitting finale for a group that has gone from being another band from East L.A. to one of the most enduring ensembles in American music.

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BILLY JOEL VS. THE MUSIC BIZ



W

HAT IS BILLY JOEL'S TAKE ON THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

Simple: Beware of vipers. Run, duck, dig in, *fight back*. As Joel often shouts at the end of his shows, "Don't let the bastards get you down!" And expect the worst. Don't hire just one lawyer, but hire another to monitor that one, he says. The same with accountants. And if possible, don't get a manager, since managers can't always be trusted either.

"I manage myself now," says Joel. "You have to learn how the business works. You have to know how deals are made. You have to look at the casualties in real life; if you don't learn how to survive, that will be you! They'll flush you right down the toilet the minute they can. They'll squeeze you dry."

The battle-scarred Joel has been "thrice burned," he says. First, he foolishly signed over his publishing rights to Family Productions in 1972, depressing him to the point of writing his classic plaint of loneliness, "Piano Man." Second, he endured legal wrangling with his ex-wife and former manager,

Elizabeth Joel. And third, he filed a \$90 million lawsuit against fired manager (and former brother-in-law) Frank Weber in 1989, claiming Weber stole millions and also lost millions more in risky investments such as horsebreeding. The suit is still pending.

"I completely trusted him," Joel says of Weber. "I made him the godfather of my child, and it gives me the shivers to think that if anything happened to me that I would have entrusted the future of my little girl to this man. I'm so naive. A lot of the story of what my new album is about is my own shattered faith and my ability to make judgments. If you can't believe in your own ability to discern and judge things, then what *do* you believe in?"

"I always was an anti-capitalist, and I got raped," Joel exclaims. "So unless you adopt somewhat of a capitalistic philosophy, you *will* get raped. That's the nature of the business. And no one is clean. I wrote a song about that, 'The Great Wall of China,' with the line, 'Nobody's perfect, nobody's clean.' I was always told about this and just went, 'Oh zippity-doo-

*An angry
artist becomes his
own manager*

dah, zippity-ay, what a wonderful day'...I was just too trusting. But you know what? I'm not gonna take it. I won't be victimized."

Joel's anger prompted him to write the hard-edged *River of Dreams* album, which starts with the wailing "No Man's Land" and winds through various soul, blues-rock and even gospel-rock epiphanies in its search for a reason to believe.

"You must write what you know and what you feel, to write effectively," says Joel, who plans a major U.S. tour this fall. "I put off writing for a while because I couldn't write this. People know me as a very successful pop-rock 'n' roll star, married to Christie Brinkley, and with a beautiful little daughter. Everything is hunky-dory for this guy, right? Who the hell is he to have the blues? So I put it off, but I finally said, 'This is what I'm feeling. This is what I have to write about. I am depressed. I am angry. I am cynical. I am mocking. I *do* have the blues.' Then it was easy for me to spin the songs off of that. Once I gave into that rage and anger and bitterness and grief, it was like therapy."

Now that he manages his own career, Joel will

BY STEVE MORSE

flex his new assertiveness by setting up the best possible arena deals on his fall tour. In an earth-shaking precedent, he's reportedly asking the arenas to waive their rental fees entirely and just make money through food concessions and the like. (Indoor arenas set the rules of rock touring as recently as three years ago, but the shift of the U.S. concert business to summertime and semi-enclosed sheds has left the arenas reeling.) Joel doesn't deny that he's pushing the arenas hard.

"All we can do is try to cut the best deal possible," he says. "That way we don't have a big expense and then we can keep the ticket price

down. Believe me, I'm very happy to make the kind of money I could make selling a \$30-or-under ticket. Who wouldn't be? What's the matter with these people? The '80s are over. Wake up and smell the coffee.

"Based on past precedent, we've done okay in these buildings. And the buildings have done okay with us. So come on, let's talk turkey. And you know, really, this is kind of like the animals running the zoo. The roadies love to be on my tour because I'm the manager. This is hysterical. The gorilla runs the show. It's kind of anarchistic, but hey, that's exciting. And so what if I

screw up? I still keep the commission and don't have to pay it to another manager.

"I'm not against the music business, because this business has been my bread and butter, and it's bringing up my daughter. And if it wasn't for this business, I would have either been in jail or dead," adds Joel, a former boxer from the streets of Hicksville, Long Island. "But I'm really *cynical* about the business."

Joel's born-again cynicism should not come as a surprise, he says. "The music business has never been a sanctuary of saints. It's been the garment industry rejects. And it's the orphan of the entertainment industry in terms of people who don't make it in the movie industry: They go into the music business. There are no moral medals to be handed out in the history of the music business. I've been at awards shows where they will trot out the Drifters and the Coasters, you name it. And all the old record company moustache Petes stand backstage and chuckle about how they ripped these guys off. It's actually a badge of honor to them, how little they paid them. And they compare stories, like 'What kind of car did you give them?' 'Well, I gave them a Buick.' 'Well, gee, you beat me, I gave them a Cadillac.' In point of fact, none of these guys got a red cent. And unfortunately, that's how the business works. While the record companies, lawyers and managers went on, the artists dried up and disappeared.

"To this day, I still see that going on. I feel bad for artists like Michael Jackson who have to define themselves in terms of 'How big is your deal? And how many records do you sell? How many records do you think you'll sell in the future, and we'll give you \$20 million for them.' That is *not* the kind of deal an artist should make. But those are the deals that are made for artists. Why? Because you have these super-agents and super-lawyers who get a piece of it. They don't care what happens to the artist. They get a big chunk anyway. And they attract a lot of other clients because of the obscene amounts of money. And then, the deal ends up in the press. Who puts it in the press? The artist doesn't. The lawyer does. And the record companies are making gazillions of dollars, so what do they care if the artist makes a couple of zillion?"

"Sure, I spend more time making notes and phone calls and following up on the business aspects of things than I used to, but maybe that's my job," Joel concludes. "I'm 44 now, and it's time for me to be responsible. Hell, I've spent most of my life avoiding things, so it's time to catch up. And it's not that unpleasant or difficult. It's not brain surgery. We're not curing cancer here. This is rock 'n' roll."

THE ERIC GALES BAND

PICTURE OF A THOUSAND FACES

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Spin magazine on The Eric Gales Band's 1991 debut.

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DON BYRON'S KATZ



man." Ah, but such are the delightful oddities of the music business: I write about Afro-American music, while Byron dedicates hundreds of hours to the arcane ethnic stylings and tricky arrangements of master clarinetist and humorist Mickey Katz.

But then Bronx native Don Byron is not your standard-issue cat, on any level. First and foremost, he's probably the finest clarinetist of his generation—in fact, he's the only clarinetist of his generation. Badaboom. Which is to say that he has a wonderful, keening sound, electrifying facility and the emotional resources to move between old and new music in both jazz and classical idioms without being typecast as anything but an original thinker.

"I wasn't attracted to it," Byron says drily, when I ask about his connections to this neglected jazz instrument. "Someone gave me one. I wanted to play the piano. I had asthma,

*The vitz and yiches
of a clarinet*

and it was better for me, and no one wanted to buy me a piano, and we didn't have any room anyway. So from the time I was a kid I studied privately. I didn't really play any jazz until I went to college, but that has more to do with the way the clarinet pedagogy is. It's just not cool to play jazz in the clarinet world. It means that you're not really a classical player, you're not going to get the right information or equipment, or else your teacher won't take you seriously. They'll say jazz ruins your sound."

Clearly, Byron has the talent to make his own rules. His Elektra/Nonesuch debut *Tuskegee Experiments* was a touchstone of eclectic modernism, full of daring instrumental contrasts, ranging from full-frontal group improvisations and complex harmonic arrangements to the music of Robert Schumann. His latest release, *Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz*, is a joyous, furiously swinging tour de force, which says as much about Byron's wit and musical wizardry as it does about the composer's. There's a delicious moment on "Mamaliege Dance" when Byron interpolates Monk's "Friday the 13th" and "Trinkle Tinkle" into a rhythm break; elsewhere, he layers a droll Yiddish rap attack atop "Mechaye War Chant." Framing the record are a pair of Byron originals, elegies really, personal echoes of things past but

YIDDISH WAS SPOKEN AROUND MY HOUSE WHEN I GREW UP, SORT OF as a buffer to give my parents their own secret code. There was also a Mickey Katz album around, as I recall, not the classic instrumental workout *Music for Weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and Brisses*, but one of his ribald party records. Mickey never made it to the turntable, though, and once when I asked about it, I got the distinct impression my folks were ashamed of him. Even today, in my current neighborhood, a devout Orthodox woman recoiled in horror at the mere mention of klezmer, which is an East European street music, kind of a Yiddish dixieland.

I suppose no one likes to be reminded of their poor origins, which might explain why country fans can't get enough of the glitzy stuff, why contemporary black audiences favor schmaltzy ballads and disdain the blues, or why klezmer music for many Jews is an uncomfortable reminder of the stetl.

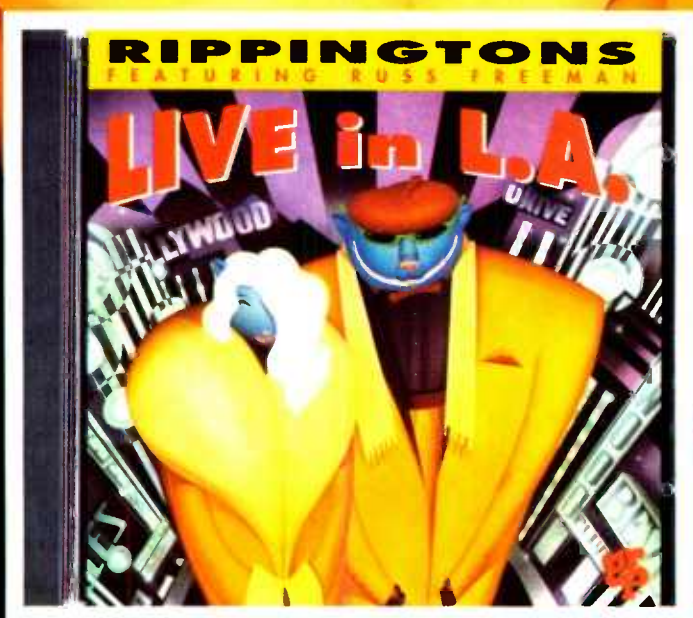
"Shtetl," Don Byron corrects pointedly, then smiles. "I wasn't trying to vibe you,

BY CHIP STERN

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not forgotten. The result is much more about creating an open musical experience than simply recreating one more klezmer record.

"Hmmm, hmm," Byron nods slowly in agreement. "It's not a straight klezmer album in any kind of way. As much as I think Katz's music is heavy, he's a parodist a lot of the time, and he's not a klezmer musician all of the time either, although that doesn't make him less of one. This music is a transition between 1990 and 1947."

For Byron, the allure of Katz's hardcore horas is in their intricate voice-leading, elabo-

rate four-part harmonies, complex rhythmic breaks and ass-kicking clarinet leads. Simple enough to qualify as a musical epiphany, right? But when Peter Gabriel or David Byrne go delving into African and Latin musics, no one confuses them with the objects of their affection.


"I feel like lately, instead of giving me credit for learning two different kinds of music, people want to give the music credit for changing my life," Byron chuckles. "Like everything I do now is tainted with this incredible Jewishness I got from klezmer music. I can't play any-

thing without someone saying, 'He sounds so Jewish.'

"I mean, for me, Mickey Katz is *the* person in klezmer music who does it for me, you know what I mean? It's not anything loftier than that." What makes Byron controversial in some quarters, however, is that—like Mickey Katz—he refuses to abide by orthodox musical traditions. When playing klezmer, it's the feeling that's sacred, not the notes.

"There's two kinds of ways of playing music," he declares. "You can play old music or you can play new music. And old music usually gets played by anal-retentive guys that want to play exactly what blahblah played on a given day. They don't want to take into consideration that the next day blahblah might have played something differently. It's like saying, 'This is such classic music that I don't want to change anything about it.' And that's more lucrative; there's always more notoriety in playing old music than there is in new music. And essentially, people who can do something different, who can play out of their own thinking, don't want to play old music on their own time."

Recently, Byron relates, he played baritone saxophone in an Ellington ensemble orchestrated by Gunther Schuller. "I was supposed to be Harry Carney, and when we came to the end of the piece and they're holding this chord, I started trying to play my shit, and he's telling me not to. Well, I guess that's cool. But when it happened, I just knew the whole thing was doomed. Not that it was going to be bad, but if a cat like that was running the band, he'd be telling Clark Terry to play like Rex Stewart, telling Paul Gonsalves to play like Ben Webster. Whereas Duke Ellington made you play like yourself. He brought in cats who were radically different from the ones who had been there, and let them play their own thing within his context.

"So in approaching klezmer music, if I got a chance to play a solo, I wasn't going to play what I transcribed off of the record more than once or twice—ever! I'd vary it, not totally changing it, 'cause if you play music all the time, you get into set patterns. But I think that from the time I was in my first klezmer band, there were a few people capable of that kind of thinking, and as this thing evolved, I tried to put together a band where everyone could do that. That doesn't mean that you can't say to somebody that what they're playing is too far off the mark," he cautions. "It just means that you empower somebody to *be* that thing. Not to imitate it." 

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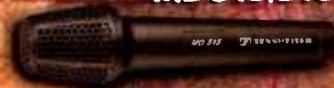
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"I'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR 25 YEARS," SAYS DANIEL LANOIS, "and it's been sort of a long slow climb." Lanois grins wryly as he snaps two pool balls together where the period would arrive in his sentence. A musical nomad now looking back at 40, this sometime accompanist to a stripper named Delightful Delilah—she bathed onstage—knows the value of a rim shot.

His finances were making that same slow climb, he adds, when he migrated from Ontario to New Orleans in late 1988. "I used to have to go to the pay phone to make my phone calls. I was staying at a tiny little place on St. Ann near Rampart." Lanois casts a look over his shoulder. The streets he's talking about are just blocks away, but in an area where (despite its rich musical history) many locals don't venture on foot after dark.

Now Lanois perches on a sizable pool table in his gracefully aging dreadnought of a mansion on historic Esplanade Avenue. He has an indoor phone now. One suspects he could have had one then, thanks to his co-producing fees for U2's 1984 *The Unforgettable Fire* and Peter Gabriel's 1986 *So*. His going underground was more a creative strategy than a necessity. Lanois is one of those rare sorts who comfortably fits the billing of "Recording Artist," and the woodshedding he came to New Orleans for would produce his solo debut, 1989's *Acadie*. This spring he followed it with a second record made from his base here at

.....
Dan Lanois The
.....

Musician
.....

Eclipses Lanois
.....

The Producer
.....

ORVILLE

BY FRED SCHRUERS



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT MAHURIN

World Radio History

Kingsway Studios, *For the Beauty of Wynonna*.

Surely by the time Lanois resettled here a home phone would have been ringing. He was fresh from co-producing U2's *The Joshua Tree*, and his name was buzzing through the industry. He had gone from bubbling-under, whiz-kid engineer to candidate for (and eventual winner of) this magazine's nod for "Producer of the '80s." What raised the heat so inexorably wasn't just the blockbuster U2 albums—which, after all, were highly collective efforts shared with Brian Eno and mix wizard Steve Lillywhite—but 1988's *Robbie Robertson*, the Neville Brothers' 1989 *Yellow Moon* and Bob Dylan's 1989 *Oh Mercy*. The fact that each of those classic entities was coming out of a kind of artistic wilderness credentialed Lanois as something of a magician; Robertson emerged out of virtual hiding, the Nevilles became reacquainted with their own rich mystique and Dylan made what was generally seen as his best record since 1975's *Blood on the Tracks*.

Acadie came out at the same time as Dylan's record, and was warmly greeted. Both 1991's U2 effort *Achtung Baby* (another Lanois co-production with Eno) and Gabriel's *Us* the following year boldly avoided the traps of mid-career boredom, alternately (often second by second) denying and embracing pop. Such balance is tough to achieve. Lanois says he had to browbeat Gabriel into converting his 1986 smash "Sledgehammer" from "just a beat" with improvised verses ("I kicked the habit/Shed my skin...") into (temporarily) a vision of lovers at a balcony, and finally the piledriver hit it became. The onetime expert knobtwister, self-trained to step in with simpatico advice and useful licks from the time he hung his producer's shingle out in Hamilton, Ontario, was now becoming a utility bandmate for megastars. He likes it that way. "If you're busy worrying whether the mikes are plugged in and all that, you don't have time to devote to working on arrangements or playing with the band. I believe that my strengths, my talents, are probably best taken advantage of if I'm not strapped to the console all the time."

That's about the limit of Lanois' braggadocio. He has a Canadian's reflexive reserve, and cultivates a slight bemusement when talking about the big names. It's no use trying to pin him down, this aesthete gotten up like a French revolutionary. The quizzical grin, the bandana that almost always encases his jet-black hair like a colorful cummerbund for the head, and the hippie shirts and accoutrements that he layers on (after his rocker's boots and tight jeans), all seem subordinated to Lanois' warm if watchful eyes. He's not missing much, and yet he's not judgmental.

Lanois began his musical trek in Hull, Quebec, in the green Gatineau Hills. His father and grandfather were both leisure-time fiddlers, steeped in the French-Canadian jigs and folk songs of the province. The youth who started on percussion with spoons and beef ribs (he remembers their "clacking" sound) moved on to stringed instruments, but asserts himself to still be "a closet drummer." In the *Rocky World* documentary shown in New Orleans when his album was released (and possibly heading for commercial release), Lanois visits relatives in the country. They hear a cut from *Acadie* and play the folk song "La Petite Cordonniere," about a little shoemaker who beats his wife. "It's a very bitter and cruel song," says Lanois, "a ridiculous and tragic sort of anti-wife-beating song." Lanois was around 10 when his parents split and his mother took him and siblings to the English-speaking province of Ontario, settling in the city of Hamilton on Lake Ontario. It was there that he and brother Bob started their own recording studio, moving from an ad hoc facility in their mother's basement to a grander space where they helped mostly

**"To be honest, it's not
the music of
Louisiana, but the
more rhythmic music
that I'm interested in.
People might think
some of my songs are
Cajun, but it's really
that New Orleans
rhythm with a French
song over the top."**

local musicians cut a wide variety of records. They did a lot of gospel albums, one Haitian, a sprinkling of folk and a notable Canadian combine called Martha and the Muffins (later incarnated as M&M), with their sister Jocelyn on bass.

There's something of the shy, guarded youth in Lanois' manner (just as fellow Canadian Neil Young seems to carry the anger of his divorced mother's forced move, as depicted in "Don't Be Denied"). And Lanois will talk about the emotional disruptiveness of being jammed into an Anglophone culture. But, although his migration from Quebec to New Orleans retraces the pilgrimage of the Acadians (now "Cajuns"), his story is not Evangeline's. If the weather and cost of living were more congenial in New York City, he might have settled there. What sound like Cajun strains in his work are a bit deceiving. "I can't rattle off a bunch of songs. To be honest, it's not the music of this



"Some songs on the new record are very much in pure form. On 'Unbreakable Chain' I had a music and lyric idea in the absence of a band, a fully written song that was brought to the recording studio. There's a few others like that—'The Collection of Marie Claire' and 'Rocky World.'"

Those three are among the album's best. The first is a bittersweet fingerpicking tale of a mother who finds the son she abandoned long ago. The second is a dark-toned, bilingual story of an obsessive country lover who virtually kidnaps a city-girl dancer. The third is an expansive ballad of feminist empathy animated with nicely intimate details. "My hands are wrapped in your raven hair," begins its picaresque hero, and though Lanois once quailed at an interviewer's comparison of himself with Leonard Cohen, he edges into that master's territory here.

"I get the clear impression," says U2's Adam Clayton (one of *Acadie's* 15), "that Dan's striving to refine what he did [on *Acadie*]
—to be more direct. I think with his first record he wasn't sure he had a future in a solo career; so the first record really spanned all his interests, they were well represented. With this record, having done a bit of touring, and been onstage a bit, he's aware of what kind of music he needs in order to have a career."

ANOTHER DAY, AND LANOIS stands in the entry hall of his studio/home, flanked by his bandmates and facing up the central staircase that's thick with bodies. Local and imported Jazz Fest-ers are wedged into the big old house that was put together out of two smaller ones by famed restaurateur Leon Arnaud Cazenave. The sprawling modern recording console Lanois often uses is to his left, discreetly lit by candles and a pharmacy lamp.

He's wearing the same lost-in-Katmandu get-up he performed in at Jazz Fest earlier in the day, but he's scrapped the stage pass he wore on his thigh then. Lanois does do windows—he's half-pleading with his meticulous guitarist/pal Bill Dillon to plug in even though Bill's shy some gear. "This feels a bit like one of those Saturday night gigs where you do a matinee and come back for another round," says Lanois, grinning back at strapping former Neville's bassist Daryl Johnson. Brian Blades sits at the drum kit. Lanois heard his wonderfully knock-kneed, "almost falling apart" playing one night at Cafe Brasil two blocks away and recruited the 22-year-old for his tour. Where did Blades learn his chops, the bespectacled prodigy is asked. "Church," he says humbly. On percussion is Charlie Mouton. He's got hands that could palm a wrecking ball and an ugly/beautiful saint's face. "It's Mouton," Lanois tells the admiring crowd, "which means pretty little lamb."

state as a whole, but the more rhythmic music I'm interested in. People might think a couple songs on my first record, like 'Under the Stormy Sky,' are Cajun, but it's that New Orleans rhythm"—he slaps out a dancey second-line beat—"with a French song over the top." He is fond, he admits, of the "more rockin'" zydeco.

Even with the inclusion of the local classic "Indian Red" from *The Wild Tchoupitoulas*, Lanois' second solo record is more determinedly his, a sonic stew brewed up out of studio time with his four-man core band (not the 15 who pitched in on *Acadie*), a collection of songs that hews resolutely to showcasing his personal and highly poetic lyrics.

"This record started with lyrics," says Lanois. "I stockpile poetry and lyric ideas, then when there's an opportunity to create melody or jam with the band, I'll pull my lyric book out and try to find homes for some things."

Lanois settles his 12-string around his neck and discreetly peers at the numbered foot pedals before him. "This is the true story of a friend of mine who had a baby at 17," he says, "and gave it up for adoption..." Telling too much? he seems to ask himself. "...anyway, 30 years later, she met her son for the first time."

The rendition of "Unbreakable Chain" that follows shows how well Lanois can weave a musical spell, a performer preserving the song's essence even as the producer in him crowds more musicians onstage. The highlight of that afternoon's festival show had

been "Indian Red," with original co-composer Cyril Neville beating on a triangle and Blades relying on kick drum and tambourine combined. The sun-drenched crowd was happily shaking skulls and busts of Professor Longhair on long sticks, second-lining. Lanois had traded verses on "Everyday People" with Johnson, listed on the record as "Vocal Coach," attacking the Big Easy classic with verve. "The more you sing the better you get at it," says Lanois. "I can't claim to be one of the confident singers. If you had a voice like Stevie Wonder or Aaron Neville or

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, then your voice would be your life, you couldn't help but be confident with that kind of gift. Peter Gabriel's got this saying I like—"Don't play the game you can't win." Another way of saying that is to show off your strengths." To record Robbie Robertson, Lanois set him front and center in the mix: "He's got what the voice-over guys call a real big *print*—you can't miss. So for lower-register deliveries like 'Somewhere Down the Crazy River' we just pushed to get that big intimate sound he has on tape. On the other end of the spectrum he has a nice falsetto. By maximizing what he's got, you build confidence. It's the same as a film director; if you have Jack Nicholson, you decide, 'Don't shoot him from across the room, let's close in on his mouth.'"

Lanois' fans and critics have remarked on his chameleon streak. Stack his records in with his clients and set the CD to random play, and both instruments and vocals commit musical miscegenation. The lifts are rarely actual (though some cricket noises Brian Eno put on tape years before ended up not only on Dylan's "Man in the Long Black Coat" but on a Lanois *Acadie* track) but the product of Lanois' canny ear and brain for what might be called organic sampling. A Bono visit to New Orleans, with the two colleagues jamming on melodies, resulted in the Bono-esque Lanois vocal on *Acadie*'s "Where the Hawkwind Kills."

Bono owed him. Adam Clayton recalls the final hours of recording *Unforgettable Fire*, when the record company was snarling for long-overdue product and Lanois was doing his last mixes. "We'd done that thing of working all through the night, we had the tapes ready at eight o'clock and they were all sequenced and ready to go off, and we were listening to it and Bono said, 'I'd love another crack at the vocals on "A Sort of Homecoming."'" Dan's taxi was waiting outside, he was waiting to get on the plane and deliver the tape to the mastering studio and everything, but he said, 'Yeah, do you mean that?' and Bono said, 'Well, if we had another few hours...' Dan just put the tapes back up, Bono sang it once, 'cause that was all the time we had. Dan said he'd mix it in London 'cause that was where he was going, grabbed the tape and ran out the door with it, and that was the last we saw of him for a couple years. But the track sounded great."

"I was literally going out the door," says Lanois, sighing, but with clear fondness. "I think he changed some lyrics too."

Perhaps the best news about *Wynonna*, for

ROBIN ZANDER

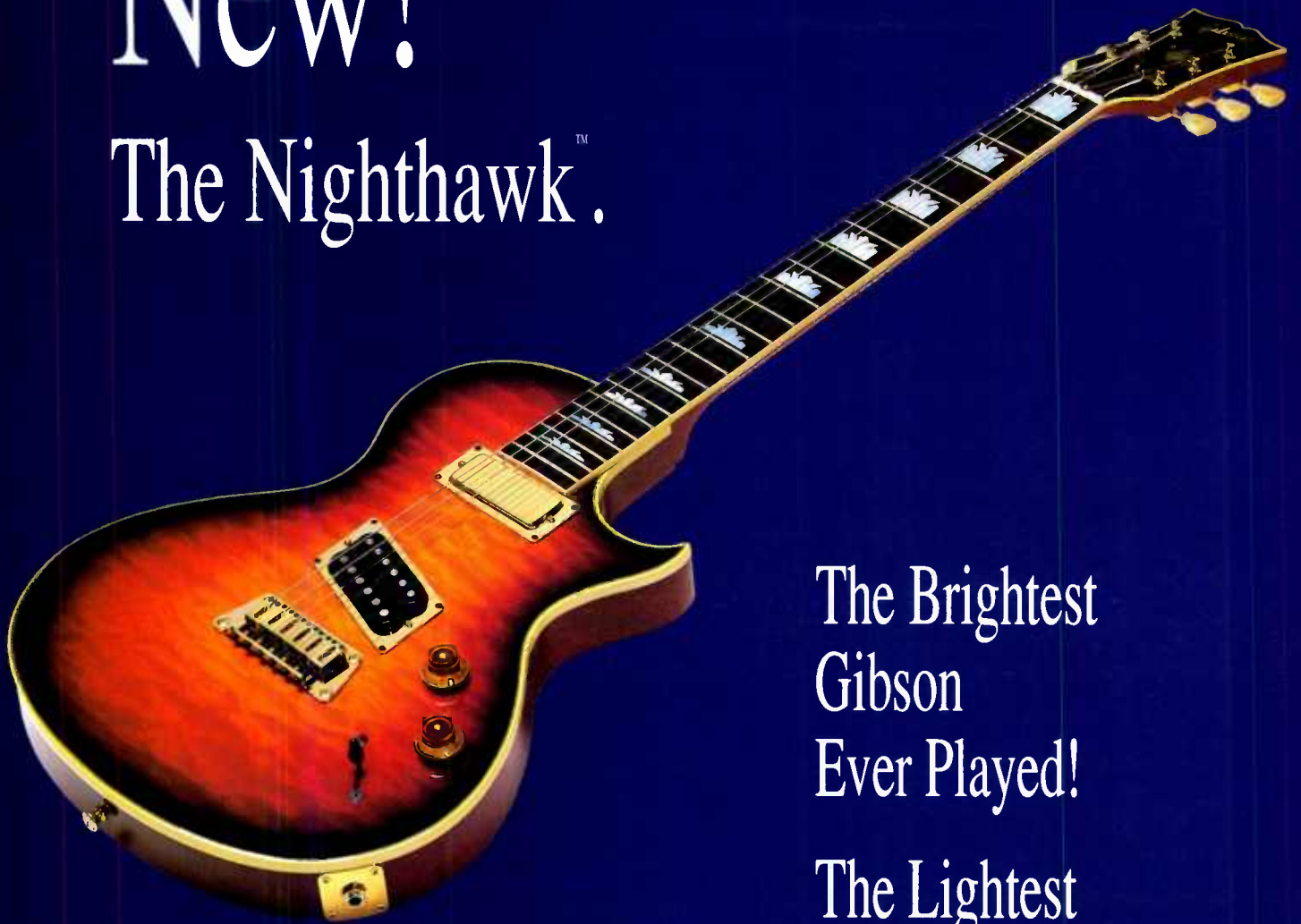
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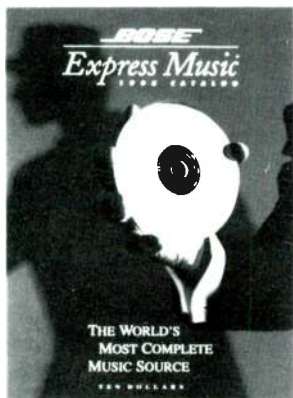
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all its clear strengths, is that it's clearly Lanois' own, right down to the title track's metaphors for artistry and its fine opening track, "The Messenger." The almost croaking vocal was the result of cutting it "with not a touch of reverb, at the end of a long workday, me pushing at the top of my range, Daryl singing in falsetto, both our voices blown out to this whiskey, tired sound, all defenses are down."

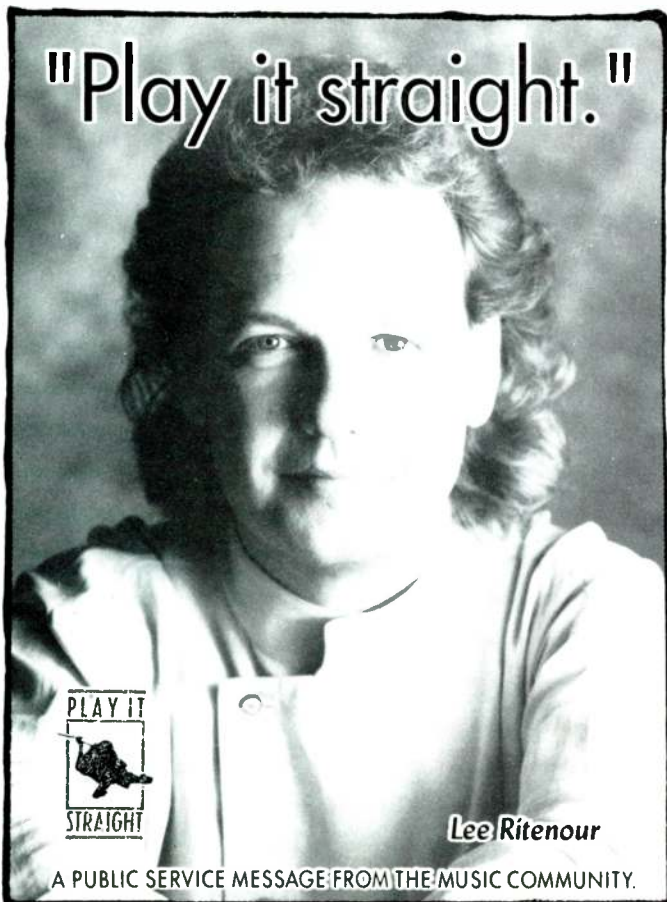
The song is "really a reminder that the things you're going after, searching for and imagining to exist in the future—some of those things already exist in your life, some of them are in the past, and maybe some of them are on the shelf, and they need to be pulled down from there."

As a practical matter, Lanois will be thinking this all through in his nomad mode—first on the road with *Wynonna*, then possibly at his apartment (not far from Eno's) in London. New Orleans may become not home, but a slot on his itinerary.

"I'm kinda ready to move on, to be honest. I've got friends and some musicians I enjoy working with here, and I feel like I've soaked in some good inspiration here—and also given some back."

This time, when he clacks the pool balls together, Lanois savors the sound for a second, and the youthful bones player and adult techno-wizard meet for a second in an artist's quietly beatified smile. 

"Play it straight."



Lee Ritenour

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM THE MUSIC COMMUNITY.

**THE DEVIL'S
BEDKNOBS**

For guitar effects, LANOIS favors a Korg STD 300 ("Edge turned me on to this box a long time ago. I plug my guitar right into the front") with a variable output level: "I boost it up about 10 dB hotter—the amp is being driven a little harder." As an onstage backup he carries "a little Boss digital delay and this Mostortion—what a great name."

He uses either an old Fender Bassman tweed amp or a Vox AC30 ("a certain room will just like a certain amp") and is going on the road with his Fender Jazzmaster. After a long time playing a Telecaster, he switched to his rare '57 Strat for most of the solos on the *Wynonna* sessions, and will warily bring it on tour (bought for \$1500, it's now worth at least 10 times that). He also carries a beat-up old Martin 12-string, notable for its onboard amp and speaker: "I wanted to go into radio stations and have a little bit of an amplified sound without making too much of a fuss."

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World Radio History

TANYA

KIM DEAL



STROLL INTO the Dayton, Ohio, house shared by twins Kim and Kelley Deal on a muggy summer afternoon and step over a clutter of CDs, cracker boxes, papers, ashtrays and soda cans that warns you: These people party. It's 1:30, and you've woken the Deals up. Kim rolls a joint and pats black shoe polish over the gray in her hair. Kelley offers you a Mountain Dew from the two-door refrigerator in the eat-in kitchen with black and white floor tiles. The green lawn, the bathroom with pink and green ceramic, the wall-to-wall carpeting, the basement

where the band practices: The suburban America that punk once tried to tear apart has become the alternative nation's rec room.

The Deals grew up 20 minutes from here. And although Kim moved to Boston, became the bassist for the Pixies and toured the world, it's to here she's returned. And it's here, to a pizza parlor where dollar drafts drown hangovers, that she brings Tanya Donnelly, current Belly leader and former Throwing Muses guitarist, for reminiscing, dissing and discussing.

Deal and Donnelly have known each other ever since the Pixies and Muses used to share bills in Boston and Providence. A few years ago they started the Breeders, a then side-project that, since the breakup of the Pixies, has become Deal's main act. When Belly kept Donnelly from making a similar commitment to the Breeders, Kim brought in Kelley—who'd never played guitar before—as a replacement. Earlier this year, Belly's *Star*, a collection of swirling fairy tales sung over guitar-laced pop, topped the alternative charts for longer than any record in history. The Breeders release their second album, the hook-driven *Last Splash*, on August 30.

Despite their shared past and easy slide into a goofy, gossipy groove, the Breeders' breeders couldn't be more different. In pink bloomers and a red ruffled tanktop, Donnelly is unabashedly girlish, while Deal, fisherman's cap backwards on her head, Bud in one hand, cigarette dangling out of her mouth, plays the tomboy. Sitting on a wicker and a rocking chair in front of the Deals' house, they look like the perfect white-trash couple. But maybe Deal takes the caricature too far: Another joint later in the living room, she starts spewing nonsense. "Did you ever meet a black man who wasn't sexist?" she asks, to which Donnelly and I reply a resounding yes. Time to leave those suburbs behind, Kim.



A CONVERSATION ABOUT BELLY, THE BREEDERS, THROWING MUSES, THE PIXIES, & ALTERNATIVES

BY EVELYN
MC DONNELL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JILL GREENBERG

DONNELLY

DEAL: When I first saw Tanya, Throwing Muses were doing sound-check at the Rat.

DONELLY: Remember how you were intimidated by me?

DEAL: You did look like a mountain woman with your hair kind of like mine, but all blond.

DONELLY: That was your third show, Charles [Thompson, Pixies leader] told me. Then we had the same manager and toured Europe together.

DEAL: It was a blast.

DONELLY: It was really fun. We were young and innocent and excited about things.

DEAL: I'd never been overseas before. And both our bands were hot property over there at the time.

MUSICIAN: *Is that when you first talked about playing together?*

DONELLY: The initial concept was doing a dance song under assumed names. But we really couldn't do it at all.

DEAL: We hired out a drum machine and got [Pixie] David Lovering and [Muse] David Narcizo to the practice space. We sounded okay for about five minutes.

DONELLY: We tried to do it for about three days, though. It just got boring. At that point we bagged it.

DEAL: Then Ivo [Watts-Russell] from 4AD said, "Why don't you do a demo?"

DONELLY: You've been writing songs since you were a teenager. What



was the initial concept for the Breeders: half me, half you?

DEAL: I think it was half and half.

DONELLY: Then we had contractual difficulties. I'm not allowed to write songs outside Sire.

DEAL: Anyway, Ivo liked the demos.

DONELLY: We waited until we both had time off.

DEAL: And then we got Steve Albini to produce because we didn't know anyone else, except Gil Norton, but he's too pricey.

MUSICIAN: *How was Albini to work with?*

DONELLY: He gets sounds really quickly. He's really good at getting guitars and drums. But I'm not fond of his vocal philosophy.

MUSICIAN: *What's his vocal philosophy?*

DONELLY: He doesn't like vocals. We'd be doing harmonies and he'd be standing there with his fingers in his ears.

MUSICIAN: *You're both now leading your own bands, having before been support players for someone else. Was that part of the idea for doing the Breeders in the first place? Had being in a band playing second fiddle frustrated you long enough?*

DEAL: No, not really. We did it just because we had free time and liked each other and hung out. It was really the fact that 4AD asked for a demo. If you think we were sitting around during band meetings saying, "I don't feel my voice is being heard in this band, creatively I'm not fulfilled, and I'm going to start this with Tanya so I can show what I'm really made of"—we didn't do it like that. It was just, "Bring your guitar over. Oh, that's good, I like that."

DONELLY: Somebody new to play with too—I think that's good for everybody.

MUSICIAN: *You didn't sit around and grouse about your bands.*

DONELLY: Not more than anyone else. It wasn't mutinous.

DEAL: Totally not. Because we had the drummers trying to do this stupid dance thing. I remember turning around and telling David Narcizo, "If you keep doing that, that's going to get on my nerves."

DONELLY: It was the first time anyone had ever spoken to him like that. In the rarefied atmosphere of Throwing Muses, we were all, "It's not that I don't like what you're doing, 'cause I do...." I wasn't unhappy in Throwing Muses up until literally the last three months.

DEAL: What made you unhappy?

DONELLY: *[long exhale]* It's not that I didn't like them, it's just that... *[laughter]* It had been two songs per album for me for years. That was the formula. And then all of a sudden I had 10 songs instead of two to contribute and it became an issue. Minimal, but it was enough that I knew that issue was going to gain in power at some point. So I cut it off at the pass.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think that having been in a band where you weren't the leader makes how you lead a band any different?*

DEAL: Naw.





DONNELLY: I do, to a certain extent. I have a lot of retroactive respect for [Throwing Muses leader] Kristin [Hersh]'s sense of democracy, which at the time I wasn't completely aware of. I think I understand more of what [Belly drummer] Chris and [guitarist] Tom [Gorman] are thinking. My face is everywhere now, Kristin's face was everywhere, and I understand how it feels to be on the other end of that.

DEAL: Do you mean you understand how when people hone in on...

DONNELLY: One person, one mouthpiece. I remember how it feels to be in a band...

DEAL: And have one face represent that band.

DONNELLY: Which wasn't an issue. But still, I know there's a little resentment.

MUSICIAN: *You've said that you try to understand that too, Kim, that you try to involve the whole band in things.*

DEAL: Yeah.

DONNELLY: You're pretty successful at doing that right now.

DEAL: They're doing a lot of stuff. I don't know the half of it. I don't want to know the half of it. I don't want to have to do everything.

DONNELLY: You're all four on the cover of *Option*.

DEAL: I ask.

DONNELLY: I do too.

DEAL: I'm a bitch about it.

DONNELLY: So am I.

DEAL: I'm a better bitch.

DONNELLY: You are.

MUSICIAN: *Was it hard making the transition to fronting a band?*

DONNELLY: The first time I got onstage I was sick to my stomach. I wondered, "What kind of frontperson should I be? Do I want to talk between songs? How do I articulate?"

DEAL: I was sick too. It is sickening.

MUSICIAN: *You've also both been in bands with your sisters.*

DONNELLY: And now I'm in a band with brothers.

MUSICIAN: *Yeah. How do you think that affects the band dynamic?*

DEAL: We fight sooner than other people would. But then we make up quicker too.

DONNELLY: Kristin and I never really fought. I used to get in the middle and sort things out when Chris and Tom fought. But then they'd both turn on me. Now I understand that they'll get over it and I stay out of it. Siblings are strange. That five-year-old stuff doesn't go away.

MUSICIAN: *Were you afraid that 4AD wouldn't take your own projects?*

DEAL: I was pleasantly surprised. 'Cause, you know, it's a dilution of the projects they already have. So here we're making another band out of two bands they have. Now Ivo's got five bands out of two bands he signed!

DONNELLY: This isn't kissing his ass, because believe me, I wouldn't do that. But Ivo's judge and jury for me in some ways, as far as demos go.

DEAL: It's the truth. He's the label. He'd better like it.

DONNELLY: I wait with bated breath for the phone call. He makes me the most nervous. He hasn't rejected anything, but he doesn't feel the need to pussyfoot. I don't think about him at all when writing songs, but when I'm sending the tape out.

MUSICIAN: *How does it compare with your American labels?*

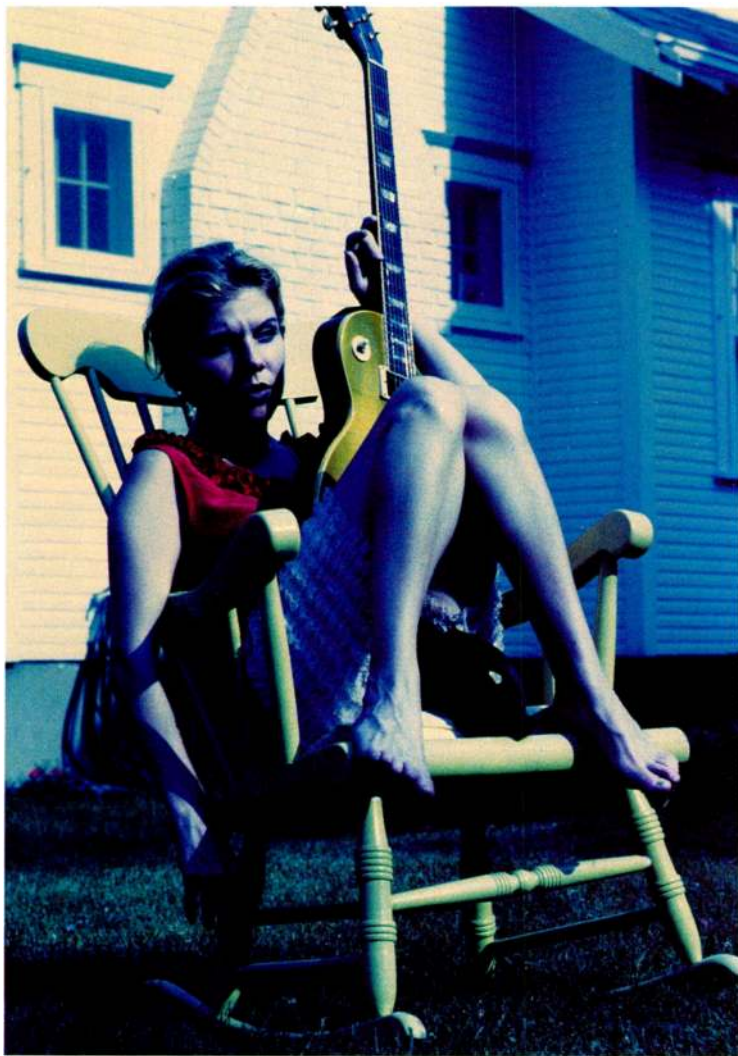
DEAL: We don't deal with them that much.

DONNELLY: I'm pretty close to a few people at Sire.

MUSICIAN: *But artistically you deal with 4AD?*

DONNELLY: Artistically the band has complete control, so we don't really deal with anybody. I have conversations with Ivo about music, but he has no input.

DEAL: I think if you're a huge band you use your label more for that. Because you have a whole marketing strategy, you do an image propa-



est for "Feed the Tree." Were there nude people up in trees?
DONELLY: There were two naked people humping trees. A male and a female. It was people I never want to be in a room with again in my life. It was a 30-person crew; they called us the talent. We could have been a box of Cheerios for all they cared. First of all I said, "No models in this video." And they were, "No no no, these aren't typical models, they're exotic." What, they're black? And sure enough, they were dark-skinned and dark-haired. "We said no models! Let's just skip this whole day." We got talked into it, because they were going to "not look like models." The way it was described to us was they were going to lie on logs and the sunlight was going to go over parts of their body, but you couldn't really tell what was going on. It sounded pretty. But then we get the video and it's naked people holding trees. And then my face.

DEAL: So what did you say when you saw it?

DONELLY: We said, "Take it out."

MUSICIAN: *Kim, you've said that you don't want to do a really expensive video and have to wear lipstick.*

DEAL: It seems like the more money you spend on your album the more you have to pay back. If you spend a million dollars on your video, you'd better produce some sex in it somewhere. And there are certain triggers you can use sexually, men and women. A man can take off his shirt and show his tattoos, and grow his hair a little longer and look like a stud. That kind of thing sells way better. I like it better.

MUSICIAN: *Then why don't you want to do it?*

DEAL: Because it's stupid.

MUSICIAN: *Tanya, your video was done expensively.*

DONELLY: Yeah. It worked!

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel like it was worth it?*

DONELLY: Yeah, I do.

MUSICIAN: *Because you decided to do some of the stuff Kim didn't.*

DONELLY: It's not a matter of deciding.

DEAL: She does it anyway. She doesn't put lipstick on for a video.

DONELLY: I also don't put lipstick on for anybody. It's just something I've been doing since I was 15.

DEAL: And anybody can pick anything that they want. If they want to use certain triggers, they can. I just don't look good in lipstick.

MUSICIAN: *Why did you call yourself "Mrs. John Murphy" on the first two Pixies records?*

DEAL: That was just supposed to be funny. I was working in this doctor's office. On the East Coast, if you address some people by their first name, they'll say, "My name is not Ruth, it's Mrs. Herbert Steinsteen," or whatever. She'd use her husband's name for her identity. I just thought it was so cool. So I said, "Oh, I got married, I lost my



ganda campaign and you need everybody involved to know, "Okay, this is my edgy album, I'm on the edge now, so everybody go for that." We just hand in another 10 songs and ask, "Do you like them?"

DONELLY: We went through a situation a while ago where people thought I should look more adult. Nobody ever said it, but it was like, "You look like a child in those pictures." They didn't even say that. They'd say, "We're going to redo the photo shoot because there's..."

DEAL: "...laws against that."

DONELLY: [laughs] They didn't want to attract the pedophile market.

DEAL: And did you redo the photos?

DONELLY: I did, actually. Because it was something that was discussed and I have the same problem with myself image-wise. I want to be an adult. I'm a 26-, going on 27-year-old woman, and I would like to be a grownup at this point in my life.

DEAL: No.

DONELLY: Yes, Kim.

DEAL: No. We had Elektra reject the "Safari" video.

DONELLY: Is that true? Why?

DEAL: 'Cause we weren't attractive. "Well," the director said—and he was probably right, they usually are—"people don't know what you look like. And this video, you could have done a really good one, but you did a really bad one. So let's just pretend it never happened." But we told him to go ahead and give it to them. And he did.

You have quite a story with your video. She did it in a redwood for-

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identity, I'm Mrs. John Murphy now."

MUSICIAN: *Didn't you wear skirts?*

DEAL: I was a secretary. It was literally practical. I'd go from work to soundcheck. It really didn't matter. It's not like I needed to go home and get my spandex outfit.

DONELLY: Makeup is more deflection than attraction for me. I'm not going to deny that it comes from a mask impulse.

DEAL: Men's sexual world isn't beauty, it's power and musculature.

DONELLY: I think physical standards hurt men and women. We have a lot of people in our

audience who are there because Gail [Greenwood] and I are...

MUSICIAN: *Blond women.*

DONELLY: Yes. Not the majority.

DEAL: So what do you do when you go to a Tom Jones concert? Why even apologize for it? There's a girl faction for Soul Asylum, Paul Westerberg.

DONELLY: You're right. In a way it's sad we can't enjoy the fact that we're getting attention paid to us because it's sexist. I'm a Riot Grrrl target right now because I wear makeup, because I smile. I'm really tired of justifying myself. First

of all, I've been doing this for 10 years, and fuck them on that level right away. And second of all, it is really unfair that it's been turned around to where there's a new set of rules. As opposed to having to do things that I'm not comfortable with, such as putting too much makeup on for pictures, now I have to do things I'm not comfortable with to please these other people.

DEAL: You should be able to do what you want to do.

DONELLY: And I always will.

DEAL: Your mom always tells you, "Be nice to guys, they're not too smart in social situations, help them out, don't make them feel embarrassed." So you do all this stuff to make them feel better. Now a new faction of people is saying, "We want you to do this to make *us* feel better." You might as well just be doing a pretty thing for boys. You're still changing your personality to fit somebody else's rules of social life. I need a list of the rules, I want them numbered, what I can and cannot wear, and what I can and cannot say.

DONELLY: I don't want to talk about them anymore. It always comes up and I always end up saying something I regret, out of insecurity and defensiveness. And it's always male journalists telling me, "The Riot Grrrls say this about you, what do you think?" So I don't even know if it's true they said it.

MUSICIAN: *And it's not as if the Riot Grrrls are a monolithic entity. I go to Riot Grrrl meetings. I went to one in New York after Belly played and this girl stood up and said how much she liked your show and how great you are.*

DEAL: People love talking about them, so they must have some good ideas.

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THE REEL DEAL

The Breeders practice in KIM DEAL's basement, where she conducts a tour of their equipment. "I usually go through the JCM 900, but Kelley bought a new Marshall cabinet, so now I let her use it and I use an old JCM head and cabinet. I also have a Peavey Classic 50. This is an old Sears Tremolo amp that we've pasted the word 'Marshall' on. Tanya used a Roland JC-120 on *Pod*. I mostly play a Seagull acoustic guitar that I distort through the amp. For electric, Kelley and I play a Les Paul and a Strat."

TANYA DONELLY: "I play a Les Paul and an SG, and a Takamine acoustic live. In the studio I play a lot of different things: I go through a Marshall JCM 800 head and cabinet. I use .011 D'Addario strings and a Boss chorus, overdrive and digital delay."

DONELLY: They attack me personally. So I turn into a complete horror about the whole thing. It's really weak on my part.

DEAL: I thought they were supposed to show enlightenment, raise awareness. And sometimes it sounds more like they're making the choices for you.

DONELLY: But sometimes extreme situations are the only source of goodness. Their extremist view is a positive thing. I find it a weakness in my character that I'm so retaliatory.

MUSICIAN: *You did say you're not comfortable with your own image sometimes, and that you're not mature enough. And acting childish is a way men like women to act because it's nonthreatening.*

DONELLY: I don't act childish. If that's projected on me, that's not my fault. The main reason I have an image problem is that I'm imageless, so people can project whatever they want on me, which is too bad. Maybe I should be stronger about how I present myself. But the fact is, I don't think in terms of what the final result of a visual of me is going to be. It's not interesting to me.

DEAL: It's so true. You just see so many horrible images of yourself. We did two full days of press in New York, and we took picture after picture after picture. It got to the point where if they asked me to take off my clothes and run around the street I would, because I was completely immune. I would do anything, I had no backbone. You're right, the lack of thinking is the problem. It's your fault, really.

DONELLY: It is.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think about it, Kim?*

DEAL: About how bad I look in photos? Yeah. And how good I want to look, and what I'm going to do to help that next time? Yeah, probably. I've got my shoe polish on. Big artists have that all down. I saw the M.C. Hammer marketing program next to the Pixies' one. Ours was: We're going to do interviews for *Spin*, *Details*, *Alternative Press*. M.C. Hammer's: "The Pepsi commercial is debuting on the ninth, your cartoon is debuting on Saturday." Now that's a marketing plan!

MUSICIAN: *How would you two compare yourselves musically?*

DEAL: Here's a good story: [Breeders bassist] Josephine [Wiggs] was up visiting you guys while you were remixing a single, up in Liverpool. And she came in and said something like, "You can't hear the kick drum." And Tanya turned to her and said, "Josephine, there is no kick drum in pop music." It's so true too. In Metallica they have a lot of kick drum, and really bassy, low-end drums, to

make it more manly.

For "Saints," the kick drum's loud. But for "Divine Hammer," it's not. Usually in our songs we're bass/drums heavy. But that's good. Sometimes when you need to get it really loud, people just turn the guitars up, when really it's just the bass that needs to come up.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think you influenced each other as players?*

DEAL: When Tanya plays guitar, she'll say, "Okay, Kim, what do you think about this?" And she'll go *dah-dah-dah-wah-wah-boing-etc.* [mimics a wandering, wistful lead] I've never heard anything like it. Kelley had to learn some of your leads, and she was like, "What is she doing? What happened to dah-duh-dah??" It takes longer to understand where Tanya's going, but when you hear it, it's really good. She's got nonlinear playing. No one else plays like her. They couldn't try. They don't know what she's doing!

DONELLY: I learned a lot from you, especially structurally, as far as not being afraid of hooks. I used to avoid choruses.

DEAL: Tanya used to say, you can describe a Pixies or Breeders song like verse, chorus, verse, chorus, tag, verse, double chorus. That's basically any song, ever. And Tanya said, "Well, our music's kind of, intro, tag, break, break, tag, verse, tag, break, then intro again, break, verse..."

DONELLY: Outro. But then after the outro you come back to the...

DEAL: And it's true. I can't even learn a song like "Finished," because structurally it doesn't do anything I can understand.

MUSICIAN: *Where do you think you got this unique sense, Tanya?*

DONELLY: From not knowing how to play technically. Nobody taught me. And because I'm trying to be interesting to a certain extent, which sounds obnoxious. I learned how to play guitar in Throwing Muses with Kristin's songs, and Kristin's songs just kind of run their course.

DEAL: But there's no repeats.

DONELLY: And she's a very complicated guitar player. So playing in and out of her complications taught me how to play oddly.

MUSICIAN: *Do you find it hard playing with other bands?*

DONELLY: Yeah, in a way.

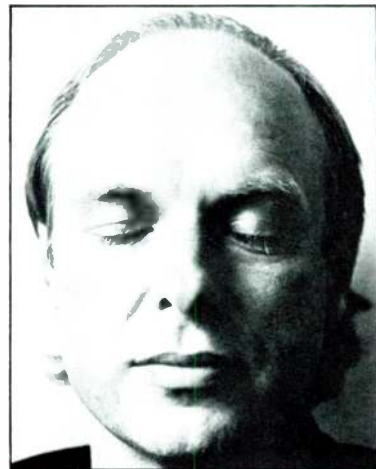
DEAL: That makes it good, though, and different.

DONELLY: I'm starting to get more of an appreciation for playing with people on a traditional level.

DEAL: "This is in A." "I don't care. You don't have to tell me what key it's in, it's not going to make any difference."

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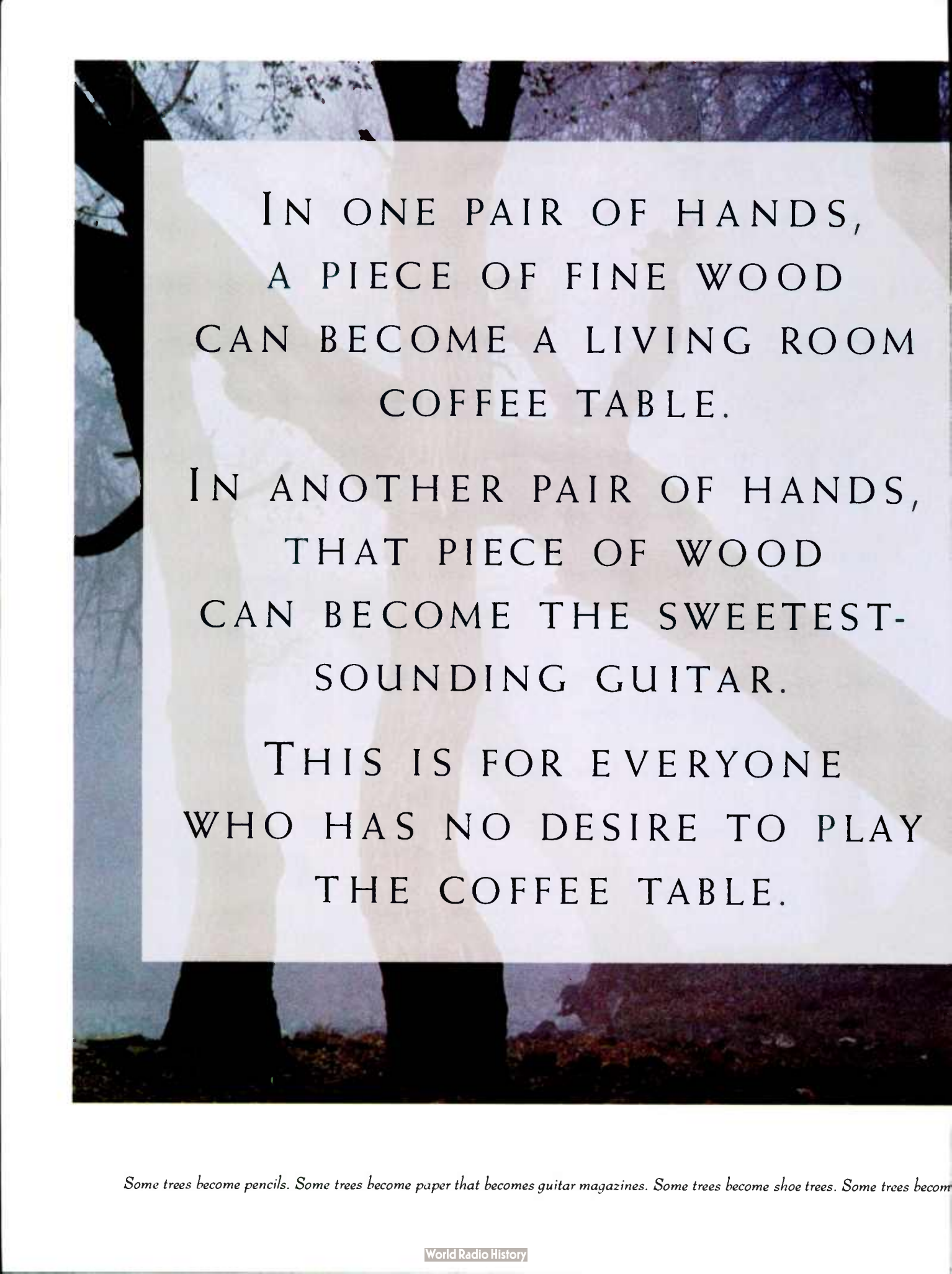
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THE RETURN OF steely dan

BY TOM MOON

THE NEW *Rolling Stone* arrives. Donald Fagen has heard that the review of his second solo album *Kamakiriad* is not totally favorable. He's just spent two hours with once and future cohort

Walter Becker deconstructing the myths that gather around Steely Dan like black clouds, so he's ready for a fight. He begins to read aloud.

"If the firmament of pop were a high school yearbook, Donald Fagen would qualify for either class beatnik or class nerd."

**Becker And
Fagen
Polish Up
Their Act**

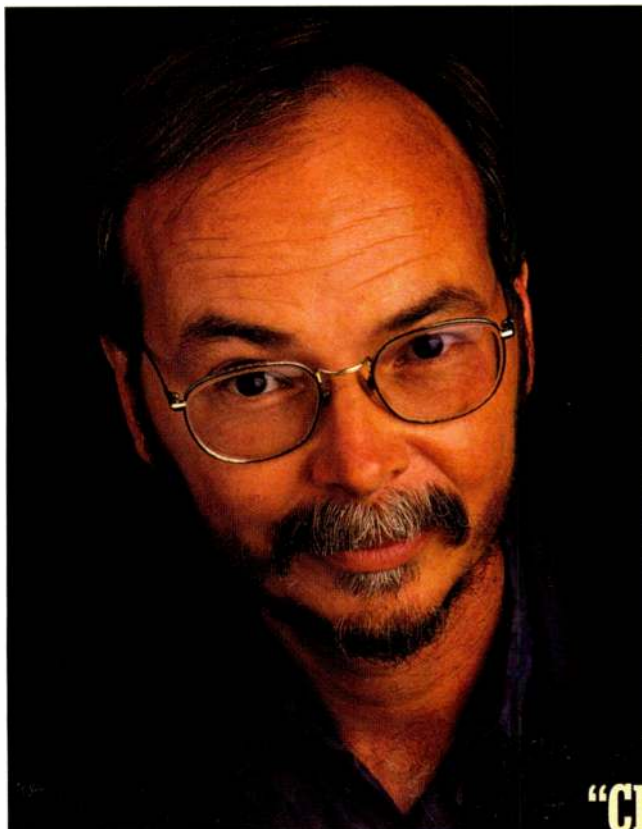
"Already a big mixed metaphor right there," he bristles. "Now am I up in the firmament or in the yearbook?"

He keeps reading. *"The futuristic song cycle suggests the fantasy of an overgrown kid who dreams of touring the galaxy in the coolest automobile ever built."* Did I ever go into space in the car? Do you remember that?

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES HAMILTON



Becker looks on as Fagen prepares to be shot in his New York apartment.



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

“Charlie Parker? He played with us. He was just a sideman.”

“The journey eventually takes him to the Florida Keys, where he fantasizes he’s being murdered in *On the Dunes*.” Now, how does he get from ‘it was like a homicide’ to being murdered?”

Ah, yes. It’s been a while. Seems like decades since these acid-tongued bards of thinking-person’s pop have had anything to gripe about. They’re clearly aware of the adversarial volleys that are now part of the legend. And, after all, they’re here to kick-start Steely Dan, to return one of the most bizarre success stories of the ’70s to active status following a mysterious decade-plus absence.

Last summer, in one of rock’s more curious turnabouts, the two artists who spent their stardom swearing they hated touring provided children of the ’70s with something we were brought up knowing we’d never see: thousands of people on their feet, singing along with that resolution about never going back to “My Old School.” Sure, it was part of the all-star New York Rock and Soul Revue, but so what? The band was roaring and the main men were serene, breathing fresh life into music they hadn’t performed in nearly 20 years, if at all. And, wonder of wonders, they enjoyed it. Steely Dan stopped touring in 1974, victims of the bad-PA-opening-for-Slade grind. Evermore a studio band, they became known for wanting to control every guitar quip and cymbal crash. When keyboardist Fagen and guitarist/bassist Becker split after *Gaucho* in 1980, it was clear they’d worn the concept out.

Yet here they are. Back again, as Steely Dan. Fagen says he and Becker have talked about more collaboration, possibly a new Steely Dan studio album once Becker’s solo debut gets finished. Drew Zingg, the guitarist and musical director for both the Rock and Soul

Revue and this summer’s Steely Dan tour, says Fagen and Becker have had to come to grips with the lingering affection fans have for Steely Dan: “I don’t think they quite understood the phenomenon, that people are fanatic about hearing this music,” he said days after tickets for a Madison Square Garden show sold out in some 40 minutes. “He [Fagen] really took it cautiously, from the very first Rock and Soul gigs where he wouldn’t sing at all. By the end of the tour last summer, I saw him really enjoying himself.”

Zingg says the tour, which may be recorded for a live album, will be

CAN’T BUY A THRILL goes gold, 1973: Guitarists Jeff Baxter and Dennis Dias, drummer Jim Hodder, Becker and Fagen.

anything but nostalgic: “They want to open it up, have as much of an improvisational approach as possible. The band is geared toward that, and the only way these two will play some of the older things is to substantially rework them, rewrite the horn charts or something.”

These days, rock artists enjoy an endless supply of second acts, and Unplugged comebacks. Even the least cynical in Steely Dan’s audience must wonder about this: Not them,

too. Why, after all this time spent with a secure legacy, risk adding another verse? Why return now, at a time when the sons of the Dan (most recently Bruce Hornsby) find themselves hitless, when selections from *Kamakiriad* (it hurts to report) regularly turn up on jazz-lite radio, when intelligent pop is an oxymoron?

MUSICIAN: What made you do it?

FAGEN: Money. [laughing] Of course. I think my manager was trying to prove that this could be done in a way that wasn’t too onerous. ’Cause all we had was memories of the early ’70s, being for the most part an opening act, kind of rough road trips. I think one of the big things was that you could be comfortable enough so that you could actually play at night without having gone through this ballistically bruising traveling.

BECKER: What we did last summer made clear to us that this whole procedure of traveling around with rock ’n’ roll bands and playing concerts for people has evolved considerably.

FAGEN: In a really scientific manner.

BECKER: And the other thing I saw, which I guess Donald had already experienced in his previous...

FAGEN: ...life...

BECKER: Live performances. What were you in your previous life?

FAGEN: Remember in the movie *The Egyptian*, the architect who built the pyramids?

BECKER: That was you?

FAGEN: Yes.

BECKER: What was I saying? At those shows I was reminded of the fact that there was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for hearing this music performed live. Throughout the Rock and Soul shows, practically everything that we did was really well-received, but there was a certain segment of the audience who were saving themselves for the Steely Dan songs. There was a real demand for it.

MUSICIAN: *Why now?*

FAGEN: A lot of it has to do with having some new material: the *Kamakiriad* record, the fact that Walter's got some new material of his own. If it was just us going out doing Steely Dan material, I'd have to think a lot harder about doing that. Even with rearranging them and so on, there's still the same element of nostalgia that I'm really not interested in.

MUSICIAN: *How do you feel about playing arenas?*

BECKER: We did at least one arena last year, the Spectrum in Philadelphia. While it was kind of weird-sounding onstage, it actually sounded good out in the hall.

FAGEN: We played at Madison Square Garden when we were with Jay and the Americans, on this big oldies show, and that wasn't bad.

BECKER: Hugo lost his tambourines and shakers, you remember that, it was a tragedy. We played there twice—once it was in the round—and that sounded pretty good. And those were pretty harmonically sophisticated, rhythmically precise arrangements we had with Jay and the Americans. "Our Day Will Come" sounded great.

Fagen and Becker as show-biz kids—"I'm the architect who built the pyramids."



MUSICIAN: *What's your recollection of the 1974 Steely Dan tour?*

BECKER: I don't think I was making any memory tracks by the end of that tour. Luckily there were a few recordings. The band was young, and there was a lot of medication of various types going on—as was generally found in the day. Of course, the audience was much more medicated than the band could ever afford to be. There were all sorts of interesting musical and personal clashes going on onstage. There was a core band there—five guys, right—that was about to disinte-

grate. It was loud, and guitar-heavy...

FAGEN: We were getting pretty good by the end of the run, when Mike McDonald joined the band, Jeff Porcaro—we had two drummers. It started to have a rich sound to it, in a way. And we had a lot of energy, so we'd play everything really fast.

BECKER: It was frightening up there on those stages.

FAGEN: We just wanted to get it over with.

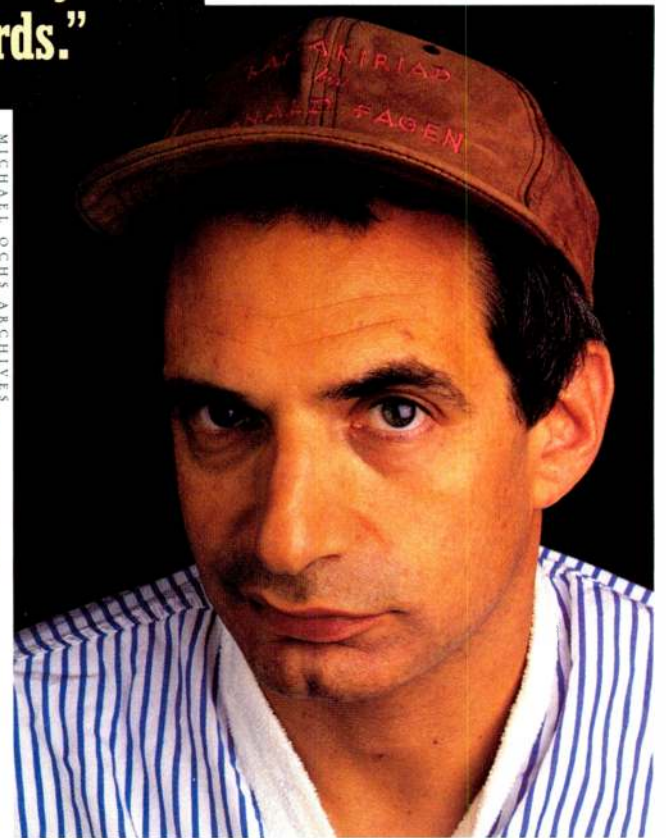
BECKER: What we were lacking in precision we were hoping to make up in enthusiasm.

MUSICIAN: *What were the clashes?*

BECKER: The overall problem was Donald and I not wanting to tour in a bigger league at all. And the other guys in the band, particularly as they were being sort of phased out of the record-making, all they wanted to do was tour. It seemed to us like, "Why should we be doing this when it doesn't really help us make records? In fact, it seems to detract from it by using up a lot of time and energy." And it seemed to them like, "Here we are, we're finally in a position to do what we've always wanted to do, we can make some money, make some new friends in every town, and why aren't these guys letting us do it?" It was ultimately an irreconcilable difference.

FAGEN: Also the band was put together very quickly. It was while we were making the first album, we'd never played together before, and the record came out and we were expected to tour. So we went out. Also it was a matter of musical and personal style clashes. We had a pretty good idea of the sort of thing we wanted, and some of these guys, although they were good rock 'n' roll players, couldn't handle this different universe. It wasn't as if there was much of a power struggle—they liked all our tunes and they were willing to take direc-

"It's just like the old days—they think we invented jazz chords."



tion and all that. But even so, they just didn't really understand what we were trying to get them to do. I don't know what was more shocking, finding out who we were or finding out who they were.

BECKER: It was a shock all around, let's face it.

MUSICIAN: *How did you arrive at the new band?*

FAGEN: It was the people who didn't have anything booked for the summer. We started a little late.

BECKER: There were no auditions as such—these are all people that we either played with in the studio or heard on numerous records and live performances, so we're knowledgeable about what they're doing. The actual combination of people is just our conception of something that would work well together, the same way it was when we were booking record dates.

FAGEN: In other words, it looks good on paper.

MUSICIAN: *Peter Erskine was an inspired choice for a drummer—he's often underrated.*

BECKER: He's not underrated at my house. He always sounds good, any kind of music that he's playing.

MUSICIAN: *Is there a set list?*

FAGEN: There's a set list. Half Steely Dan songs, half my stuff and a few of Walter's things from his yet-unreleased album.

BECKER: And then we were thinking of doing some songs that people might remember being us but weren't really.

FAGEN: Like "Ride captain ride on your mystery ship," or the one about the horse with no name.

BECKER: Some of the quirkiest '70s things.

FAGEN: We're probably gonna do "Babylon Sisters." I like the more pop-type songs like "Josie." And some of the blues things like "Chain Lightning" stand up well. I'm a sucker for the blues; anything based around that progression is fine with me.

MUSICIAN: *But you've already played them last year—you know they work. How about something like "Any Major Dude"?*

BECKER: That was on our list. I don't know if it'll make the final cut.

FAGEN: We're messing around with rearranging things, but when we started doing it, we found it kind of tricky. Say something like "Babylon Sisters," we couldn't figure out

much to do with it; it was already so complex that we'd probably do pretty much the structure as it is on the record. Most of the lead sheets from the record are missing. So I've had to pick out a lot of things off the record. There are some things that are very tricky, passing chords and stuff which I don't remember writing. When I finally figure out what it is, I'll remember its structural function. Then we have some of the earlier, simpler stuff that's easier to fool around with.

BECKER: You know why? Because the arrangement things we're thinking of doing to the early ones, we already did to the later ones before we recorded them. We're thinking of doing the whole show as a medley—one long Steely Dan medley.

FAGEN: Using those little musical bridges in between, Broadway-type things, modulations.

BECKER: "Way down upon the Swanee River..."

MUSICIAN: *Would that require you to play all the hits?*

BECKER: A fast few bars of each would probably do it.

MUSICIAN: *With this body of work, do you feel obligated to play hits?*

**"At this moment
in history you
can do
anything and
perhaps be taken
seriously for
doing it."**

FAGEN: "Body of work" has a nice kind of cadaverous ring to it.

BECKER: We examined the body of work for signs of abrasions or lesions...

FAGEN: And found that the time of death was sometime in late 1974...

BECKER: Unfortunately the body was too dumb to lie down, and continued to roam the earth for some years longer...

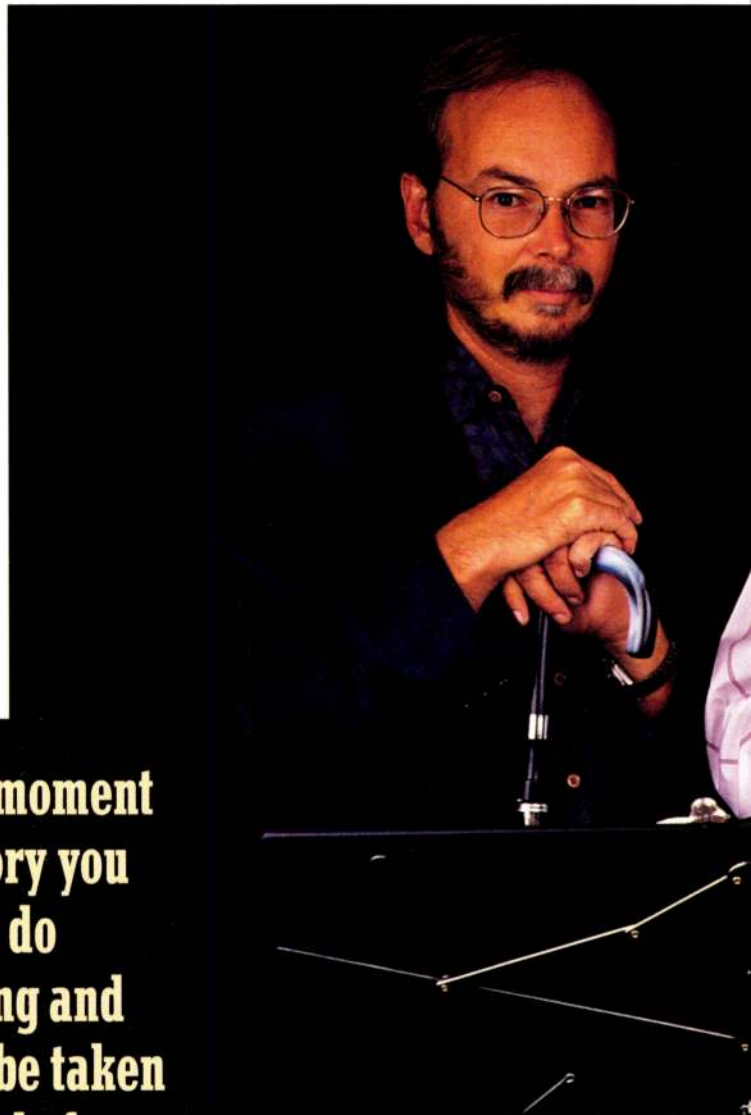
MUSICIAN: *Back to the hits.*

BECKER: I think we're probably gonna do most of them—whether out of a sense of obligation or just love for them.

MUSICIAN: *Musicians who have played on Steely Dan records seem to cherish the work they did for you—they say you were able to get from them something they don't always capture on tape. Why is that?*

BECKER: A tremendous portion of the careers of studio musicians, they're submerging themselves to some dreary strictures based on the length of the commercial or the ideas of who's in the room. And yet the kind of guys we're talking about are prepared to go way beyond that. So when the right context comes along, they get a chance to do what they rarely get to do.

FAGEN: Soloists are challenged by the complexity of the chords. When we write, the arrangements are set up to make the soloist stand out—





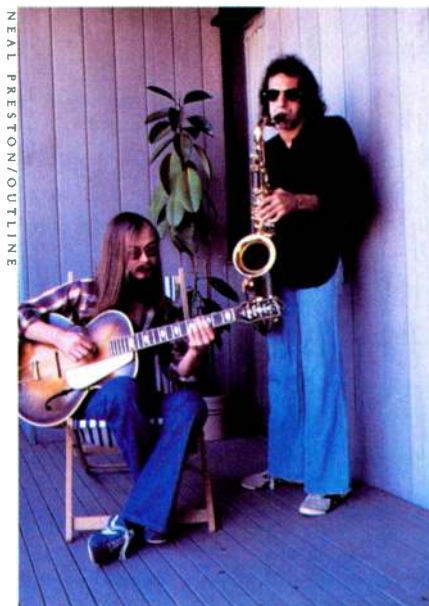
there'll be a modulation or something to help him sound good. We build things into the arrangements, the way a good big band arrangement does. Some of these guys may be great musicians, but they may not be the best writers.

BECKER: Even when a guy's doing his own album I've noticed as often as not the things that have the best blowing will be the standards, tunes they can get right.

FAGEN: We tell the guys, "Go out there, have a good time, take a few cracks." Everybody mentions Wayne Shorter playing "Aja" as one of those things that took so long. It really didn't take that long. He rehearsed it a few times, then he decided he wanted to write out scales. As good as any musician is, when you hit him with some music he's never heard before that's got some complexity to it, sometimes it's better to take a look at it. So he wrote them out, and this allowed him to forget about the mechanics of it. After that, a couple more takes and that was it.

BECKER: Usually the guy gets it or he doesn't. Maybe the guy basically gets it but there's a little area that's rough, a little passage he's going to have to work on. What's actually on the record are the things when a guy got it. We might have some general kind of rousing advice about the mood of the thing.

FAGEN: I remember when Cornelius [Bumpus] came in for "On the Dunes," I did suggest that if he had a chance, and it came into his



NEAL PRESTON/OUTLINE

Walter falls in with the rhythm section while the Bird files: "For all the years I was writing with Donald, I didn't have to worry about the chord voicings because Donald already knew all that. My solo things may sound simpler harmonically because I don't have Donald's ability in that area."

mind, to play "By the Sea"—which he didn't for a couple of takes, and then he did, sort of, for the last. It clicked in, in a weird way.

MUSICIAN: How has your relationship changed since the '80s?

FAGEN: We're going for the license, going down to city hall.

BECKER: After *Gacho*, I moved to Hawaii and I didn't see Donald for four or five years. And when we got back together to do some writing, we pretty much found it was an enjoyable process, but it was a commuting situation. It's hard to casually traverse 5000 miles. But when we are together and we're working together, I feel like it's a similar dynamic to what we were doing back in the old days. We haven't collaborated on writing too much the last three years.

FAGEN: We still never touch each other's bodies.

BECKER: Except perhaps a handshake configuration.

MUSICIAN: Are there any lingering misconceptions about Steely Dan?

BECKER: Misconceptions? I feel pretty well-understood.

FAGEN: It depends on what audience you talk to. For instance, I've known musicians who take the vocabulary of the harmony very seriously. Where for us there was always something funny about that whole thing. Applying jazz harmony to backbeats and everything.

I don't know if a lot of fusion bands see the humor in it. Especially young musicians, learning for the first time, take it seriously. To us, there was some sense of parodying the fact that even before we were born, jazz had already been co-opted: detective shows, "The Ed Sullivan Show." We both liked the authentic music but we liked the fake jazz as well.

BECKER: If not better.

FAGEN: We could tell the difference, at least. I *think*.

BECKER: Maybe we couldn't tell the difference. That was the problem. The other thing was that we were aware of the high degree of incompatibility between jazz and rock music. And that it didn't take very much jazz to offend a rock listener pretty badly in a way they would never, ever forgive.

FAGEN: What did Chuck Berry say? "I got no something against modern jazz, unless they try to play it too darn fast."

MUSICIAN: Was the legend overblown of the weeks you spent in pursuit of single sounds?

BECKER: There were many stories that were greatly exaggerated or without any truth whatsoever. But that's not to say that we weren't obsessive or didn't take a long time trying to get things a certain way.

STONE PIANOS

FAGEN recorded *Kamakiriad* at River Sound, the studio he co-owns with Gary Katz in New York, and at WALTER BECKER's Hyperbolic Sound in Hawaii. The album was tracked on Sony 48-track digital machines; River Sound's board is an old Neve, Hyperbolic's a Soundcraft. A Neumann TLM-71 microphone was used for vocals. "I guess I made three trips to Hawaii," Fagen recalls. "We were doing vocals and technical stuff. At one point I did ship a Rhodes out there, but most of the keyboards were done in New York."

Fagen used a Yamaha six-foot acoustic piano and one of his stable of 76-key Rhodes electrics. He says he's still having trouble adjusting to "the digital aesthetic": "A record made with synthesizers sounds like your head is in some sort of clamping device. It's out of tune. A piano tuner 'stretches' the top and bottom of the piano to account for the fact that the extremes are going to be a little off. They're starting to put the stretch technology in synthesizers, but you still get weird-sounding harmonics. And as you overdub, there's an increasing tuning clash."

So Fagen avoided synthesizers except for the string parts on "On the Dunes," which came from "this funny Roland thing that looks like a refrigerator. It has two piano sounds and a string sound—I think it's designed for your living room."

For Becker, the 48-track storage meant that he and Fagen could maintain a creative flow for much longer than on previous projects: "With a 24-track machine, pretty soon you only have three or four tracks, then the performance is stopped and you've gotta start to edit. With 48, you don't sit there and judge everything. You keep going because there are any number of empty tracks."

Becker says the vocal tracks required an average amount of time. "They pretty much just came out. The playing room is in a separate building from the control room, so Donald was all by himself. He's very consistent from take to take. He has the vocal well-defined in his mind, so even after working on it for a while, his performances still had the character he wanted."

Becker's Strat-style guitar is a patchwork: body by John Carruthers, neck by Jim Tyler, a Floyd Rose vibrato, Seymour Duncan pickups. The instrument was recently tweaked by Roger Sadowsky. Strings? .010s, but he disavows all knowledge of brand: "I always try to weasel out of actually changing the strings." His bass is by Jim Crawford at Carruthers' shop.

On tour Fagen plans to play electric piano; Becker will play guitar. DREW ZINGG, the guitarist and musical director, plays a custom Pensa-Suhr, with neck specs from a Gibson 335. He uses D'Addario strings and a reconfigured Fender Princeton amp.

BOB SHEPPARD uses a Selmer Mark XI tenor sax with a Hollywood Dukoff mouthpiece, and a Yamaha YSS-62 soprano with a Francois Louis mouthpiece; he likes La Voz Medium reeds. Bob also uses a Yamaha bass clarinet and 881 flute, and a Gemeinhardt alto flute. CORNELIUS BUMPUS has a Selmer Super 80 tenor with an Otto Link hard rubber mouthpiece and La Voz medium reeds; his Selmer Super 80 soprano has a Selmer metal mouthpiece and Rico Royal #31/2 reeds. He also uses a Haynes flute. TOM BARNEY uses two basses from The Bass Shop—an ESP four-string and a Music Man Stingray five-. Strings? Dean Markley Magnums and Supers. PETER ERSKINE uses Yamaha Maple Custom Vintage drums—bass and five toms; he alternates between a 51/zx14 and a 4x12 snare. He uses Zildjian cymbals and Vic Firth sticks. WARREN BERNHARDT will use a Yamaha C7 on the road. Fagen will play a suitcase-model Rhodes.

MUSICIAN: *But are you happy with the records?*

BECKER: You mean without actually playing them? I manage to live with them as long as no one plays them. Through the years we were more and more able to accomplish what we were trying to do without sounding too amateurish. On the other hand, in isolated examples, some of the stuff on the early albums is just as good as the stuff on the later albums. On the early albums, the things that were more ambitious didn't come off as one might have hoped, and still sound that way. Although it's kind of charming that we were trying to do some of the things we were trying to do—you get points for that. To tell you the truth, some things from the first album that were successful were as good as anything else we did, and what they lacked in polish they made up for in other ways.

MUSICIAN: *Those obscure lyrics have become touchstones for people, in ways you could never have intended.*

BECKER: We were probably just taking the cheap way out with these evocative little names for places or people that we used.

FAGEN: Some of them were real people.

BECKER: It was subjective and stylized in a way that lends itself to the type of thing you're talking about, or to William Gibson naming bars in his books after Steely Dan songs. We were throwing out a lot of little names and places that made it possible to enter the songs. I think it's great up to and including Steely Dave's. It kind of adds to the myth.

MUSICIAN: *Steely Dave's?*

BECKER: One of Donald's uncles was going to open a bar.

FAGEN: Actually it was my Uncle Dave. He had this bar in Dayton. The bar was going belly-up, and he called me and asked if he could change the name to Steely D's. Dave, you're down there in Florida now—in the long run it was better you got out of the bar business. You even sold the beer and wine drive-through warehouse.

MUSICIAN: *"Hey Nineteen" is more prescient than it was when it came out. You guys are part of something that happened a generation back.*

FAGEN: The sequel's gonna be "Hey 34." It's just like the old days—they think we invented jazz chords.

BECKER: That of course adds a lot to the myth—those jazz chords. Remember that, upstairs at Minton's Playhouse?

FAGEN: Yeah, we were great.

BECKER: We'd come up there after our regular gig...

FAGEN: ...and explore some of the upper intervals of the chords.

BECKER: Charlie Parker, man? He played with us. He was just a side-man, brother.

MUSICIAN: *Walter, you're working on your first solo album. Donald has established a certain territory connected to but apart from Steely Dan, with his two solo projects. Do you have to avoid certain things?*

BECKER: I don't feel any compunction about that. But as a practical matter, because I was working alone and I don't have the harmonic ability, the compositional ability, and some of the other technical abilities Donald has, it's basically me and a sequencer for most of these songs. A couple of them are guitar-based, but most were written like that. I realized very early on that I should not necessarily try to maintain any particular high level of harmonic sophistication, because it's just not possible for me to do that without a lot of work. So I started writing things that were simpler and more accessible to me with the skills that I did acquire over the years, which are spotty. For all the years I was writing with Donald, I didn't have to worry about learning the chord voicings or anything, because Donald already knew all that. The things I have that may sound different or simpler harmonically than Steely Dan things are a product of the fact that it's just me writing. I didn't have Donald's ability in that area. But there are similarities—I



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World Radio History



notice anything I've had to do with will remind somebody of Steely Dan, whether it's the lyrics to other people's songs that I didn't write, or whatever.

MUSICIAN: *Anything you've heard recently that you admire?*

FAGEN: I don't follow it, so it's usually music I'll hear in a cab.

BECKER: I like the Farsi cab guys where the dispatcher has echo on his voice.

FAGEN: Dentist music...commercials on TV. I don't watch television hardly at all, but every once in a while I'll hear something interesting.

BECKER: That's where the best musical talent is going. The trained musicians are playing commercials imitating cab music.

MUSICIAN: *What about jazz?*

FAGEN: There's something reactionary about it that's just not very satisfying. There's some great players, but it's kinda lost its way. No one wants to hear a retreat. It's more interesting if you're a rap group that uses pieces of this and that and puts them together in this kind of collage. Just to recreate one style is an academic exercise.

MUSICIAN: *The flip side of that is Kenny G.*

BECKER: That's another aspect of the problem. The question of style is crucial. Obviously, at this moment in history you can do anything and perhaps be taken seriously for doing it. So anything's possible, and people are looking for slants that are gonna somehow draw attention to them so that their substance, if there is any, will get through to people. It's hard to get the attention of the musical audience right now. There's been a lot of fragmentation. There's a lot of retro stuff, a lot of very primitive things, very stripped down in a kind of punk way: "We don't care what this sounds like—it's the attitude more than anything that we want to present." One night Donald and I went to a club. It was jazz musicians, basically great musicians we were hearing, and they were playing "The Anger of the '60s."

FAGEN: We called the Mode Police on the way out.

BECKER: They were playing this angry type of music that evolved in the '60s, and at the time I saw it as an aspect of the black experience and the demand for social equality. But here are these guys playing it completely out of context. And in retrospect, it was the least attractive element of that music—that's what those guys chose to celebrate.

FAGEN: Both the musicians and the audience are on their own Sentimental Journey: The music takes second place to associations with the music. They're trying to bring back what they think happened—it's not only bringing back the past, but some idealization of it. So it's an illusory experience, or certainly an inauthentic one.

MUSICIAN: *You've managed to sidestep this for two decades simply by taking yourselves out of circulation. Does this reunion beg the charge of nostalgia?*

FAGEN: People will probably think that's what it is. What can we do?

BECKER: We could do "Sentimental Journey."

FAGEN: When people hear some of the old stuff, they'll be in their own world, thinking about sitting in their Volkswagen with their first love or second or third, or maybe several at once, and they'll associate with the music rather than actually hear the music. I try not to associate anything. I've trained myself so that I only hear exactly what's happening—I don't bring anything to it. It's called "laser thinking."

MUSICIAN: *Naturally you'll give workshops on this after the tour ends.*

FAGEN: That's what the whole tour will be: about a 40-minute lecture and a 10-minute musical demonstration.

MUSICIAN: *On Kamakiriad the grooves have much more pure R&B in them.*

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Elektra Music Group

FAGEN: I was researching records at the time of the New York Rock and Soul Revue. I was looking for a more aggressive feel. I had a lot of control because I was building the tracks with a sequencer, like a mechanical model. I could create these beats that a drummer would not normally play. I was very careful about the groove. I'd run everything through delays and kinda play around with it until I got everything really relaxed. Then I'd show that to the drummer, and then he'd...

BECKER: ...fall to the ground weeping uncontrollably.

FAGEN: The drummers were generous about suspending their own feel, their own personal grooves. They got very good at avoiding the expected kinds of grooves and creating what I was looking for.

MUSICIAN: *Were you thinking about that Stax rhythm section?*

FAGEN: When I'm playing around with it, I think of it almost like swing music, where it's a very laid-back backbeat—more space than Stax had. For instance, for most of the Stax stuff, Al Jackson Jr. actually pulls up on his snare drum, and he has a racy feel.

MUSICIAN: *It's ahead of the eighth note.*

FAGEN: Yeah. I guess I like a more relaxed thing. To me, it comes from a swing vein, where it feels like every bar it's about to fall over. That's what I held out for.

MUSICIAN: *Rhythmwise, was any one track harder than another?*

BECKER: "Trans-Island Skyway" was a bitch.

FAGEN: That was hard. Drummers tend to want to race along. We had to just keep telling 'em to relax. You know what else was hard to get? "Tomorrow's Girls." We had several versions of that I was playing around with.

MUSICIAN: *What about the vocal harmonies? Do you work them out on a keyboard?*

FAGEN: "Tomorrow's Girls" has a basic melody that was very difficult to harmonize. Some of the inner parts are awkward. At times it sounds like parts are crossing, but they're not. It went up a key for the chorus; I knew that I had to amend the melody to be able to sing the chorus, because my range could not handle it. So we had to kind of spritz that one together a little.

BECKER: It was really loose at times, too. Reminded me of the Band, the way those guys would just slide into those harmonies. The character you're talking about comes from the unusual underlying harmonies.

FAGEN: It sounds simpler than it is—the second chord of the chorus is a IV triad—in C, like an F, but with a major third in the bass so

it's like F over E. But it's a blues thing.

BECKER: When a guy plays blues licks in the middle of a pop song improvisation, you sit and look at it and say, "This is ridiculous. It'll never work."

FAGEN: But then it goes by, and it smooths out. You know how I was able to do it? Laser thinking.


MUSICIAN: *Were you as concerned with precision as you were as Steely Dan? It sounds as though the tracks are a little less fussy.*

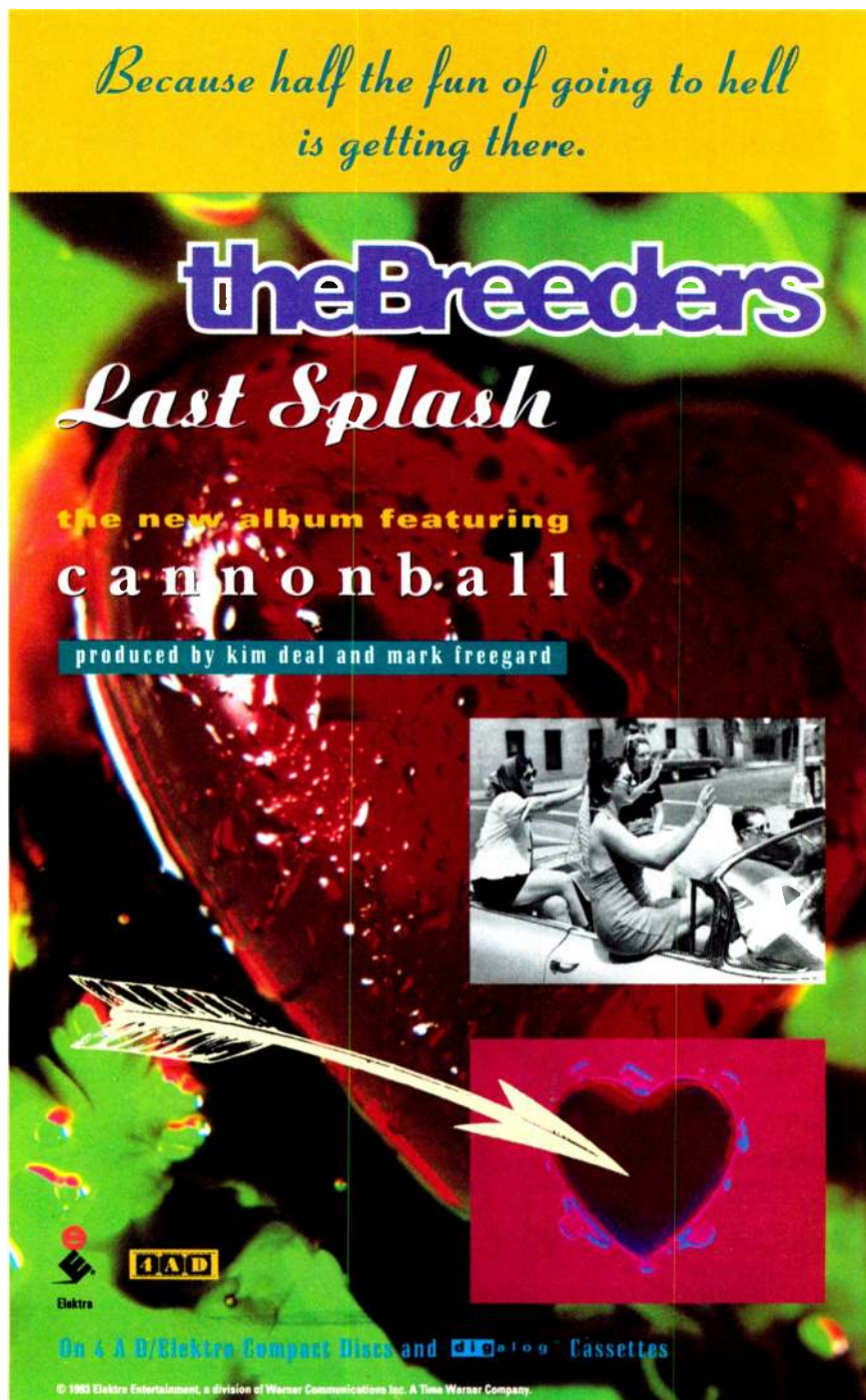
BECKER: I think "as though" is a good operational term. The underpinnings of it were as

precisely laid out as anything else. With the layers, you try to create the more casual kind of thing. You put it together more carefully to make it work.

MUSICIAN: *With Aja, the innovation came through structure and harmony. Where's the locus of the next innovation?*

BECKER: We can't tell you that. It's secret information. We know, we've thought about it, we've identified it, but it's secret.

FAGEN: We've got it in a locker down in Port Authority. You got the key, right? I don't have the key... 





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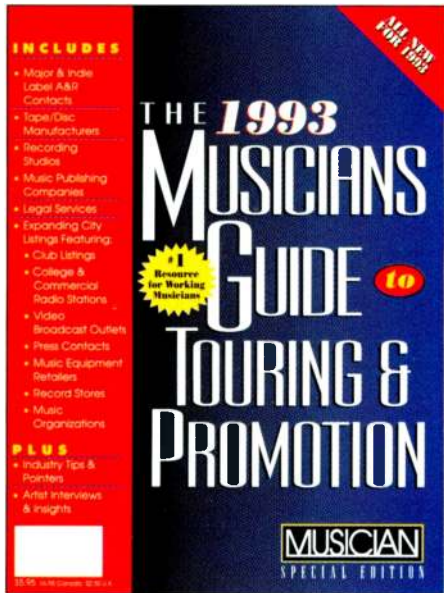


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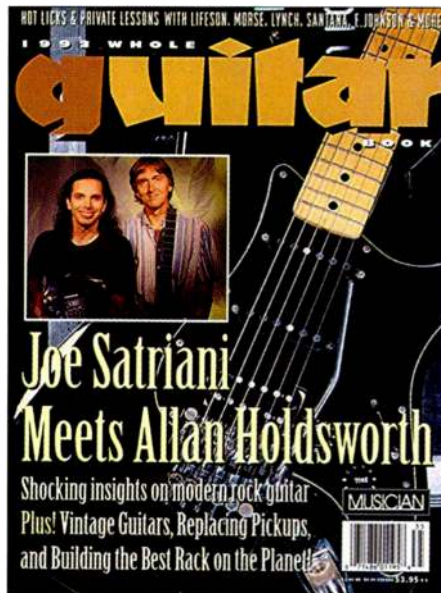
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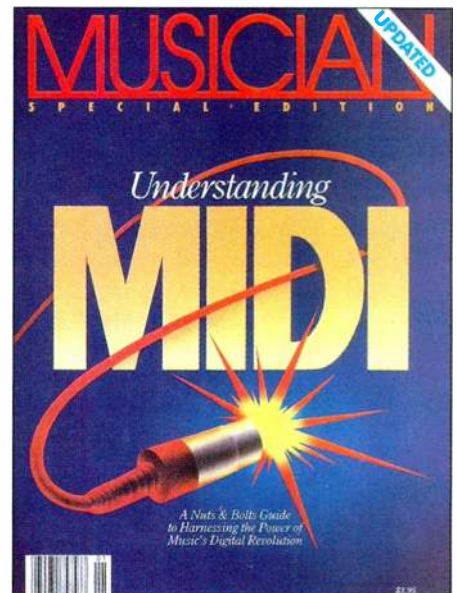
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Five-String Freestyle

*Fishbone's
Norwood Fisher*

by ALAN DI PERNA



of funk, soul, thrash, ska, reggae and prog. But it's Norwood's deep bass foundation that provides a sense of rhythmic unity. Sequestered in a backstage tent somewhere on the University of California's beachside Santa Barbara campus, the lanky, goateed bassist is dressed for summer in print boxer shorts and a sleeveless undershirt, a Brownie-scout yarmulke emblazoned with the Fishbone logo covering one braided lock of hair. Fishbone are playing the college's "Summer Extravaganza" as a way of warming up for their slot on this year's Lollapalooza tour and to promote their latest LP, *Give a Monkey a Brain and He'll Swear He's the Center of the Universe*. While he waits to perform, Norwood takes up his five-string bass and tries to put his musical approach into words.

"A lot of my basslines involve some kind of contrast: maybe pushing one particular note harder than the rest, or getting smooth in the middle of a line. Or like in 'Lemon Meringue' [one of Norwood's compositions on *Monkey*] there's a lot of slapping going on, but then there's a lot of pretty shit in the middle and at the end."

Fishbone debuted in '85, as part of L.A.'s mod/ska scene. But even their first EP, *Party at Ground Zero*, showed stylistic ambitions far beyond Two-Tone revivalism. A significant turning point in Norwood's playing technique came around '86, when he started to explore the fretless five-string bass: "We went on tour and all I took was a fretted four-string, a fretless four and a fretted five-string. The very first night, Chris [Dodd, Fishbone's trombonist/keyboardist] jumped up and kicked the headstock right off my fretted four-string. I couldn't afford to buy a new bass, so by the end of the tour, I was playing fretless *really* well. And the five-string was coming on too. I figured there was no reason to go back to a four-string, because you're just working with less. Some five-strings don't have as much punch as a four-string, but not all of them have that built-in sacrifice."

All of Norwood's bass parts for the [cont'd on page 58]

As a kid in the '70s, John Norwood Fisher listened intently to Funkadelic's Billy Bass and Aston "Family Man" Barrett from Bob Marley's band. Rather than getting caught up in the surface differences between funk and reggae, young Norwood keyed in on the

similarities between what the two bassists were doing.

"Nobody could say Billy Bass and Family Man are exactly the same," he says. "But some of the ways that they both rocked the groove *were* the same. Even when I listen to them now I can hear it. They were doing the same thing at the same time, but in different styles of music."

This lesson served Norwood well when he grew up and joined Fishbone. L.A.'s genre-happy mavericks funnel their crazy, angry energy into a polychrome hybrid

*Playing God
with Todd**Rundgren's interactive CD
allows listeners to shape the music*

by STEVE OZARK



Get Todd Rundgren talking, and you're in for a lesson on the future. "In five years, say, musicians will be able to direct-market to their audience without having to be signed to a label," asserts the erstwhile master singer/songwriter and all-around studio whiz. "There won't

be record stores. Music won't need to be pressed to disc. You'll be able to buy space in a database and make your work available to be downloaded right into people's homes.

"In the near future, all communication and entertainment media will be brought into your home using a single fiber optic cable. It'll all be funnelled through a single device that allows you to access and interact with television programs, recording, stock market information and live events of various kinds."

When it comes to future-speak and -seek, Rundgren is at the head of the class.

He was instrumental in producing the first interactive concert (the audience voted on the songs to be performed), the first music video incorporating both live action and computer graphics, the first live radio concert to be broadcast in stereo, the first national cablecast of a live rock concert—not to mention non-musical projects such as the first videodisc (a 1979 demo for RCA) and the first color computer-graphics tablet (Apple's Utopia Graphics Tablet, for which Todd wrote the software in 1980). From his rock-god period as front man for the Nazz and Utopia through a solo career as a one-man band, songwriter, producer, software developer and video pioneer, Rundgren has remained an icon of innovation.

Todd's new project *No World Order* is another first: the first-ever interactive music recording, released by Philips in a new format called CD-I (Compact Disc Interactive). CD-I, which requires special playback hardware, is a television-based multimedia format that resembles an interactive combination of videodisc and audio CD.

"I've been sort of a conventional music artist for a long time," Rundgren reflects during a break at the Hit Factory, where he's producing a record for Paul Shaffer and the World's Most Dangerous Band. "But the music business is becoming less focused on the things people do musically and more focused on the shenanigans. In order to be relevant, I decided to incorporate a number of things I've been investing a lot of time in—multimedia, computers and the ways they can be applied to artistic endeavors—but I hadn't found a way to integrate them, especially in a way that would affect how the music sounds, or more important, how it can be experienced."

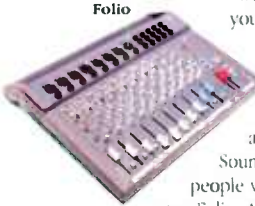
The solution was to develop a database of 933 short, free-standing, digitally recorded musical ideas, which he calls "clips." Each clip is unique, but each is also related to others, so that clips can be arranged to play in a variety of orders. The need for seamless transitions between clips led Rundgren to temper his taste for lush melodies with a dose of rap-

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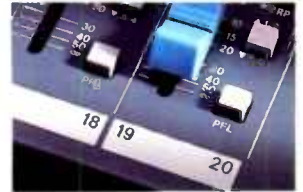
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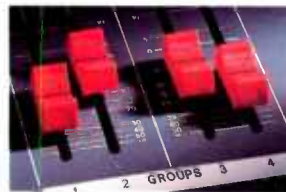
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style disjuncture. "That kind of hip-hop approach lends itself to being cut into pieces," he observes. "That's the way a lot of that music is generated in the first place."

The next step was to give copies of the database to four renowned producers and ask them to put together their own sequences. "My sequence exactly resembles a non-interactive CD coming out on Forward Records," a division of Rhino, he says. "The interactive version will feature sequences by Bob Clearmountain, Don Was, Jerry Harrison and Hal Willner—if they've all finished in time for the release."

The celebrity sequences serve as starting points for further exploration. Having selected one, you can use a joystick to play with basic parameters called "flavors," each of which offers several options called "spices." The flavors (and spices) include direction (forward, reverse, looping, fast forward and very fast forward, which skips clips); form (standard, creative and conservative); tempo (from 86 to 132 beats per minute); mood (bright, happy, thoughtful, sad and dark); and mix (thick, natural, spacious, sparse and Karaoke). Rundgren also includes a function that he calls "slack." By increasing the slack between spices or flavors (from 1 to 100 percent), you can generate a virtually unlimited number of variations.

No World Order is much easier to use than to explain. Rundgren limited the options available to the user/listener, both in deference to an audience accustomed to TV channel-surfing and to preserve the integrity of the music. Actually, most of the work goes on below the surface, so the musical output sounds palatable no matter how haphazard the user's edits.

"A lot of people think interactivity is automatically an egalitarian thing," Todd observes, "but I don't agree. I don't expect that an art per-

formance is necessarily democratic. It takes a lot of professional experience to do the job right, to mix a record. Why do you think people get paid so much money to mix records?"

FISHER

[cont'd from page 55] *Monkey* album were done on five-string. "I learned the whole album on fretless," he says. "And then in the studio I just made the choice to play fretted on a few songs, for the sound." Turning his attention to his axe, he demonstrates the tricky syncopations in his funky, fretless tour de force, "Properties of Propaganda." Norwood's picking technique is unique: The thumb and first finger are held in a kind of "clawhammer" shape. And it's often the first finger rather than the thumb that does the slapping parts, using an abrupt upward motion.

"On songs like 'Lemon Meringue' and 'Nutt Megalomania' [another funky Norwood track on *Monkey*], I learned the songs slapped all the way through, and then all the way fingered. In the studio, I just ended up doing both: changing between them without really thinking about it."

The "clawhammer" technique is put to furious use for the machine-like bass arpeggios toward the end of "The Warmth of Your Breath," a sort of thrashy C&W comedy tune on *Monkey*. What sounds like a power drill upside the bass strings is actually Norwood's thumb, first and second fingers—on the A, D and G strings, respectively—playing root-fifth-octave figures up and down the neck. "It's rough," Norwood says of the part. "But I'm glad you picked up on it. I was wondering if anyone was gonna hear that."

Norwood demurs when I marvel at his ability to shift gears from spacey funk to the manic thrash of a song like "Servitude." "Aw, I played that song like a sissy," he laughs. "I didn't need to play extra hard on that, because the tone was really warm and round—as a contrast to the guitars. So I just played 'fat bottom' style. On bass, it's all just me being me. But the guitars now...they change attitude like a motherfucker."

TODD'S TOOLS

TODD RUNDGREN's Apple Macintosh Centris 650 provides the horsepower for Digidesign hardware and software, and for Steinberg's Cubase sequencer. Todd prefers the Roland JD-800 "for most keyboarding, and for some of its sounds, along with the E-mu Proteus II for more sounds." An Alesis D4 serves as a drum module. "On a lot of *No World Order*, I just play guitar," he says. He uses Dean Markley strings and "various guitars. Most prominent of late is a P-Project guitar, which was given to me. I think it's made by Fernandes, but I don't pay much attention to brands."

FISHTONES

NORWOOD FISHER plays Warwick five-string basses with EMG pickups. He uses a combination of Trace Elliot, SWR and MESA/Boogie amplification. Of his effects he says, "The few times I used any on the album, it was so minimal that I don't even remember what I was using."

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Waiting for the Revolution

*Desktop video
in the year One B.D.*

by LEE STRANAHAN



We've all watched MTV. Not as much fun as it could be, right? Just as necessity is the mother of invention, MTV seems the mother of a voice inside that hisses, "I can do better than

this crap!" For many of us, MTV is where the dream of desktop video production begins.

It goes like this: You walk into your home video studio. Your bandmates mug as your manager works the camera. The drummer cooks up a digital stew of fractal animations. You mix it all together with a few video effects, and out comes a masterpiece. It looks as good as anything on the networks, but with one difference—it bears the stamp of an artist's vision, rather than that of advertisers, demographic surveys and corporate bureaucracies.

Is it just a dream? Can you produce broadcast-quality videos out of your own home on a musician's budget? The answer is yes. Well, maybe soon.

Desktop video is where desktop audio was a few years ago. Back then, cheap but effective synthesizers, samplers, sequencers, digital effects and mixers were everywhere, but there was no similarly inexpensive, high-quality way to record and distribute your creations. Then along came affordable digital recording. Suddenly you really could make pro-quality recordings in your living room.

For the purposes of desktop video, 1993 is Year One B.D.—Before Digital. There's cool gear aplenty for generating raw imagery. The problem is how to record and edit it.

The buzz right now is NewTek's Video Toaster 4000, a hardware/software package that turns the Commodore Amiga computer into a TV studio in a box. You get a video switcher, character generator and paint system, and a bunch of amazing effects that let you flip, tumble and otherwise mess around with moving images in real time. But the real breakthrough is the price. The unit goes for about \$2400, the computer for an additional \$2500. For five grand you get most of the capabilities of a \$100,000 video production suite.

Take a basic Toaster system, add one of the new high-quality camcorders like Sony's VX-3 (around \$4000) and a good consumer Super VHS deck (around \$700), and you have one hot little studio. For producing video demos, recording gigs, producing a public-access show or making the *Terminator 2* of wedding videos, this set-up works like a charm.

It's not going to get you onto MTV, though. The quality required for that just can't be had at the magic under-\$10,000 price. Not that the Toaster's output isn't broadcast-quality. For proof, look no further than Steven Spielberg's upcoming TV series, *seaQuest*. Rather than filming miniature models, Spielberg is using a fleet of 50 Toasters to render his 3D graphics.

But the video equivalent of the Alesis ADAT has yet to appear. Pro-quality analog video decks are [cont'd on page 64]

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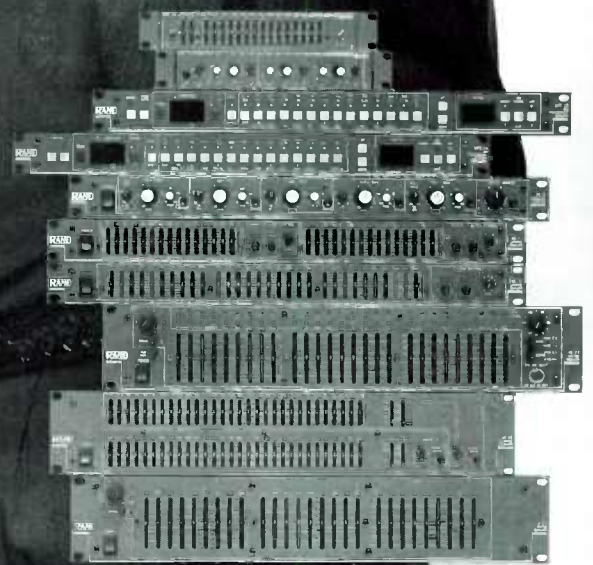
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Pete Zeldman's Advanced Times

Solving the polyrhythmic puzzle
by KEN MICALLEF



On the track "Pistons," Pete Zeldman uses a six-pedal setup (striking bass drum, cowbell, hi-hats, side-mounted timbales) with large, suspended hi-hats over a conventional kit. What at first sounds like a skipping record is actually a 19-over-16 groove; then, a cross-mesh

of rhythmic phrasing creates a 4/4 feel inside the original pulse. It gives the impression of a rock drummer playing in 4/4 and an Afro-Cubanist laying down a cowbell pattern while a Senegalese percussionist works out next to Tony Williams' left hand, free-form improvising on a snare drum.

The innovative drumming on Zeldman's CD *Other: Not Elsewhere* leaves many musicians scratching their heads in disbelief. The 35-year-old has worked with the Lounge Lizards and Elliott Sharp as well as contributing rhythms to Steve Vai's *Flex-Able*. Going beyond basic odd meter-grouped "licks" over a rock pulse, he often plays odd meters on each limb simultaneously against an ostinato (a repetitive, sus-

tained rhythm) while improvising phrases within the pattern.

Citing Edgard Varèse's "Ionization" and Frank Zappa's "Black Page" as quintessential works in odd rhythm, Zeldman explains the basics: Polyrythm is "the ratio of how two rates are working together." Hemiola: "how fours and threes or fives and threes relate in music." Anacrusis opening: "when you start a piece and the downbeat is a rest, like the Beatles' 'She's a Woman.' The Police and Van Halen have used it also."

A cross-rhythm, such as that used in the Police's "Murder by Numbers," is what Zeldman defines as "an unusual phrase in repetition, like playing a nine-note grouping across the set at a sixteenth-note rate over and against a 4/4 pulse."

Here, he first plays a nine-note roll over snare, toms and bass drum, working it up to speed. He then overlaps the roll through a 4/4 rock beat, with no rests between rhythms. If you tap your foot to the four-beat pulse, it takes you through the odd-sounding roll, back to the downbeat every time. The two rhythms are simultaneous; the trick is to internalize them.

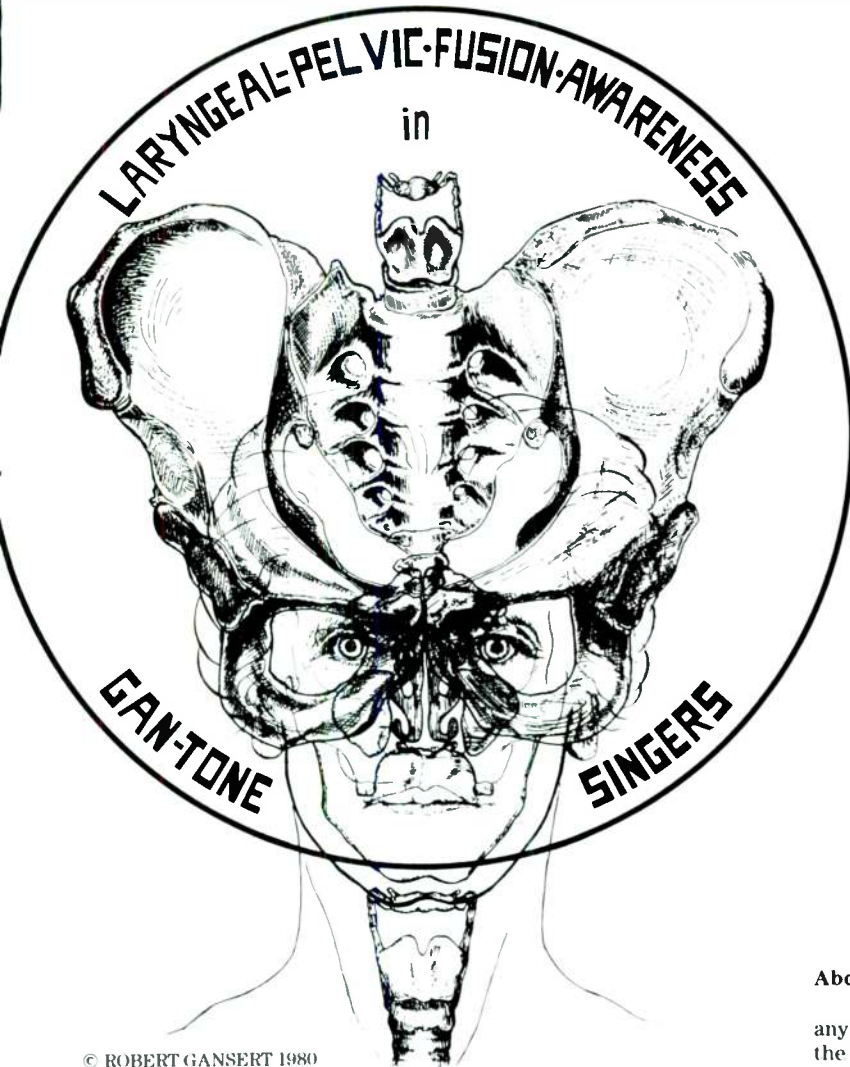
"You can also fit that phrasing into more unusual rates," he says. Using an 11-note grouping ("squeezed into the time of eight") against the 4/4, he plays it first in 16th notes, as with the previous nine-note roll, then as eighth notes, staggering the phrase over the bar line cross-rhythmically. One is a rapid fill, the other a more bizarre-sounding, herky-jerky funk groove.

Commercially, there are subtle ways to apply odd phrasings. In Zeldman's group, 25D, he spins cross-rhythms as grooves under Zeppelin/Police riffs or in harder-to-detect 16th-note hi-hat patterns. For example, he plays a "Squibb Cakes"—styled groove: 2 and 4 on the snare, open hi-hat "punches" on 3-and and 4. Over this, he can drop five-, seven-, nine- or 13-stroke rolls on the hi-hat for a layered, lengthening effect.

The hardest part to mastering odd groupings is breaking free of our Western "everybody clap on three" mentality. Zeldman calls it the "sound barrier" and uses a familiar pattern to help free his students at the Drummers Collective in New York.

"There are three attacks in swing rhythm: ding-ding-dad-ing. Singing the pattern to yourself, spread the syllables

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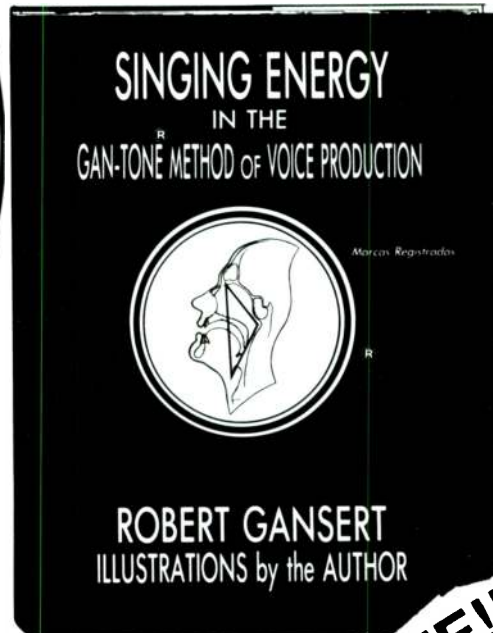
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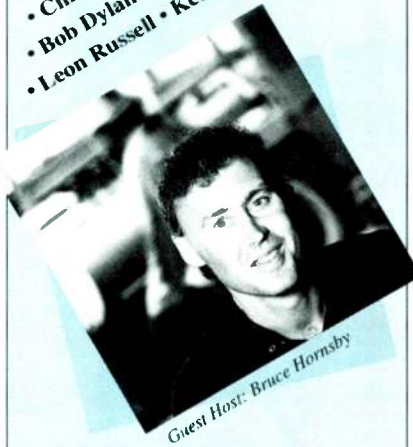
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(ding-ding-da-ding) over separate sound sources like cowbell, cymbal bell, rim and right hi-hat. By singing to yourself while physically playing the pattern over the sources, you're sustaining an inner ostinato while playing it melodically. It's a mental/physical cross-rhythm."

There are five ways to make the simplest odd-note grouping more interesting on the drum set: Phrase the grouping in sixteenths (accenting the 1) over a quarter-note pulse; break the same grouping into triplet phrases (and accent some part of the triplet) while maintaining the quarter-note pulse; utilize rests (leave notes out); spread the sticking over sound sources; and use restraint, or vary dynamics of notes (feel, ghosting or implying notes).


If that all sounds like a lot, it is. Zeldman stresses patience and internalization. Counting away from the drum set is crucial.

"Pick a rate," he advises, "like 16th notes, and choose an accent. Take the phrase of five, counting aloud in 16ths, accenting 1 and 3. Now shift away from the drum set after you've internalized the accents in 4/4 time. Tap your foot on the quarter note. You can do this in the shower, anywhere, to practice." He sings the accents—"One-an, e-uh, an-four, uh-an"—as they roll through the 16ths. The effect is hypnotic, the basis for the vocal duets by Trilok Gurtu with John McLaughlin and the rhythms found in Indian music. "If you're serious about advanced rhythms," says Zeldman, "that's where you start. Take it slowly and you won't get lost.

"Internal counting can be applied to the most basic sticking. Play a five-stroke sticking—RLLRL—and count the phrase. Without stopping, count different rates over it in 4/4 time: eighth-note triplets, 16th notes, groups of seven, breaking up the pattern on the kit as you feel comfortable."

For Zeldman, something really far out, like the improvs on *Other: Not Elsewhere*, is having four time signatures going simultaneously with the option of having them relate cross-rhythmically, polyrhythmically or through blending (meshing a floor tom with the bass drum, for instance). He plays a broken 5/8 pattern between cymbal and mounted tom, 4/4 splashing with his hi-hat, while the bass drum plays a loose 6/8 Latin pattern with left-hand complements. "Everything will be subdivided and placed in a 4/4 feel," he says. What sounds like an unholy mess at first somehow reveals a back-beat on four, with the hi-hat maintaining the pulse amidst the overlapping time feels.

Zeldman's aptitude for otherworldly rhythms doesn't detract from his ability to play a fat, rocking pocket; he values simplicity. "I had to work on

advanced rhythms to where it's become second nature," he says. "Perhaps it came out of insecurity, the feeling that I had to do this. But I feel secure in what I've created; I'm not in competition with other drummers. Heck, even Ringo swung like crazy. And he's definitely one of the best." 


DESKTOP VIDEO

[cont'd from page 60] at least \$5000, and you need three of them to perform even simple effects like cross-fading between two video sources. Digital decks start at \$40,000 per. Computer-based digital video is viable, but at the moment it comes in only two flavors: pricey and lame.

For instance, there's been a lot of talk about Apple's QuickTime video standard for the Macintosh (recently ported to Windows), which makes it possible to display full-motion video in a small window on the computer screen. Using external hardware like SuperMac's under-\$500 VideoSpigot, you can record video with your computer, where it can be saved to hard disk. Once it's in the computer, you can flip, tumble, stretch or pull it as you please, although usually not in real time. Using Adobe's Premier, Passport's Producer or similar software, you can edit clips together, adding sound and effects. The process is not unlike sample manipulation and MIDI sequencing, and it's heady stuff. But try to get the results onto a big screen for real-world viewing, and you'll find that the tools for the job simply don't exist—at least, not yet.

What you really need is the VideoCube from I-Mix, which also runs on the Mac. The Cube is what computer nerds like to call "a sexy box"—a curvaceous molded-plastic case and a nifty user interface. It allows the same sorts of way-cool video manipulations as QuickTime products, but with much higher-quality output. The Cube's main drawback is its \$38,000 price tag, but the unit itself is a good example of where things are headed.

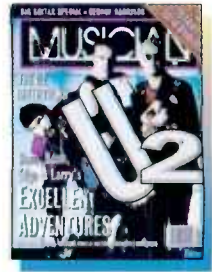
So where does all of this leave the dream of desktop video? Right now, you can produce video that looks nearly as good as what you're used to for a lot less money than ever before. The *Wayne's World* ideal—regular mooks with a TV studio in their basement—is here, for not much more than you'd spend on a really good audio studio.

The future looks even better. You should be seeing the first high-quality, affordable digital video recorders in the coming year. Home-video heaven would be a combination of Toaster-like switching, graphics and effects with a broadcast-quality digital editor, all for less than \$10,000. When that comes along, the desktop video dream will become reality—and MTV will become very interesting indeed. 

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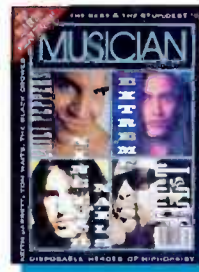
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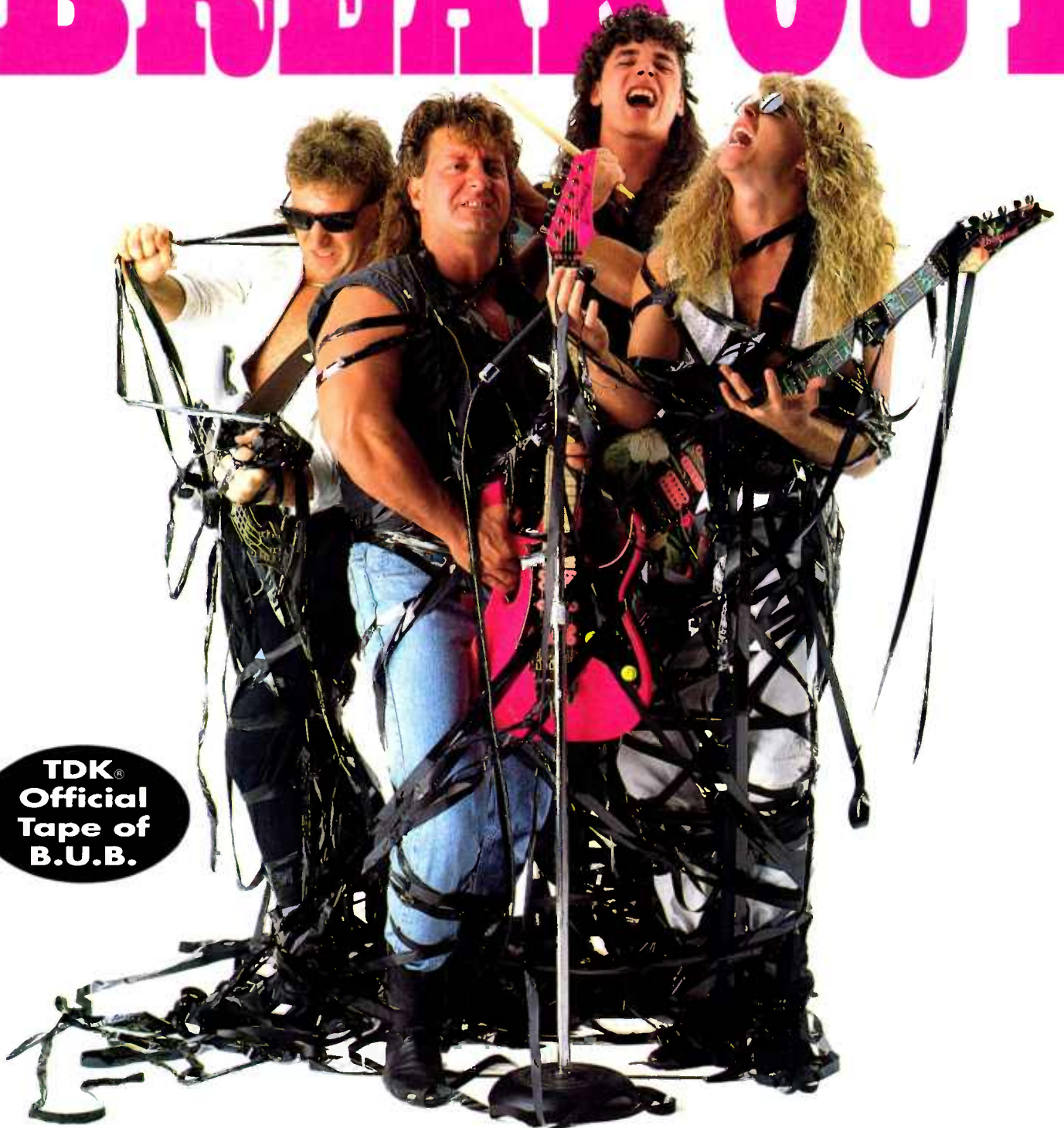
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All entries must be accompanied by a complete roster (full names and addresses) of all musicians featured, plus an official entry form or facsimile thereof and a processing fee of **\$15.00** (check or money order in U.S. funds only).

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CAN A SMALL BASS AMP ROCK AND ROLL?

THE TOLL OF schlepping bass cabinets for a living finally hit me last year when my back went out at a gig at CBGB's. I had to be carried out and didn't get out of bed for four days. Since then, I've dreamed of a bass amp I can carry with one hand. I wouldn't expect it to shake the floor like my old rock-solid (but back-ripping) rig—but is it too much to ask that, paired with my early-'70s Fender Precision with a Seymour Duncan active pickup, it be loud enough to complement a rock drummer and deliver a clean, fat tone?

Maybe so. Designers of bass amps have to deal with a basic principle of acoustics: The sound wave generated by a low E is almost 27 feet long. Unfortunately, little speakers in little boxes can't move that much air, especially at mosh-pit tempos.

Sure, you can run the sound from a small amp into the house PA—but then you sacrifice much of the kickass power of bass and drums working in tandem, and in any case, club PAs often have enough trouble handling the vocals alone. I want an amp big enough for a decent-sized room—100 or more watts RMS—but small enough both to spare a weak back and fit on the seat of a car—say, 50 pounds or less. Models that fit this description fall into two price ranges: under \$400 and under \$1000. But can they do the job?

Carvin's ProBass 150 (\$299, 150 watts, 40 lbs.) sounded great in my living room—fat, bassy and clean, the best in its price range. Unfortunately, the 10" speaker doesn't cut it behind drums. Low notes distort once you turn up past 5, and below 4, a crash cymbal can drown it out. Still, with "mudcutter" circuitry, parametric midrange EQ and adjustable compressor and gate, it's a great little amp for practice and home recording.

Dean Markley's K200B (\$399, 105 watts, 47 lbs.) and Yorkville's 100B (\$399, 100 watts, 44 lbs.) dodge the bass-sound dilemma by putting out a trebly, metallic tone. If you're into slapping, that's perfect; the Yorkville sounds especially good. If you want to play reggae or the riff from "O.P.P.," you'll find yourself boosting the bass and cutting the treble and mids by about 9 units each. The Markley is only marginally loud enough for rock, but its 12" speaker delivers a clean tone up to volumes of about 7. The

Yorkville, with a 15", retains some presence even over thrash beats, but at the cost of distortion: My low E broke up when I turned it up past 5. With better bass response and an external-speaker jack—it's the only amp discussed here that lacks one—the Yorkville would come closer to the ideal of a lightweight gigging amp. (Peavey offers the Basic 60 for \$299, but it was out of stock and thus not available for review.)

Moving up the price ladder, SWR's Basic Black (\$799, 120 watts) packs a tube preamp, a 15" driver and a tweeter into only 50 lbs. This amp is the loudest of the bunch and boasts a warm, rich sound, deftly handling Motorhead at full throttle. In fact, it scored at the top of the heap in a recent shootout in *Bass Player*. The catch? Its tone is so bright that I found it difficult to use for styles other than slapping. Finger noises and pickup clicks stuck out until I reduced the highs. Eliminating virtually all treble and midrange, I got rich slabs of dub from the E and A strings—at the expense of the D and G. Aside from that, the Black comes closest to replacing my deceased—and much heavier—Ampeg B-15.

The Gallien-Krueger MB150E (\$959, 150 watts, 24 lbs.) is thinner than a Macintosh computer and lighter than my cat, with tons of features: stereo balanced outputs, parametric high- and low-mid EQ, limiting and chorus. (If you don't need stereo or chorus, there's the MB150S for \$829.) The basic sound is a little springy, but the tone controls, especially the mid-cutting contour filter, are versatile enough to yield a clear, deep, powerful sound. In performance, it delivers even tone anywhere on the neck: Low notes retain enough presence to cut, yet high notes boast enough depth to groove. My only complaint is that it doesn't put out enough low-end drive to motivate a dance floor (due to the limited cabinet size). If this amp could pump bass like the Basic Black, it would be perfect.

The verdict? All of these models are well-suited for practice and for creating a basic sound for further reinforcement. If that's what you need, the Carvin is a sure bet with a low price. If you gig in a relatively quiet setting without a PA, the Yorkville is a good choice. If you play rock, funk or just plain loud, your best bets are the SWR and the G-K (but plan on using an external speaker or the house system for larger venues). Meanwhile, the day when I'll sell off my big rig has yet to arrive. Until every club provides a dynamite PA, I'll need it to rattle the drinks at the far end of the bar.

STEVEN WISHNIA



- Carvin, 1155 Industrial Ave., Escondido, CA 92029; (800) 854-2235.
- Dean Markley, 3350 Scott Blvd. #45, Santa Clara, CA 95054; (408) 988-2456.
- Gallien-Krueger, 2240 Paragon Dr., San Jose, CA 95131; (408) 441-7970.
- Peavey, 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301; (601) 483-5365.
- SWR, 12823 Foothill Blvd. Unit F, Sylmar, CA 91342; (818) 898-3355.
- Yorkville, 4600 Witmer Industrial Estate, Unit 1, Niagara Falls, NY 14305; (716) 297-2920.

MARK OF THE UNICORN UNISYN PATCH EDITOR

IN LARGE MIDI systems, organizing patches and backing up the ones you use for a given session can be a major chore. Unisyn, Mark of the Unicorn's "universal" editor/librarian (\$395; \$195 to owners of MOTU products or those upgrading from competing editor/librarians), helps out by transferring patches, individually or in sets, between a Mac and MIDI synths, drum machines and signal processors.

Once patches are in the computer you can organize them into libraries and banks, use editor screens to tweak sound parameters, audition computer-generated patches, maintain a database of key words to find patches easily, save sounds to hard drive or floppy disk instead of costly cartridges, and assemble "performances" that contain the data for a complete MIDI setup.

In theory, you can create a "snapshot" of your entire system—either a bulk dump from every device or only patches currently in use—with a few mouse clicks; however, a universal ed/lib can deliver that ideal only to the extent that it supports the gear you own. Unisyn scores well on this point, handling over 150 devices from 360 Systems, Alesis, ART, Casio, DigiTech, DMC, Ensoniq, E-mu, J.L. Cooper, Kawai, KMX, Korg, Kurzweil, Lexicon, Oberheim, Peavey, Rane, Roland, Sequential, Waldorf and Yamaha.

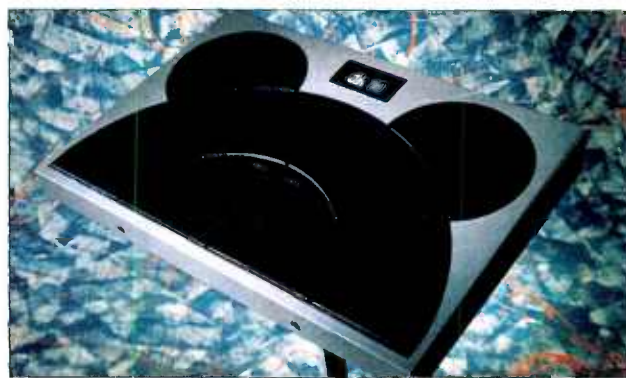
Users of MOTU's Performer sequencer will appreciate the integration between the programs; you can transfer and edit patches while a sequence plays in the background. Those who

sequence with Vision can enjoy similar integration with Opcode's Galaxy (the primary competition for Unisyn), and won't find anything compelling here. Generally, Galaxy's screens are more elegant, while Unisyn supports about twice as many devices. Nonetheless, it's nice to see that Unisyn reads most Galaxy files, as well as data from IBM, Atari and Amiga versions of Dr. T's X-oR (of which Unisyn is an update).

Because of its comprehensiveness, Unisyn is complex and requires effort to set up. But it's not necessarily daunting. The individual help files for each instrument are a lifesaver, and once everything is in place—preferably with a multi-cable MIDI interface or MIDI switcher to minimize re-patching—transferring patches between your computer and even the biggest MIDI rig becomes routine.

CRAIG ANDERTON

• Mark of the Unicorn, 1280 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138; (617) 576-2760.



KAT DK-10 MIDI DRUM CONTROLLER

NO MATTER what instruments you play, if you do any MIDI sequencing you probably program drum parts from time to time. A keyboard or drum machine usually serves, but what you really need is to hit something with a stick—maybe a low-cost, moderately programmable, easy-to-operate drum pad.

That's how KAT bills the dk-10 (\$499). Divided into 10 dynamics-sensitive zones, the dk-10 sends your choice of MIDI note, on any MIDI channel, from each pad. The playing surface is bouncy, a bit like a practice pad, facilitating fast stickwork and responding nicely to rolls. I began using the dk-10 without reading the manual; I plugged the accompanying footswitch into the "play/bass drum" jack and MIDI'd it to my stock E-mu Proteus. It worked! I didn't look at the manual for two weeks.

It turns out that I should have, because the footswitch was supposed to go into the "edit/note" jack—but no harm done. The bass drum input requires a foot trigger, while the "play/hi-hat foot" jack takes either a regular momentary footswitch or KAT's hatKAT pedal (\$259), which yields more realistic hat control with some drum machines. The "edit/note" and "edit/channel" inputs allow you to program by striking particular pads while you depress the footswitches—a little arcane, but workable.

You may not need to do much programming, though, because the dk-10 is pre-configured to trigger instruments from Alesis, Boss, E-mu, Kawai, Korg, Roland and Yamaha as well as General MIDI (GM) sound generators. (There are 10 preprogrammed GM "kits," only three of which are user-programmable, including a Latin percussion kit and several snare/kick/tom/cymbal configurations.) Furthermore, in many cases you can actually program it from your drum machine using "AutoTrain" mode, so you may never need to learn the dk-10's own interface.

Basic percussion control with minimum hassle—the dk-10 delivers what most MIDI setups lack, at a reasonable price.

RICHARD LAINHART

• KAT, 300 Burnett Rd., Chicopee, MA 01020-4636; (413) 594-7466.

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World Radio History



ROLL OVER BEETHOVEN

CRACKER
KEROSENE HAT
(VIRGIN)

David Lowery splits up his fab college/alternative band Camper Van Beethoven and tells the press he'd been "getting really tired of alternative music." Then—after listening to personal high school faves like the Stones, ZZ Top and Little Feat—he forms a new band called

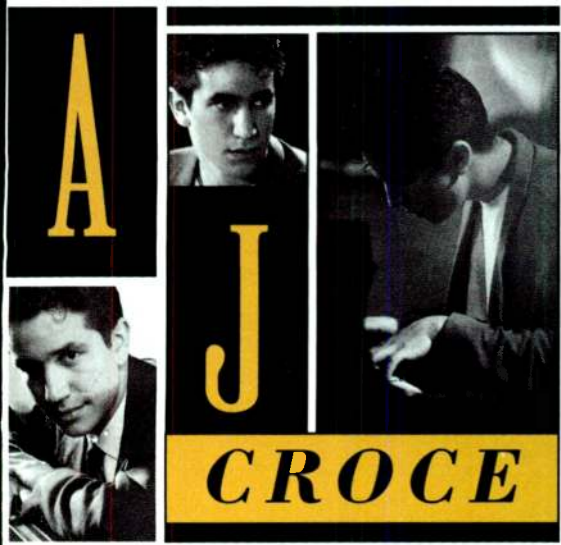
Cracker that plays, in his words, white-boy rock, soul, country and country blues. They make a record and it's...an alternative smash. The cutting edge: It's so darn sharp.

But to Lowery's credit, the last thing anyone's going to think upon hearing Cracker's simply terrific second album will be the words "career move." *Kerosene Hat* is well-produced, sure—but unlike so many other bands, the group's choice of producer (again they've

opted for Don Smith) almost doesn't even matter. In the same sense that no two early Little Feat songs sounded alike but you knew it was them, that *Sticky Fingers* and *Tes Hombres* were stylistic romps by utterly recognizable bands, Cracker has that indefinable spark that money, producers and limitless session players alone can never provide. These songs and this playing would exist regardless of who pressed what buttons.

Kerosene Hat may be the year's

most important rock 'n' roll album simply because it shows that the genre hasn't died of overuse—and, more importantly, that it doesn't deserve to. Respect, not ridicule, for the past shines through on every track, no matter how varied the source. And the sources do vary—from the expected Stones, Feat and ZZ to Captain Beefheart (title track lyrics: "Here comes old kerosene hat/With his earflaps waxed"), T. Rex ("Get Off This") and, hypothetically, Tom Petty



"Considering he's only 21, it's understandable that people are surprised to discover how gifted A.J. Croce is as a pianist, singer, songwriter and band-leader whose musical abilities belie his age."

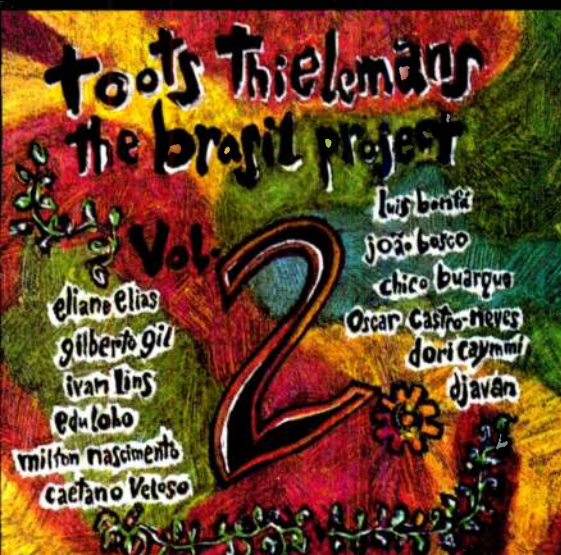
--- George Varga, San Diego Union-Tribune

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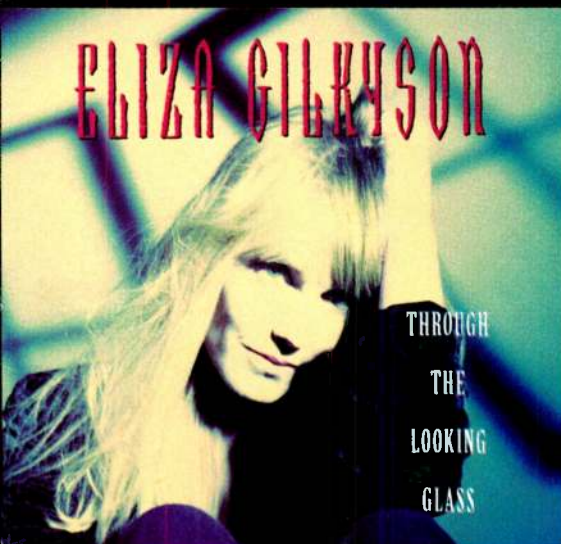
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Private Music is proud to announce the label debut of acclaimed singer/song-writer Eliza Gilkyson.

Her emergence as a recording artist five years ago brought an immediate acceptance from critics, the industry and a legion of fans. The Dallas Observer called Eliza's first collection Pilgrims, "The breathy, lingual folk-poetry of Suzanne Vega, the humanistic personal-politic of Joni Mitchell, and the emotive torch of Billie Holiday."

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fronting the Stills/Young Band (“Nostalgia,” oddly enough). Yet nothing is recycled: Lowery & company draw from tradition and then broaden it, which may end up being what makes Cracker special. Chances are the majority of *Kerosene Hat*’s listeners won’t realize that the tastefully ambling “The Loser” is a Grateful Dead cover, say, but they’ll love it just the same.

Ultimately, *Kerosene Hat* is very much a ’90s album—“fecund” is actually used as a lyric—and calling it alternative, mainstream or retro would only be a distraction. If you want an overused word, try transcendent. This record would sound great in any year, and it sure does in this one.

—Dave DiMartino



LISA GERMANO

Happiness
(CAPITOL)

CALL IT BUNGEE-JUMPING INTO THE underworld. On her first major-label release, John Mellencamp violinist Lisa Germano plunges into that abyss of misery, alienation and screwed-up relationships we all know and love. But instead of getting mired in or mesmerized by despair, she instinctively works through it. When she berates herself or strays towards self-pity, as on the title cut, humor and insight lift her music’s dark center of gravity to a new plateau. “Give it up/Try again/Ain’t life fun?” she wryly drones, then adds in her breathy, self-mocking groan, “C’mon everybody, let’s...sing!”

Actually, her songs are quite singable, though Germano’s skewed melodies and arrangements have more in common with Mellencamp’s surreal, expressionistic paintings—and his worldview—than with his sound. (Imagine a cross between Nico and Chrissie Hynde fronting the Velvets in, say, Bulgaria.) More a texturalist than a virtuoso, Germano weaves bittersweet Eastern tonalities through the chords in ways that echo her emotional revelations. “What a waste to feel the way I feel/While happiness is just around the corner,” she confides in “Around the World,” the album’s manifesto of sorts. It’s an attitude

that allows her the flexibility to laugh at demons, then chase them out of her head—or bed—in songs as sonically distant as the wistful, folkly “Cowboy” and the grunge-rock of “Puppet.” Not to slight “You Make Me Want to Wear Dresses,” a cautionary tale about the almost addictive temptation to lose, rather than find, yourself in a love affair. Like the rest of *Happiness*, it’s a song that could only have been written by a woman compelled to grope towards the resolution she senses beyond her angst.

—Vic Garbarini



THE BEACH BOYS

Good Vibrations: 30 Years of the Beach Boys
(CAPITOL)

GOOD ONLY KNOWS, I LOVE THE BEACH Boys. In 1968, when they were the coolest band in the world, I was one of about 35 people who anxiously awaited, and actually bought, their *Friends* album. By the time that record was released, they’d completely blown it in the hipness department, but even with his creative compass askew, Brian Wilson continued to make brilliant, shimmering music. (And, as his 1988 solo album proved, there’s still some great songs in there.) But the idea of a Beach Boys boxed set augured ill, yet another collection of “summer” music to conjure thoughts of what the band has become—a bad “oldies” act, adrift on the road, cut off from Brian, their creative heart. To any fan who really loves the Beach Boys, witnessing their present-day concerts, with Mike Love leading the singalong, is the saddest thing in the world.

Good Vibrations: 30 Years of the Beach Boys will make those same fans very, very happy. Not only does this five-CD set serve as the best hits package to date, it goes for broke in the extras department, with fascinating outtakes and session chatter that capture Wilson in his creative prime. (A skeletal, in-progress version of “God Only Knows,” with Brian offering suggestions to his session players and vice versa, is one of the coolest things I’ve ever heard.) There are also

Stack-O-Tracks—style remixes of five of the band’s biggest hits (including the magnificent “When I Grow Up”), with instruments panned to the left and vocals to the right. In other words, hours of fun. With the same high standards that governed the recent two-fer rereleases of the band’s catalog, Capitol hired the right people (including David Leaf, Grand Pooh-Bah of Beach Boys historians), and dug deep to capture the group’s creative evolution and tragic dissolution. The result is an insightful career chronicle, from an early home tape of Brian playing “Surfin’ USA” alone at the piano through 30 minutes of iridescent music from *Smile*, that long-lost, much-bootlegged, greatest-ever album-that-never-was. After that project and its creator fell into a late-’60s post-psychedelic heap, the Beach Boys were never the same.

But even the post-Capitol years are thoughtfully represented here, including prime cuts like “Marcella” and “All This Is That” from *Carl and the Passions/So Tough*, and the haunting instrumental backing track from “Mount Vernon and Fairway,” a bonus single that accompanied 1972’s *Holland LP*. The only real boners are the exclusion (at Brian’s insistence) of the beautiful “Let Him Run Wild,” and the inclusion of the dreadful “Kokomo,” a piece of garbage that the Brianless (and label-less) Beach Boys recorded for the *Cocktail* soundtrack.

The story of the Beach Boys doesn’t have a happy ending, and the awe-inspiring music in this collection leaves the listener with a bitter-sweet taste, wondering what might have been. Among other things, *Good Vibrations* is clearly a loving tribute to a pop music genius. If only Brian Wilson, the person, could have been afforded the same kind of care.—Peter Cronin



SMASHING PUMPKINS

siamese dream
(VIRGIN)

MAYBE ROCK ‘N’ ROLL IS READY FOR serious rock stars again. Not grungy

anti-rock stars, not ironic pop regurgitators and certainly not cheese-headed, self-important fashion plates. But the time seems right for folks who aren't ashamed to show a little brains, class and style as they crank the living hell out of their Marshalls. On *siamese dream*, the second full-length release and major-label debut from Chicago's Smashing Pumpkins, the band takes itself, and its sounds, quite seriously. And they pull it off with freely perspiring panache.

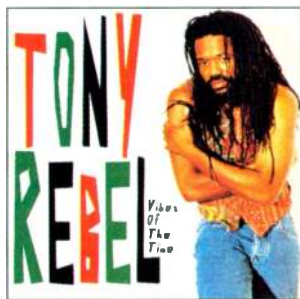
With 1991's *Gish*, the Pumpkins demonstrated that they could beat some fresh blisters out of old rock formulas, and it seemed the band might build a satisfying career out of updating "Are You Experienced?" But with *siamese dream*, the band has cracked itself wide open to display an engaging range of abilities and inspirations. Certainly the sludge-rocket guitar lines that Billy Corgan and James Iha fire off on "Hummer" and "Silverfuck" pay proper tribute to Jimi. But the heavy riffs of "Cherub Rock" are wrapped around some basso-falsetto unison vocals that recall the better moments of the Climax Blues Band. There are aching string arrangements on "Disarm" and "Luna," and the redoubtable Mellotron gets fired up for supportive warbles on "Spaceboy." From the opening snare drum sound-offs to the ringing final chord, *siamese dream* rolls along like a fevered, honest-to-gosh rock album—the kind that used to sound good even on eight-track.

It may be easy to play "Spot the Influences" with the Pumpkins—a crunchy Sabbath lick here, an astral Bowie moment there—but fresh, flexible songwriting makes the familiar bits and pieces pull their weight. Butch Vig's upfront production presents the sonic particulars of each cut with power, while Corgan, who coproduced, manages to tuck some moments of creepy calm amid the explosive choruses. Taken together, the 13 tracks ring out as a triumph of dynamics and atmosphere, and serve as gold settings for the fragile charm of Corgan's emotive vocals.

We don't need rockers blabbering on about how to heal their inner fetuses or how much

they enjoyed rehab. We just need a few hardy souls who look kind of cool, act kind of cool and deliver music that lives up to its packaging. With this album, the Pumpkins are doing it. On "Today," Corgan sings "I want to turn you on" without sounding retro, precious or dim, and there's no reason not to take him at his word.

—Chuck Crisafulli



TONY REBEL
Tony Rebel
(CHAOS/COLUMBIA)

BUJU BANTON
Voice of Jamaica
(MERCURY)

TIGER
Claws of the Cat
(CHAOS/COLUMBIA)

THIS IS NOT A REGIONAL. BUT A GLOBAL t'ing," says ace dancehall DJ Tony Rebel on "Vibes of the Time," from his self-titled major-label debut—dancehall being a kind of high-energy post-rap reggae, and DJs being the ones who deliver their rapid tongue-twisting patois spiels over relentless and pumped but rhythmically finessed drum programs. Just how global this thing can be is an open question, but Rebel is an appealing performer in a genre that puts up some imposing hurdles for the uninitiated. For a guy who likes to chant in double time, T.R. has a fairly mellifluous style, sliding across bunched syllables

with innate musicality, for one thing. For another, there's touchstones here for the curious infidel: not just instrumental garnishings like the "Willie and the Poor Boys" bassline on "Wanna Party" and the toy xylophone (or approximation) on "Reggae Vibes," but the way that "The Voice and the Pen" takes off from "Let My People Go" and "Vibes of the Time" borrows the melody of "Harper Valley P.T.A." A more ambivalent aspect is Rebel's personal philosophy, optimistic and full of good advice but also, in the reggae tradition, apocalyptically religious. Part prophet and part guidance counselor, he leans toward the latter, fortunately, offering more rational uplift than Revelations references.

Unlike the accessible Rebel, Buju Banton seems likely to remain an export fit mainly for cultists. Banton DJs in an in-your-face growl that communicates an unsettling urgency while assuring that the non-linguist will only be able to make out the odd phrase here and there. There's undeniable excitement in having all these words rain down in Banton's almost Beefheartian timbre, but it can get a little weird. When Banton says, "Never seen a girl/Who's so pretty and so fair" ("Red Rose"), he sounds like he wants to take a bite out of her neck, at least. It's forceful, unadulterated dancehall. You've been warned.

Tiger falls somewhere between the smooth Rebel and the rampaging Banton. Of the three he's the most inventive in a purely vocal sense, with an uninhibited bag of cartoonish effects, including snorting and a sarcastic nasality. But mostly he's got a larger-than-life voice and not too much on the agenda aside from spreading a good feeling. There are two Unity songs—"Who Planned It" with A Tribe Called Quest's Q-Tip, and "Out of Many One People" with the Brand New Heavies—but there's also "Beep Beep," "Flip Up and Flop," "Cool Me Down" and "Groovin'." In other words, it's a party album. With Tony Rebel you're drawn in because you understand him, with Buju Banton you're almost grateful that you don't. With Tiger, it doesn't really matter. —Richard C. Walls

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NEW RELEASES

ROCK

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

U2
Zooropa
(ISLAND)

HAVING GOTTEN OUR attention with the raucous electronics of *Achtung Baby*, U2 can afford to speak softly now. But even if the sound of *Zooropa* is scaled back, skewing toward the ironic cool of "Some Days Are Better Than Others" or the hypnotic murmur of "Numb," the band's ambitions are as grand as ever. This time they offer overt statements of faith (the dark-and-distorted "Daddy's Gonna Pay for Your Crashed Car"), oblique political commentary (the arch-and-airy "Zooropa"), and even a touch of musical burlesque (the Mick Jagger-meets-Talking Heads "Lemon"). By no means a stopgap project, *Zooropa* ranks among the band's best work to date.

B. B. KING
Blues Summit
(MCA)

THOUGH THE FORMULA seems hackneyed—duets with damn near every blues great still drawing breath—the results are anything but. What makes these sessions sizzle is the deep rapport between King and his peers. That makes it as easy for B.B. to mine the sexual tension of "You Shook Me" with John Lee Hooker as it is for him to spar teasingly with Ruth Brown on "You're the Boss." And anyone who still doubts Robert Cray's propers should hear how handily he matches the master on "Playin' with My Friends."

LIZ PHAIR
Exile in Guyville
(MATADDR)

FORGET THE ALLEGED parallels to *Exile on Main Street*. What makes Phair worth hearing isn't her conceptual ambition, but the sheer strength of her writing. She's an ace at conveying mood through melody and expressing complex feelings with simple, vivid imagery, and she uses those skills to lure the listener into her world. Despite stripped-down arrangements and low-budget production, it's hard not to fall for the melancholy "Never Said," the desperate "Help Me, Mary" or the wry and crunchy "Johnny Sunshine."



WALT MINK, BAREBACK (CAROLINE)

A LOT OF alternative acts have no trouble developing a sound, but lack songs to match; not Walt Mink. With melodies that walk the line between indie crunch and lush-and-tuneful guitar pop, the Minks at their best come across like R.E.M. with an attitude—tough, canny and abrasive. Not a bad ride.

FREEDOM WILLIAMS
Freedom
(COLUMBIA)

IN WHICH THE former C+C Music Factory rapper celebrates his independence by releasing an album's worth of imitation C+C product. Aren't you glad he's thinking for himself now?

BOB TELSON & LITTLE VILLAGE
Songs from the Warrior Ant
(GRAMAVISION)

NO, IT ISN'T *that* Little Village; it's Telson's Afro-Caribbean combo, a group equally at home with calypso melodies, soukous rhythms and soul singing. That Telson provides equal space for each of these influences goes a long way toward explaining what makes *Songs from the Warrior Ant* so likable and listenable.

TINA TURNER
What's Love Got to Do with It
(VIRGIN)

A BETTER QUESTION would be "What's Ike got to do with it?" Answer: as little as possible. That

Turner would relish remaking her early hits without her ex is understandable, but it's hard to hear the improvement in her sterile, show-band renditions of "Fool in Love" and "Proud Mary." On the other hand, the title tune actually sounds better here than it does on *Private Dancer*, and the new stuff—especially "I Don't Wanna Fight"—is catchy as hell.

THE WILD MAGNOLIAS WITH
THE NEW ORLEANS PROJECT
The Wild Magnolias
(POLYDOR)

CONTRARY TO POPULAR belief, it wasn't *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* that first put funk behind the sound of New Orleans' Mardi Gras Indians; even the Neville's acknowledge that the long-out-of-print *The Wild Magnolias* led the way to the glories of "Meet the Boys on the Battle Front" and "Hey Pocky Way" (though the Magnolias did it as "Two Way Pak E Way"). Not only is the original album back in all its glory, but the reissue includes outtake material as well, including a killer rendition of the

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work song "Shoo Fly." A must for any serious student of New Orleans music or '70s soul.

**PRIME MINISTER PETE NICE
& DADDY RICH**
Dust to Dust
(DEF JAM/COLUMBIA)

AS PETE NICE and Daddy Rich were once two-thirds of 3rd Bass, it's no surprise that their wise-ass rhyming and funky-butt rhythms seem familiar. What might surprise is the way these guys use rap's past to map its future. As old-school as Daddy Rich's work on the wheels of steel may seem, these guys' grooves are as fresh and phat as anything on the radio.

J A Z Z

BY CHIP STERN

DOC CHEATHAM

The Eighty-Seven Years of Doc Cheatham
(COLUMBIA)

THE EIGHTY-SEVEN YEARS of Doc Cheatham is the soul of everything that is noble and joyous in American music—the musical event of the year. That Cheatham is still walking among us should be celebration enough, given that his career encompasses the entire history of jazz, from Bessie Smith and a young Louis Armstrong, through the big band era, Tito Puente and beyond. But to hear Doc playing with such brash vigor—behold the roaring bell tones of "Blues in My Heart"—suggests a restless creativity for which the past is not a crutch but a crucible. The subtle turns of phrase and brassy shadings of "Round Midnight" reflect a musicality for whom notions of yesterday or tomorrow are utterly irrelevant, even as Doc's coy storytelling vocals on "Have You Met Miss Jones" recall more innocent times. With his superb working band (pianist Chuck Folds, bassist Tomorrow Calabrese and drummer Jackie Williams), Doc Cheatham's art is graceful, witty, alive...and growing.

GREG OSBY
3D Lifestyle
(BLUE NOTE)

WHILE OSTENSIBLY DIGGING the same turf between rap and jazz evidenced on Guru's hit LP *Jazzmatazz*, Greg Osby has a much harder, more interactive, polyrhythmic sound in mind, and there's an edge to *3D Lifestyle*, a sense of danger and interplay that's hard to resist. The opening "Mr. Gutterman" sets the tone, with its gritty tales of life on the edge of despair, as Osby's poignant alto tolls like a prayer for children yet to be born. Osby's backdrops are a melange of scratches, beat-box bop and instrumental counterpoint, allowing hip-hop and swing to collide on the title tune, using Monk's "Green Chimneys" as a dance vamp on "Thelonious," even opening up the monolithic

rhythmic groove of hip-hop on "Intelligent Madness." Some day, perhaps 20 years from now, we'll be looking back upon *3D Lifestyle* the way we now grok Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* and Miles Davis' *On the Corner*—as a breakthrough in pop sensibility, a luminous sketchpad for the synthesis of poetry with dance and concert music.

LEWIS NASH
Rhythm Is My Business
(EVIDENCE)

JOE MORELLO
Going Places
(DMP)

WHENEVER MUSICIANS TALK about drummer Lewis Nash, the words taste and class seem to crop up. The only things more imposing than his chops are Nash's musical tact and restraint, which are what make *Rhythm Is My Business* such a delightful debut. Mulgrew Miller's piano and Steve Nelson's vibes underscore Nash's warm, dry ride sound and his sure, graceful touch on a series of upbeat, radio-friendly Latin, blues and ballad features. His percolating uptempo brushwork on "My Shining Hour" and supple blues grooves on "Monk's Dream" and "104 Nix" are defiantly understated in the serene manner of a master who can swing in any setting without busting a gut and knocking over all the furniture. In a way, drum legend Morello was the Lewis Nash of his generation, although the big beat and punchy bass drum of the swing era animate his complex rhythmic permutations. Morello's gaudy rolls, crystalline cymbal colorations and mastery of odd meters are the stuff of legend. But for those who missed him first time around with Dave Brubeck, not to worry, because Joe gets to throw plenty on *Going Places*, a hard-swinging, 20-bit digital recording that captures all the lovely details and melodic permutations of his sound. As his driving orchestrations on "Mission Impossible Theme," "Parisian Thoroughfare" and "Topsy" illustrate, Morello can be utterly invisible one second and swinging like an entire percussion section the next.

DON CHERRY
The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Don Cherry
(MOBASIC)

BUCK CLAYTON
The Complete Columbia Buck Clayton Jam Sessions
(MOBASIC)

A TALE OF TWO brassmen. *The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Don Cherry* represents this singular artist at his peak as a composer and improviser (having just come through associations with Ornette, Sonny Rollins and Albert Ayler) and is a must buy for fans of the best post-bop explorers. Cherry's side-long suites are masterful examples of his storytelling prowess and his gift for bluesy,

expressive vamps and compelling melodies, even if the overall tone of the blowing is decidedly avant garde (Pharoah Sanders and a pre-cryogenic Gato Barbieri). But what brings me back again and again is the sublime interplay of drummer Ed Blackwell and the criminally neglected Henry Grimes on bass (they swing so hard on "Our Feelings" it's unbelievable, inspiring Cherry's most Fats Navarro-like recorded solo). *The Complete Columbia Buck Clayton Jam Sessions* is required listening for anyone with a passing interest in the joys of Basie. As rough and ready as their original recordings with the Count might have been, these sessions—chaired by one of the master bluesmen—are as sweet, tight and laid-back as any toe-tapper could ask. And with the Basie rhythm seal of approval; all-Americans Walter Page, Freddie Green and Jo Jones are on board for most of the ride. (35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902)

**NORMAN BLAKE/TUT TAYLOR/
SAM BUSH/BUTCH ROBBINS/
VASSAR CLEMENTS/DAVID HOLLAND/
JETHRO BURNS**
(FLYING FISH)

VASSAR CLEMENTS
Once in a While
(FLYING FISH)

MORE OFTEN THAN not, when discussing the American melting pot of improvised music, the great fiddlers and flatpickers of bluegrass and country music aren't even part of the discussion. Which is a shame, because players like Vassar Clements bring so much soul to the mix. Bassist Dave Holland, a modern jazz giant, is the common link between these two dates some 13 years apart, and the muscularity and tenacious swing he brings to both bluegrass and modern jazz transcend genres. Fiddler Clements has a rich, gospelish, hear-my-train-a-coming tone, and a whimsical swing era/boogie-woogie melodic conception that makes jams like "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Take the 'A' Train" come alive; check out his airborne duet with the bassist on "Vassar & Dave." Clements' 1987 session, *Once in a While*, is a decidedly swinging affair, teaming the fiddler with a no-nonsense rhythm team of Holland, John Abercrombie and Jimmy Cobb. From the opening glisses and rich chords of "Indiana" to the boppish blues of "Sonny-moon for Two" and the gentle sing-song of "Sweet Lorraine," his soaring melodies and coy interplay prove that styles don't clash—only people.

INDIES

THE CACTUS BROTHERS
The Cactus Brothers
(LIBERTY)

THE CACTUS BROTHERS' debut is as hard to label as it is easy on the ears. Diverse to say the least,

this record takes as many twists and turns as the Tennessee backroads whence these boys sprung. Festivities begin with a rousing, high-powered romp through Merle Travis' "16 Tons" and wind up with the 211-year-old "Fisher's Hornpipe." In between, traditional musical boundaries are not so much ignored as shattered, with banjo and dulcimer augmented by hard rock drumming and kick-ass guitars. Few bands can boast string experts like world champ dulcimer whiz David Schnauffer, and Will Goleman is equally adept on both banjo and rock guitar. Tramp's contributions as fiddle player and back-up vocalist are mighty, and he teams with steel man Sam Poland for a kind of Western psychedelia in "Devil Wind." It makes for a complex package, but the Cactus Brothers are not to be confused with any pre-fab cowboy outfit—they're the real thing, and they deliver a damn fine hoe-down.—*Ray Waddell*

BYRON OLSON
Sketches of Miles
(ANGEL)

ANSWERS THE MUSICAL question, what if Miles Davis was white and didn't swing? Seriously, these chamber arrangements of Davis standards like "Four," "All Blues" and "Nardis" are eminently listenable, with a quiet, spacious quality (e.g. no drums) that helps underscore Miles' own penchant for traditional melodic structures; the trumpet solos by Randy Brecker and Lew Soloff are models of lyric grace. Taken as a whole, though, the bloodless result may strike some as a curious tribute to this funkiest of jazz giants. Then again, that Miles would inspire such an approach is itself tribute to the universality of his appeal. Take it away, maestro.

—*Mark Rowland*

OTTOPASUUNA
Ottopasuuna
(GREEN LINNET)
VARTTINA
Seleniko
(GREEN LINNET)

I'M NOT PRETENDING expertise on the relative quality of contemporary Finnish folk ensembles, but I love these two records. The instrumental quartet Ottopasuuna utilizes mandolins, winds, melodeon and fiddle in dexterous combinations that at times suggest a tiny orchestra, but what really makes the group special is their taste in material—hauntingly melodic Scandinavian polkas, waltzes and mazurkas that occasionally tip their hat to locales as far flung as Ireland and Transylvania.

Ottopasuuna's fiddler Karl Reiman is also part of the swinging acoustic backup band on *Seleniko*, but what's front and center here is a female vocal quartet whose spine-tingling harmonies simultaneously bring to mind Les Voix des Bulgares and ABBA. The album notes provide lyric translations

to their songs, but it's hard to imagine another vocal album where words were less to the point. At slow tempos or bright, Varttina makes a truly glorious sound. (43 Beaver Brook Rd., Danbury, CT 06810)—*Mark Rowland*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Playboys II
(GLAD)

THESE CASUALLY ELEGANT renditions of swing standards and Bob Wills classics by the cream of his former sidemen is the kind of gem that could only be crafted from decades of experience. The players here, including Johnny Gimble on fiddle, Herb Remington on pedal steel and Eldon Shamblin on guitar, are musician's musicians, which is to say they combine taste and feeling so well you don't even notice the effort, unless you choose to really listen. Then the pleasures of the grooves, instrumental solos that never waste a note and terrific vocals—mostly by Leon Rausch, with a sweet cameo by Gimble on "It Had to Be You"—become wonderfully apparent. Some wine only gets better with age. (3409 Brinkman, Houston, TX 77018)—*Mark Rowland*

INSANE JANE
Each Finger
(SKYY)

UP-AND-COMING ATLANTA BAND Insane Jane suffer from a much-dreaded malady: "potential." The band's biggest asset, singer/lyricist Yellow, has a clear, strong rock voice in the tradition of belters like Grace Slick and Robin Lane. All but buried in an indifferent mix, she still delivers her tales of love, regret and defiance, though she and the fine rhythm section are held back by guitarist Tom Branch's mediocre licks and skeletal tunes. The title track manages to deliver real listening pleasure (with help from the "Taxman" riff), as do a few others, and Yellow alone makes this album worth hearing, but Insane Jane clearly need to cement their strengths.—*Geoffrey Welchman*

HYPNOLOVEWHEEL
Altered States
(ALIAB)

ONE OF THE most enjoyable albums I've heard in ages, *Altered States* glows with tunefulness and smartass humor. Employing the standard two-guitar line-up with all members singing, the band is full of surprise chord changes and mood shifts, evoking the dB's at their prime (one of the members is a vocal dead ringer for Chris Stacey). Swinging confidently from chunky, distorted-guitar rockers to dreamy harmonies, it's an album that brings to mind the out-dated moniker "power pop" (for all their mastery of squealing guitars, they clearly know good pop-song mechanics). A fresh, unmitigated delight.

—*Geoffrey Welchman*

**WHEN PEOPLE WERE SHORTER
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Bill Kennedy's Showtime
(SHIMMY-DISC)

FOR THEIR NEXT trick, WPWSALNTW musically salute '60s Detroit—not Motown but the other Motor City of Bob Seger, the Rationals, Unrelated Segments and Scot Richard Case. (No obvious Iggy or MC5 material for these folks.) The performances remain the band's own merry blend of chant-along group vocals and occasionally anarchic "arrangements." Consequently this is more in the spirit of their mentors than any slavish reproduction. Burn, baby.—*Scott Isler*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Threadgill's Supper Session
(BUDDY)

This is a rare case of a "you shoulda been there" album working—Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock, Sarah Elizabeth Campbell and other gifted Austinites singing country standards in a small diner. Highlights include Campbell on "Sweet Dreams" and Gilmore and Champ Hood teaming on "Waiting for a Train," but the whole thing is carried by an eloquent backup band (beautiful dobro from Steve Williams) and the ambience of genuine camaraderie. If the food is half as good as the music you might want to consider making the drive. (1121-B Bluebonnet Lane, Austin, TX 78704)—*Thomas Anderson*

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