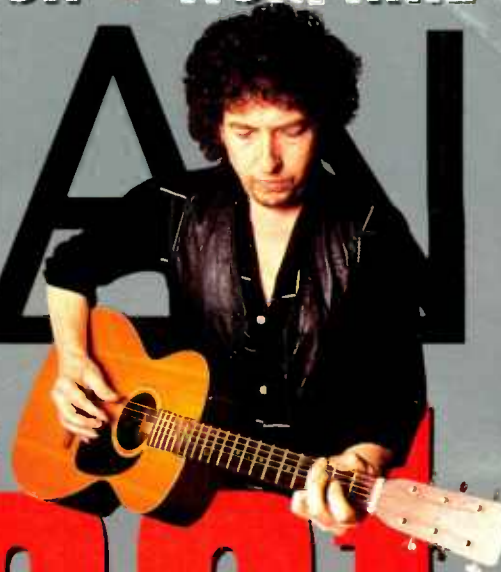


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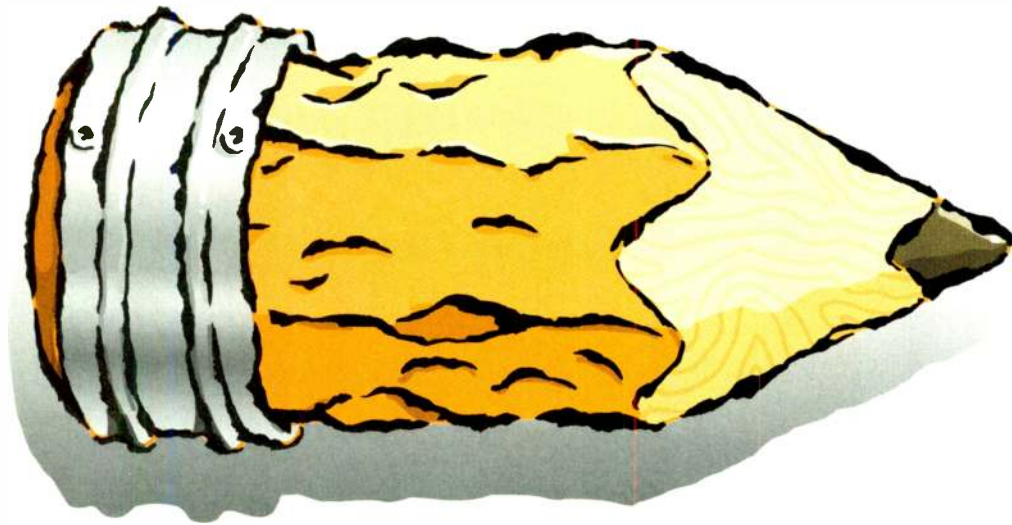
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metallica

Okay, I loved your piece on Metallica (March '97)! What a trip to hang out with the coolest boys in rock. It was great to read; you should do more pieces like this. I also loved the sidebars about their equipment; it made me feel I could get into their heads. So keep up the good work. And if you ever have a "Meet Metallica" contest, expect to receive 100 entries from me.

susan elders
address withheld

I've been a subscriber for quite a few years. I want to read more—but I can't! I'm sure the sidebars in the Metallica article were interesting and informative, but I couldn't make them out without using a magnifying glass.

joseph a. matarazzo, jr.
schenectady, NY

[Several readers wrote to complain about the inscrutability of our Metallica sidebars. In trying to include maximum information without cutting the story, we apparently rendered the band's gear list unreadable to all but the most eagle-eyed. Our apologies to all; we'll keep our type big and bold from now on.]

All Metallica did for their new album was to totally rip off AC/DC, the Allman Brothers, and some Zeppelin. I guess that's what James Hetfield meant when he said, "We'll give any riff a chance"—as long as it's not one of his, as if music itself is oh so fortunate to be played by these now unoriginal riff thieves. I guess music should thank them for giving it a chance, or maybe Metallica should thank the fans for giving them another chance after their previous CD. (This coming from a man who once stated in an interview, "I hate the Beatles.")

As for the rest of the issue, Bush (What the Players Play) blows, big time. C'mon, one decent song! And if you insist on ending a review of Load with the word "absolutely," it should have been preceded with the question, "Has this been done before?"

bill roess
new york, NY

I was pleased to see your Metallica story. However, even though Jason Newsted mentions in two separate parts of the issue that he plays Sadowsky basses exclusively, this was omitted from the product index on page 105. Thanks for your attention to this matter.

roger sadowsky
sadowsky guitars
new york, NY

up with must

In his interview with Ritchie Blackmore (Mar. '97) Mac Randall referred to the master's (sic) of classical music as "musty old composers." Randall should approach the classical discipline with more respect, as these "musty old composers" forged our musical traditions, whether it be jazz, rock, or classical. I would hope that you all would focus on some real concert guitarists (e.g., Pepe Romero, Julian Bream, the legacy of Andrés Segovia, etc.), as well as musicians of other instruments. Unfortunately you focus on today's and yesterday's fads of pop culture. I really wish you take this into consideration and discipline, as well as edit, these idiotic attempts by Mac Randall at real and insightful journalism.

alex aguado
san antonio, TX

Musician's twentieth-anniversary issue (Feb. '97) shows it to be the premier music magazine of the past two decades. Just reading your history reminds me of how much musicians need an unfiltered voice to make themselves heard beyond what agents, managers, and record companies want them to say. Amen, and good job!

That being said, couldn't you have found at least one quote from Paul McCartney to put in the issue? I mean, he is the Beatle to whom you devoted the most ink over the years. Didn't he even rate a line in the sidebars? Even Ringo got a quote!

Anyway, keep up the good work. Write on, and write well.

mike russo
doylestown, PA

[Blackmore's references to classical elements in his style in fact mirror the author's own respect for the kind of training that he, like Blackmore, experienced.]

sick love songs

Rev. Billy C. Wirtz missed my favorite "downright sick" love song (Backside, March '97): "Gravedigger," by the New York Rock & Roll Ensemble. This guy likes to dig them back up and bring them back to life with a kiss. By the way, the lead vocal was by Mike Kamen.

rick baughman
latrobe, PA
bluerick@aol.com

jeremy enigk

I would like to commend *Musician* for recognizing talent where it deserves to be recognized. Jeremy Enigk (Talents, Feb. '97) is one of the most interesting, to say the least, modern musician/poets around. And he has a lot to live up to as he follows in the footsteps of such geniuses as John Lennon, Van Morrison, Paul Simon, and Muddy Waters. *Return of the Frog Queen* was one of the most overlooked albums of 1996. Many musicians named Beck's *Odelay* best album of the year, but what Beck did for reviving Seventies funk and disco, Enigk does to revive the philosophy of rock music. In a world where rock and alternative are generally mired in a late-Eighties "Poison" era, it's artists like Enigk who will lead the way into the future of rock music—namely, back to our roots.

phillip horky
phorky@umich.edu

what the players play

In your writeup on Soundgarden (Mar. '97) you overlook the contributions of Mark Newman. Mark has worked intensively with Chris Cornell and many other artists to recreate appropriate sounds for each song and to make sure that no matter what [each artist] does to the guitars they still play well. Mark, and all the technicians out there, are truly unsung heroes.

neal storme
nstorme@aol.com

20 years ago today ...

Great twenty-year retrospective (Feb. '97). Here's to twenty more. Keep up the great work. But, in regards to your "Time and Time Again" section, does Greg Dulli really think the most important event of the past twenty years was *Sixteen Stone* by Bush? I think he's flipped his Afghan Whig!

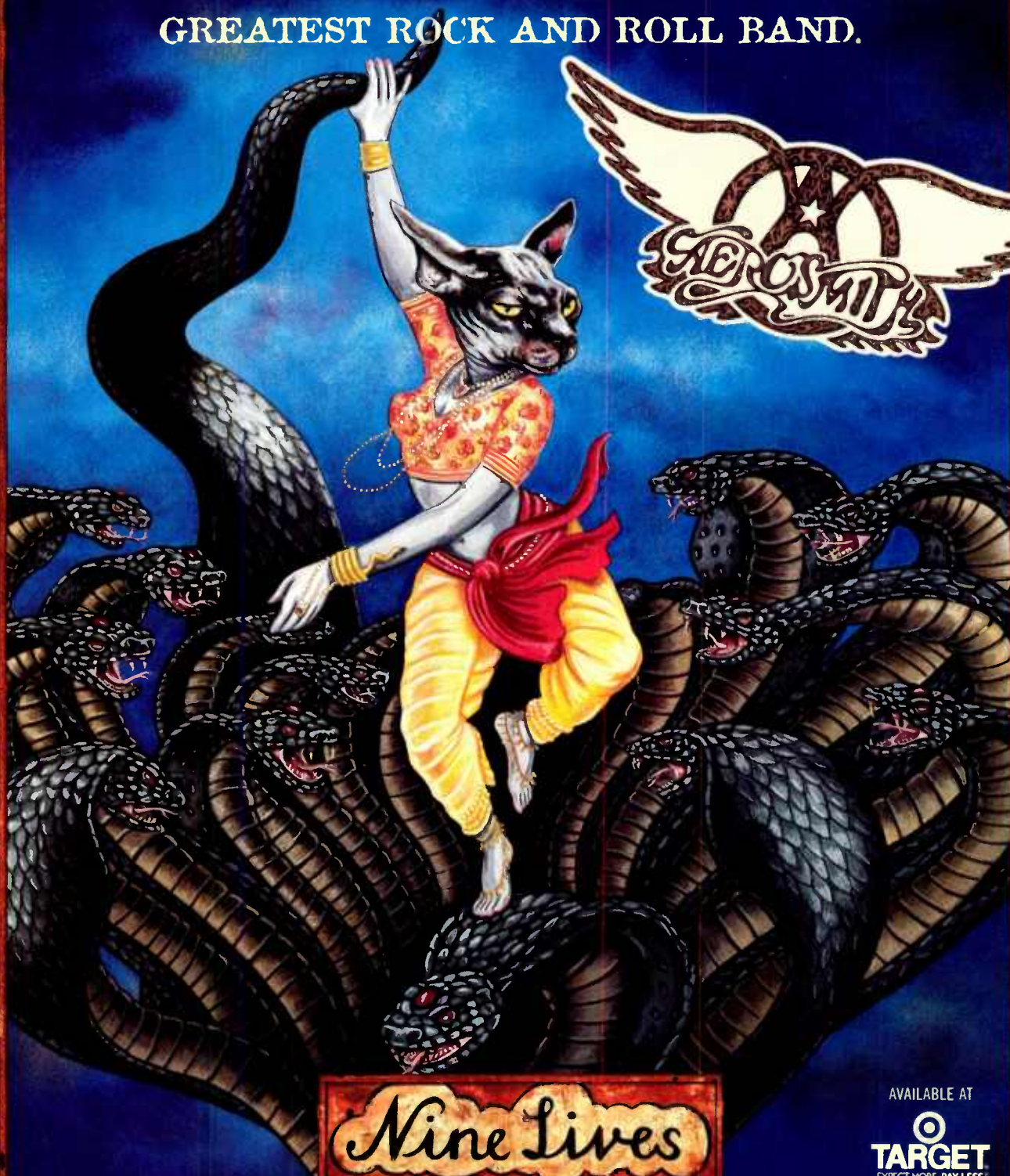
joy noyes
montpelier, VT

air-ah-tah

A couple of misspellings to note, including the names of Johnny Vidacovich in the Sideman interview with Brian Blade in our Feb. '97 issue, and Ritchie Blackmore on our Mar. '97 cover (ouch!). Also, the correct price for the Mackie digital mixer referred to in our Mar. '97 Technology report on the AES show is under \$10,000.

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"I'm a rock & roll musician. I throw TVs out of hotel windows."

RICHARD THOMPSON

Obviously, any album that has you on it isn't going to sound like anyone else. But over the last few records you've cut with Mitchell Froom and Tchad Blake, you've developed an even more distinctive sound.

I think I'm just sick of hi-fi. What's hi-fi ever given us? Enya records. Pristine, beautiful, lots of high end, but...sort of boring. When I think of records I like, I go back to the Fifties and Sixties—a Sinatra record or a Kinks record—where things didn't work that well. We deliberately tweak stuff, so it's a less naturalistic approach. Actually it's just a different way of saying what's natural. Some say that an acoustic recording of Schnabel playing Mozart in 1929 is the greatest sound you'll ever hear.

How much of the sound is you and how much is Mitchell and Tchad?

It's things we all talk about and agree on. I'm thrilled to work with them. It's time they were fired, though [laughs]. We've done four records together, which is pushing it usually. But I find it stimulating to be in the studio with them.

Did any new ideas come up during the

recording of you? me? us?

Well, we didn't allow Jim Keltner or Pete Thomas to bring their own drums in. They had to play Tchad's kit, which was old and rattly, with dreadful cymbals and calfskin heads—rather touching, really [laughs]. And the way we recorded it, you can hear how horrible it sounds. But it's a different sound, so in the end it's appealing.

How did you divide the labor between Keltner and Thomas?

Just a question of different feels. "Put It There Pal" and "Bank Vault In Heaven" are Keltner, "Razor Dance" and "She Steers By Lightning" are Pete. Pete isn't a rock drummer, he's a pop drummer. He's very adaptable, and he's interested in new sounds. He'll work with an engineer getting sounds for six hours and then start playing completely fresh. Keltner peaks somewhere around the first take, and then comes back at about take 35, which perfectly mirrors my learning curve. I always play best on the runthrough before the tape rolls, then go downhill from there [laughs].

Do those vicious string bends on songs like "Put It There Pal" come out of a love for

country music or something else?

Could be Irish pipes. There's a lot of things that bend. It's all vocalization; any instrument is at some point based on the human voice. And when you play a solo, you're vocalizing.

What about the Indian influence that showed up in your playing early on?

I studied Indian music for about a week. You sort of had to in 1967. I said, "Wow, look at these scales, this is great. What does this mean? Just tell me about the theory." And the teacher said, "Sorry, you've got to learn to play first." And I thought, "Oh dear, can't be bothered with that," so I didn't persevere. I always thought the science was fascinating, but the music was culturally on another planet and wasn't worth submerging myself in.

So you just experimented with scales.

I tried to. But I had to ask myself, to what end? I'd rather be intuitive about music. If there's a science presented to you, then it has to be already inside you anyway. You just have to find it and get it out. And I'm not making sacred music. I'm a rock & roll musician. I throw TVs out of hotel windows.

Still, there is some other place that you can reach.

Yeah, you can always aspire. Always aspire upwards.

—Mac Randall

sideman

Under “most memorable gigs,” *subbing for Dickie Betts would have to be right near the top.* In the summer of '93, flying home from my job with Mellencamp, I called my wife. She said, “The Allman Brothers just called, and they want to know if you can get on a

relaxed and organic, whereas with John it was so regimented it was almost like theater.

You seem more at home onstage than your average session player.

I've learned how to play guitar onstage. For six years with Joe Ely I got to stretch out every night, almost like a jazz gig. About once a month I'd be in the middle of some long solo, and I'd play something I'd never played before, never thought of, never conceived of—one of those illuminating moments where this thing happens under your fingers and it ends up being an element of your style. The only reason that stuff happens, for me, is playing live. I wouldn't have gotten to that point if my ass wasn't on the line.

Is there a different rush in the studio environment?

Each time you do a session, you walk into a situation where the artist has their whole career on the line. Their current record could be their last record. It can be real intense in a positive way. You get a chance to make a contribution, and at the same time you're learning. I'm just hitting my stride as a player, but I probably spend less time playing guitar now than I have for the past ten years. I spend more time writing and working in my studio, but I'm playing better than ever.

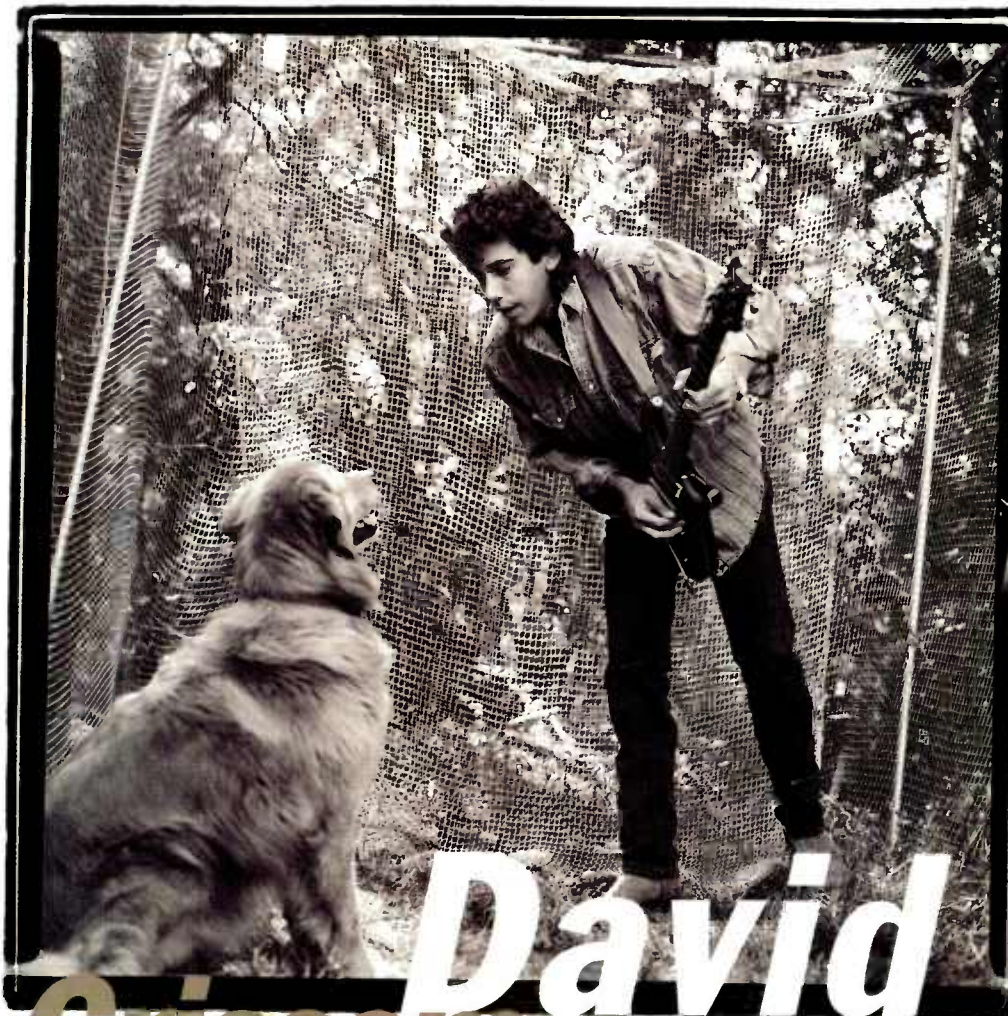
You graduated from “sideman” when you joined Storyville.

You spend more time with the guys in the band than with your wife, so trying to find the right chemistry, most of the time it doesn't work. It was a gamble, but everybody was so committed.

What advice can you give to potential sidemen?

Write songs, don't give away your publishing, learn to sing well enough to at least sing background vocals (which makes you more employable), and wear earplugs if you can stand them. You keep your independence to a certain degree if you're smart with your publishing. There's a creative benefit to it, plus

the fact that you don't necessarily have to go on the road to get paid. There's lots of good guitar players out there; the reason you get the gig is the extra stuff. Also, try to be somebody you'd want to hang out with. The bottom line is, your playing is your personality.—**Dan Forte**



David Grissom

“Each time you do a session, the artist’s career is on the line.”

plane tonight and go out and play for two weeks.” I called from the Austin airport, but by the time I reached them they'd hired Zakk Wylde because they needed somebody immediately. Next day they called because Zakk hadn't worked out. I got on a plane that night, with CDs to refresh my memory, and the next night I played a three-hour show with them. Warren Haynes and I got together for about an hour in the afternoon to work out some harmonies and to go over some of the new stuff, but I literally kind of learned it while we were onstage. Their approach to live gigs was so

résumé

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Chris Isaak
Joe Ely
John Mellencamp
Ringo Starr
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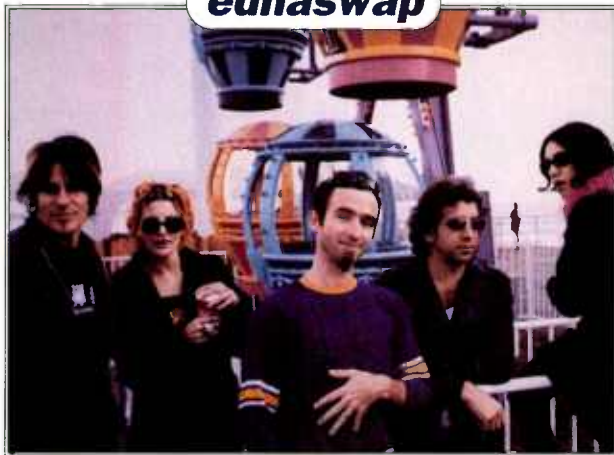


talents

It's early December at a small club in Boston and, surveying the sparse crowd gathered to check out her band's first area show, singer Anne Preven recognizes the scene from a bad dream she had a few years ago. "I was standing in the back of a club," she recalls. "I'd never been in a band before, but there I was watching myself play in some band called **Ednaswap**. They were terrible, horrifying."

Preven may have been tempting fate when she christened her first and only band Ednaswap. But that hasn't stopped the three-year-old, L.A.-based outfit, who have a promising new CD on Island titled *Wacko Magneto*, from enjoying something of a charmed life. Back in 1993, before they'd even played a proper gig, Ednaswap got their first major-label deal when a four-song

ednaswap



demo fell into the hands of someone at EastWest. But, by the time the band had finished their debut CD, their run of luck had evaporated.

"There was a big upheaval at EastWest and we found ourselves without allies at the label," explains Preven, who could pass for Perry Farrell's younger sister, with her mane of dyed-orange mini-dreadlocks and intense, aquiline features. "I think it also had something to do with our sound getting edgier when we went from playing unplugged in a living room to doing real shows." Adds guitarist Scott Cutler. "We signed with Island the day EastWest dropped us."

For the *Wacko Magneto* sessions, the band enlisted producer Dave Jerden, whose previous work with Jane's Addiction and Alice In Chains was perfect for Ednaswap's update of classic hard rock, tasteful psychedelic effects, bluesy textures, and muscular guitar workouts framing Preven's gutsy, cathartic vocals.

Centered in the eye of Cutler's and Rusty Anderson's churning guitar storm, clad in a tight, midriff-bearing sleeveless shirt, Preven turns yesterday's nightmare into her own version

of the rock & roll dream. Her advice to young bands: "Play live shows before you sign anything and have a full album worth of material ready."—**Matt Ashare**

There's got to be a million stories about one drunk guy telling another drunk guy: "Hey, you play guitar and I'll sing. We'll make it big." Most of them lead nowhere, of course. But then there's always that one success story that gives everyone else hope. Like the **Mother Hips**. The band was born in 1991 at California State University at Chico. Guitarist Greg Loiacono and bassist Isaac Parsons were jamming in Loiacono's room when singer and guitarist Tim Bluhm walked in and said those magic words mentioned previously (or something like them). Within a year the trio found drummer Mike Wofchuck and were playing up and down the Golden State. They readily admit that they

It's not unusual for a record company to slap a sticker on a new release, touting the merits of what's inside. But the label affixed to the self-titled debut album from L.A.'s **Wondermints** (Big Deal) bears this rather noteworthy quotation from Brian Wilson: "If I had the Wondermints back in 1967, I would have taken *Smile* out on the road."

It doesn't take long to figure out why the Wondermints' music fills Wilson with good vibrations. The group's songs are high-brow pop constructions, full of beautifully simple melodies, layers of harmony and counterpoint, and—perhaps most striking in this post-grunge era—affecting uplift.

"I've always had a real love of pop," explains keyboardist Darian Sahanaja. "There's something so appealing about the structure of a well-crafted song. You hear it in the work of the Beach Boys, the Raspberries, the Hollies, and you can hear the same craft in the work of Haydn or Richard Rodgers."

The music showcased on the new album isn't actually the freshest the group has to offer. Assembled from three different demo tapes



wondermints

and released originally on the Japanese Toy's Factory label, the record charts Wondermints' progress from their inception five years ago. The group has also released a second Toy's Factory record, a sampler of covers that includes the Monkees' "Porpoise Song," Pink Floyd's "Arnold Layne," and Paul Revere and the Raiders' "Louise."

But don't dismiss the Wondermints as retro poppers. Says Sahanaja, "What we're after isn't really a Sixties pop sound but a timeless sound. If our music can move people a little bit, we're very happy."

—**Chuck Crisafulli**

were lucky to be playing in a hide-away college town, where the pressure to become immediately successful was low. It allowed them to develop their own sound (a blend of the Eagles, Everlys, and Flying Burrito Brothers) and a fervent local following. Somewhere in there they recorded and issued an independent release, *Back to the Grotto*, got courted by several

influenced their sound the most. "We've learned a lot from being onstage," Bluhm says. "I think we've become good harmony singers because we've had to sing through so many crappy P.A.s and situations where we couldn't hear ourselves."

All of the road experience and studio help from Neill King (who engineered Green Day's *Dookie*)

It's amazing what some bands get away with. Take the English trio **Dodgy**. "When we signed our publishing deal, we had two matching offers and couldn't decide between the two of them," explains singer/bassist Nigel Clark. "So we took the managing directors from Virgin and BMG down to our local pub and made them play video soccer against one another to determine who got our publishing."

What does their label (A&M in the UK, Mercury in the States) make of these sorts of antics? "They see us as a group who know where they want to go," shrugs drummer Mathew Priest. (Guitarist Andy Miller completes the lineup.) "In the music industry that's quite rare. Right from the start we had a pretty clear idea, so it's totally our rules and everything's fine."

Dodgy's last album (their third, but the first to see a U.S. release), *Free Peace Sweet*, is a beginning-to-end classic, exploding like *Quadrophenia*-era Who, peaking with a gorgeous, string-laden ballad ("One of Those Rivers"), and closing with the laid-back Van Morrison-like strum of "Homegrown," a paean to their favorite herb. Dodgy's songwriting manages the trick of sounding "classic" without being retro; while old bands serve as a blueprint for so many of their Brit rock peers, for Dodgy they are merely reference points.

Like all great rock bands, they love to take their music on the road. "You can cheat in the studio, but in the end you've got to go out and play it live," observes Nigel. "We've been playing live for more than five years now, and your confidence builds from that. When you do go to lay down a song in the studio, you've got to keep in mind that you're gonna be playing that song live for the next twelve months all around the world."

"But," adds Mathew, "that certainly hasn't prevented us from adding strings or female backing singers or church bells when we wanted."

—Dev Sherlock



dodgy



for Blakesberg

mother hips

major labels before signing with American, and put out their major-label debut *Part Timer Goes Full*.

It's been their constant Dead-like touring style, averaging ten months a year on the road, that's

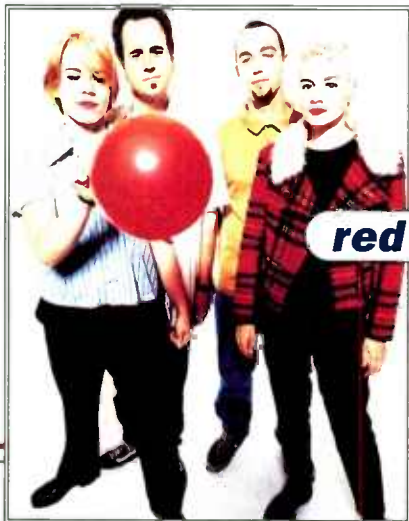
has made their latest offering, *Shootout*, their strongest to date. "We know that even if we do get successful it's not going to happen next month," Bluhm says. "It takes a long time. A lot of hard work."

—David Farinella

Where L.A.'s **Red Five** go, dichotomies follow. There's the male/female one: The band's fiery live shows and equally combustible debut album, *Flash* (Interscope), join the cheek-to-cheek vocals and tigerish guitars of Jenni McElrath and Betty Carmellini to the screwtight rhythm of bassist Mitch Townsend and drummer Adam Zuckert. Then there's that sound: a blend of sweet-toothed punk and dark, amphetamized pop. Finally, though the name Red Five is lifted from Luke Skywalker's squadron in *Star Wars*, the band steers clear of the junk culture Sarlaac Pit that swallows so many of its peers.

Carmellini sees this last point as a definite advantage. "We can write whatever we want, and we don't have to deliver a certain

product," she says. "There's a lot of versatility in our songs, a lot of different styles, so that lets us open up and create even more, rather than being pigeonholed."

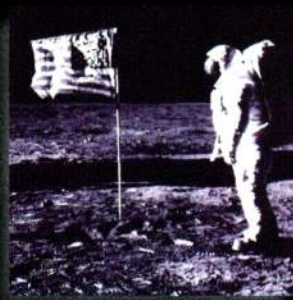


red five

It's this mutual respect that gives "Making Waves on the Future Ocean," McElrath's Go-Go's-with-a-hangover anthem, room to breathe alongside the headlong crash of Carmellini's "Seven." Jenni's a little bit country ... "and I'm a little bit rock & roll," laughs Carmellini. "She's the pop, I'm the rock. But she's also written some rockin' tunes."

Which leaves one question: If there were a support group for the male members of female-fronted bands (led, naturally, by the estrogen-challenged musicians of Hole, Tuscadero, and No Doubt), would Townsend join? "You know, this'll sound stupid," he says, "but I'd have to honestly say I wouldn't need to. I could use some psychological help, but not in that department."

—Chris Smets



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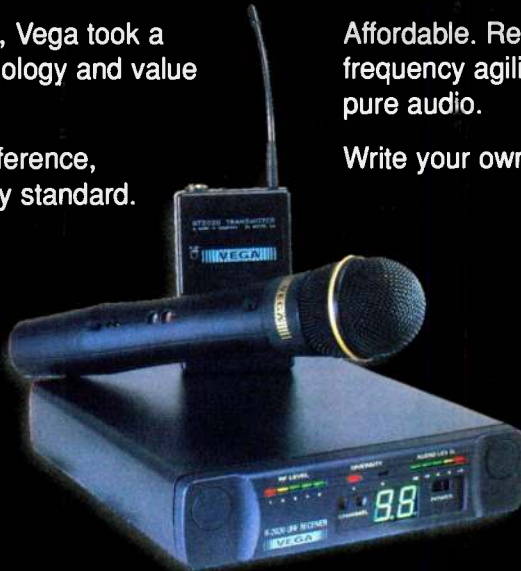
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Parry Gripp's "welcome to the big time" story takes place in a small town by the name of Gamer outside of Raleigh, North Carolina. Apparently Gripp and his Nerf Herder bandmates—drummer Steve Sherlock and bassist Charlie Dennis—were standing on the side of the road, waiting to cross. "We're not weird-looking rock guys. We're not Marilyn Manson or anything like that," he explains. "But this big fat guy is driving along in this white beat-up pickup truck. Then he slows down, looks at us, and flicks us off. That was our introduction to the South. We felt welcome."

Of course, based on the *fame du jour* of Nerf Herder, the fat guy could have been a Sammy Hagar fan who took umbrage with the band's novelty hit "Van Halen." It was their ode to that band in its David Lee Roth incarnation that took them from the garages of Santa Barbara to a major label signing.

This rise to notoriety has taken Gripp off guard. "I personally didn't think I'd ever be in a band again," he explains. "I'm 29, and I was playing in bands when I was in high school and college. My friend Steve (the drummer) just wanted to get something together. We found this guy Charlie (the bassist), and we were just playing for fun. That's why our songs are really goofy, because they're about our friends. It was just something to do on weekends."

Indeed, Gripp was busy running a five-acre

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orchid nursery he inherited from his mother nearly four years ago, Sherlock was playing with the Lost Kittens (who also featured the guitarist/singer for Silver Jet, the bassist for Summer Camp, and the guitarist for No Use For A Name), and Dennis was in the goth band This Ascension. But it was during those weekend warrior gigs that Gripp and company found common ground and began developing the Nerf Herder sound.

"Part of the reason our music sounds the way it does is that it's really simple and easy to play," Gripp says. "I'm not a great musician, but it's pretty easy to do a good-sounding punk song. Really, our whole thing is working with our limitations, working within what we can do. That's why our songs are so simple and the emphasis is on the lyrics."

Even though "Van Halen" captured the nation's attention, it was "Sorry" that Joey Cape, an old friend, wanted to include on his *Happy Meals* compilation for his new San Francisco-based independent label, My Records. After the success of *Happy Meals* (which also featured current Virgin act Silver Jet; Summer Camp, who signed to Maverick; and DGC's Snot), Cape went looking for a band that would be willing to record an entire album. After Canadian punkers Chixdiggitt passed because of a previous agreement with Sub Pop, Nerf Herder got the call. Their "nerdcore" humor/punk/pop sound was perfect for an indie release and ideally suited to the production styles of Cape and Ryan Greene (NOFX, No Use For A Name).

While the members of Nerf Herder were waiting in Santa Barbara for Cape to arrive with copies of their self-titled release, one of Cape's friends took a disc down to San Francisco's Live 105. The station played "Van Halen" during their *New Music Challenges* program, and after five days of strong feedback from listeners they added the song to their rotation. Gripp remembers it well: "When Joey came to Santa Barbara and handed me the CD, he said, 'Oh, by the way, they're playing it on Live 105.' That was super exciting, but that was just the beginning of the craziness. As soon as that kind of thing happens, you get managers and record companies calling because they all want to have songs on the radio, and here's one that's already there. Since then it's been a never-ending escalation—and the pinnacle of it all is me riding around in a van."

Gripp is speaking of his recent tour supporting Weezer throughout the South. "It was a

haphazard, crazy tour," he explains with a laugh. "I'd call it the *Cold As Hell* tour. I never studied up on being signed, being in a band, and what all that was like, but I always imagined that if you weren't riding around in a limo, at least you had an elevated lifestyle. I didn't realize that I would be living in a van, like going back twenty years to when I was a kid going on camping trips with my parents. That's basically what going on tour feels like: You ride around in a van, eat at McDonald's, and do what your road manager/dad tells you to do."

As Nerf Herder toiled around the country, radio stations and magazines picked up their story in fine style. Not only was "Van Halen" getting added to playlists from coast to coast, Gripp had somehow been targeted as a Van Halen expert just as the controversy exploded. In an *Entertainment Weekly* story he was quoted as saying, "Everyone hates Sammy Hagar. Who doesn't?" To which Gripp now adds, "I remember when that came out; it was the most shocking thing that ever happened to me. It sounded really negative, and I was like, 'Oh, my God, this is probably the most fame I will ever have.'" Less disturbing, though, was the magazine's comparison of "Van Halen" to "The Macarena," which Gripp finds "very funny." Then he adds, "We are what we are. I think 'Van Halen' is a novelty song and it did pretty good for a novelty song. Hopefully the other songs on our record are not considered novelty songs. I think there's a certain musical merit to a song like 'Sorry.' There's a lot more to it than just funny jokes."

Now that everything is the same but totally different, Nerf Herder are getting ready to launch their own tour. They'll be supporting Arista's remaster of their debut album and banking on the success of their next single, "Sorry." The song, which is about the apologies Gripp constantly made to an ex-girlfriend, features the line, "Sorry I jacked off outside of your window." In another fortuitous development, the video for "Sorry" will feature Mark Hamill, thanks to the fact that the band's name stems from a less than complimentary comment made by Princess Leia about Han Solo in *The Empire Strikes Back*. "Everybody's got high hopes for 'Sorry,'" admits Gripp. "If it takes off, '97 will be the year of luxury. If it doesn't, it's going to be the year of riding around in a van."

Either way, it'll be a great time. "My expectations of this are really none," Gripp says. "If the whole thing falls apart next week, it was an interesting little adventure." —**David Farinella**

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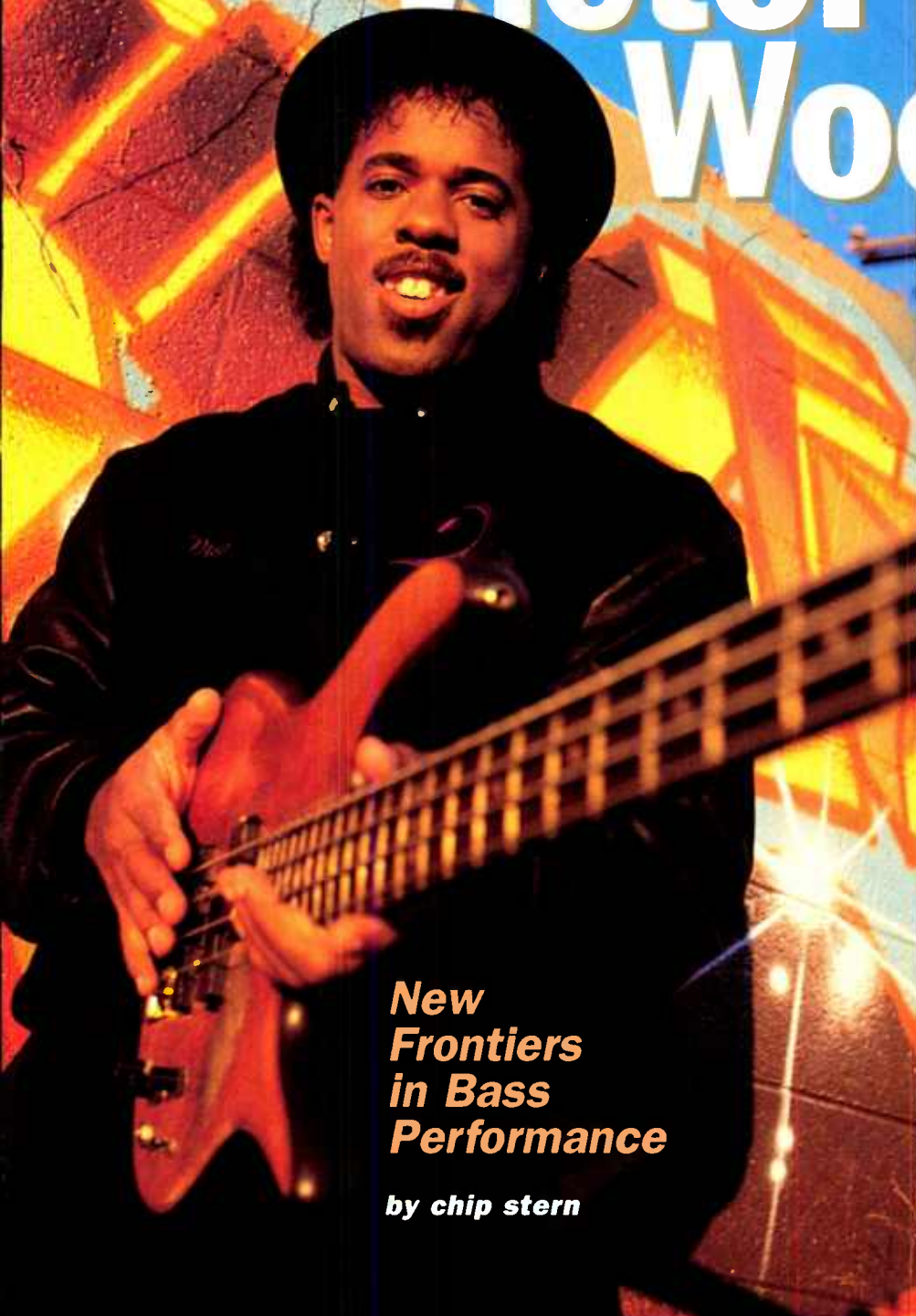

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Victor Wooten has an astonishing technical command of his instrument, yet he also projects an earthy, uncomplicated feeling for the groove. As a charter member of Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, he captivates audiences with pyrotechnical showmanship, but more often than not he hits upon a few simple notes that define the structure of a song without drawing undue attention to himself. His performance of

"Amazing Grace" on the Flecktones' most recent concert document, *Live Art* (Warner Bros.), and such choice cuts as "The Vision" and "Classical Thump" from his remarkable solo debut *A Shaw of Hands* (Compass), are distinguished by a lyric/harmonic sensibility and a rhythmic/percussive vitality that are uncommon even among the most seasoned improvisers, let alone bass guitarists.

"My goal is to try and make a person hear the whole band, not just the bass part," says Wooten. "What I do a lot is to hammer away a figured bass line with my left hand, while the right hand is playing a percussion part, strumming harmonics to get the chords, using the pinky on my left hand to fret the harmonics. Then I'll add some hits in between to get a hit type of feel going or maybe strum some contrasting chords, depending on what key I'm in. But one way or another I'm always putting in the backbeat. Even when I'm playing solo in the two-finger style, I'll use the backs of my fingers to get the downbeat, sort of strum up with the fingers and use the fingernails to get that little pop."

A seasoned veteran on bass by the time he entered sixth grade, Victor was inspired by the likes of Stanley Clarke, Jaco Pastorius, and Larry Graham, yet his coming of age was mainly a product of his own abstract

intuitions and his brothers' home-grown, practical approach to making music.

"They were always experimenting. The way the first Wooten Brothers band started, one of my brothers was shaking a chain, one had made a flute out of straw, and Roy was beating on boxes. We weren't relying on the technology of the instruments; it all had to come from us. And through them, I got ideas. For example, I'd see my brother playing the piano, doing those ten-finger arpeggios, and it didn't take much thinking to say, 'Hey, that could work on the bass guitar neck.' So I set about to adapt those tapping techniques. If I needed help, I'd give him my instrument and say, 'Play this like a piano.' He could lay it in his lap and play it, and I'd get ideas that way. To me, piano, fingering-wise, is very similar to saxophone. Saxophone

thumb—together with the regular thumbing and plucking allowed me to go down with my thumb, up with my thumb, *then* pluck: down-up-pluck, down-up-pluck. Now, if I bounce off the E string, I'm already on my way up; I've missed my chance. So if I'm going to hit my low E string, just like a banjo player using a thumb pick, I'll go *through* the string and let the A string stop my momentum, so I'm already *under* the string. Therefore, on my way I'll grab it with my thumb *and* a finger so that in one upwards motion I can get two notes. You can grab *any* one of the strings; it can even be the same string. And common sense told me that if I could pluck with one finger on the way up, then I can pluck with two or three or even four, along with my thumb, so that in one downwards motion I can get my thumb and on the way up I can get a roll.


the melody against it. You know, Stanley Jordan-type stuff, except he's the master of it. I use what little technique I have well, but Stanley's just way out there.

"During that same medley I play Erroll Garner's 'Misty.' I think it was originally in Eb but I transposed it to D because I could play just about that whole song without having to fake too many artificial or false harmonics. I almost always fret a bassline with my left hand and use my pinky to hit the harmonics, almost like a slide. Being able to hit a bass note with a chord in harmonics, then figuring out how to also play melodies: I got into all of that from listening to Jaco."

For this listener, the penultimate moment on *A Show of Hands* is "Classical Thump," which sounds like a parody of a Bach Violin

Partita, on which Victor emulates the polyrhythmic complexity of a great drummer even as he gets his bass guitar to sit up and jam like a harp-

sichord. "I go through quite a few techniques. I start with hammering the moving bass figure, then I'll emulate the sixteenth-note groove a drummer would play: I hit an open note, then I hammer the note. I may go down with my thumb, up with my thumb, and then pluck twice, index and middle finger; that's four notes. To get the triplet it would be down, up, pluck, just thumb and forefinger. I'll go up and down with the thumb and then come up with my forefinger, get some two-against-three going, then I might use my thumb in the traditional manner to get a percussive rim shot. When I start doing it harder it gets into the regular slapping sound, so I'll generally do it fairly soft, especially if I'm doing a lot of intricate rhythms."

To a rudimentary Precision Bass plodder like myself, all these flashy moves are as mind-boggling as some ancient Aztec rites. I couldn't see myself getting into *any* of this bad shit in a million years. Victor Wooten laughs and seeks to reassure me. "All that other stuff isn't necessary. Like we say at the beginning of *A Show of Hands*, 'You can't hold no groove if you ain't got no pocket.' There has to be a strong foundation for all that flashy stuff to sit on, or else the flashy stuff will burn out. To grab people and sustain yourself with nothing more than the groove of a so-called simple song like 'I Heard It Through the Grapevine,' well, that's subtlety. That takes real musicianship." 

"I'd get into piano and horn technique and apply that to my instrument."

is even more similar to the bass than the piano is, because you've got one hand over and one hand under. If you take it and do like this"—Wooten rotates his hands from a vertical to a horizontal posture—"you're playing the bass. So where a lot of players would listen to horn players and pianists and simply learn their lines, I'd get into their technique and apply that to my instrument.

"One of the things that put me furthest along into the style that people are most familiar with from me—all the thumb stuff—is listening to drummers. I couldn't get all these rhythms out with the right-hand, two-finger technique. While thumb-playing in a Larry Graham style gave me all those cymbal crashes and snare rimshots, I couldn't approximate the speed, intensity, and fast rolls of a good drummer. But I knew that there had to be a way, so I began experimenting."

Where traditional thumb slapping is analogous to the percussive technique bass violinists use when they turn their bows over and bounce the wood on the strings (known as *sforzando*), Victor's solution more closely resembles the right-hand techniques of banjo players. "All the bass players from Larry Graham to Louis Johnson were thumbing and plucking where you'd snap it," Wooten explains. "But applying the technique that my brother Reggie showed me—down *and* up with my

"I realized I could get a lot of attacks with my right hand, so then I figured if I can get four notes with my right hand plucking, and I have these four left-hand fingers that can also tap, then when my hand goes down and up in that one motion, eight or more notes can pop out. Then after I realized I could get all these rhythms, the challenge was to make them melodic: do a fast roll and have it come out like a pianist's pitches, whereas most bass players will do it and it comes out like a drum. So on a Flecktone song like 'Sinister Minister' I'm playing a lot of fast triplets in rhythm but you're hearing it go through all these chord changes. That was a different sound that people were used to hearing, and it's been evolving ever since.

"For instance, on *A Show of Hands* I do a jazz medley that sounds to some people like I'm playing two basses, but it's just one normally tuned bass. The challenge there is that I always like to hear at least a three-note chord, but that leaves me with only one string to play the melody on. So sometimes when I'm playing melody on the same string I'm playing chords on, I have to figure out what notes of the chord to leave in to make it sound like you're hearing more of the chord. On 'Someday My Prince Will Come' you're hearing chords ringing with the melody. I'm basically playing seventh chords with my left hand while my right hand is tapping

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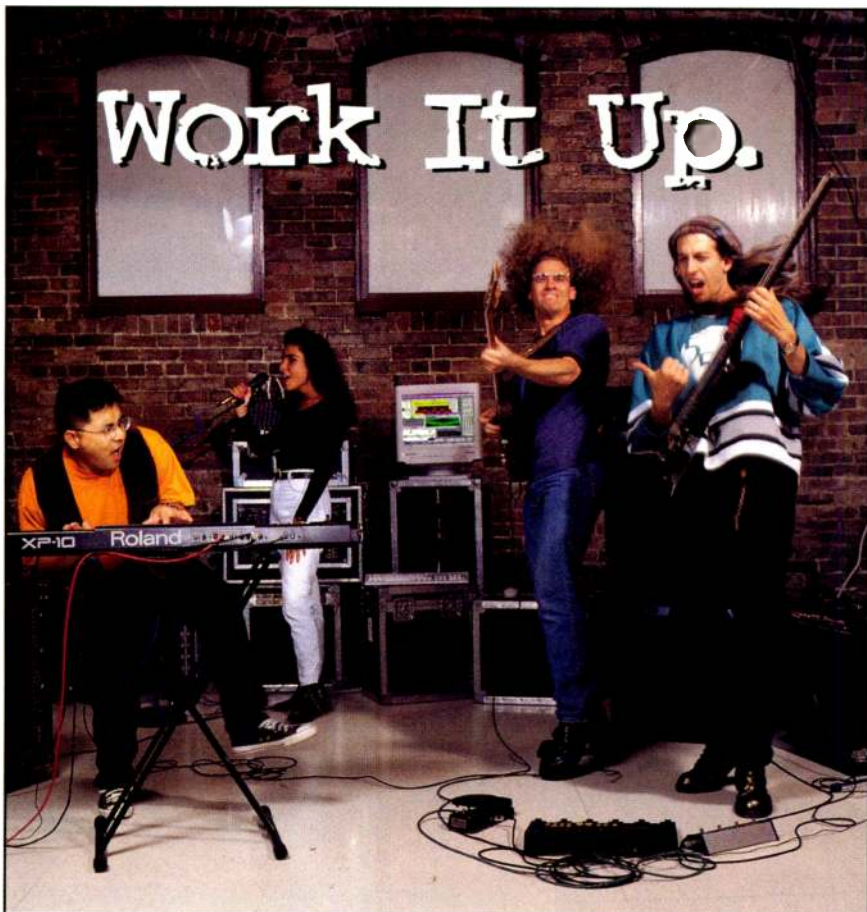
DISCUSS THE GREATEST SONGS EVER WRITTEN

A G E S

What song do you have going through your head right now? That's easy to answer, right? Stretch that a bit: What's your favorite song? Sure, it depends on how you feel; it could be "Some Enchanted Evening" one day, "White Punks On Dope" the next. • Now try this one: What is the greatest song ever written? If you're serious about your music, the proper response is, "Uh, can I get back to you on that?" • There's a difference between what we might choose as our *favorite* song and the *best* song of all time. As players, we might enjoy blowing through blues changes, or even jamming over a one-chord vamp. And there are times when nothing will do but twenty choruses of "Louie, Louie." But when you consider the possibilities of fitting a beautiful lyric to its most appropriate melody, or finding the right changes to bring a motif to life, or somehow find-

ing the magic that makes complex musical ideas go down as smooth as a simple riff, it becomes clear that there's more to the art of writing a song than bashing out twelve bars of I-IV-V. • (Or maybe not.) • That's why we asked some of the top songwriter/performers of our time to help us track down this elusive prey. Not only that, we encouraged them to explain to us the reason for their choice. It had to be more than "it sounds cool, and you can dance to it." We're interested in how they, as composers and players, see the spirit within the architecture of the song. If there is an answer buried somewhere in there, maybe the reflections of those who practice this craft can point us toward it. Check out what they have to say, and when you're finished, ask yourself again: What is the best of all songs? • Maybe it'll be the next one you write. Let us know.

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**Tori Amos
"A DAY IN THE LIFE"**

BY JOHN LENNON & PAUL MCCARTNEY

Lennon and McCartney were the greatest songwriters who ever lived, and you're just a ding-brain if you don't think so. There were so many great songs that it's so hard to say, "Okay, where do we go?" But "A Day in the Life" stands out because it's a marriage of the two of them.

Where do you go from where Lennon went? How do you take that further? Well, ... you go to a collegiate boy who gets his books and eats his Wheaties. At a certain point, you've got to get off the battlefield. Where do you go from Belfast? You go to suburbia.

It's one of the few songs that is not just one experience. When I hear that song, I take an around-the-world trip. I don't just stop off in Bombay for a day, or under a bridge in San Francisco with a needle, or in the cotton fields in Georgia. It's not a one-culture experience. "A Day in the Life" draws from so many different music styles. It's an epic, but that's dangerous territory. There are so many epics where you go, "Uh, why didn't

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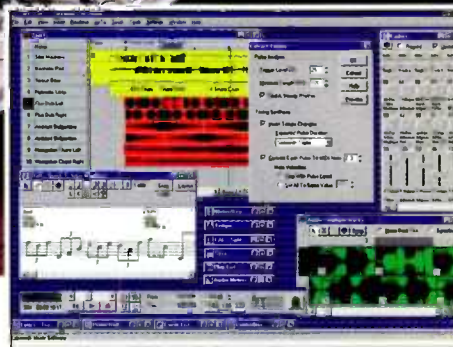
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this get sunk with the *Titanic*?"

You know that saying, "As above, so below"? That song is completely an example of that, because of the whole drug thing of going on a journey, however it's induced. Yet at the same time, there's such a lullabye happening with that melody. It's quite classic, and that's why that song is so radical. —**Robert L. Doerschuk**

Diane Warren

"WICHITA LINEMAN"

BY JIMMY WEBB

All of Jimmy Webb's songs, especially "Wichita Lineman," touch me so deeply. It's the notes and the words, but more than anything it's the marriage of the two: If either the music or the words is lame, the song is not going to work. In "Wichita Lineman," besides having



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an absolutely gorgeous melody, you can see the whole picture: the guy up on the telephone pole; the lonely, empty, desolate road; the trucks going by. It's one of those songs that talks to me, and that's the reason it endures.—**Paul Zollo**

Jimmy Webb

"WITH A SONG IN MY HEART"

BY RICHARD RODGERS & LORENZ HART

I think of Larry Hart [lyricist of Rodgers & Hart] first of all, and definitely one of my favorite songs ever in the world is "With a Song in My Heart." People seem to take cheap shots at Larry Hart, and I don't tolerate any of it. They say, "Oh, he was too facile, he was too quick with a rhyme." Bullshit. "With a song in my heart, I behold your adorable face/Just a song at the start, but it soon is a hymn to your grace." I'd say that has to be way up at the top of the list.

I love everything about the song, the words and the music. But I've realized that the emphasis is always so much on the composer and that we are all prey to this little composer disease. We all know the cliché story of [sings, to the tune of "Old Man River"] "Dum, dum, dum-dum..." But the thing is, it's true: We do invest more weight in the composer. In actual fact, it's the lyric that carries things that paralyze us years later and we say, "Don't you remember

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where it went ...," we're not just doing the tune, we're singing the lyric. So I love that song. Yes, Mr. Hart! Yes! Don't let them tell you that you were a hack. I should say Rodgers and Hart. But Dick Rodgers was very hard on Larry. Very hard.—**Paul Zollo**



Matthew Sweet
"TIL I DIE"

BY BRIAN WILSON

I think the best song ever written doesn't exist, because the best song ever written is the one which is right for you right then. But if I have to choose, I realize that I've always been more amazed by songs that are melancholy and make me feel sad and moody. Immediately when someone says "best song ever written," I go to Brian Wilson for some reason. It's got to be him, if I had to pick, because he wrote so much beautiful music. I think of a lesser-known song of his called "'Til I Die," which is on the Beach Boys' *Surf's Up* album. I believe that's one of the songs that he did mostly on his own on that album. I even heard that people in the band lobbied not to have it on the record.

It's almost discordant, with really complex chords but simple, repetitive movement. It's got three verses—not a complex structure, like a perfect pop song structure, but it has this really intense vibe where it's basically about life and dying: He says he's a

cork on the ocean, he's a leaf on a windy day. These images of his life being a little piece of nature seem really profound. Songs where something is going on like that always seem great to me. And the music of this song says so much. You can make this melody an instrumental and, even without the lyrics, it would work.

—**Paul Zollo**

Robyn Hitchcock
"VISIONS OF JOHANNA"

BY BOB DYLAN

I first heard it thirty years ago. I was probably at school in a basement, watching the older guys crowd 'round the record player, going, "This is it, man." I loved it simply for the feeling of the song, and that's why I still love it. It manages to convey so many contradictory moods. He's doing what he does best, which is kind of complaining in a very soulful way, but he's doing it with a lot of exhilaration, and it's like being sort of uplifted and downcast simultaneously. It's like a candle burning upwards. It doesn't make any sense, but it does, as if the more the candle burns, the longer it gets. It's very sad and very funny at the same time, and it's not easy to convey those feelings simultaneously.

A lot of songs, I suppose, go for a mood. Take something classic like "Walk On By" or "I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself." Those kind of songs will produce a particular



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mood. What was so good about "Visions Of Johanna" is that it went for three or four completely opposite moods and somehow managed to get them all.

I've heard different versions of it, studio and live, and I think the *Blonde On Blonde* version is still the best. I think it's Robbie Robertson playing guitar, and the guitar echoes the vocal lines beautifully. There's the lines in the last verse about "Madonna she still has not showed/and we see this empty cage now corrode/ where the cape of the stage once it flowed." It doesn't sound too good reading it out like that—you know, it could be the stock market—but with a guitar echoing the singing, it's great. The organ's swirling around with hints of the acoustic guitar. Even the rhythm section is good. The beat is almost like a march or something. It wasn't rock or blues. People had different rhythms in those days. I think they'd take a lot more from the strum of the acoustic or whatever.

I feel, as a songwriter, I've been created by that song, but I've also made that song my own. It's as though I've inhabited it. So I now feel I can sing it. I don't have the same images in mind that Dylan would've had when he wrote it, but I feel that I'm entitled to sing it, that I can do it justice. In fact, I probably sing it better than Dylan does now, because he tends to garble his songs anyway. He also likes dismantling his old melodies, and "Visions Of Johanna" is a great tune. That's what's lying at the root of me as a songwriter. Whilst there may be dozens of great songs, songs that will win awards, like "Whiter Shade Of Pale," or songs that don't win awards, like "Wolfpack" by Syd Barrett—they're still brilliant songs. But I think in between those different worlds, "Visions Of Johanna" stands there as a kind of beacon and I hope I'll always enjoy listening to it.

—Bill DeMain



Deborah Feingold

Suzanne Vega
"STORY OF ISAAC"

BY LEONARD COHEN

It's so mysterious, and such a great story. The way he tells it is really great; I love the point of view. It's a song you could sing for years and still not understand all of it, especially the ending verses. There are these ambiguous things in the song, but at the same time it's a very dramatic story. The way he's framed it from the boy's point of view was really powerful.

"I THINK IT'S GONNA RAIN TODAY"

BY RANDY NEWMAN

I love the tone and the imagery of it, both the music and the lyrics. The melody is absolutely beautiful. It seemed like a really sad and melancholy song without being sentimental—kind of sad but kind of dry at the same time. All the emotions are in the images, which I really like. "Broken windows, empty hallways"... All of the sadness that's in those images is quite powerful. It's not like him sitting around going, "I feel sad," which is the kind of song I really hate.

"IT'S ALRIGHT MA (I'M ONLY BLEEDING)"

BY BOB DYLAN

That's one that I've sung, and it was a real thrill because the flow of thought is so complicated and so exciting. When you sing a

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song like that, you can get yourself into the frame of mind that Dylan must have been in when he wrote it—the stream-of-consciousness lyrics. It just expands your mind in this really great way. The melody is basically one note during the verse: “Darkness at the break of noon ...” It’s not terribly melodic, but because of that all the emphasis is on the words and on the guitar playing, because the guitar really drives it along. Then you have the chorus, which has the little melody on the title, so that contrasts with the relentless feeling of the verses.

—Paul Zollo

Bonnie Raitt

“I THINK IT’S GONNA RAIN TODAY”

BY RANDY NEWMAN

It wasn’t a very difficult choice for me. The imagery, the economy, and the irony of that song, mixed together with that beautiful melody, is more haunting than anything I’ve heard to this day. The bridge especially is what makes it so magnificent: It lifts the song to a level of complexity, yet it’s complex and simple at the same time, as all great art is. It’s a perfect expression of what is being felt in the song, in both the way that it lifts and the way it comes back down to imagery as simple as, “Tin can at my feet/Think I’ll kick it down the street/That’s the way to treat a



Outline/Wyatt Counts

friend.” Without saying anything so obvious that it insults the audience, it’s the most beautiful and basic of images, reflected in the rise and fall of the melody. It’s like the way haiku is so brilliant: Any great poet will narrow down and distill the words to the essence of what you’re feeling. And to have someone as funny and wry and sardonic and loopy as Randy come up with songs like this—well, that’s one of the



Outline/Pamela Springsteen

reasons why I do music, knowing that a guy like Randy or Richard Thompson can write these outrageous fast songs and then turn around and rip your heart out with a ballad. Of course, Randy’s vocal kills me, but I think anybody could sing this song and kill me too.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Randy Newman

“THE NEEDLE AND THE DAMAGE DONE”

BY NEIL YOUNG

Because it moves me every time I hear it, no matter how many times I hear it. I love the tune, and the whole attitude of it. Of course, we all know someone who has died of an overdose, so it has that content, which is powerful. But more than that, the song really holds up incredibly well. Neil Young may very well be the best writer this music has produced, and I like many

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of his songs very much, including that *Rust Never Sleeps*—"My My Hey Hey"—especially the live version of that. But this would be his best song.—Paul Zollo

E of eels
"MARIE"

BY RANDY NEWMAN

I heard it the other day and fell into a deep depression because I know I could never write something like that. To me it's a perfect song; it is so incredibly moving. It's got that part, "You're a flower, you're a river, you're a rainbow," which in any other song would make me puke. But this is one of Randy's untrustworthy narrators, and it works because he's abusive and closed off but you don't doubt his love and this is how he would say it. It completely brings you into the world of that character because Randy becomes this person completely. It's absolutely amazing writing.

The melody is gorgeous, and the



Jay Blakesberg

arrangement—which, surprisingly, is not by Randy but by Nick DeCaro—is beautiful, the way the strings build on the peak moments of the song. It's quite simple, but it's also complex because of what the character can't put into words. It kills me every time I hear it, and it gives me goosebumps, which is the goal.

It's the kind of song with lines like "You looked like a princess the night we met/With your hair piled up high, I could never forget"—lines that could be hilarious but in this context, they're very serious. They bring you deep into that world, yet you accept it at face value. It's definitely the kind of song that I aspire to write, though I don't imagine I ever could. If I did, I'd probably just retire.

—Paul Zollo

Grant Lee Phillips of
Grant Lee Buffalo
"I AM THE WALRUS"

BY JOHN LENNON


It's not as though popular music has ceased to yield truly experimental works since the Beatles. Nevertheless, time and time again I find myself returning to that very hallucinogenic period which produced such surreal masterworks as "Strawberry Fields," "A Day in the Life," and "I Am The Walrus" as a fountain of inspiration. I feel fortunate to have encountered this music while I was still quite young and impressionable. "Walrus" hit me at the right time. The power of the song lies in its otherworldliness, its disruption of language, and its ability to convey a very internal, psychic drama. Gawd. And it was on the radio!

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Jay Blakesberg

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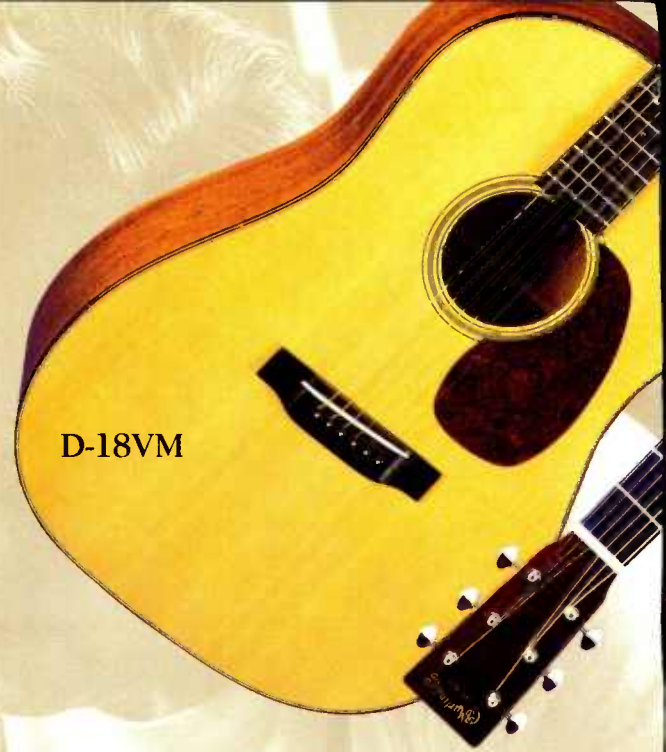
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the hard panning of instruments to the left and right. For anyone who's fascinated with the nuts and bolts of recording, I recommend listening to the track on one side of stereo at a time. You'll hear two distinct performances, and the orchestral arrangements will become increasingly transparent. Though the song functions effectively as a snarling stream of consciousness, at its heart it is a protest against all dogmatic factions of societies and a cry of desperation set against a backdrop of nursery rhymes and wicked storybook imagery. The manic thrust of the lyrics is furthered by fuzz box vocals and random tape loops. Even on paper, it still sounds pretty contemporary.

—Dev Sherlock

Billy Bragg
"ON RAGLAN ROAD"

BY PATRICK KAVANAGH

This beautiful ballad began its life as a poem and was subsequently set to an Irish air



Jay Blakesberg

called "The Dawning of the Day." The tune fits it so well that you have to believe that Kavanagh was hearing it in his head as he wrote the words.

Although set in Dublin, "On Raglan Road" is not an Irish song as such. The streets that form the backdrop to the ballad could be in any city where young men and women go a-courting.

Here in the verses is a universally recognizable world-weariness of someone who knows from experience that love hurts. From the very start he seems resigned to disappointment and yet feels it is worth it all for a walk "the enchanted way" with his lover. This sense of resignation seeps through the verses, yet nothing quite prepares us for the final act of this self-fulfilling prophecy. That last image of her that he contemplates walking away from him "so hurriedly" conveys the totality of her rejection. He responds by comparing her to a piece of clay. Spoken as she hurries off, it's not much of a comeback.

Kavanagh (1905-67) does something unique in the third verse: He offers us an insight into the poet's art. Not just how to write lyrics but why: "I gave her the gifts of the mind, I gave her the secret sign/ That's known to the artists who have known the true gods of sound and tone/And word and tint. I did not stint. I gave her poems to say/With her own name there and her long dark hair like clouds over fields of May."

Of the solitary kinship of the songwriters, he gave her the secret sign. By taking events from their relationship and conjuring them into song, he drew her into the mystic mechanisms behind the creative process. In doing so, he had to reveal to her where the inspiration and imagery come from. By studying his poetry, she might figure out this secret art. It was a chance he had to take. How else was he to set himself apart from her other suitors? What other means did he have to entice her to his bed? Maybe that's the true secret: People write songs so that they can get laid.—Dev Sherlock

John Popper of Blues Traveler

"IMAGINE"

BY JOHN LENNON

John Lennon's "Imagine" is bang-on perfect. It moves the melody very simply—two chords—and then it takes that same movement of two chords and changes it a little bit at the bridge. But it's the same melody, just distorted a little bit, and there's

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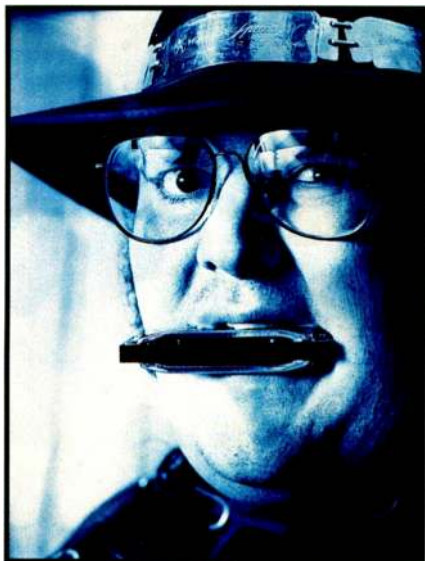
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that nice turnaround. That's really what you need in all good songs, like a twelve-bar blues, is a statement, the repeating of a statement, and then, the repeating of a statement causes a change. That's what the V chord does in a blues. But he's also got such great subject matter here. He's suggesting this great ideal, and the way he tells it—the intentional simplicity—gets it across.

I think all the best songs are some kind of a confession. In "Imagine" what John Lennon is saying is "I hope you will join us," kind of confessing that to you—"imagine this idea, and I hold it dear." I like to say whoever is singing a song is always whining about something. Some of them actually do whine—I'm not gonna use any names. But I take the view of a comedian, that the best comedy—or the best songwriting—is stuff everyone can identify with. It makes us remember that we're all human beings.

—Mark Rowland

Paddy McAloon of Prefab Sprout
"STARDUST"

BY HOAGY CARMICHAEL AND
MITCHELL PARISH

Part of what amazes me is the longevity of the thing. That's important to establishing the greatness of any song. Then, its openness to interpretation. God knows how many cover versions there

have been of it. Everyone's had a go. There's also something in it that appeals to me greatly, and that is its oddness of shape. You could pick any Richard Rodgers tune, or for that matter any Gershwin tune, and find, in the way it's shaped, a sort of perfection. "Some Enchanted Evening" or one of those classics—you have a very tidy little song, universal and describing the perfect moment. I kind of like the untidiness of "Stardust." You're not quite sure what the verse is, you're not quite sure what the chorus is. It's not eight bars of perfection, it doesn't really have that measured elegance of so many standards. The lyric does sound like it's trying to find words to describe what the melody does, because the melody wanders all over the place.

Any song from the modern era, written since about 1960, would probably have some kind of message, or it would have a lyric that was instructive. "Stardust" doesn't have that. It's so old-fashioned that it evades the kind of good intentions that too many songwriters have now. It was written at a time when that wasn't important, and people didn't go to songs for that. Maybe its ambitions lyrically are much more sentimental, but that's part of its strength. It's hard to pull off. Maybe you can't be quite that whimsical now, as if you're describing a reverie.

It's also not an easy song to sing. You have to think about it, and it's that paradox of it having lasted so long yet being quite complex in its way. And how do you describe the rhythm of it? It's a kind of gentle dance number, but it reminds me of something like *Clair De Lune*. The melody is so stretched out that it sounds like a classical piece, but at the same it lends itself to a jazz band.

I think I became most conscious of the song because it was one of my father's favorite songs. Yet when he mentioned the name to me, I didn't recall it. In the Woody Allen film *Stardust Memories*, it's either at the beginning or the end as the signature theme, and I remember thinking

then, "Boy, what a strange, strange song. Where are we in this?" Then my kid brother bought the sheet music to it and he used to play it over and over, and no matter how many times I've heard it, I'm not absolutely sure what comes next. That in a way contradicts the normal thing you'll say about a great song, which is that it has an inevitability. I guess I've kind of defined it by the things it doesn't do [laughs], but I think it's the greatest.—Bill DeMain

Mark Eitzel

"LIKE A ROLLING STONE"

BY BOB DYLAN

I'll go with "Like a Rolling Stone" by Dylan, it's a song I've heard far too many times—but still, here's why:

It was fucking ambitious and at the same time seems thrown away. He was so confident he was like a steel worker wandering around casually thirty stories up. It rings with an ecstatic kind of joy (was he on speed?) that makes you feel that anything is possible. It's like a sling-shot that simultaneously slams a rock



Jay Blakesberg

into your head and launches you like a stone. Your head spins with excitement at the language. Because it's all so right on. It's all so focused. It's a complicated insult that also celebrates the life of the person he's singing about. It cruelly picks apart the superficiality of her (?) life but you still kind of feel that his anger is

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focused on the waste of her life—that there is a point to this nasty diatribe. Like within the song he's trying to find the right key that'll unlock her life. He's putting her down but he really wants to save her. It is a righteous anger. It becomes righteous when it reflects on something beautiful, when it makes you wonder, when it needs to make no claims, when it just burns and burns and is as familiar to you as your eyes. He was trying to say Everything and actually leaves you with the flavor of it on your tongue.

All the songs on this record [*Highway 61 Revisited*] kind of take my breath away, but I'll pick this one because it changed the face of music forever. Suddenly here was a songwriter with a point of view. He revolutionized an older tradition of songwriters who speak to their contemporaries, not by changing the music so much but by incorporating all that he had learned from the Sixties and a love for an idea of the good that people can be. "Like a Rolling Stone" was based in a long tradition, and yet he said things so they sounded brand new. It was an incredibly acerbic disc, but also thoughtful and interesting. Art for me is something that communicates experience on many levels at once. Because that reflects life. Most songs I hear sound like people who only want to do one thing—like people who are destined to only walk a treadmill. It is such a narrow and loveless betrayal.

Andy Partridge of XTC
"AUTUMN ALMANAC"

BY RAY DAVIES

It's a miniature movie, basically, that unravels itself as you're listening to it, and it has all these little movements or scenes. And they all seem to take place in the kind of mythical cozy London that the Ealing studios always had in their films, like *The Lavender Hill Mob*. The song just keeps turning and changing; you see a new facet every few seconds. But there's nothing unsettling about the fact that there are so

many parts. Normally that would be the death of a song, it would just scramble people's brains.

The lyrics are very everyday. There's no "calling occupants of interplanetary craft" in it. All the language in it is what you'd say over a cup of tea. It's like a rollercoaster, but it's not a high-speed chromium-plated space-age rollercoaster—it's this slow creaking wooden baroque kind of rollercoaster. There are some lovely moments in it, like that section that starts "Friday evening..." It starts off in this mournful minor thing, and you think, "Oh dear, Friday evening, the end of something," and then suddenly: "People get together"—it clicks into major, and becomes very optimistic. It just lifts your heart up another rung. And there's something very plain and uplifting about [*from the cho-*



Outline/Arron Rapoport

rus] "yes, yes, yes," this repetition of the affirmative.

The woodiness of "Autumn Almanac" is really appealing. Everything sounds like sticks and branches and planks. The whole song is wallpapered in dead leaves, as far as I'm concerned. They [the Kinks] touched on this same sort of thing later on, in "Shangri-La" and "Lavender Hill," but it was more mannered, a bit more ponderous.

Damn, I wish I'd written this song. I'll probably spend all my life trying to. It's such a huge ghost; my entire songwriting career has

been trying to exorcise it.

—Mac Randall

Bill Janovitz of Buffalo Tom
"JOHNSBURG, ILLINOIS"

BY TOM WAITS

This song, from *Swordfishtrombones*, is a beautiful piano sketch, just under two minutes long, and it's got a classic, Tin Pan Alley feel amidst all the noisier stuff on that record. Also, it seems to be about his wife and where she's from, so it's very personal in its detail. It's so short, but the impact is that much stronger as a result.

It's difficult to load a song with personal detail and still pull off some sense of universality. But as Waits talks about where she grew up—"on a farm there ... outside McHenry in Johnsburg, Illinois"—I get a real feeling for the place, even though I've never been there. It also makes me think about how my wife and I go to where she grew up—even though I'm talking about New Jersey as opposed to Illinois.

I read a book about Waits once, so I knew his wife came from the Chicago area, which is why I presume this is about her. And even if he's in character on a lot of songs on that record, I think his own personality is very much in evidence on this song: He really lets his guard down—which is another great thing about it. You have a lot of confessional singer-songwriters who are trying to convey therapeutic stuff; they're in pain, and it's all about me, me, me. But the trick to doing that is basically what your creative writing teacher taught you in high school: You don't tell, you show. Waits does this a couple of different times. At one point he says, "There's a place on my arm where I've written her name next to mine." He says that as opposed to, "I'm in love with this woman and it makes me feel really lonely because we're apart, etc." He just gives a couple of hardcore images—very simple ones, but they strike home. He shows, rather than tells.—Dev Sherlock

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**BY
ROBERT L. DOERSCHUK**

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BY
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"I grew up in a family of snake handlers," says Robert Sledge. His expression is solemn; his eyes search ours for reaction. We stare back, a bit warily. "What kinds of snakes?" "Rattlers. I'd let 'em crawl all over me. Never got bit. My dad showed me how to do it. Every Sunday we'd go down to the church in the holler ..."

And so on. As Ben Folds Five's bassist reminisces about his hair-raising childhood, we catch a glimpse of Folds, in the shadows behind his beat-up Steinway. Apparently he's heard this tale before, or something very much like it. He listens quietly, nodding now and then, the picture of sympathy. Then, when Sledge leaves the room, he motions us over.

"Don't believe a word of it," he whispers. "It's all bullshit."

Let's make this scene a bit more vivid. Technically, we're standing in Folds' home studio, the place where the three-piece Five cut their new album for Sony/550, *Whatever and Ever Amen*. Only problem is, there isn't anything that looks like a studio here. What we've got is a tiny living room, gloomy behind drawn tattered curtains and dominated by the battered, brown grand piano. One door opens to the yard, a patch of mud and

grass dug up by dogs and leading to a ditch that borders the street. Another door points to the rest of the house: an even dimmer kitchen decorated with open bags of chips and low-budget musical gadgets; Ben's bedroom; a windowless chamber nearly filled by a tired-looking couch, a bare-bones pink Rendano drumkit, and a Steger & Sons upright piano whose abused appearance belies its massive sound.

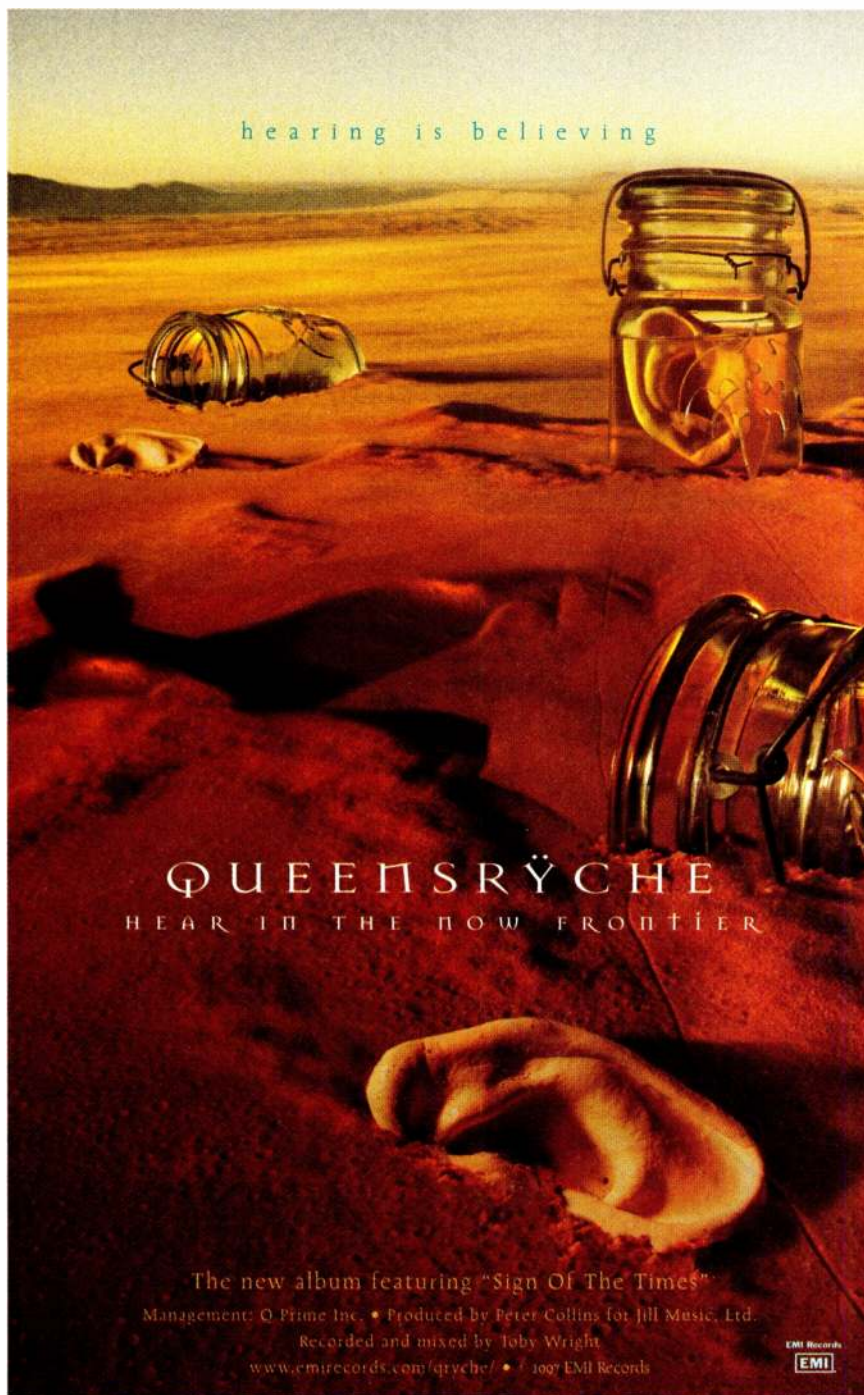
In other words, we're miles from the Record Plant, here in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where the band came together back in '93. Yet somehow, amidst the kind of mess that has horrified countless parents of musicians, they managed to create an album that boasts sophisticated yet catchy songs, executed with the right mix of freedom and precision. Rip-it-up rock, Randy Newmanesque soliloquies, jazzy waltzes, klezmer *schmaltz*: The band darts merrily across this landscape, sometimes changing direction on a single beat, always with the irreverent edge that's become one of their trademarks.

And still with no guitar in the mix. Lots of people made a big deal out of their instrumentation even at their first gig, at a neighborhood club called Local 605; they've made the point again and again since then, before college audiences in the States and rabid, lyric-mouthing fanatics in Japan, that all you need is a basic drumset, a distortion pedal for the bass, and a maniac at the piano to boot punk toward higher ground.

So we find ourselves in the spawning ground for Archers of Loaf, Superchunk, Sledge's old band Toxic Popsickle, and of course Ben Folds Five, with three guys still dazed by a week of doing press in Japan. We shove an old half-drunk Diet Coke out of the way, cast a last glance at the shag rug in case any of Robert's rattlers have slithered in, and get down to business.

Ben, you describe yourself as a rock & roll piano player. What exactly does that mean?

Folds: It's like what it takes to make someone a jazz musician. There's that famous scene in the Miles Davis autobiography about him being in the back of a cab with some other jazz player. They're get-



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tin' a blow job, eatin' fried chicken, and ridin' down the road. And that means they're gonna be better jazz players than someone who went to Berklee. It comes down to state of mind and lifestyle; you live your music. I'm not throwin' TV sets out of windows, but I've been playing in bands since I was little, and they're *rock* bands.

But you use a lot of jazz-inflected voic-

ings, and you play with chops you don't often hear from pure rock keyboardists.

Folds: Well, I guess I'm a *literate* rock player [laughs]. After all, unlike a lot of kinds of music, pop music should be popular. That's the rule. It has to get the point across, and then I can sneak in what I've got to say. There are definitely genre lines: Now you're playing country, now you're playing jazz. I don't dig that too much,

Guess what? Ben Folds Five isn't anyone's idea of a gear-happy band. The most space-age detail in their setup is a quarter-inch jack built into their Baldwin touring grand. We're talking low-tech gear and high-octane performance.

DARREN JESSEE plays a minimalist set of '67 Ludwig drums: 20" bass drum, floor tom, mounted tom, snare. For heads he favors coated Remo Ambassadors, and his cymbals are assorted Zildjians. "I'm not sure what type," the not terribly talkative drummer admits. His sticks are Vic Firth 5As with wood tips, and for brushes he uses "whatever's around the house. But they're wire, not plastic."

ROBERT SLEDGE played a Hamer Explorer bass on the band's first album, but he's switched since then to a new Fender Jazz with an old Sixties bridge. "I could have bought a Sixties bass," he explains, "but I was about to tour non-stop for four months, and I didn't want to worry about having a museum piece with a neck problem." His arsenal at home also includes an Epiphone Les Paul bass, a Maison P-Bass copy that he bought in Japan, and his first upright bass, a Carl Hoffner built in '65. His strings are Emo, medium light gauge, which he assaults with Dunlop picks. The killer fuzz sound that rattles teeth throughout *Whatever* comes courtesy of an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff pedal. "A lot of my sound comes from that going through a Trace Elliot amp into two full stacks of four 12s with an additional 15 inside. I'm probably going to switch to an

TAKE

5

SVT amp for the tour; it's a cooler sound."

BEN FOLDS batters his Baldwin 5'5" grand through vintage Helpinstill and Barcus-Berry pickups into a Marshall stack—"the reissued Plexi [the '59 SLP], the old Jimi Hendrix setup," he says. He does his own mix onstage with a Mackie

CR1202. "The Helpinstills are for the volume; you can't get piano volume any other way. But its image is very electric; it sounds like an old CP-70, like that Howard Jones shit. By just barely sneaking the Barcus-Berry into the top end, I can make it sound like a real piano." No MIDI? No synths? No way. "I did used to own a Clavinet and a Wuritzer," Folds admits, "but I loaned 'em out years ago and I never got 'em back. I guess they're gone."

Whatever and Ever Amen was recorded through two Mackie 1604 consoles onto two TASCAM DA-88s with an RC-848 remote locator. For mic preamps, they used a Neve 1073 and 1272, and a Telefunken V72 and V76. Vocals were recorded with a Neumann U48 for Ben, a Sony C-48 for Darren, and an AT 4033 for Robert. Ben's Steinway was miked with a Neumann U48, an AT 4033, and a Shure SM7, with the blasted-out Steger upright going through C-ducer pickups. Drum mics included a Shure SM7 and five SM57s, three Sony C-48s, and two AKG 460s; Sledge's acoustic bass was recorded through a C-ducer pickup and an AKG 460, and his Fender through an AM-7, an SM57, and a Stewart active DI. For vocals, they carry three Shure SM58s and plug 'em into the club P.A.

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but it exists. But rock music, to me, is the most versatile. I can play jazz chords, or I can take bits and pieces from even country music's play-on-words stuff, and it's still pop music. In jazz, if I play I-IV-V once, that shit is not jazz. Jazz has been gilded into this classic thing that you can't touch. There *was* a time when jazz was still moving. I could have been some crazy motherfucker in Charlie Parker's band, and if I was doing what I was supposed to do, and I had won their trust, and I was kickin' ass and rockin', and all of a sudden I started playing these three-note, I-III-V chords, or even if I started playing fuckin' "Louie, Louie" behind him, that might have been cool with him. There was a certain amount of rebellion in jazz at that time, so that would have been understood. But now it's like *[in pontifical tones]*, "The rules of jazz are as follows ..." I never was interested in learning the rules.

One reason you're able to voice your chords as richly as you do is that you're not

playing leftover notes in competition with a guitarist. Do you feel harmonically freer now than you did in more guitar-oriented bands?

Folds: I've never played with a guitar player as a piano player, but with this band I've come to realize that the parts sound better if I play more ... I don't want to say *wrong* notes, but notes that are around the part. If I play this cleanly *[plays intro piano riff from opening cut of Whatever, "Kate"]*, that's okay, but it's better to do this *[plays louder, with fingers pushed back to fallboard and heels of hands dropping clustered "bombs" on white keys]*. With a guitar player, it just becomes a question of playing parts, and that takes the energy out of it.

Yet you do play parts. On "Fair," for example, the bass sustains a single note through most of the song, the bass drum plays a specific part, and piano chords dress that up.

Sledge: We just wanted to do some-

thing totally obvious. You have to know exactly what you're playing in terms of notes, but then you turn your brain off. When Ben plays clusters of "wrong" notes, I have to do that too; I have to over-play, because there's so much velocity on the piano. I mean, my bridge is bent down. If I played that hard with a guitar band, it'd be ridiculous.

What was the toughest song to work out on the new album?

Jesse: "Evaporated," the last song on the record. Its simplicity was a killer.

The open fifth that plays throughout most of "Evaporated" built the idea of simplicity into the foundation of the tune. So why did you drop in that one diminished chord, right before you sing "Now I poured my heart out"?

Folds: I wanted to upset it for a second. There's a scene change, a major voice change, in the lyric, and I didn't want to just fall into it.

So the lyric guided you there.

Folds: It always does.

Do you talk about the lyrics before rehearsing a new tune?

Sledge: We try to ask Ben, but he doesn't answer.

Folds: We know each other well enough that I don't have to tell them what the lyrics are. I don't have to say, "This is a song about a clown," and they have to go *[plays a raucous circus riff]*. It's more like, "This is the climax of what I'm talking about." I wouldn't call it mind-reading, but even though Darren didn't know that the lyric in "Fair" is gonna be the word "pain," when we were playing it we arrived at that place and played the same thing, and it seemed like the right thing to do. That kind of stuff is all over the album.

That's why you change your accompaniment so dramatically from section to section on most of your songs.

Folds: Because I think lyrically. Even if I don't have the lyrics, I know it's gonna be tension-release-tension, and I play to suit that. The way this record went down, I didn't have all the words at the time we played the parts, but I knew how the words would feel.

You also kick the bass line in and out of distortion a lot to emphasize what you call "scene changes."

Sledge: Yeah. I definitely like the dis-

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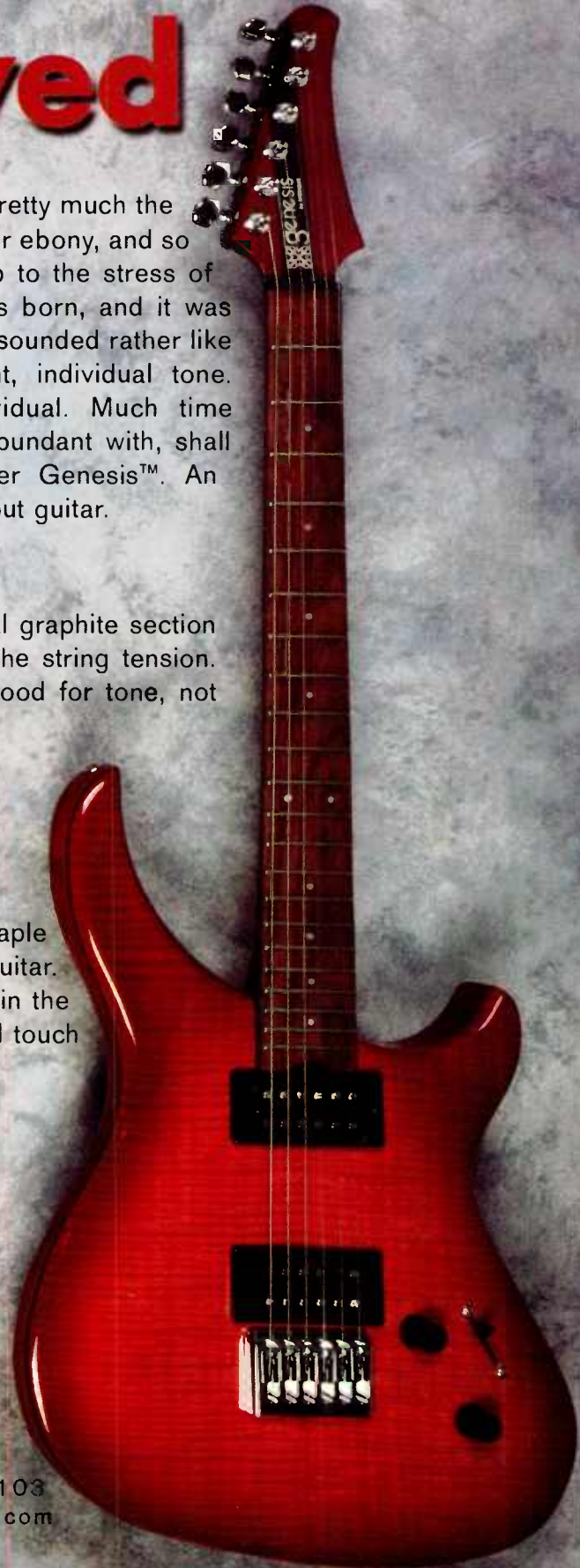
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tortion pedal, but if I leave it on forever and then cut it off obviously, in a real indelicate way, it's a hell of a release. And it's like comic relief when I come out of those parts. It just sounds funny, like you're wasted: You're lying there on the ground after running a marathon, and you get up, smile for the camera, and fall back down.

The piano sound, on the other hand, is kept pretty straight.

Folds: I want what I hear in my head to come out when I play it. We tried recording the piano more like it's played live, which is through the Marshall amps, but the house didn't allow it. There was an irreversible effect, because we mixed the signal from the Helpinstill and Barcus-Berry pickups that were inside the piano, sent that into an amplifier, and it was blowing across the room. It created this quick delay that we couldn't cut off, and there was nowhere else to record it because the guys were taking up the other two rooms. So I was like, okay, we'll do it



with two mics on the piano.

What's the worst thing you've ever done to a piano onstage?

Jessee: I spit gum into it once. I have this bad habit of going onstage without

taking my gum out. So as I started singing, I was trying to spit it out ...

Folds: Were you trying to hit me with it?

Jessee: No, I was just trying to get rid

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of it, off the side of the stage. But I guess I was playing pretty hard, and I didn't realize how hard I actually spit it.

Folds: It flew into the strings ...

Jessee: I was afraid it was gonna fall down into the strings and start getting nasty.

When you stand up and play as hard as you do, how does that affect your hands?

Folds: I'm pretty lucky. There's been too many musicians who've gotten carpal tunnel or some kind of muscular infirmity. When we first go out on tour, I have two weeks of ouch, and then I'm okay.

Sledge: The desire to play has to outweigh the fear of pain.

Folds: The thing with the piano is, since it's not by nature an aggressive instrument when you put it next to a fuzz bass, I do have to play hard. When I hit it, I'm putting all of my 140 pounds into it. That's because part of our hook when we began playing was that we're the piano band that rocks. The idea was to be a piano trio that was also a power trio, so

we kind of overcompensate with piano and bass guitar to keep up with the energy of guitar bands. You have to exaggerate the point before it gets lost.

Was there any synth on the album?

Folds: Yeah, in "Dwarf" ["One Angry Dwarf & 200 Solemn Faces"]. I go [plays fast alternate-hand octave passage], and the [Hohner] Clavinet part comes in. At that point, this guy who directed our video came in with a bunch of space-sound keyboards, like old vintage Moog stuff, and put down eight tracks of crazy shit. The idea was to freak out; Beck does that great. But by the time we got to mix, we were back in the headspace of, "Let's make the band sound like a band."

Why don't you use synths more often?

Folds: I don't hear things that way. It's a matter of identity for the band. You have to look at what you have to offer, and I don't think anybody in this band thinks of that as our offering to the musical gods.

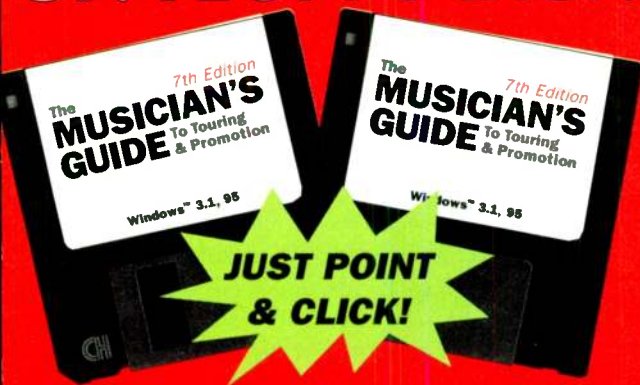
Sledge: Also, we spend so much energy being dynamic on our instruments and

getting sounds nobody thought they could make. I didn't even have those sounds in my vocabulary before I started playing with this band. To go from this little tiny part to the loudest fuckin' part in the world and try to make that work in context, and to do it in the right place—and all of a sudden you bring in this little device where you go, "Okay, I want it to be more dynamic here ..." [pantomimes turning a dial up and down], that's kind of anticlimactic.

You've said that you returned to your home state of North Carolina to escape the "professionalism" of the music scenes you had encountered in Nashville and New York. What did you mean by that?

Folds: It was this dentist-appointment mentality, this gravity, around the music centers. You can find good musicians, but there's something jaded about them, like, "Man, it's all about the money." Most musicians are idiots, but these guys have learned how to schedule their time and get money for it, which is a drag. Shit can't

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happen when you've planned everything out by the moment. It's not just us being cool when we say we're gonna rehearse at twelve one day and we end up rehearsing at eight that night. Robert might get pissed off because my left hand is too loud, but he's gonna let things happen because he's a cosmic musician rather than a paid-by-the-hour guy. I don't think these guys were like, "When I grow up, I wanna play sessions."

Did you have a conscious strategy for finding a record deal for Ben Folds Five?

Folds: No. We didn't make a demo tape, on purpose. I had an allergic reaction to making demo tapes while I was in Nashville; I couldn't do it anymore without throwing up. So when we got together as a band, the thing was, *no demo tapes*. All these books that tell you how to get your fucking demo tape together are evil. The thing is, you play music, so play music. You can sell it if you want to, but you play it as an offering for people to listen to, not to further yourself. The energy behind making a demo tape is, to me, so obviously wrong; bands should just make tapes they're planning to sell or give away.

Sledge: And it makes no economic sense to make demo tapes if you don't have much money. Why spend \$1,700 for recording time to never get any money back unless you get a publishing deal? Why not just make a single and put that out? It takes a lot more guts to do that than to get with some music industry creep who won't even give you his real opinion.

But if you accept the purity of one's motivation, a demo tape and the media will plug you into more of an audience to entertain with your music.

Folds: My distinction is real subtle. The idea of making a demo to get your stuff across is, at least to me, not musical. It feels like a résumé, like you're looking for someone's approval, whereas if I go, "It'd be really cool if we could make a record," that's different.

Even though functionally that record is no different than a demo.

Folds: I'm talking about the energy behind it. There's a certain amount of karmic energy behind the fact that when we made our single, we didn't care what

someone's approval meant. Caroline knew they wanted to acquire the single. You go out and play gigs, and create interest that way; then you've got something to sell. It's much more exciting to discover a band that way than to get something in the mail anyway.

A lot of kids today feel that the coolest musicians belonged to their parents' generation. As someone who gets compared a lot with Elton John and Billy Joel, how do you feel about that?

Folds: That's strong in the psyche of pop music right now. In a way, I fall into a division where I'm almost in either camp. I grew up seeing VH1, and it was like, "Fuck this if I have to see one more time that Jimi Hendrix was amazing and we have nobody!" I mean, all this cool stuff, and ... we got Madonna? So we begin to trash things: "We've got this beautiful lamp. Maybe we'll put it over here—but first I'll beat the fuck out of it! Yeah, now it's lookin' good." That's what we do: We take classic song form and bash it around in a way that, if we had done it in 1975, which everyone says we're ripping off, the producer would have been like, "First of all, you're rushing. The bass is way too busy. And the song! Think about the song!"

As musicians, you respect the work that was done before, but in the climate of cultural tyranny by boomers, you have to fight it too.

Folds: Definitely, yes. When we were playing punk clubs, and we'd get booked into a place like the Iron Horse in Massachusetts, where there was a piano and everybody expected us to be a piano band, my intention was to fuckin' break the piano. It's psychological: "I know that Blind Motherfucker So-and-So was here last night, and he played really nice chords, but that's not what we do." It's like trying to be understood for what you do, and everybody there is like, "I'd rather be at home, listening to my Billy Joel album. But this is louder."

But some of that audience will go home thinking, "When Ben Folds trashed that piano, it reminded me of Jimi at Monterey."

Folds: Yeah, you can't win [laughs]. But at least you know you're at the source.



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ROCKIN' THE TAXMAN

A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING TAX AUDITS

The most important music fan in America is one you don't really want to meet backstage: the Internal Revenue Service. Sure, the IRS asks for your autograph every year, which (one hopes) you provide at the bottom of a filled-out Form 1040. But that's not all; it also likes to review one percent of the nation's musical acts every year, and these reviews can strongly affect careers.

Even prominent music figures—people like Willie Nelson, Liberace, George M. Brown of Kool and the Gang, and classical conductor/composer Pierre Boulez—have flubbed their interviews with the IRS. So do you have

to be famous to be audited? Of course not. A more important question is, how do you impress interviewers enough to get a good write-up?

The answer: anticipate the questions they will ask. That way, you'll be prepared to back up your crisp vocals with multitrack documentation. Fortunately, the IRS has published a music industry handbook to guide its auditors, who may be tone deaf or unaware of how the music business works. Its forty pages—covering such topics as managers, producers, publishers, and music videos—make for useful reading. Here we'll look mostly at what the IRS wants to ask live performers and songwriters.

BY PETER DESMOND ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM MCCAULEY



LIVE PERFORMERS

The IRS fanzine distinguishes between "stars" and other performers. It concedes that stars' records are usually pretty good, since they have teams of business managers, road managers, and booking agents working for them. The authors grudgingly admit that even cash payments tend to be properly accounted for and included in the stars' gross incomes.

Even so, the guide urges auditors to check the performers' contracts and itineraries against the income reported on their returns. Noting that road managers often receive payment in cash after a performance and use it to pay "on the road" expenses, the authors tell auditors to "be alert to these practices to ensure that income and deductions have been properly claimed." They even recommend reading *Billboard* to check out concert grosses.

The fanzine's top advice? Interview the stars themselves, if at all possible. Getting a good overview of the way the performers work will help examiners "to focus in on primary areas of audit potential." This, of course, is a bureaucratic euphemism for "to hit the jackpot."

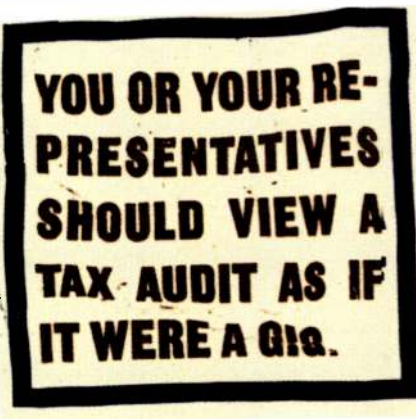
Fortunately, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights guarantees stars and others the right not to go to an examination in person but instead to be represented by a tax professional who knows the taxpayer's business. As a result, you don't even have to plan to be out of town on the day of the audit.

What about the boys (and gals) in the band? The manual's authors observe that musicians are devoted to their art, not to keeping records, although "this doesn't appear to be due to an intent to cheat or defraud the Government." Faint praise, perhaps. But they go on to reveal that, after spending hours and hours going through musicians' messy records, examiners often find that unclaimed expenses offset income and result in "minimal deficiencies."

This is truly good news for the cash-strapped musician who gets stage fright when it's time to perform the income tax return. There's a reason you're a starving artist, and it's because you pour most of your money back into your business. The fanzine acknowledges this fact: "Vast sums are spent for travel, clothes, instruments, bands, buses, motels, and uniforms. There

are periods of feast and famine." So step right out onstage; not playing that gig on April 15 greatly increases your chance of an audit.

Suppose you file and you're audited anyway. What will the examiners look for? Most obviously, they will check to see that you have included all the income that was reported on W-2 or 1099 forms. (This information is sent to the IRS as well as to you.) The fanzine also urges interviewers



to get information from performers' booking agencies and unions, which always cooperate with the IRS. Your return had better reflect those earnings.

Next comes the issue of one-night stands at clubs, as well as concert sales of CDs, tapes, and T-shirts, all of which tend to be cash transactions. Auditors will probe for unreported income, so be prepared. They may even demand twelve months' worth of bank statements and require you to explain every deposit. Remember that lying to the IRS on your tax return is a crime, while sloppy reporting is merely negligence. But, hey, why be downbeat? Let's check out the next act.

SONGWriters

A songwriter's audit should be a breeze, right? You show up at the IRS office at 12:30 and hand the examiner your royalty statements from your publisher—BMI, ASCAP, or SESAC. He checks the figures against what you've reported on your Schedule C (Profit or Loss from Business) and asks about a few of your expenses. You hand him receipts and canceled checks, which add up fine.

The auditor leans back in his chair and says, "I like music. Bought a Hammond

organ last Christmas, but I don't use it much anymore." You cluck sympathetically and urge him to practice every day, even if only for half an hour. At 1:30 he walks you to the door and shakes your hand. The return has passed inspection; you can go eat lunch with barely concealed glee.

If only it were always that simple. The IRS fanzine tells examiners to probe a bit more deeply. Its authors recommend asking songwriters for copies of contracts with publishers and collaborators, as well as any employment contracts. They want the auditor to look at all agreements with performing rights societies. "Show what arrangements are made for royalty advances and how they were handled on the return," the manual urges. Auditors are to ask if you sold any copyrights, if you belong to any unions, and if you freelanced as a studio musician.

In fact, you'd better eat a good lunch *before* the audit, because the examiner may be prepped to look closely at expenses too. "This area usually contains numerous issues," the 'zine advises. Three deserve some discussion: vacation homes, travel expenses, and home studio expense.

The manual notes dryly that "vacation homes, etc., are used by songwriters as a retreat and a place to think. This is not allowable as an ordinary and necessary expense." Condolences if you have a cottage on Martha's Vineyard where you recharge your artistic batteries.

No cottage? Then be prepared to explain any deductions you took for travel. Here the issue is that "travel expenses are not properly substantiated and, in many cases, include personal expenses." This would eliminate low-budget trips to Montauk, where you rent a motel room offseason and croon in the dunes for inspiration.

Of course, if you're a singer/songwriter on tour, the business nature of your travel expenses is obvious. (And you probably *wish* you had a personal life.) Documentation is still important, though. You must be able to prove your lodging expenses with receipts and canceled checks or charge card statements. If you're driving from gig to gig, log your car mileage every day; it just takes a minute, and you'll be able to write off 31 cents per mile. The really good news is that you don't need to co

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lect and keep any food receipts: The IRS permits you to deduct a per-diem amount for meals for each day you travel away from home overnight on business.

The trickiest deduction is for a home studio. This is an area in your home which you use regularly for work. It can be a whole room or part of one, but you can't use it for any other purpose than work. Not only that, it must be your principal place of business. Finally, you must have some net earnings from your work before you can deduct your studio expenses. In other words, if your business is running at a loss, you can't increase the loss by writing off a share of your rent and utilities.

What is your principal place of business? It depends on the facts and circumstances of your musical career. If you're a performer, you can probably forget about this deduction. The IRS auditor will say that your essential money-making function is to stand onstage in your flannel shirt, play your three chords, and incite the crowd to mayhem and moshing. After all, that's how you earn the bulk of your money. It doesn't matter that you spend more time at home practicing than you do at clubs performing. Case closed. (And the auditor won't let you deduct the shirt, either; it's suitable for ordinary street wear.)

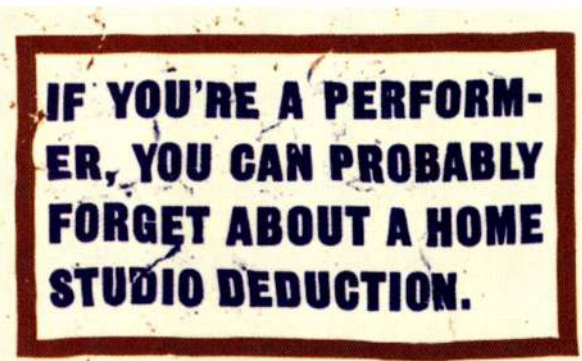
The situation is different if you write songs at home and have a stream of income from royalties. Now you can argue that the home studio is the principal place of your songwriting business, and that you're entitled to write off a portion of your housing expenses, at least up to the extent of your earnings. If you also earn money as a performer or studio musician, it may be wise to file *two* Schedule Cs instead of one, especially if you earn 51% or more of your money outside your home. You'll have to reasonably allocate your other musical expenses between these two separate occupations. (This is just an opinion; for tax advice, consult your tax professional.)

THE COMMAND PERFORMANCE

You or your representative should view the audit as a gig. Don't bring in a shoebox full of jumbled receipts; this will just tick off your audience of one. *Do* organize the paperwork beforehand, and *do* plan to

educate the auditor. She may have read the IRS fanzine, but she probably hasn't dealt a lot with the music industry.

If a home studio deduction is the issue, submit snapshots of your setup. It wouldn't hurt to also bring in some copies of *Musician* and show her the color photographs of other artists' home studios. Besides being visually striking, these shots



suggest that home studios are an ordinary and necessary business expense, especially if you produce your own tapes. (And it's great proof that your subscription to *Musician* is deductible.)

Photocopies of court cases are totally cool. Do you teach music lessons at home? In a 1996 case (TC Memo 1996-110), a piano teacher named Lois Hewett got a home office deduction for the space occupied by her nine-foot Steinway grand. (Your tax professional may have tax law on a CD-ROM disk; otherwise, you can find cases at your local law library.)

Say you buy expensive equipment but don't have much income to show for your business. Music promoter Clarence Leaphart (TC Memo 1993-502) ran losses of \$10,000 a year for three years. Even without a lawyer, he was able to convince the judge that he sincerely intended to make a profit, and that was enough to justify the red ink.

If you think that's gutsy, check out the case of David Krebs, a lawyer and music promoter, and his wife, ex-bunny and aspiring singer Cheryl Krebs (TC Memo 1992-154). In a failed effort to launch her musical career, they wrote of \$58,000 in one year and \$80,000 in the next. But since the couple had conducted their disaster in a businesslike manner, the judge approved.

Classical musicians can be equally gutsy ... *cat-gutsy*, you might say. Take Brian

Liddle (3rd Circuit, 9/8/95), who bought a seventeenth-century Ruggeri bass viol and had the nerve to depreciate it, even though it had been appreciating for three hundred years. The court okayed his deduction. Violinists Richard and Fiona Simon (2nd Circuit, 10/13/95) depreciated their much-appreciated nineteenth-century bows. Again, the judge nodded approval.

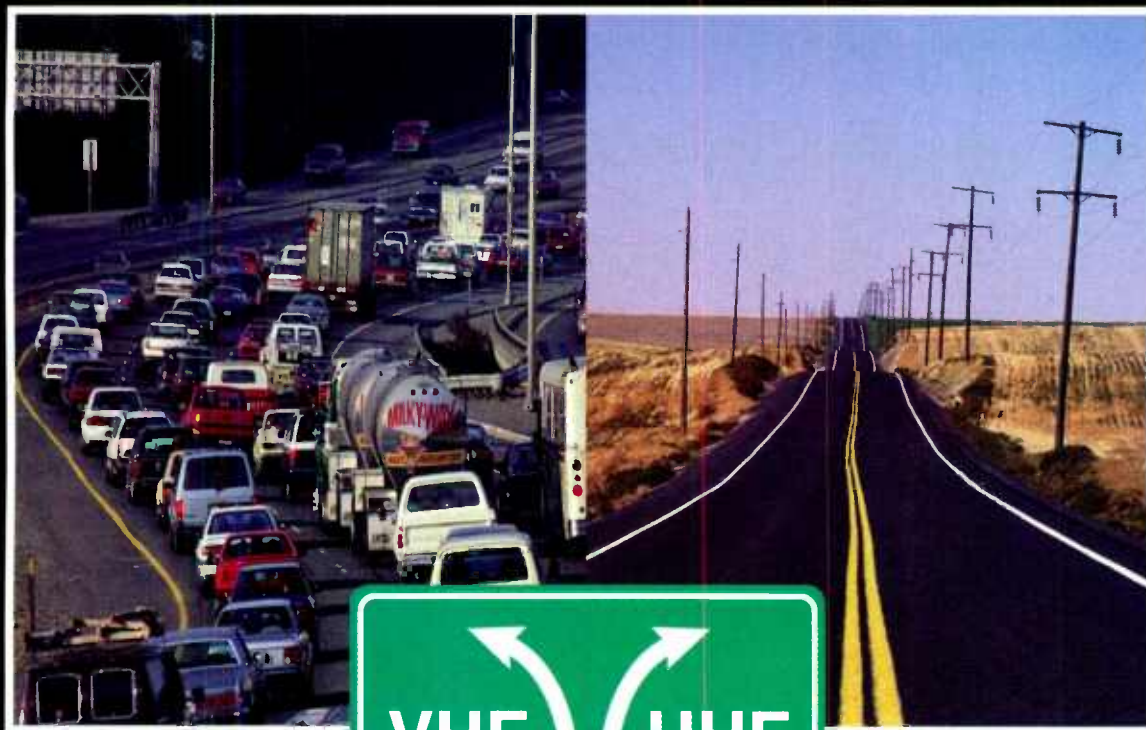
Sure, taxpayers also lose in court. The George Kukes (TC Memo 1996-363), who came up with a bright idea for a keyboard instruction system with flexible plans. For eight years he appears to have done nothing to produce or promote his vaporware while writing off more than \$65,000 in expenses against zero income. The court put an end to this. Moral: The IRS has the right to look at your records, and you have the responsibility to hustle if you're claiming business expenses.

CURTAIN CALL

Every musician likes good reviews. When the interviewer is the IRS, it's especially important that the review be favorable, even if no one but you will ever know about it. So do your homework beforehand. Sort your receipts, assemble all those income statements and contracts, and double-check your addition. If you're too rattled to perform solo, hire a professional to represent you. Taxes are one area where you definitely *don't* want to see your name and picture in the headlines.

Contributors: Peter H. Desmond (tax_homebre@delphi.com) is an enrolled agent authorized to represent taxpayers before the IRS. He hosts the tax forum on Delphi Internet Services and has written tax articles for *Writer's Digest*, *Self-Employed Professional*, and *American Artist*. To order a copy of the IRS audit guide, titled *Music Industry*, send a check for \$6.00, made out to the Superintendent of Documents, to the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402. Mention both the document title and stock number—048-004-02364-4 in your letter.

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fast folks

AKG Emotion Series 1

Low cost and high performance are AKG's aim when it comes to the Emotion series of microphones. As of now, the D770 (\$120), a dynamic cardioid for instruments and vocals, the D880 (\$130), a supercardioid for vocals, and the D880s (\$144), a D880 with an on/off switch, are the only members of the line, but more are expected later this year. All three feature a high-tolerance diaphragm, a two-way elastic suspension system that reduces handling noise, and neodymium magnet assemblies for higher output. The folks at AKG claim the Emotion mics are "startlingly accurate," so make sure you've got your chops together before gigging with them. okay? ▶ **AKG, c/o Harman Pro North America, Air Park Business Center 12, 1449 Donelson Pike, Nashville, TN 37217; voice (615) 399-2199, fax (615) 367-9046.**



Remo Mondo Drums 2

Now *this* is alternative percussion: a drum kit designed to respond to the swat of a stick but equally capable of being played solely with hands. Featuring Acousticon drum shells, special molded bearing edges, and synthetic heads that duplicate the feel (but not the maintenance trouble) of calfskin, Remo's Mondo drums are both highly evolved and supremely adaptable. How do they sound? Tribal, man. Prices range from \$2650 for a five-piece kit to \$4150 for a nine-piece kit (pictured). ▶ **Remo, 28101 Industrial Dr., Valencia, CA 91355; voice (805) 294-5600,**



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ward

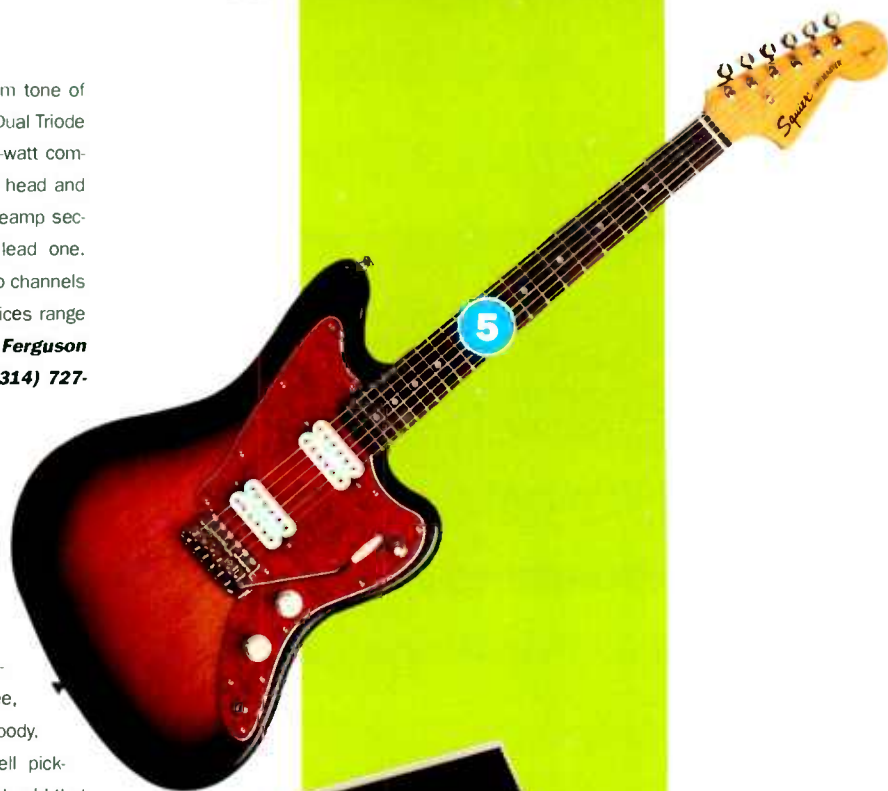


4 Crate GXT 100

For those indecisive amp buyers vacillating between the warm tone of tubes and the reliability of transistors, Crate's new line of GXT Dual Triode amps are worth a look. The GXT series consists of four 100-watt combos—in 1x12, 2x10, 2x12, and 4x10 configurations—plus a head and 4x12 cabinet. All models feature two 12AX7 triodes in the preamp section, enhancing the tone of both channels, not just the lead one. Additional switching, boosting gain and mids, makes those two channels feel like four. And the speakers are Celestions, of course. Prices range from \$550 to \$750. ▶ **Crate, c/o St. Louis Music, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63133; voice (314) 727-4512, fax (314) 727-8929.**

5 Squier Vista Jagmaster

It was inevitable, wasn't it? One day Fender just had to start making weird hybrids of its old designs. The trend started with the ultra-bizarre Jag-Stang, and continues under the Squier name with the Vista Jagmaster (\$699 with gig bag). Part of a new affordable Vista series that features four additional models, the Jagmaster, as you can no doubt plainly see, crosses a Jaguar with a Jazzmaster; it features a basswood body, maple neck with 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, tortoise-shell pickguard, and two humbuckers. What next, the Corocaster? (Or should that be the Stratonado?) ▶ **Squier, c/o Fender Musical Instruments, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85258; voice (602) 593-9690, fax (602) 596-1384.**



6 Morley Echo-Plus

Way back in the Seventies, Morley made a well-respected echo/chorus/vibrato pedal called, strangely enough, the Echo Chorus Vibrato (or ECV for short). Reviving the idea but updating the circuitry, they've come up with the Echo-Plus (\$250). The box comes equipped with two basic modes, echo (300 milliseconds) and chorus; in echo mode, the foot control changes the signal mix, while in chorus mode, it alters speed from standard chorus to vibrato. Analog effects with real-time controls—what a concept. ▶ **Morley, 185 Detroit St., Cary, IL 60013; voice (847) 639-4646, fax (847) 639-4723.**



Better Editing Through Windows

by **howard massey**

Computers are not just for geeks. I ought to know—I own seven of 'em, and I've never been spotted wearing a pocket protector. Actually, software packages like Sonic Foundry's Sound Forge and Steinberg's WaveLab provide a compelling argument for musicians of every genre to take the plunge. They're two of the finest audio editors available anywhere, for any system, at any price—but they both happen to be written for Windows/Intel computers. (Pentium systems with 16+ meg of RAM,

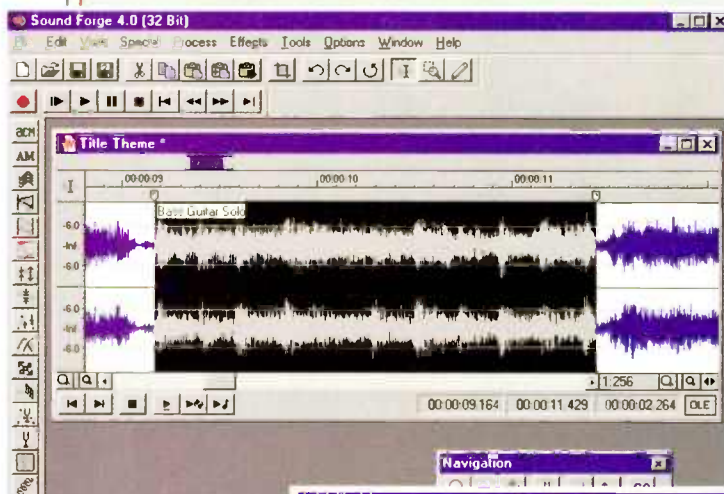
Steinberg and Sonic Foundry help you slice and dice your audio

a large and fast hard drive, and a 16-bit sound card are recommended.) This is particularly significant since, just a few years ago, the Mac ruled the roost among musicians—in fact, there were no audio editors worth mentioning for Wintel machines. Clearly, the times have changed—not just for the businessman needing a faster, sharper-looking spreadsheet, but also for the musician looking to improve his or her recordings.

So what do these programs actually do? If the phrase “non-linear random access digital audio editing” brings a tear to your eye (or a lump to your throat), you'll know what we're talking about. If not, just understand that these software packages let you take any kind of recording, store it on a hard disk, play it back through your PC's sound card, and then view, preview, review, cut, copy, paste, reverse, inverse, mix, merge, twiddle, tweak, slice, dice, spindle, fold, and mutilate your audio in any way imaginable. Using your computer's Pentium chip as the engine, they can provide as much signal processing as most dedicated multieffects

boxes. They also allow you to create original recordings, thus turning your PC into a hard disk recorder, optimizing the resulting data for CD mastering or for Internet or multimedia CD-ROM distribution. The list price for this magic? \$495 for Sound Forge, and \$499 for WaveLab.

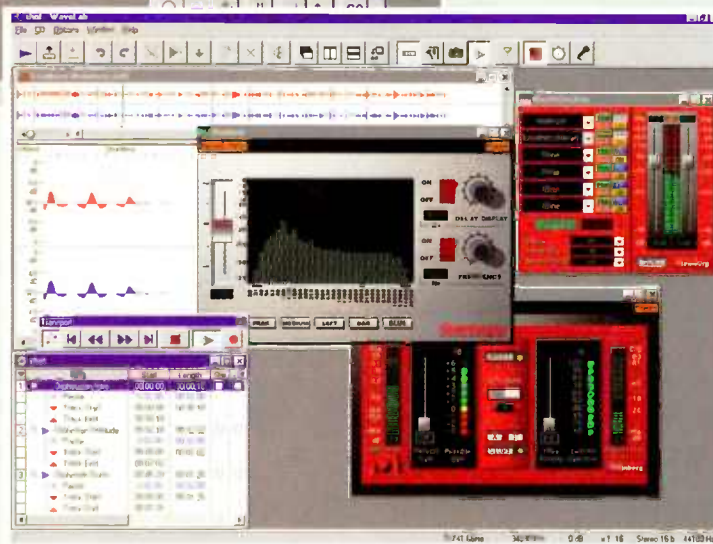
The two programs take a similar approach overall. Both use all the real estate on your computer screen to provide a series of tool icons (including tape recorder-like transport controls) as well as a graphic display of loaded audio files that show the by-now-familiar time vs. amplitude view. Zoom



Processing time (Normalize) 0.072 seconds

▲
Sonic Foundry's Sound Forge catches a few waves

▶
Steinberg's WaveLab waxes up the virtual board



controls enable you to see as much or as little of the wave as required. Standard mouse dragging techniques are then used to mark and select the area of the file you want to edit. (Markers can also be placed on the fly during playback.) Because only small pieces of the file are loaded into memory for playback as needed, files of any length can be opened and displayed. An important advantage of using a computer-based audio editor is that virtually all edits are non-destructive; you're only altering pointers to data in the file, not the file itself. The results of your edits are stored in an invisible temporary file (each undo/redo simply recalls a different temp file), which allows you to freely undo or redo any number of layers, limited only by the capacity of your system's hard drive.

Both programs also go well beyond basic editing functions. For example, they provide the ability to speed up or slow down a section of audio without any pitch change—or the converse, altering the tuning of a section of audio without changing the tempo. If you're coming from the world of analog recording, this feature alone is nothing short of miraculous. Other functions let you perform controlled fade-ins, fade-outs, and crossfades, and to apply digital EQ and dynamics processing, as well as something called normalization, where the overall amplitude of the sound is adjusted until peaks reach a certain level.

With each program you can also apply multieffects, such as reverb, chorus, and echo; factory presets are provided, and you can also store your own custom settings. It's in this area that the two programs part ways. Sound Forge uses a series of standard Windows dialog boxes to present editable effects parameters, adjusted by moving onscreen faders and by incrementing, decrementing, or "spinning" value boxes; exact values can be directly typed in as well. In contrast, WaveLab uses a "Master Section" that contains snazzy 3-D graphic boxes, each of which emulates the front panel of a dedicated effects processor. To change effects parameters in WaveLab, you click on data increment/decrement buttons or grab hold of the corresponding onscreen data entry knob and turn it by dragging the mouse up or down. The approach you take is largely a matter of personal taste; while I appreciated WaveLab's advanced graphics, I found myself missing the direct data entry methods offered by Sound Forge's more mundane dialogs. On the other hand, WaveLab's onscreen processors have a handy Clip LED (lacking in Sound Forge, though its onscreen faders continuously show output levels), and the program's "Master Section" concept enables up to six effects to be ganged together in a serial configuration for non-destructive real-time multiple processing.

Neither program's reverbs, delays, and choruses will make you want to ditch that Lexicon or TC unit in your rack, but both are perfectly serviceable, especially for music that will be delivered via the Internet or CD-ROM. But it's through plug-ins (small applications, or "applets," that operate within another program) that both deliver audio processing that goes well beyond the norm. Sound Forge 4.0a works with the full range of Microsoft ActiveX plug-ins, while the current version of WaveLab (1.5) only supports proprietary plug-ins. (The upcoming version 1.6 is expected to include ActiveX support.)



The Grungelizer plug-in for WaveLab: gnarly, dude!

Available WaveLab plug-ins (at \$399 each) include Declicker, Denoiser (noise reduction), and Loudness Maximizer modules, as well as one called Spectralizer, a sonic enhancer that boosts second- and third-order harmonics, adding a kind of sheen to the sound; this tends to work best on percussion and vocal tracks. A number of free WaveLab plug-ins come with the program, including the wonderfully named Grungelizer, which uses onscreen retro knobs and switches (circa 1940 army surplus) to degrade your recording in a number of fun ways, adding controlled amounts of vinyl surface crackle (at 78, 45, or 33 rpm), noise, distortion, megaphone-like EQ, and AC hum (switchable, for the fussiest among you, between 50 and 60Hz). The Grungelizer even includes a "Timeline" knob, with which you can dial in varying amounts of all of the above, making your pristine 1997 recording sound like it was made decades ago.

The ActiveX plug-ins supported by Sound Forge include

Sonic Foundry's noise reduction plug-in (\$249), which is particularly useful if you're working with analog tape recordings. Every bit as powerful as Digidesign's highly acclaimed DINR (written for Mac systems), it enables you to take an accurate "noise print" of the hiss and then selectively removes it, with a high-shelf filter utilized to restore any sparkle lost in the process. Their spectrum analysis plug-in (\$149) not only provides time vs. frequency graphs but, for all you budding forensic scientists out there, it's even capable of producing sonograms. Qsound's Qtools/SF plug-in (\$199) allows static positioning of mono sound files or expansion of stereo files. The Waves AudioTrack plug-in (\$300) provides a combination 4-band parametric equalizer/compressor/expander/noise gate, all in one integrated dialog. But take my advice and spring for the more expensive Waves



Native PowerPack (\$600). Its powerful and invaluable tools include a 10-band parametric equalizer, independent compressor and noise gate, and a stereo imager, as well as Waves' proprietary "TrueVerb" reverb processor. The package also includes Waves' popular L1-Ultramaximizer, a super-high-quality limiter that lets you squeeze extra level out of your digital recordings. This processing is especially important when downsampling audio files—that is, converting them to more compact, lower-resolution sampling rates for distribution on CD-ROM and over the Internet.

Both programs also offer batch conversion; it's built into WaveLab but you have to buy a \$199 Sonic Foundry plug-in to add this feature to Sound Forge. This lets you perform any number of processing functions in any order to any number of files. Suppose you record a bunch of backing vocal takes and you want to compress and equalize them all the same way before making a comp track. Without batch conversion, you'd have

to go set up and process each one individually—a tedious task that demands all your time and attention. With batch conversion, you do the setup just once, specify the files you want to process, and the program tells you how long it will take. Then you go have a long, relaxing cup of coffee, come back, and the job's done.

There are all sorts of unique features to each of these programs. While WaveLab is the simpler of the two (and that's not necessarily a drawback, since it makes for a shorter learning curve), it provides more in the way of user customization; for example, you can easily alter the colors or styles of any element in any window. WaveLab also has nifty tools, such as "nudge" kickers (these allow you to shift selected data one sample at a time) and a speaker tool for instant auditioning.

Sound Forge is a more complete and mature program, with more features and generally deeper editing control. For example, it provides for data transfers to and from vari-

ous samplers (including a sample looping window), as well as support for AVI video and fairly extensive MIDI implementation. One cool MIDI feature allows you to trigger playback of complete files or specified file regions via MIDI note-on or controller messages. This is useful if you use a MIDI sequencer that lacks digital audio capability and you want to play back various samples in sync. Sound Forge also offers a number of effects not provided by WaveLab (such as flanging/wah-wah, vibrato, and distortion), and even enables you to synthesize basic waveshapes or create complex ones with four-operator FM.

Decisions, decisions. The bottom line is that you can't go wrong with either program—and once you've opened up to the world of computer-based audio editing, you'll wonder how you ever got by without it.

Special thanks to Stacey Moran and Monty Schmidt at Sonic Foundry, and to Russ Jones and Steve Garth at Steinberg.

DW Details play a big role.

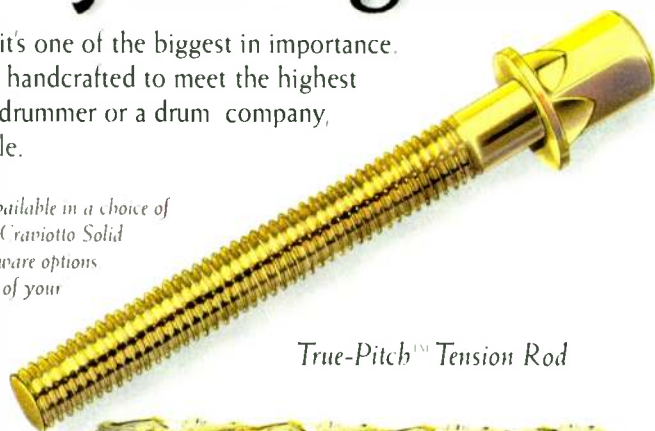
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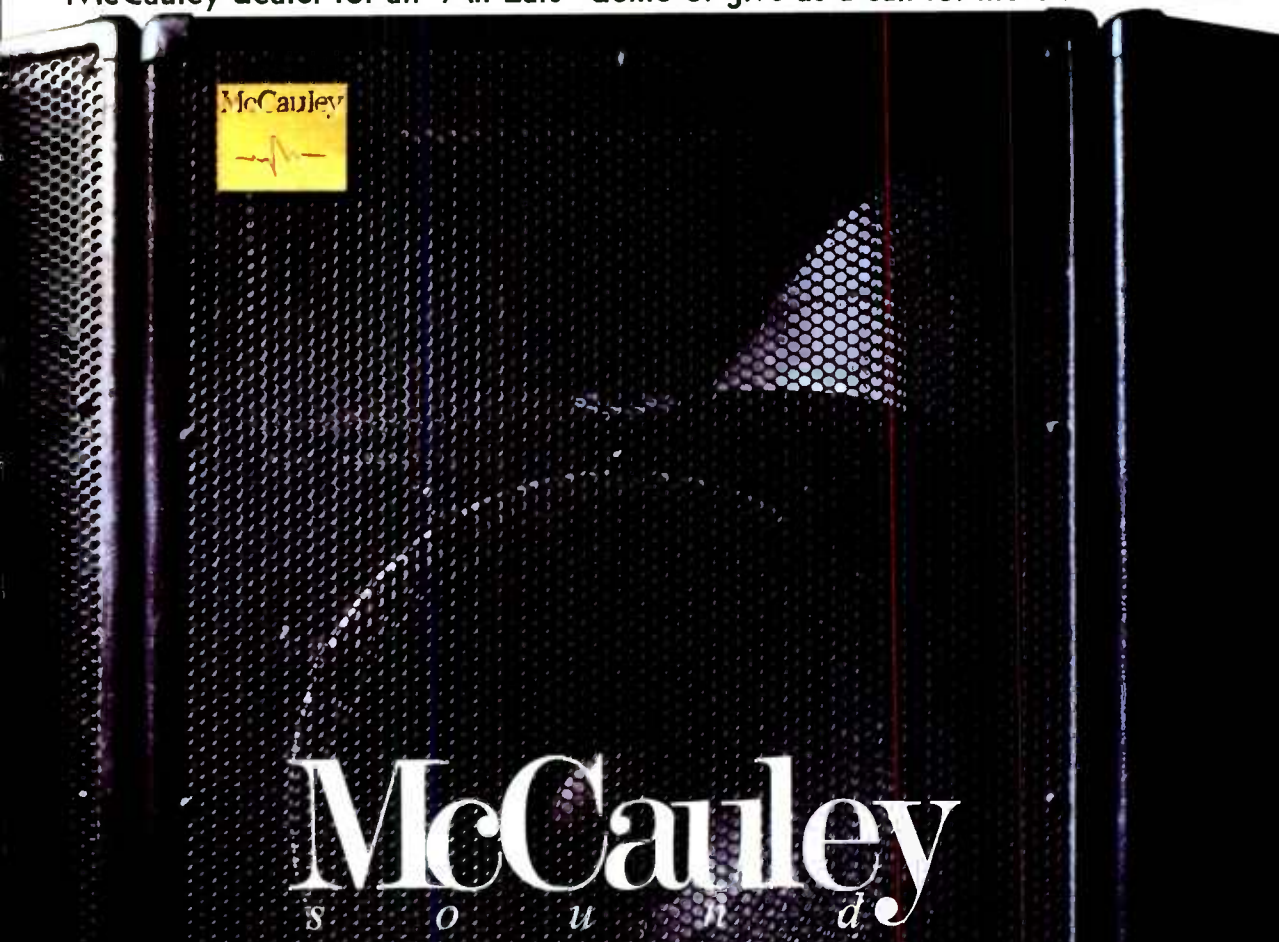
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home Studio

by matt ashare

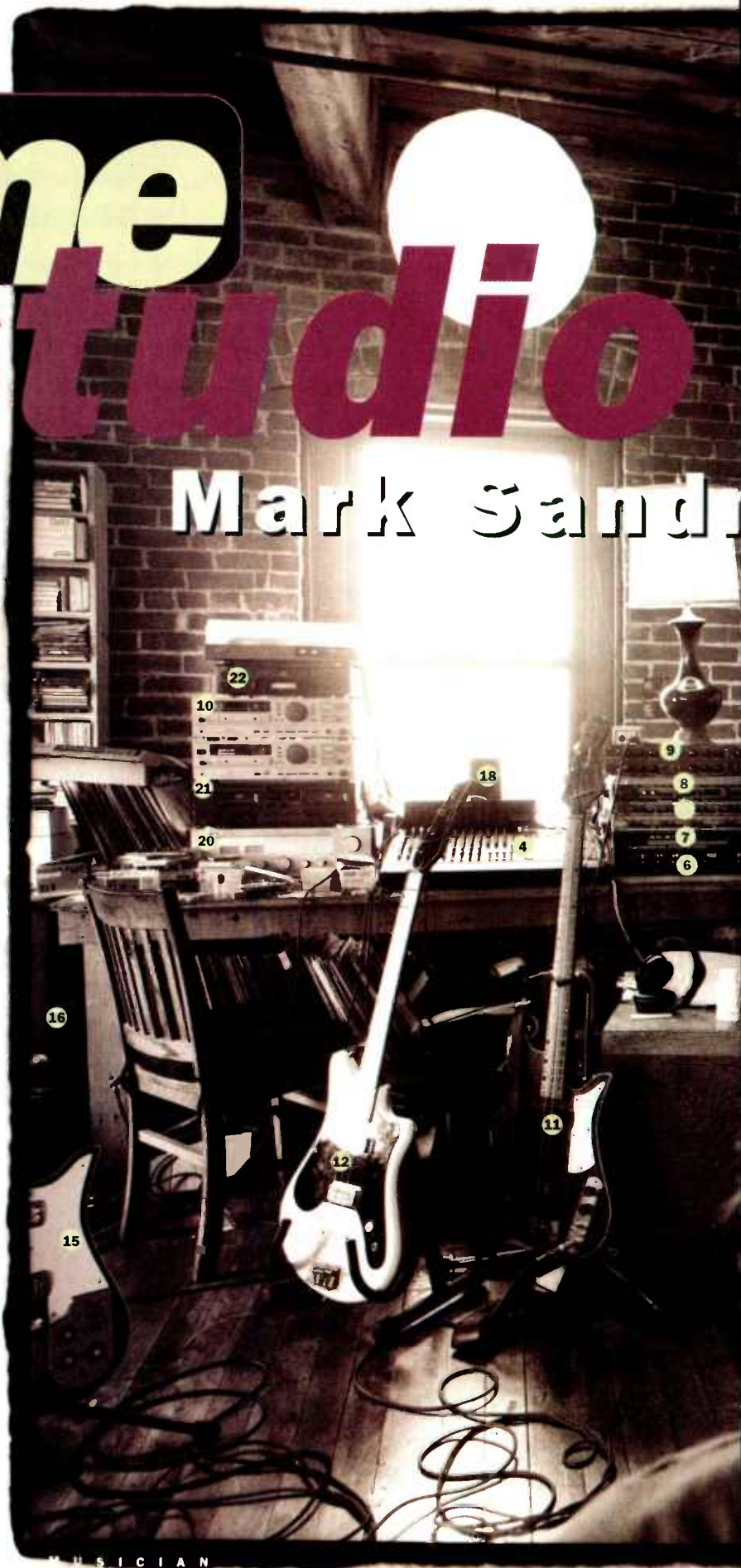
Mark Sandman doesn't like the term "home studio." When it comes to his own in-house recording setup—a 350-square-foot third-floor loft in Cambridge, Massachusetts that he's dubbed "hi-n-dry"—he prefers "private studio. It's more accurate because most people think home studios are just for recording demos, and that's not always true."

Sandman should know. Every one of the four CDs he and his guitarless, low-rock outfit Morphine have released, including the new *Like Swimming* on DreamWorks, has featured at least one track recorded at hi-n-dry. But nobody's ever pegged Morphine as a lo-fi band, or singled out home-studio productions like the moody "You Look Like Rain" from *Good*, the bittersweet "In Spite of Me" from *Cure for Pain*, or the buoyant "The Jury" from *Yes* as tech-challenged creations, even though they were all done at hi-n-dry, where separating Sandman's home life from his studio work would be a tricky task.

"Sometimes I work all night," he admits. "It [the gear]'s always blinking at me, saying things: 'Hey Mark, come here and play.' When I did the vocals to 'You Look Like Rain' my roommate was sleeping so I had to whisper the lyrics."

These days he's free to play as loud as he pleases. Whenever he, saxophonist Dana Colley, and drummer Billy Conway aren't on tour, hi-n-dry, which doubles as the trio's rehearsal loft, with activity. The **Rogers** drum kit **1** is always set up and miked with two **Shure SM57s** (snare and kick) **2**, and an **AKG C414** **3** overhead, ready for a Morphine practice or for Sandman to work with members of his two other projects—the dark and folky Pale Brothers and the horn-driven funk ensemble the Hypnotics. Other players from the Boston area tend to drop by in the afternoons for informal jams sessions.

Mark Sandman





photographs by john soares

"It's easy to come here," offers Sandman, "and I know a lot of good players. Plus, something might end up on a Morphine record. I did the basic tracks for 'Miles Davis' Funeral' [from *Cure for Pain*] here with Ken Winniker playing coconut bongos, and he has no recollection of that session. And the version of 'Like Swimming' that ended up on the album was done here when Larry Dersch dropped by—he doesn't remember playing on it."

Sandman's tape machine of choice is the **Tascam 688** (4), a cassette 8-track recorder with a built-in board, as well as a MIDI hookup that Sandman's never even turned on. "With this format I get 20 minutes of 8-track time on a 90-minute tape. I started out with the Tascam 488, which was a cheaper model with less features. All the hi-dry stuff on the first two Morphine albums was done on that. Then I got the 688 and it's twice as good. The people I know that have the 688 love it. And probably, like me, they can never get anyone to believe that they're using an 8-track cassette."

Sandman also owns an impressive collection of Electro-Harmonix effects. Right now he has a Memory Man analog delay and a Poly Chorus set up, and onstage he uses the Electro-Harmonix Micro Synthesizer multi-effects unit. "The thing that I like about Electro-Harmonix boxes," he explains, "is that the knobs always go way past any sound that you'd consider normal. Plus they have really big knobs so you can work the dials with your feet while you're playing."

Sandman is also used to operating his 688 while playing guitar, bass, or organ, which is one of the reasons he favors a simple setup. He's not averse to overdubs, but he does like to capture the feel of bass and drums grooving together for the basic track of a song. To compensate for gain boosts and other level problems, he has two **Aphex Rider** four-channel compressors (5), which give him eight separate channels of compression. For digital delay and reverb, he relies on a new **TC Electronic 2290** (6) and his trusty old **Lexicon PCM-70** (7). "I love the PCM-70. I used to bring it to all the Morphine gigs when we were playing loft parties and small clubs. Everything always sounded better with it. I also have a **PCM-41** (8), and I've got a PCM-42

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in a different rack." Topping it all off is the latest addition to hi-n-dry, a **Tube Tech** stereo tube compressor ⑨, through which Sandman runs all of his final mixes on their way to his two **Panasonic SV-3700** DAT machines ⑩. "With the Tube Tech," he admits, "everything sounded about 20 percent better."

Sandman's main Morphine ax is a brown Sixties **Premier** bass ⑪ with only two strings on it. He plays it with a slide through a big Ampeg SVT amp. The original Morphine one-string bass hangs on the wall, along with Sandman's self-customized **Tritar**, a no-name bass adorned with a tulip-print wallpaper finish and outfitted with three strings. (A white back-up Tritar ⑫, originally a supro four-string, stands next to the two-string.) The Tritar is also played with a slide, though Sandman sometimes runs it through his Ampeg Reverberocket instead of the SVT. The collection's rounded out by a '59 **Fender Esquire** ⑬ (Sandman's "low guitar" in his pre-Morphine band Treat Her Right), a **Silvertone**

⑭, a red, sparkle-finish, vintage **Premier** guitar that says "Monza" on the headstock ⑮, and old basses by Hagstrom and Univox.

Minimalism has always been an important part of the Morphine aesthetic; one of Sandman's favorite quips is "less is best." That's clearly part of what makes home recording attractive to him. "When you go to a real studio, they say things like 'Well, the first day we'll mostly just work on drum sounds,'" he says with a laugh. "The drum sounds I get using two or three microphones are great, and the drums are always ready to go."

An inventive spendthrift with a penchant for bargain hunting at garage sales, flea markets, and second-hand music stores, Sandman has amassed a colorful collection of odds and ends, from two plastic toy saxophones that sit on a shelf with his Octavia pedal behind the drums, to a couple of vintage Eighties drum machines: a Casio RZ-1 and an **Oberheim** with a **Stretch DX** ⑯. He recently acquired a cheap plastic set of Kawasaki drum synthesiz-

er pads, manufactured by Remco, which he's quite proud of. And one of his best garage-sale finds was an **Argosy** taxicab-dispatcher microphone ⑰, which he uses onstage and in the studio. "You can never have too much stuff," he jokes as he picks up a Transformer toy microphone. "I did the vocals to 'You Speak My Language' with this."

Sandman has been mixing with only one working speaker, a **Radio Shack Minimus-7** ⑱, for the past few months. But he's finally decided to order a pair of high-end Meyer Sound powered speakers to replace the broken set of old **Ohms** ⑲ that he bought with his still-functioning **Nikko NR-819** receiver ⑳ over a decade ago. The **Technics** dual cassette deck with an HX-Pro unit ㉑ and **Admiral** CD player ㉒ are newer purchases.

"The last few years it's been sounding consistently good," Sandman concludes. "But I'm definitely going to go out and track down another Tascam 688 before this article comes out."



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16 JUNE WEEK 25

10AM - BLUES PERFORMANCE CLASS (THIS WEEK: B.B. KING)

12 Noon - PRIVATE VOCAL LESSON w/ MIKE CAMPBELL

1PM - Songwriting MASTERCLASS w/ DESMOND CHILD!

8PM - STEVE NAI concert @ MI!

11AM - MODERN ROCK PERFORMANCE CLASS (SONS: U2 + NIN)

1PM - JAZZ IMPROVISING SEMINAR (BRING CHARTS)

3PM - RECORDING SESSION @ MI STUDIOS *FINISH CD*

8PM - CHEAPTRICK concert @ MI!

18

10AM - MUSIC + THE INTERNET SEMINAR!

12 Noon - R+B PERFORMANCE CLASS (MOTOWN WEEK)

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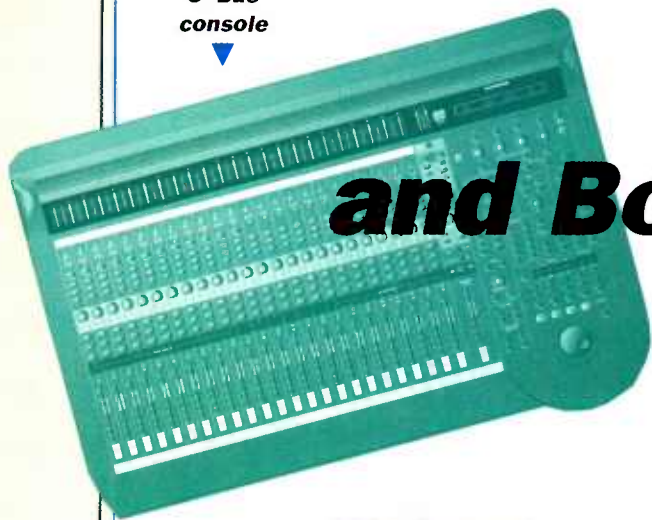


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**Mackie's
8•Bus
console**



Bombshells and Bonanzas

**We found
both at the 1997 Winter
NAMM show.**

**by Howard Massey
& Mac Randall**

It's funny how an annual event like the Winter NAMM show can take on a life of its own. Though each year's extravaganza features many of the same cast of characters, each show inevitably develops a unique personality. The 1997 Winter NAMM was no exception, providing tantalizing glimpses into the future interspersed with a certain amount of the tried and true. There were tons of new product announcements (including a couple of absolute stunners)—so many, in fact, that we don't have enough room for all of them this month. Our advice: Dig the following facts, look out for Part 2 in the

next issue, and start saving those pennies, 'cause there's going to be a lot of tempting new offerings in the months ahead.

The **Mackie** booth was certainly the "hot spot" of this year's NAMM, with the grand unveiling of their long-awaited all-digital mixing console, the Digital 8•Bus. The feature set of this bad boy is nothing short of incredible (especially considering its list price, which the company projects as being "under \$8000"), with 48 input channels, 24 motorized faders, eight analog bus outputs (digital tape outputs and inputs can be added with optional ADAT and TDIF-compatible cards), total automation (under the control of an onboard 586 processor, with its own dedicated video output and keyboard/mouse input), a one-gigabyte internal hard drive and floppy drive, 12 aux sends, two onboard effects, full dynamics and parametric equalization on each channel, and built-in meter bridge, jog/shuttle wheel and MIDI transport controls. There's even a modem connection so that you can dial up Mackie's Internet site automatically and download software upgrades. Admittedly this product is still at an early stage of development (there was only a single prototype unit on display, and it wasn't functional until midway through the show), but Mackie expects to be shipping the Digital 8•Bus by this coming summer, and when it does hit the stores, it should provide some healthy competition for the Yamaha 02R (our October 1996 Editor's Pick), which, up until now, has owned the low-cost digital console



**Roland's V-Drums
TD-10 percussion
module**

1996 Editor's Pick), which, up until now, has owned the low-cost digital console market.

Another major new product announcement came from **Roland** with the debut of their totally cool V-Drums TD-10 percussion sound module, which promises to do for drummers what the company's highly successful VG-8 (our February 1996 Editor's Pick) has done for guitarists. Like the VG-8, the TD-10 uses Roland's proprietary COSM (Composite Object Sound Modeling) technology—essentially a form of physical modeling—to provide an extraordinary degree of expressive control. The user interface allows drum sounds to be customized by selecting the kind of virtual drum head, shell material, and drum depth, as well as setting the type and position of a virtual microphone—even the desired room ambience can be dialed in. Complementing the TD-10 are a new series of drum pads, appropriately enough called "V-Pads." These not only have an extremely natural feel and excellent trigger response (you can even play them with brushes), but they look more like real drums (albeit extremely shallow single-head drums) than any pads we've seen to date. Retail price of the TD-10 is \$1895, with each V-pad priced at \$445 (for the 12" version) and \$395 (for the 10" version). You'll also be able to buy either basic (\$3995) or extended (\$4995) versions of a complete V-Drum kit, including a TD-10 and all stands.

But there was more to the 1997 Winter NAMM show than these two bombshells. We found hot new products in almost every category, starting with...

Synths, Samplers, and Drum Machines

Akai kicked things off with the release of their lowest cost MPC (MIDI Production Center) sampler/drum machine/sequencer yet, the MPC2000 (base price is just \$1499; a fully loaded system will run you \$2499). **Alesis** unveiled three additions to their popular and highly compact one-third rack width Nano series—the NanoSynth (\$449), NanoBass (\$299), and wonderfully named NanoPiano (\$399). **Emu** were grooving with the \$1095 Planet Phatt tone module ("targeted toward the urban dance scene"), which features



**Fender's
PowerStage
100 monitor
system**

drum loops, multiple filters and MIDI-synchronized LFOs. And **Korg** showed their iX300 workstation (\$1900) and NS5R tone generator module (\$850), which provides GM, GS, and optional XG compatibility (notable since it's the first non-Yamaha XG synth).

Speaking of XG, **Yamaha** debuted their MU90R (\$800), a full-rackspace XG-compatible tone generator which provides 779 voices, 30 drum kits, and 6 onboard effects. The company is also reentering the sampler market with the A3000 (\$1700), which boasts 64-note polyphony, a variable sampling rate (48 kHz all the way down to grunge-like 11 kHz), and rotary encoders for real-time control. There are also expansion options galore—for digital I/O, up to 12 analog outputs, an internal hard drive, and up to 128 megabytes of sample RAM.

Physical modeling continues to be the buzzword of the synth scene, but it's now widely being used to create Seventies-style analog synth sounds in new products such as **Yamaha's** AN1x (\$1199) and **Roland's** JP-8000 (\$2295). Roland were also showing their VK-7 combo organ (\$2495), as demonstrated by Joey DeFrancesco (killer set, Joey!), said to use "Virtual Tone Wheel" technology—complete with drawbars!

Speaking of the Seventies, a German company called *technosaurus* (great name!) turned back the clock with a series of switchboard-like modular analog synthesizers (highly faithful to the original Moog modules, but with MIDI compatibility). In a similar vein, **Jomox** (also from Germany) debuted the Euro-cool XBase 09 MIDI-controlled analog drum machine.

Computer Hardware and Peripherals

Long absent from NAMM shows, **Ensoniq** returned to debut PARIS (which stands, natch, for "Pro Audio Recording Integrated System"). Expected to retail for less than \$3000, the system includes a PCI card, control surface (with 16 faders, transport controls, and jog/shuttle wheel), breakout I/O box, and slick Windows/ Macintosh software to run the thing. Future options will include different format digital I/O boxes and SMPTE/Word Clock synchronization capabilities.

Emagic are also leaping into the hard disk recording arena both feet first. They debuted their Audiowerk 8 eight-channel digital audio PCI card, which comes bundled with their Virtual Multitrack Recorder (VMR) software, all for just \$799. Audiowerk will also be supported by the upcoming version 3.0 of the company's Logic Audio software. **Sonorus** entered the PCI wars with the release of STUDI/O (geddit?), a \$989 card that enables 16 channels of digital audio data to be ported in and out of a computer

using ADAT fiber-optic cables (which can be configured to carry either ADAT or S/PDIF signal).

Event Electronics unveiled a whole series of new products, including the DAR1a PCI card (\$349) and the low-cost (\$999) but full-featured Layla hard disk recording system, complete with a PCI bus card and breakout box that includes 8 analog inputs and 10 analog outputs, as well as S/PDIF digital I/O and word clock I/O (important for synchronizing with other digital audio or video devices). And **Hohner Midia** debuted the ARC44, an ISA sound card that provides four analog ins and outs. It comes bundled with an eight-track version of the company's Samplitude audio editor for \$899.

Control surfaces (mixer-like boxes that simply provide a series of assignable faders, switches, and knobs) are becoming increasingly popular with owners of hard disk recorders who crave that tactile feel. **JL Cooper** is a company that has specialized in these kinds of devices, and they used NAMM to preview their first ever moving fader controller: the MCS-3000 Media Command Station (\$2500), an eight-channel box, expandable to 64 channels. They also demonstrated their new MMC/9PIN interface, which enables devices equipped with Sony nine-pin inputs (such as video recorders) to be controlled from hardware or software that supports MIDI Machine Control (MMC).

Recording Equipment

With AES held just a couple of months before, you wouldn't expect much recording-related news at NAMM, but **Roland** nonetheless took the opportunity to announce a major software update for their VS-880, which adds a number of significant improvements, including onboard mix automation, scene changes via MIDI program change messages, and simultaneous playback of six tracks when doing 44.1 kHz recording, as well as 10 additional effects algorithms. Speaking of the VS-880, **Fostex** debuted their own integrated eight-channel hard disk recorder/mixer, the DMT-8VL. Priced at just \$1295, the system includes a 540-megabyte hard drive—extra drives can be connected with a \$345 SCSI option.

On the mixer front, **Alesis** debuted their Studio 32: a 16-channel, four-bus inline console which features three-band EQ per channel (including a fully parametric mid-band) and six aux sends, all for just \$1299. **Yamaha's** new

MX12/4 compact mixer has, appropriately enough, 12 inputs and four buses, along with the very low price tag of \$599.

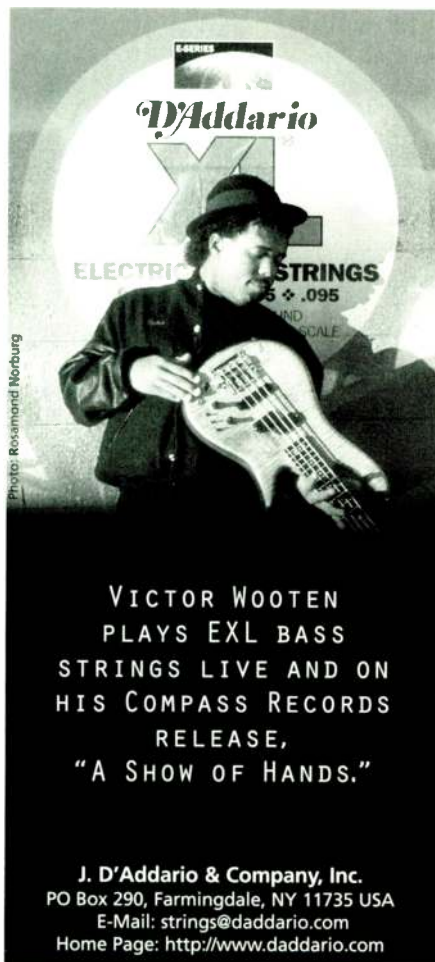
Other recording-related products were being shown by **Event Electronics** (a new addition to their line of powered monitors, the 20/20P, priced at \$599 per speaker), and by **Midman**, who unveiled the DigiPatch 12 x 6 digital audio patchbay (\$699), featuring (you guessed it) 12 digital inputs (six coaxial and six optical, any of which can be either S/PDIF or ADAT format) and six digital outputs. Custom patches can be stored in any of 50 memory locations and controlled from optional computer software.

Ergonomics also plays a large role in the home studio. To this end, **Omnitrix** were showing a number of new studio furniture products, including their MixStation line (\$1199), which provides an elegant means for integrating a Yamaha O2R or Mackie 8-bus mixing console into your home studio while adding dozens of vertical and sloping rack spaces for housing outboard gear (and lord knows you can never have too many rack spaces!).

Signal Processors

Alesis started out making signal processors, and their new Wedge (\$499) follows in that tradition. No, it's not an onstage monitor (as immortalized by Courtney Love *et al*), but a unique, highly editable digital reverb that provides an audition button and four sliders so that multiple parameters can be adjusted in real time. **Spatializer** debuted the Retro 3-D audio processor (\$649), a rackspace device that "retrofits" mixing consoles, using its existing panpots to place signal in a 270-degree space, essentially pulling sounds outside of the plane of the speakers. **PreSonus** debuted their Blue Max half rack-width compressor/limiter (\$249) that features 15 factory presets as well as manual controls. They also announced a two-channel successor to their popular ACP-8 compressor/limiter/gate, the ACP-2+ (\$349). The **Symetrix** 606 Delay F/x Machine (\$599) provides high-quality dual delay lines under MIDI control. **Rane's** newest entrants included the RPM 26 multiprocessor (\$2295), along with the GE 215 two-channel (\$559) and GE 130 one-channel (\$529) graphic equalizers. And **ART** introduced their Quadra/FX four-channel multi-effects processor (\$299).

Moving down the processing chain to stompboxes, **Zoom** debuted the latest addi-



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tions to their Five-O line (our April '97 Editor's Pick)—the 507 Reverb and the 508 delay. Because they concentrate on producing one specific type of effect, these pedals promise greater flexibility than the reverbs and delays on the more ambitious 505 and 506, and at \$149 each, they're just as affordable as their predecessors. **Boss** continued to investigate the possibilities of the "unplugged" world with their AD-5 processor (\$395) and AC-2 Acoustic Simulator pedal (\$169). Basically a preamp to warm up the sound of an amplified acoustic guitar, the AD-5 also features four-band EQ, chorus and reverb; the AC-2 supposedly makes an electric guitar sound like an acoustic at the click of a footswitch. Electric players with a retro jones should also welcome the reissue of Boss's classic FZ-3 fuzz and TR-2 tremolo pedals (\$149.50 and \$149 respectively).

The good name of Danelectro was revived at by a company called **Evetts Corp.** But they weren't showing guitars or amps—the new Danelectro products are three little stompboxes with a pronounced Fifties Cadillac vibe. The Fab Tone and Daddy O. distortions are both \$79, while the Cool Cat chorus/vibrato goes for \$99. **Visual Sound** showed a stereo/pan version of its Visual Volume pedal, which has LEDs to show you just what level you're at. And both **DOD** and **Ibanez** attempted to duplicate the sound of old tape echo boxes with, respectively, the FX96 and Soundtank EM5 pedals.

Live Sound and Microphones

Often the best ideas are the simplest ones, and **Fender** hit the bullseye with their PowerStage 100 (\$550) and Xpander 100 (\$450) powered wedge monitor system. Both provide 100-watt amplifiers and 12" two-way loudspeakers, but the PowerStage 100 also includes a detachable three-channel mixer that can be mounted on your mic stand—a very slick idea that allows you to adjust your own monitor levels without missing a note.

There were more than a few new powered mixers on the show floor. **Peavey** unveiled their XR 560 powered mixer (\$499), as well as its big brother, the XR 886 (\$1799), which includes two 300-watt power amps, onboard digital multieffects, dual nine-band graphic equalizers with feedback locating system, and the ability to use both mic and line inputs on a single channel simultaneously. The company also announced two new Unity portable mixing consoles.

Yamaha showed their EMX640 six-channel powered mixer (\$649), includes built-in digital reverb and two 200-watt amplifiers (one for front of house and one for monitors); these can also be used in a bridged mode to provide 400 watts. **Rane's** MLM 82 puts an eight-input, two-output mic/line mixer in a single rack space for \$499. And **Yorkville** announced a redesign of their Micromix powered box mixers.

What's a band without PA speakers? **Electro-Voice** had several new ones on display, including their S-Series family and the T221 biampable 12" two-way stage system. **JBL** announced a number of new EON systems, including the 15PAK system (optimized for keyboard-based combos playing clubs and lounges) and the Power10 system (a smaller version of the 15PAK). **Turbosound** showed two new touring speaker systems: the lowcost Impact Series and the midpriced HiLight Series. **EAW** debuted the LA212, a two-way 12" loudspeaker addition to their LA Series, and also showed their MX8600 MIDI-controlled processor for controlling speaker systems. **Community** introduced their XLT series of trapezoidal loudspeakers and announced a technology that provides signal-controlled forced air cooling of drivers, increasing power handling while simultaneously reducing power compression. And **Peavey** introduced a line of TL trapezoidal speaker enclosures (with a new driver design), set to replace their DL series.

There are lots of new power amplifiers to drive those speakers, too. The **Crown** K2 power amplifier (\$1795) delivers a phenomenal 2500 watts of power without fan-cooling. **Crest** unveiled the CA18 power amplifier (\$3390), which delivers a beefy 1000 watts into 8 ohms. **Samson** debuted a new line of Quad Servo power amplifiers (\$449 for the 60-watt/channel Servo 4060 and \$599 for the 120-watt/channel Servo 4120), and **Electro-Voice** debuted their kW Series of power amplifiers.

New microphones were also in abundance. **Audix's** latest was the D4 dynamic mic (\$279), designed primarily for capturing the thud of low-tuned percussion. **Electro-Voice** tapped into deeper frequencies as well with its new N/D868 bass drum mic, while at the same time debuting its RE500 hand-held condenser for live and studio vocal use. **Shure** proudly showed off its BG6.1 cardioid mic, featuring high-output neodymium magnets, and also announced that the other five mics in its BG series would be

improved with use of the same technology (prices for the BG series range from \$83 to \$305). The latest in **Sennheiser's** MD series of dynamic mics is the MD425 supercardioid (\$395). **Audio-Technica** added the ATM87R unidirectional condenser and the ATM89R handheld hypercardioid condenser to its Artist Series. **JBL** also added to its EON series with three new cardioid mics, while beyerdynamic introduced the MCE84 electret condenser (\$399) and **Roland** unveiled its DR-10 (\$95) and DR-20 (\$150) dynamic mics.

On the wireless front, **Sony** unveiled a new low-cost component for their 800 Series UHF wireless system that will bring the cost for a complete system down to under \$1000. **Shure** announced their first personal in-ear monitor product, the PSM600 system, available in both wired (under \$850) and wireless (under \$1600) versions, and **Samson** showed their new Concert IV VHF wireless system (\$399 for the guitar system; headset and lavalier systems slightly higher).

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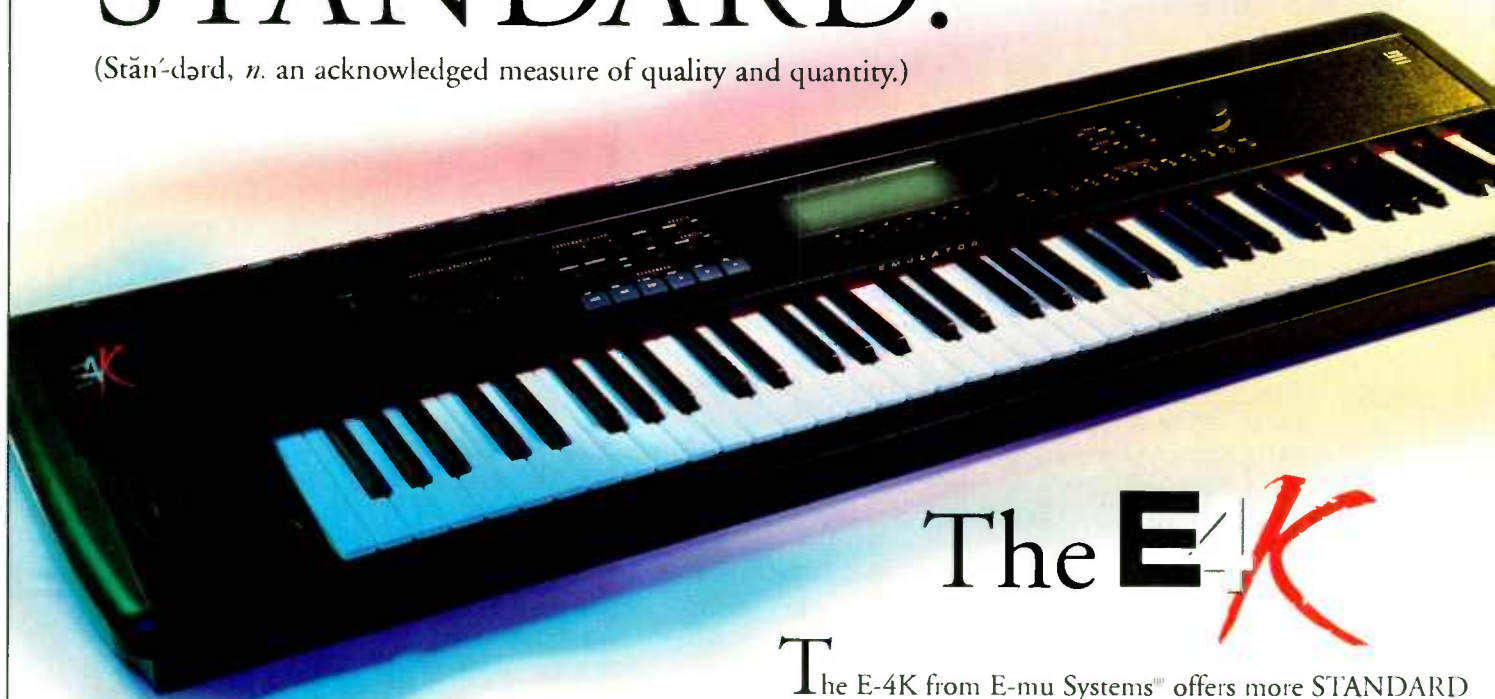
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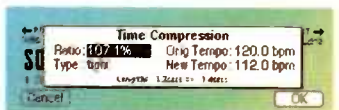


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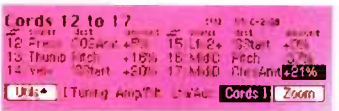
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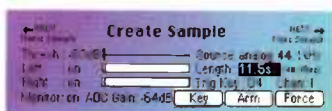
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◀ **The author's studio in its humble early days.** point is deciding what the business will be. You may think this business will obviously be a recording studio, but it's not quite that simple. When prospective clients call a commercial facility, they usually ask about equipment. Conversely, the operator is generally what attracts clients to a project studio. So you must carefully examine your strengths and consider what you'd really like to do in your studio. A thorough study of the market is essential, as it will help formulate ideas and will be included in your business plan. This can also prevent costly mistakes, such as the one made by a certain composer who spent a substantial sum to build a jingle studio in his home on the outskirts of suburbia. It sat idle.

According to D.J. Jaffe, a creative director with FCB/LKP, one of the big advertising agencies in New York City, proximity to the agency is important. "When checking the progress of a piece or making changes, the producer can't waste a lot of time traveling. Many agencies are currently getting away from doing jingles and are using more sound design and scoring."

Your target market will also have a direct bearing on equip-

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How to make money with your home studio (Part 1 of a series)

by **bill philbrick**

What's the difference between a musician and a mutual fund? (Apologies to those who've heard this one already.) A mutual fund eventually matures and earns money. Not a bad joke, and it does seem an appropriate way to begin this series of articles about home recording. We're not here to talk about how to make demos or which is the best mic pre for under \$500. This series is about building a high-quality professional project studio and earning a living with it.

This means starting a business to create a product (or service). If you can't adjust to the concept that your music is a product, then keep your day job, save up some money to buy a nice home theatre system, and entertain yourself with the products that the rest of us create. Even if your ultimate goal is to be an artist signed to a label, you'd be wise to get used to the idea of your music being a product. That's how the labels think of it. Not to suggest that you shouldn't be true to yourself and the music you do best, but that's another topic.

▶ **The same studio today, geared up for business.**

Anyone starting a business, any business, needs a plan. The starting



ment decisions. The composer who does original scoring for television has different equipment needs than the arranger/producer who remixes dance cuts for labels and clubs. The scoring work warrants the ability to lock to picture, requiring video gear, synchronizers and time code readers/generators. Dance remixes often require sampling power and considerable outboard signal processing. We'll elaborate on these equipment considerations in upcoming installments.

looks cheap does not attract clients. (One possible way to help save money on brochures and reels is to put up a content-rich Web site that can be accessed by prospective clients around the world. Again, it must look professional.)

So, you've got to spend some money if you want to make more money. For that you need lenders and/or investors, and to get them, you need a business plan. Unfortunately, as our opening joke suggested, musicians are not typically regarded as astute business people.

Many artists find the idea of doing flow charts and marketing strategies distasteful. But if you want to build a successful studio, it's imperative.

Once you decide what service to offer and gear to purchase, it's time to start assembling your business plan. The purpose of the plan is to show how sound your business can be (pun semi-intended). For many artists, the idea of doing flow charts and marketing strategies is rather distasteful. But it is imperative. Not only will it give you a clear idea of how to operate your business successfully, it will also help you to obtain financing.

The importance of financing can't be stressed enough. One of the main reasons that many small businesses fail is undercapitalization. A recording studio is capital-intensive, mostly because of the equipment. Many would-be entrepreneurs try using savings to build their facility. This can cause numerous problems if your name isn't Getty. Due to lack of funds, necessary equipment purchases are postponed, creating that "not having the right tool for the job" syndrome. Projects take longer to complete; some can become downright impossible, severely cutting earnings. And the frustrations born from trying to work in such a situation will burn you out quick—long before a project is done, you'll hate the project, hate the client, and kick the dog.

Another crucial element of start-up is marketing and promotion. Inadequate funding often causes this corner to be cut or overlooked entirely. This might be the most common cause of death to a business. Prospective clients will want samples of your work, requiring duplication of at least several hundred high-quality copies of your reel. And don't forget postage. You shouldn't skimp on stationery and business cards, either; this means professional graphic design, including logos. A company that

Therefore, the business plan must be comprehensive, well thought-out, and creative. It should contain:

- ▶ A clear description of the business (products or services offered, location, personnel bio)
- ▶ A marketing plan (marketing strategies, promotion, advertising, etc.)
- ▶ A market study
- ▶ A detailed list of start-up expenses, including comprehensive list of equipment, tech services, rent (if applicable), telephone, utilities, security system, acoustical materials and any construction necessary, legal and accounting, promotion (graphic design, advertising, printing, postage), miscellaneous
- ▶ Pro forma cash flow (two- to three-year chart of projected income vs. expenses—by month, at least for the first year; second and third years may be quarterly)
- ▶ Other sources of funds
- ▶ Collateral (house, car, equipment, other investments)
- ▶ Owner information (your résumé, financial statements, tax returns)

A trip to the bookstore or library will provide much more in-depth information on exactly how to compose, construct, and present your business plan.

The library is also a place to start researching where to take your business plan once it's finished. Banks are a logical place to start but are not the only sources of financing. The Small Business Association can be of help securing loans for start-up businesses. Many local governments provide funding to help entrepreneurs get started. Your local Chamber of Commerce can be an invaluable source of information.

One way of lowering the amount of capital

needed for start-up is by leasing equipment. This may raise the monthly expenses but could have tax advantages. Partnership is also worth serious consideration. Taking on one or more partners divides the risks and adds to collateral. A good partner could have strengths in areas you may not. For example, you may be a brilliant arranger and player but couldn't sell shoes to Imelda. You could find a partner with a tongue carved from pure sterling who could handle sales and vocals.

Another imperative call or visit is to your local zoning board. They can help you make sure your studio is operating legally. Many project studios are essentially home offices, but if you're thinking of remodeling or bringing in outside clients, you must adhere to zoning laws.

One item listed in the start-up expenses deserves further mention: tech services. Unless you can put together enough financing to hire a good full-time (read: live-in) tech, then you'd better know your gear backwards and forwards going in. I can guarantee that sooner or later (or both) you'll have a situation where you're at the end of deadline, nearly finished—and an important piece of equipment will suddenly, for no apparent reason, stop working. This will occur at 3 a.m. on Sunday. If you don't have a deep enough understanding of your studio to either fix or properly work around the problem, you will blow a deadline, lose a client, gain a reputation for not being able to cut it, and wind up thinking, "Jeez, I wonder if I could get my old job back flippin' burgers."

Now it's time to start doing your homework. And there's plenty of it. If a studio is what you really want, you can do it, and do it right. There is no reason to settle for cheap, bad-sounding gear. You don't have to just keep making demos for your friends and the trash cans of last week's A&R execs.

In future articles we'll examine many pieces of equipment, different ways to market and promote your business, and other aspects of running a project room. But before gear lust takes over your life, remember the best way to make a small fortune: Start with a large fortune and build a recording studio.

Contributors: Bill Philbrick is one of the principals of PM Productions, an audio production company that handles film scoring and record work. Their web address is www.brainlink.com/~pmprod.

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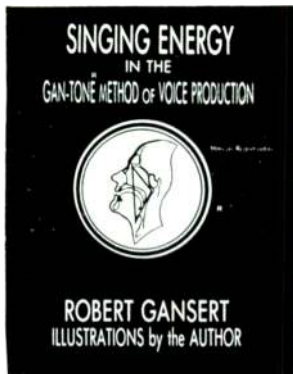
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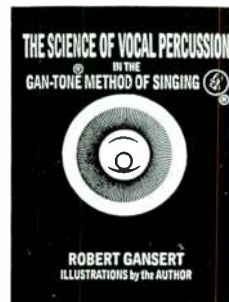
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Robert Gansert in one of his Carnegie Hall Studios in New York City in August, 1996

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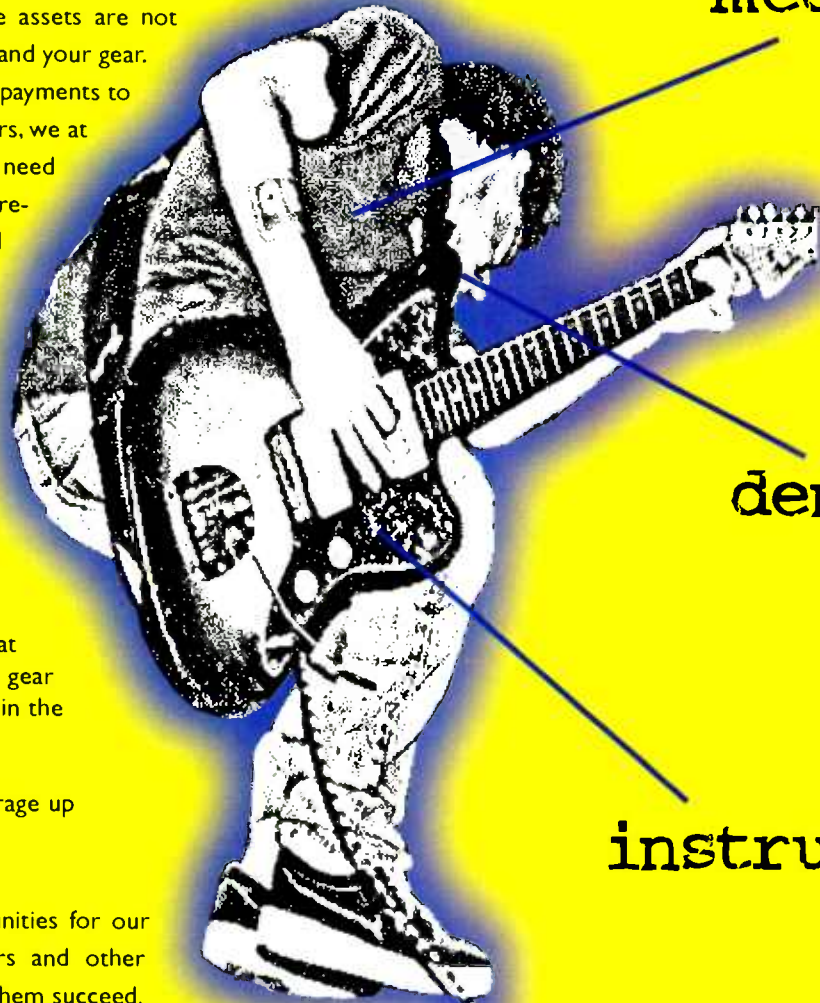
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powerusers

Uli Roth wants

MORE

by David Farinella

I'm certainly a power user," Uli Jon Roth says with a laugh from his London-based Sky Studios. "I'm always trying to ask more from the system, but there's never enough RAM, gigabytes or anything."

From his custom seven-string guitar to his Soundscape SSHDR1 hard disk recorders to the eight monitoring systems in his studio, Roth is constantly looking for bigger, better and faster. Most recently he's been pushing his Soundscape system to capture a blend of orchestral, classical and rock music he's recording with other musicians under the name Sky of Avalon. It's a long way from the early days of his career when he was playing lead guitar for the Scorpions (a gig he left in 1978), that's for sure.

The Sky of Avalon performances that Roth is composing and recording are called *The Symphonic*

Legends. "They are basically symphonies scored for orchestras and band. But they are more than symphonies, because they structurally integrate aspects from concerto operatic thinking," he explains. "It's a lot of different colors and I blend them in what I think is a homogenized way. I'm very aware of the danger of using too many elements in a chaotic way and I'm always trying to integrate everything so it seems effortless."

The tool that's made his job easier has been the SSHDR1, which he considers to be the premier up-and-coming recording medium. "I can see no other way of working in the future, at least not in the near future," he says. "Soundwise it sounds virtually one to one, which is more than I can say for tape or ADAT or a lot of other systems." After running out of space in his first SSHDR1, which he bought three years ago, Roth bought another and another. Now he's up to six machines, and there's more on the way. "I will get more because I need an infinite amount of tracks," he says. "They help me to organize, which before on tape machines was so hard to do."

While Roth's been using the system for the past two

years. Soundscape first introduced the SSHDR1 in August of 1993, to

both the music and audio post-production markets. The system includes a 19" rackmount unit and a software program that runs on PC-based computers. One machine records 16-bit digital audio and plays back up to 8 tracks at the same time, and several machines can be locked together without additional software (that's how Roth works). The software enables the user to cut, move, copy, repeat, reverse, time-stretch, and pitch-shift material, as well as real-time fades and parametric EQ. A 386DX PC with 4MB of RAM and Windows 3.1 can run the SSHDR1 fine, but the faster your system is, the better results you'll receive.

The SSHDR1s are Roth's main recording and editing machines, although he does utilize them as mixdown machines from time to time. While he concedes the machines do have some problems he would like to see remedied and he wishes there were more flexibility in the software, he uses them for more and more applications as time goes on. In fact, rather than use the level faders on his console, he uses the level meters in the PC-based software itself.

And Soundscape's giving it to him

"It's not fast but it gives you a lot of control."

And that, he explains, is part of the problem.

"If I spend six hours recording, then I spend six hours editing, which is basically hell. The nice thing is that you can do all this stuff, but it entices you to go for perfection. Sometimes I really have to stop myself and say, 'This could go on forever.' I've been through that learning curve, so now I work faster and I don't edit that much, simply because it's not very good for the nerves."

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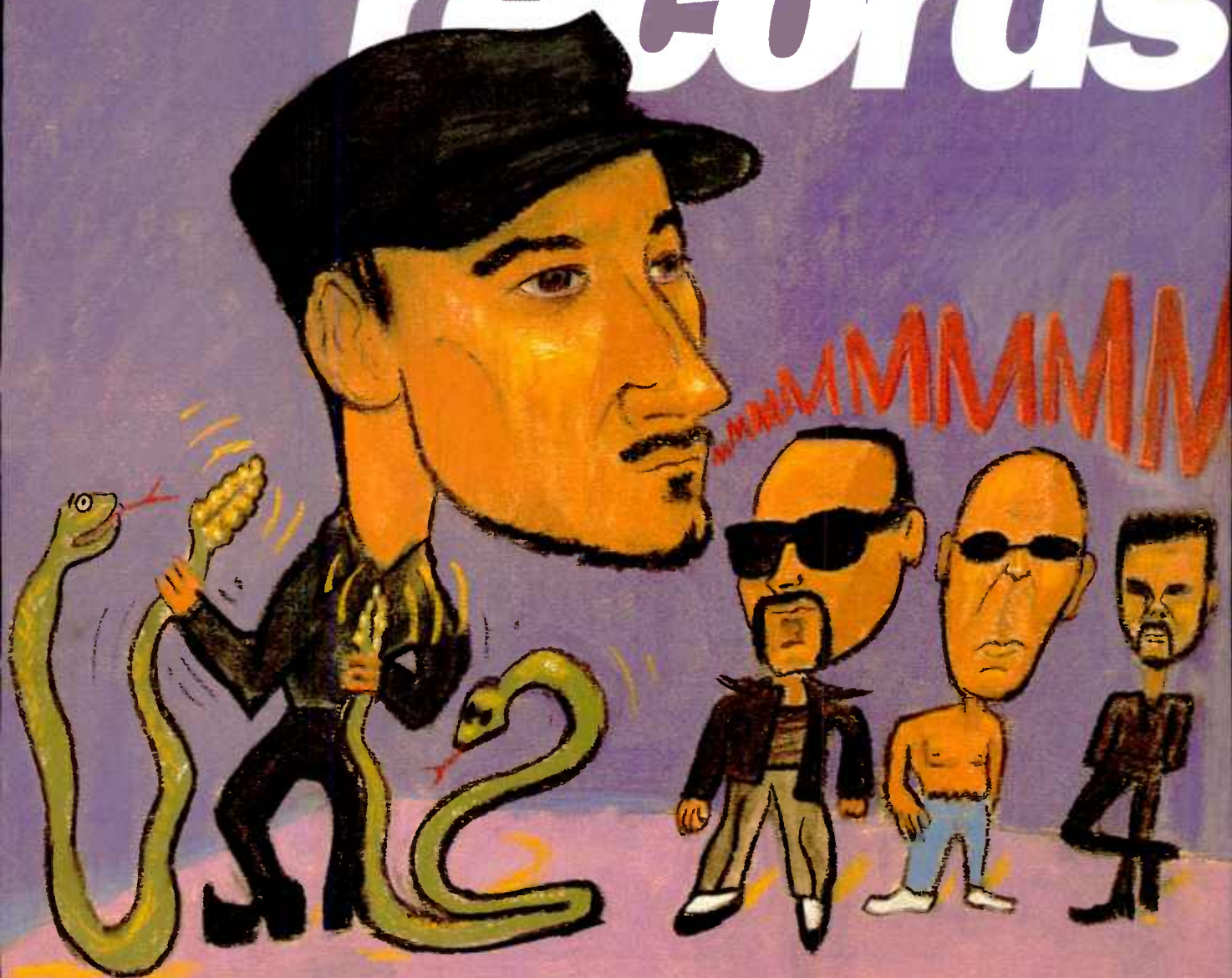
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records



The Grand Gesture—a show-biz staple since prehistoric times—has been U2's trump card and albatross. But high drama is so essential to U2's identity that it may be futile to attempt a makeover. At least that's what Pop suggests.

Thanks in part to the pre-album release of the jittery single "Discothèque," advance word had U2 morphing into electro-dance dudes. That's not true. Although they've front-loaded all the superficially different tracks to heighten the illusion of change. But by the third song, the wonderfully kinetic "Mojito," the lads have largely exhausted their modest repertoire of new tricks, subsequently reverting to more familiar guises. Even these ostensible departures recall typical U2 once the rhythm machines and keyboards lose their novelty value.

Of course, typical U2 can be swif. "If God Will Send His Angels" may be a predictable ballad, but the smoldering "Staring at the Sun" mesmerizes, with Bono passionately sighing, "God is good, but will He be listening?" That spiritual yearning, nothing new in U2's big picture, so dominates the proceedings that

RATTLES & HUMS

U2

Pop (Ireland)

one longs for more trivial concerns. Indeed, Pop invokes Jesus often enough to merit the Savior a slice of the royalties. Bono just can't resist showy flourishes. Even on smaller tunes like "If You Wear That Velvet Dress," he plays to the balcony, straining to extrapolate desire into a larger statement. (Not so the Edge, who maintains a lower profile, using his ringing guitar for textures and effects; dig those tasty rhythm fills in "Last Night on Earth.") Though Bono finally relaxes amidst the loping grooves of "The Playboy Mansion," slip-sliding into a sweet falsetto, he's still proselytizing for truth. Enough, already. "Miami," the closest thing to a throwaway, is not coincidentally also the high point, a series of beachside snapshots that manages the neat trick of being simultaneously dreamy and insistent. Otherwise, these honorable men are what they are, for better or worse. In fairness to U2, who released their first album when Jimmy Carter was president, they can still make wondrous noise when the mood strikes. If only they didn't sound like U2 all the time. —*Jan Young*

Blur

Blur (Virgin)

Whatever has got into Blur? Five years ago, they embarked on their first American tour, took one look at the country's fast-food culture and burgeoning grunge movement, and sped back to England in disgust. Their subsequent releases, *Modern Life Is Rubbish* and *Parklife*, which celebrated English culture and revered kindred spirits like Ray Davies, would almost singlehandedly spark the Britpop revolution. Yet now, with the world having swung back in their favor, the cheeky bastards have done another 180° turn.

Of course, the signs were there—frontman Damon Albarn's recent interest in Pavement and guitarist Graham Coxon's ongoing obsession with old

punk bands. But these hints couldn't have forecast what is essentially an effort to sever all ties with the now-bloated British scene. As a stylistic switch, *Blur* is audacious; as a followup to 1995's brilliant *The Great Escape*, it's a mixed bag.

There's a nagging feeling that nearly every song here could've been better. Some sound like B-sides, others unfinished. Although producer Stephen Street was again behind the board, one must wonder how involved he was. Furthermore, why a band so skilled at their craft would adopt the American indie-rock ethic that it's "not cool" to have arrangements or sound "produced" is baffling (especially in light of Albarn's past critiques of this approach).

Still, it would take a lot to dampen Albarn's songwriting; his choruses remain irresistible. And

guitarist Graham Coxon's first album vocal, "You're So Great," could've been Blur's "Wonderwall" had they not been so concerned with making it sound lo-fi. Two spots where the band's old sensibilities find a perfect balance with their newfound aesthetic are "On Your Own" and the dreamy "Strange News From Another Star"—through noisy arrangements, the emotion in Albarn's voice still rises to the top. Ironically, in light of the band's insistence that there would be no horns or strings on this album, the one track that contains said embellishments, "Look Inside America," is the standout—a U.S. tour diary set to a skanking hook and soaring chorus. (It's a little amusing, too, to hear the band with a once-legendary disdain for America rejoice, "...America/Well, she's alright, she's alright.")

A challenging turn, *Blur* takes some getting used to. But it's merely a stop-off, one hopes, en route to someplace better.—**Dev Sherlock**

The Jazz Passengers

Individually Twisted (32)

No doubt, the Jazz Passengers have done plenty of zany things before. After all, the aesthetic of that motley downtown troupe has always been to recognize no genre boundaries and not to take anything too seriously. But hiring Debbie Harry? And making her sing jazz? Come on!

But that, friends, is exactly what the Passengers have done. Those who've caught them live recently, either at Manhattan's Knitting Factory (their 10-year home base) or elsewhere, can testify that the gamble paid off brilliantly. Always equipped with a pleasant voice, Harry has put it to expert use in the latest installment of her career, wrapping her pipes around some unlikely material and engaging in witty repartee with the two fine fellows who co-head the Passengers, saxophonist Roy Nathanson and trombonist Curtis Fowlkes.

And now it's there for all to hear on *Individually Twisted*. The album kicks off with the up-tempo hipsterisms of "Maybe I'm Lost," proceeding through the classic dissin' song "Pork Chop" and the wonderfully ridiculous mock-travelogue "Olé" (which includes as many awful rhyme schemes and Mexican clichés as you could possibly want) before ending with a wacky run through "The Tide Is High." From start to finish, Harry matches the band perfectly, singing with admirable control and a barely concealed smirk. The only downside is that you miss the banter and some extra songs from the live shows. (One fave of mine that didn't make it on the album featured this timeless lyric: "Think of me whenever your medication starts to wear thin.")

Yet that's easily made up by the appearance of guest star Elvis Costello. Not only does ol' Cos team up with Debbie on a sly version of "Don'cha Go 'Way Mad," but he also takes the solo spotlight on one track, "Aubergine." Its jumpy melody is the most demanding of the set, and Elvis tackles it with his usual intensity—this music smokes. They may be crazy, but when it comes to hiring singers, the Jazz Passengers have their heads on straight.

—**Mac Randall**

SHOOTING THE SILVER BALL WITH

Collective



"Forget about music. I'm going to be a pinball champion by the time this record's done," says Ed Roland of Collective Soul. Indeed, a considerable amount of time ostensibly allocated to final mixes on *Disciplined Breakdown*, the Georgia-based quintet's third effort, goes into mastering the intricacies of *The Game Show*, *Ms. Pac Man*, and *Street Fighter II* at L.A.'s Larrabee Studios North. "I'm no good at it," he admits, "so I'm glad it's free."

The bulk of the disc was recorded in a home studio in a rented cabin in Stockbridge, the small town near Atlanta where the Soul men grew up. "Three racks, a Mac, and [Digidesign] Pro Tools, that's it," says Roland, summing up the relative basic gear involved. After wrapping up in Stockbridge, Roland headed west to subsist on a diet of tuna melts and flavored coffees in front of Larrabee's SSL

9000 J console. A self-confessed equipment junkie and collector, he'd seen the board, which looks like something from the bridge of the starship *Enterprise*, on a CD-ROM; immediately he knew he wanted to mix on it. "It has lots more buttons than we'd ever use," he admits, "but it's good to know they're there. This is America."

These are technically mix sessions, but when Roland, who brought along his own rack loaded with Neve strips and a Lucas EQ and limiter, hears something in a vocal that bothers him, he'll dash into the booth to redo the part. As much as he enjoys tweaking, though, he figures he's about ready to let the new music be heard. "You can twiddle-dee-dee and twiddle-dee-dum so much," he says, "that you lose what you were doing in the first place."

—**Chris Rubin**



Jazz Passengers

Bettie Serveert

Dust Bunnies (Matador/Capitol)

Every family's got one: the earnest grade-school magician who keeps performing the same shamelessly awkward tricks during holiday gatherings. The saddest part is, the kid never notices that the applause keeps getting weaker, more let's-humor-the-little-doo-fus forced with each living room show. Grunge-obsessed Dutch outfit Bettie Serveert is that hapless youngster. On its third disc, the band desperately fishes around in the same old bag of tricks but comes up empty-handed. Granted, there's a lot of smoke and big-guitar mirrors, which create the illusion of a decent alternative outing. But it's all a sham; you'll see through it after only a couple of listens.

The magic was fresh on the sparkly '93 debut, *Palomine*. Carol van Dijk's cricket-chirp vocals paired seamlessly with a circular schematic that, within many numbers, went from winsome quiet to grating-dissonance loud in a split second, and then back again. Cute. Intriguing. A new take on Nirvana-school nastiness, with its own bumbling Amsterdam charm—the magician with his first set of TV Magic Cards. *Dust Bunnies* repeats that gag until all the mystery is gone: "Geek," "Musher," "The Link," and "Fallen Faster" all stop and start, ebb and flow, and even van Dijk's personable warmth can't temper their monotony. Maybe it's a translation thing, like Bush's myopic study of Pearl Jam. Bettie Serveert might have pondered so long on its Stateside influences, it no longer has any hope of forming an identity of its own.

The few fine moments here are for the most part van Dijk's. Her straightforward woofing through the punkish "Story in a Nutshell" is believable, winning. She whispers over the jangly "Co-Coward" until it feels almost conspiratorial, and her pop chops on the uplifting "Rudder" have never been sharper. If you dig deeper into "Rudder," though, you realize

that she's mocking the U.S. music business with lines like "The record seems to do so well/And everybody loves a band that sells."

That's where Bettie Serveert went wrong. Everybody loves a band with new tricks up its sleeve. Lazy magicians, however new at the game they might be, will always get the hook.—Tom Lanham

The Boo Radleys

C'mon Kids (Creation/Mercury)

Eggman

First Fruits (Creation/TriStar)

The rarest revolutions in music are revolutions of structure. As much as pop has changed over time in its instrumentation, sonic trap-pings, lyrics, and rhythms, it has continued to yoke itself to that creaky old caravan of basic song form, in which the repetition of verse and refrain aren't just conveniences but necessities. Granted, a few songwriters have messed with the form—Lennon and McCartney, Brian Wilson, Zappa, Simon, Costello—but they didn't do it consistently. Perhaps they had some voice inside reminding them that pop could only take so much structural manipulation before it stopped being pop.

The Boo Radleys' Martin Carr doesn't appear to have that inner voice, and if he does, he doesn't listen to it. Nearly every song Carr has written breaks multiple rules of songwriting: He'll roam restlessly from one style or tempo to another by way of a third, carefully establish melodies that he'll then drop and never return to, string countless sections together that have hardly anything to do with one another. The results are almost always messy and disjointed, but they're often thrilling as well.

C'mon Kids is the purest example of Carr's approach yet, forgoing the friendliness of the Boos' last album *Wake Up!* in favor of a denser, harder, more demanding sound. Old fans may be taken

aback by the razor-edged shrieking of normally mild-mannered singer Simon "Sice" Rowbottom on "What's In The Box?" and the title track. But the biggest surprises will be for new listeners, who may not be prepared for the more kaleidoscopic offerings ("Four Saints," for example, saunters through 11 parts, from avant-funk to surging riff-rock to soaring balladry, in a little over four minutes). Not everything works: "Get on the Bus" sounds like Motorhead crashing headlong into the *Bananas in Pajamas* theme. Yet over repeated listenings, most of these numbers become insidiously catchy.

More immediately appealing is *First Fruits*, Sice's solo debut, issued under the name Eggman. (Although it's billed as a side project, all the Boos, including Carr, appear.) The album's 10 short, heavily orchestrated songs showcase Sice's high, sweet voice, an essential component of the Boo Radleys formula. They also attest to his emergence as a songwriter, sharing many of Carr's melodic gifts and all of his psychedelic-Sixties fixations. Everything here could have fit onto a Boos album; the only thing missing is the wild experimentation with form. But the gorgeousness of tracks like "Tomas" and "Not Bad Enough" make a solid case for more traditional approaches. Who ever said you always had to be revolutionary?—Mac Randall

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chuck's cuts

by charles m. young

Mojo Nixon

Gadzooks!!! (Needletime)

Consisting of equal parts seething anarchist, novelty singles populist, and unrepentant town drunk, Mojo Nixon mixes his exuberance with a little too much malice to make big piles of money. But with less malice he wouldn't be funny and would make no money at all. So he's carved out a place for himself between poverty and oblivion that is all his own, because nobody else wants it. Accusing David Geffen of killing rock & roll ("Bring Me the Head of David Geffen") will certainly keep him in that place on this collection of odds and ends ranging from his earliest recording ("Death Row Blues," in 1983) to failed attempts at crashing the world music market with cheap sex ("The Poontango"). With backup from various members of the Beat Farmers, World Famous Blue Jays, and Talking Boogers, Mojo hides his musicianship on both guitar and vocals under his overpowering enthusiasm. The musicianship is there, though. Just remind yourself that rock & roll is supposed to be loose.

Love Riot

Maybe She Will (Squirrel Boy)

Folk-rock heroes of Baltimore, these guys deserve a shot at the national stage. Lisa Matthews can sing big, and she can sing small, and she can enunciate without sounding like she's trying to enunciate, which is paramount when you want to get a feeling and the lyric across. If you're not loud, the key is sharing your intimacy without coming off like a precious twit. This trick they pull off, describing subtleties of relationships from a variety of perspectives, which reveals them as observers of not only their friends but the softer side of the Beatles. Introverted, not self-pitying. Nice violin too.

INXS

Elegantly Wasted (Mercury)

Watching lesser bands eclipse them on the charts and even say mean things about them, INXS is faced with the problem of longevity. How do you convince a cruel business that you aren't last decade's model when your biggest hit was pre-Nirvana? Well, you could try throwing a large dollop of the Stones into the mix, and you could try coming up with a bunch of catchy songs, cleverly arranged and generously laden with ideas. Then you could hope someone with power will notice, even if you aren't the next big thing. As in the Eighties, they have lots of talent and not lots of meaning, plenty of hooks and little resonance with anything bigger in society, unless you think sex is enough. Maybe it is. Or maybe they need a touch of U2.

Nirvana

In Utero

(Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab)

When you really, really like an album, when you're sure it's a masterpiece in your own personal pantheon, it's time to consider upgrading to MFSL. Their catalog is huge now, and the extra twenty bucks or so that you pay

is audible in the guitar overtones. If your stereo is even moderately good, the sound becomes more complete. When you're dealing with an artist like Kurt Cobain, who invented the soft/loud dynamic in grunge, the guitar suddenly sounds new again, not the cliché it became. On a song like "Heart-Shaped Box," surely the weirdest thing ever in heavy rotation on MTV, sounding new again is worth the price.

Skeleton Key

Fantastic Spikes Through Balloon (Capitol)

A noise/power trio with an added percussionist, this demented quartet tears the lobes of your brain apart with rhythm tracks that groove and break the groove simultaneously, which is very odd. Major appeal for those with a surplus of both alienation and hormones. A dreadful grate if you've already made your compromises and are trying to forget how horrible your job is.

Shonen Knife

Brand New Knife (Big Deal)

The question with the Ramones was always: Will they diversify or will they make an entire career out of one joke? The answer was: Diversify and

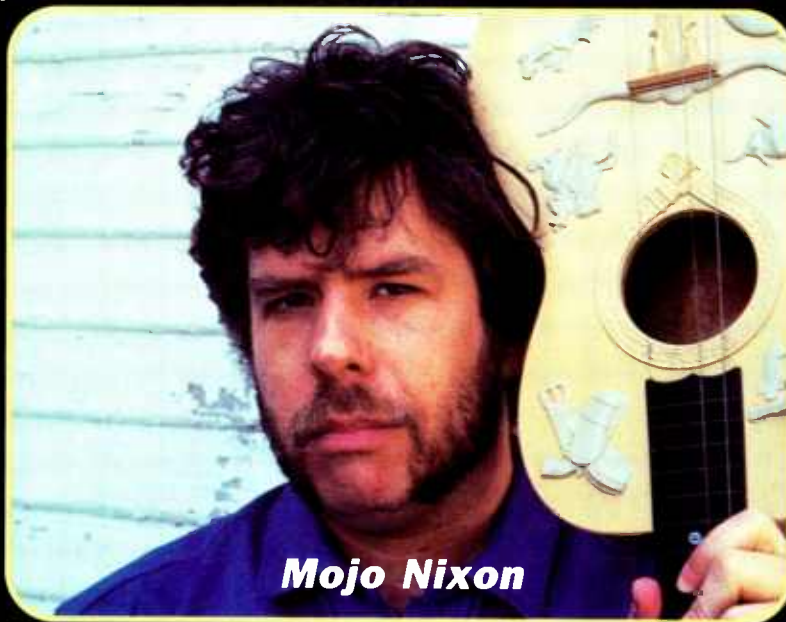
you suck. So they did make a career out of one basic joke and a lot of funny, memorable songs. In the case of Shonen Knife, three Japanese women of indeterminate age who are often compared with the Ramones, the joke remains charming. They love rock & roll, and in not quite getting it, they get it completely. "Man becomes all things by not understanding them," said philosopher Giambattista Vico three hundred years ago, and he's still right. But Shonen Knife sounds more like the Bangles than the Ramones.

Bo Bryan

Shag: The Dance Legend (Foundation Books)

Prior to World War II, the jukebox went into mass distribution, and the jitterbug migrated south from New York. Perhaps because of the heat, perhaps because of the generally slower pace of life, perhaps because of the asthma of one of the main local dancers, the jitterbug halved its speed when it reached the beach nightclubs of the Carolinas. Gradually this new dance became known as the Shag, and long before rock & roll, young white people were carrying on their mating rituals to black rhythm & blues. "Jumping the Jim Crow rope," they called it. This spontaneous social eruption of "beach music" was a scene long before anybody knew what a scene was. For that reason, it probably lasted a lot longer.

Historian/anthropologist/poet Bryan tells this mostly untold story with gentle humor, sharp insight, and solid research through archive and interview. Like any other art form, history comes alive in the details, and the details are here, from hair curlers to knives, from Weejuns to Madras. Unlike the Macarena, the Shag is still happening. Further unlike the Macarena, it has its own Hall of Fame.



Mojo Nixon

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MUSICIAN MAGAZINE'S 1997 BEST UNSIGNED BAND COMPETITION SEMIFINALISTS

ROUND 1

Let the games begin! We're pleased to announce the first round of semifinalists in this year's Best Unsigned Band competition. The list below has just some of the bands that avoided elimination, as determined by our discriminating judges. They are in no particular order, nor do they reflect how early or late we received the entry. Since your band may have yet to be heard, check out the next three issues of Musician for more semifinalists. For now, let's congratulate the following groups...

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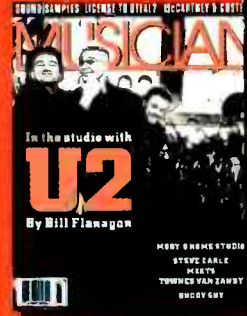
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- 123 1/89 Year in Music '88, Metallica, Jack Bruce, Fishbone
- 125 3/89 Elvis Costello, Jeff Healey, Sonic Youth
- 128 6/89 Peter Gabriel, Charles Mingus, Husker Du
- 129 7/89 The Who, The Cure, Ziggy Marley
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- 143 9/90 Steve Vai, Michael Stipe, Malmsteen/McLaughlin
- 144 10/90 INXS, Neville Bros., Lou Reed/Vaclav Havel
- 146 12/90 Slash, Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
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- 150 4/91 R.E.M., Top Managers Roundtable, AC/DC
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- 152 6/91 Stevie Ray Vaughan, Morrissey, Drum Special
- 153 7/91 Bonnie Raitt, Tim Buckley, Sonny Rollins
- 154 8/91 15th Anniversary Issue, Sting, Stevie Wonder
- 155 9/91 Paul McCartney, Axl Rose, David Bowie
- 156 10/91 Dire Straits, Jesus Jones, McCartney part 2
- 157 11/91 Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, Fogerty/Duane Eddy
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- 160 2/92 Fear of Rap, Eric Clapton
- 162 4/92 Def Leppard, k.d. lang, Live
- 163 5/92 Drugs, Booze & Creativity, Lyle Lovett, Microphones
- 164 6/92 Guns N' Roses, Metallica, Genesis
- 165 7/92 Led Zeppelin, Faith No More, A.M.C., T-Bone Burnett/Sam Phillips
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- 181 11/93 Pearl Jam, Liz Phair, Producer Special
- 182 12/93 End of the Music Business, Lemonheads, The Band
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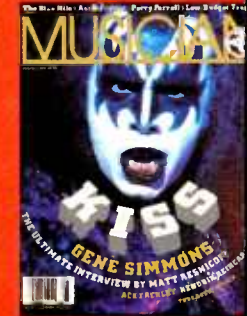
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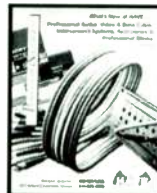
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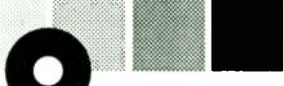
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productindex

Here's our product guide which lists the equipment and page number where the players talk about the gear they use. Feel free to call or fax the manufacturers listed below for specific info on what the best players play.

AKG 1449 Donelson Pike Nashville TN 37217 (615) 399-2199: 460. **50**; Emotion Series. **64**; C414. **70**
AKAI 7010 Soquel Dr. Aptos CA 95003 (800) 433-5627; MPC 2000. **75**
ALESIS 3630 Holdredge Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90016 (310) 558-4530; Nano Series. **75**; Studio **32**, Wedge. **76**
AMS NEVE PLC Billington Road Burnley Lancashire BB11 5UB UK 44 (1282) 457-011: 1073, 1272. **50**
APHEX 11068 Randall St. Sun Valley CA 91352 (818) 767-2929; Easy Rider. **71**
APPLIED RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY 215 Tremont St. Rochester NY 14608; 2366 (215) 436-2720; Quadra/FX. **76**
AUDIO-TECHNICA 1221 Commerce Dr. Stow OH 44224 (216) 686-2600; ATM 87R, ATM 89R. **77**
AUDIX 29103 SW Kinsman Wilsonville OR 97070 (800) 966-8261; D4. **77**
BEYERDYNAMIC 56 Central Ave. Farmingdale NY 11735-6906 (516) 293-3200; MCE84. **77**
BOSS 7200 Dominion Cir. Los Angeles CA 90040 (213) 685-5141; AD-5, AC-2. **77**
COMMUNITY 333 E 5th St. Chester PA 19013-4511 (610) 876-3400; XLT. **77**
CRATE AMPLIFIERS 1400 Ferguson Ave. St. Louis MO 63133 (314) 727-4512; GXT 100. **65**
CREST AUDIO 100 Eisenhower Dr. Paramus NJ 07652 (201) 909-8700; CA18. **77**
CROWN INT'L 1718 W Mishwaka Rd. Elkhart IN 46517 (219) 294-8000; K2. **77**
DIGIDESIGN 1360 Willow Rd., Ste. 101 Menlo Park CA 94025 (800) 333-2137; DiNR. **67**
DOD ELECTRONICS 8760 S Sandy Parkway Sandy UT 84070 (801) 566-8800; Fx96. **77**
EASTERN ACOUSTIC WORKS One Main St. Whitinsville MA 01588 (508) 234-6158; LA-212, MX8600. **77**
EMU 1600 Green Hills Rd. Scotts Valley CA 95066 (408) 438-1921; Planet Phatt. **75**
ELECTRO-HARMONIX/SOVTEK 20 Cooper Square, 4th Floor New York NY 10003; Big Muff. **50**
ELECTRO-VOICE 600 Cecil St., Buchanan MI 49107 (800) 234 6831; S-series, T221, KW series. N/D868, RE500. **77**
EMAGIC USA P.O. Box 771 Nevada City, CA 95959 (916) 477-1051; Audiowerk. **76**
ENSONOY 155 Great Valley Pkwy. Malvern PA 19355 (610) 647 3630; PARIS. **76**
EPHPHONE 1818 Elm Hill Pike Nashville TN 37210-3781 (615) 871-4500; Les Paul Bass. **50**
EVENT ELECTRONICS, INC. PO Box 4189 Santa Barbara CA 93140-4189 (805) 566-7777; DARla, Layla, 20/20p. **78**
EVETS CORPORATION PO Box 2769 Laguna Hills CA 92654-2769 (714) 583-2419; Fab Tone, Daddy O, Cool Cat. **77**
FENDER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS 7975 N Hayden Rd. Scottsdale AZ 85258 (602) 596-9690; Jazz Bass. **50**; Squier Vista Jagmaster; '59 Esquire. **72**; Powerstage 100. Xpander 100. **77**
FOSTEX 15431 Blackburn Ave. Norwalk CA 90650 (800) 770-STEX; DMT-BVL. **76**
HAMER GUITARS P.O. Box 507 Bloomfield CT 06002-0507 (860) 647 2244; Explorer Bass. **50**
HOHNER MIDIA PO Box 5497 Santa Rosa CA 95402 (707) 578-2023; ARC44. **76**
IBANEZ 1726 Winchester Rd Bensalem PA 19020 (215) 638-8670; Soundtank, EM5. **77**
JBL PROFESSIONAL 8500 Balboa Blvd. Northridge CA 91329 (818) 894-8850; EON 15PAK, EON Power10. **77**
JLCOOPER ELECTRONICS 12500 Beatrice

Street Los Angeles CA 90066 (310) 306-4131; MCS-3000. **76**
KORG 316 S Service Rd. Melville NY 11747-3201 (800) 645-3188; ix300, NS5R. **75**
LEXICON 100 Beaver St. Waltham MA 02154-8425 (617) 736-0300; PCM-70, PCM-41, PCM-42. **71**
LUDWIG & MUSSER INDUSTRIES P.O. Box 310 Elkhart IN 46515 (219) 522-1675; **50**
MACKIE DESIGNS 16220 Wood-Rd. NE Woodinville WA 98072 (800) 258-6883; CR1202, 1604 Console. **50**; 8-Bus. **74**
MARSHALL AMPLIFIERS 89 Frost St. Westbury NY 11590 (516) 333-9100; '59 SLP. **50**
MORLEY 185 Detroit St. Cary IL 60013 (800) 284-5172; Echo Plus. **65**
MIDIMAN 236 W Mountain St., #108 Pasadena CA 91103-2967 (818) 449-8838; Digipatch 12*6. **76**
NEUMANN USA 6 Vista Drive Old Lyme CT 06371 (203) 434-5220; U-48. **50**
OSBERHEIM 2230 Livingston St. Oakland CA 94606 (800) 279-4346; **72**
OMNIRAX PO Box 1792 Sausalito CA 94966 (415) 332-3392; Mixstation. **76**
PANASONIC/RAMSA 6550 Katella Ave. 17-A7 Cypress CA 90630 (714) 373-7903; SV-3700. **72**
PEAVEY ELECTRONICS 711 A St. Meridian MS 39301 (601) 483-5365; XR 560, XR 886, TL Series. **77**
PRESONUS AUDIO ELECTRONICS 501 Government St. Baton Rouge LA 70802 (504) 344-7887; Blue Max. **76**
RANE CORP. 10802 47th Ave. W Mukilteo WA 98275 (206) 355-6000; RPM 26, GE 215, GE 130. **76**; MLM 82. **77**
REMO 12804 Raymer St. N. Hollywood CA 91605 (818) 983-2600; Ambassador Heads. **50**; Mondo Drums. **64**
ROLAND 7200 Dominion Circle Los Angeles CA 90040 (213) 685-5141; V-Drums TD-10, VG-8, 74-5; VS-880. **76**; DR-10, DR-20. **77**
SAMSON P.O. Box 9031, 575 Underhill Blvd Syosset NY 11791-9031 (516) 364-2244; Quad Servo, Concert IV VHF. **77**
SENNHEISER 6 Vista Dr., P.O. Box 987 Old Lyme CT 06371 (203) 434-9190; MD425. **77**
SHURE BROTHERS 222 Hartrey Ave. Evanston IL 60202 (800) 257-4873; SM57, 50, 70; BG6.1, PSM 600. **77**
SOLID STATE LOGIC Begbroke Oxford OX5 1RU UK 44 (1865) 84-2300; **66**
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SONY ELECTRONICS 3 Paragon Dr. Montvale NJ 07645 (201) 930-1000 (212) 529-0466; C48, AT 4033, 50; 800 Series. **77**
SOUNDCRAFT 8500 Balboa Blvd. Northridge CA 91329 (818) 894-8850; Spirit Folio F1. **64**
SOUNDCAPE 705 A Lakefield Rd. Westlake Village CA 91361 (805) 495-7375; SSHDR 1. **63**
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Overnight Sensations

Many years ago, I faced the dilemma of staying at a well-known chain motel or saving ten bucks by staying at a cheaper place down the road. I opted for the cheaper one, and that sleepless night I discovered that: **(1)** the guy next door had a real bad smoker's cough; **(2)** the construction workers operating jackhammers out in the parking lot at eight in the morning were pissed off at their wives; and **(3)** I wish I'd spent the extra ten bucks.

To avoid this mistake while looking for lodging during a band tour, here are a few motel survival tips I've picked up (the hard way):

Where to Stay. Look for chain motels outside the city limits that have lots of necessities—i.e., Denny's, Walmart, etc.—around them. It's worth the extra drive, since in-town hotels can be expensive and inconvenient should you need a tire changed or an all-night drug store.

Checking in. Always ask if there is any construction or remodeling, and if the hotel is expecting any large groups to check in. If the answer to either is yes, ask to be located as far as possible from the activity, unless you really want to choke on paint fumes or risk an ugly confrontation involving a rudely-awoken, half-naked musician screaming Ozzy lyrics at an early-rising church group.

Survival Gear **(1)** Ear plugs. Three bucks at any K-Mart; get the ones with the 25dB+ rating. **(2)** White noise machine. Essential for drowning out slammed doors, gas-powered leaf blowers. Buy the fancy model for 300 bucks at your local Vibes-Aura-Us shop, or get the equally effective version for around forty dollars at Radio Shack.

My Favorite Motel Chains. **(1)** Red Roof. Reasonable rates, clean, consistent, and pet-friendly. Get a Redi-Card™ and they'll treat you like a head of state. **(2)** Holiday Inn. The old favorite. They've undergone major renovations, and prices vary tremendously, but you can still usually find a room for around fifty bucks on weeknights. Always ask for the Great Rate and save an additional 10-25 percent. **(3)** Hampton Inn. Pricey, consistent. They usually fill up fast, even during the week. **(4)** La



Quinta.

Spanish for "next to Denny's." **(5)**

Comfort Inn. Nice rooms, but fanatical about 11 o'clock checkouts.

Other Accommodations. **(1)** Friends' houses. They mean well; they just forget to tell you that the cat usually sleeps where you will, the roofers are coming at seven, they're going through a "transition" period in their marriage, and their therapist has told them it's okay to loudly verbalize their feelings. **(2)** Band houses. Remember *Stalag 17*? **(3)** Rest areas. Remember *The Hitcher*?

You Know You're in A Cheap Motel When ... **(1)** They demand a key deposit; **(2)** they advertise in-room phones; **(3)** the security guard's uniform is more than one size too large.

Before You Turn Out The Light ... **(1)** if the room doesn't have a "do not disturb" sign, make one; **(2)** take the phone off the hook; and **(3)** never waste your money on the in-house porno channel. Enjoy your stay!—**Reverend Billy C. Wirtz**