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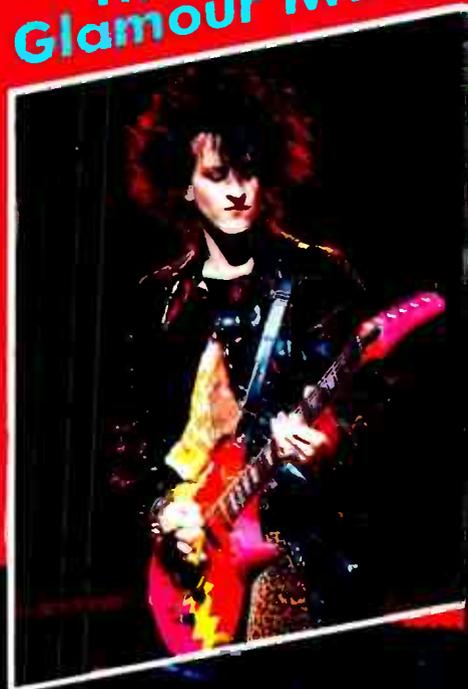
INTERNATIONAL  
**MUSICIAN**<sup>®</sup>  
AND RECORDING WORLD

November 1985  
\$2.50

**BILLY  
IDOL**

And Steve  
Stevens

The  
Glamour Twins



**On Test:**

dbx 166x

Sundown Amps

Omni EP-401 Delay

Moog Song Producer

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See Page 6

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NOVEMBER 1985

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The new Jagger-Richards or the new Lennon-McCartney? In the past some critics might have claimed the new Abbott and Costello, but on Idol's new LP, imagination triumphs over image.

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Photo by F. Gabowicz

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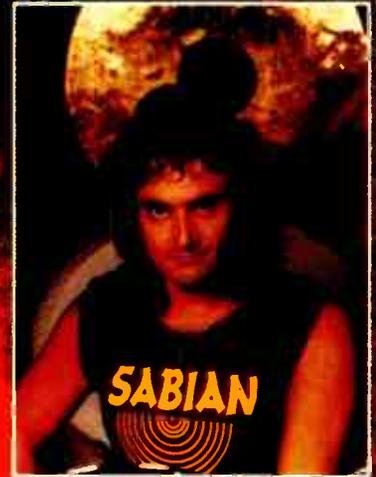
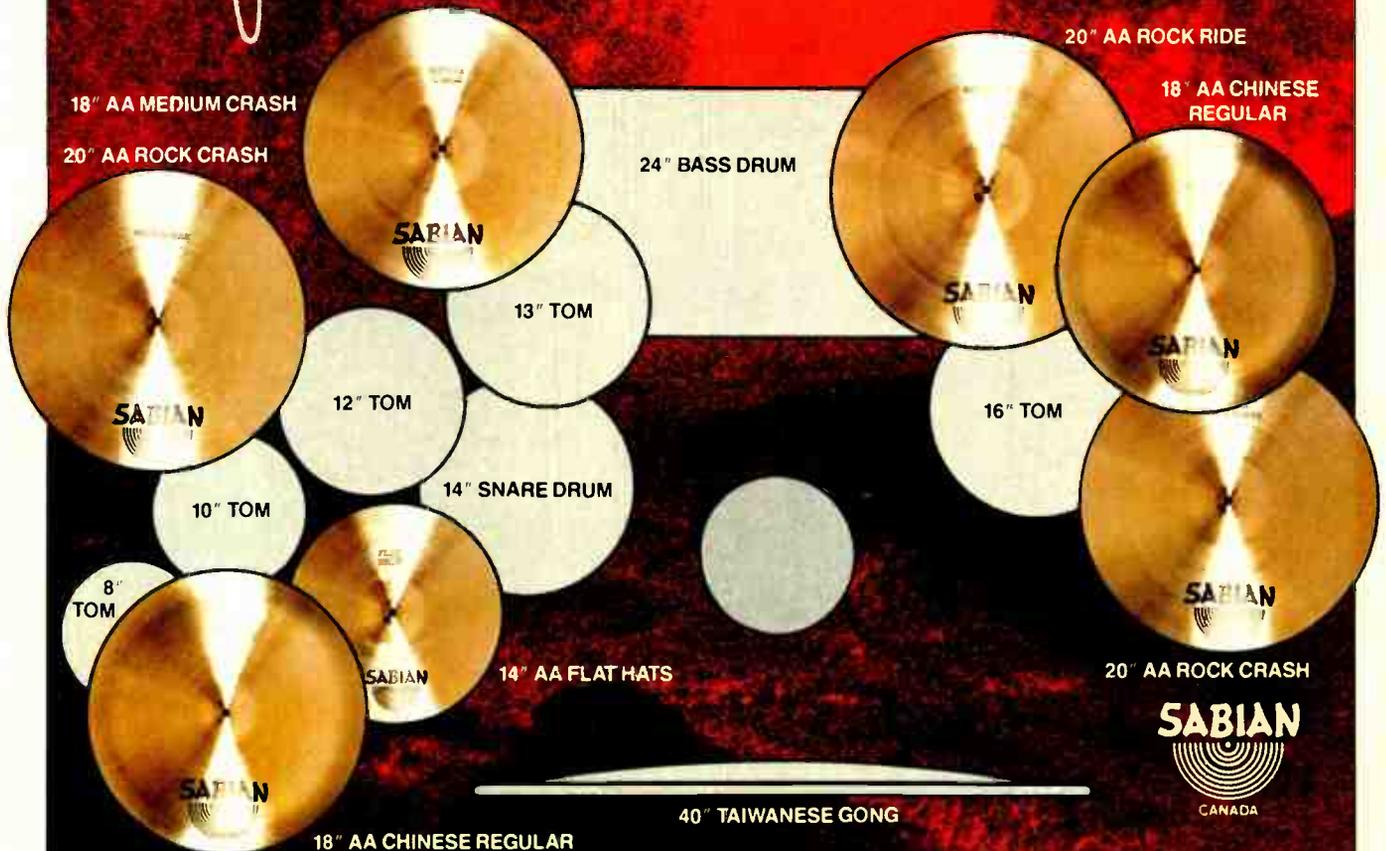


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Vinny Appice of Dio

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Founded by **Richard C. Desmond**

# Editorial

**IF YOU THINK ORGANIZATIONS** such as the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) will have no impact on your career or First Amendment rights, "You've got another thing comin'," to borrow a song title from Judas Priest, one of the acts cited by the PMRC in its "Filthy 15." The music business, powerful enough to raise millions of dollars to feed the world, must raise its voice to protect itself from a group that claims—via its Washington spousal relationships and right-of-center philosophical dogma—to represent a majority opinion. The PMRC and its kind seek to censor music in a very real and direct way, by calling for a rating system to be imposed upon the recording industry. In the process they are placing themselves in the position of arbiters of moral behavior and cultural and artistic expression.

Just as jazz, blues and early rock & roll were viewed as "devil's music," or music that played upon man's more base instincts, rock is now the primary victim of this 1980s witch hunt. It is a very real threat that should the PMRC not be satisfied with a "self-imposed" record-rating system, it is fully prepared to ask for legislation that will in effect, by law, erode your First Amendment rights as a musician, an engineer, a producer and a citizen. Shrouded in

"concerned parent" rhetoric will be a law that will chill your freedom of expression.

The recording industry has already conceded several points to the PMRC, undoubtedly due to pressure that exists through its aforementioned Washington spousal connections. Before more points are conceded that will directly affect our lives—we being the creators of the music that these people seek to censor—we must make sure our voices are heard. In making our voices heard, we should also state that we neither appreciate nor condone some of the music that is in question. Ironically, however, due to the PMRC's efforts, that music will gain more notoriety and will become more successful. By preventing the natural flow of business in the recording industry, the PMRC has, in fact, heightened the prospects for groups that may have only exploitation in mind.

If the PMRC and its ilk are truly concerned parents, and only want to protect their children from the "carnality" and "obscenity" of rock, perhaps they should ask their children to unplug their headphones, and talk to them about the so-called objectionable material. Without doing this first, it's just like saying, "We'll fix it in the mix."

**Ron Bienstock**  
Publisher/Editor

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## Dave Stewart Wouldn't Lie: The Bond's Great

This year's award for the most wonderfully vile, dirty, raunchy guitar solo on a Top 40 hit goes to:

**Dave Stewart** of Eurythmics?

Hands down. The eight-bar break that detonates "Would I Lie to You?" may not be any technical masterpiece, but the professorial-looking Stewart certainly belies his stoic image by banging out audacious, reckless chords that screech like a car wreck.

Though he's shown playing a Stratocaster in the song's video, Stewart recorded the track with his favorite guitar, an oversized green Gretsch Country Gentleman that he says was originally built for Elvis Presley's guitarist, Scotty Moore. Stewart put the hollow-body electric, which he claims is "very nice for feeding back," into a Scholz Rockman, then straight into the board.



**Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox...**

Other favorite guitars (he presently owns about 20) include a Telecaster constructed out of old Schecter parts, a Robin Octaver and one of the revolutionary Bond guitars, which he utilized on the song "Adrian."

Of the Bond, which incorporates such innovations as a ridged fingerboard, Stewart says, "The action's completely different, so you've got to play it completely differently," adding, "I play it more like an Indian instrument."

"But once you're used to it, you can do things you can't on a normal guitar. It's like a fretless bass," he analogizes, "only it's a lead instrument."

## Nils Lofgren: All Thumbs

It's difficult enough to analyze **Nils Lofgren's** playing technique, but especially when the slight guitarist is airborne, having executed one of his patented onstage somersaults. But cornered toward the end of his whirlwind tour as a member of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, Lofgren revealed a few of his tricks.

"Well, for one thing, I play with a thumbpick," he explained, "which gives a much harder edge to the sound. But it's not as easy to get a soft strumming sound, so to get much variation I have to change where I hit the strings. Over the end of the fingerboard and up by the neck pickup gives a softer, warmer sound, whereas if I want a harder, brighter tone I play toward the bridge. That position's also good for picking."

Another of Lofgren's techniques is false harmonics, which he picked up from **Roy Buchanan**, whom he respectfully calls "a

# OPENERS

by Philip Bashe

tremendous player."

"The secret is to play the note you want in the normal fashion with the left hand, then touch the string lightly with one finger of your right hand exactly twelve frets up from the left-hand position; just split the neck in half and touch the string at the middle point. Then pick the string and take the right-hand finger off, and you'll get a real ping-y high harmonic on the note you're playing. I use that a lot."

Besides Buchanan, the Fender Strat and Super Reverb playing Lofgren enjoys the guitaring of two of his employers over the years: **Neil Young**—who engaged the then 17-year-old from Chicago to play piano on his 1970 album *After the Goldrush*—and current boss **Bruce Springsteen**.



**Nils Lofgren: Uses a thumbpick...**

"Both are really good," said Lofgren, "even though they're not known primarily as guitarists. Bruce is like Neil, very much a feel player. When Neil was playing not long back, Bruce and I went along and got up at the end for a jam, and it was great to hear them playing together. We did Neil's 'Down by the River,' and Bruce did a blinding solo, really getting into it."

"Down by the River"? How apropos.

## Old Grandad

Here's a trivia question for you: While it's no longer unusual for rock & roll musicians to be in their 40s or even their 50s, how many are *grandparents*? Beaver Brown saxophonist **Michael Antunes**, 44, is the father of nine and the grandfather of two, though you'd hardly know it from his energetic stage performances with the Rhode Island-based band, currently riding a crest of what Antunes calls "Beaver Fever."

"A lot of these kids are amazed when they find out I'm older than their parents," he chuckles.

Antunes, a native of Dartmouth, Massachusetts, is a third-generation Cape Verdian, an ethnic group that originated on the formerly Portuguese island of Cape Verde. The saxman's grandparents were part of the migration to America around the turn of the century, settling along with many of their compatriots in the whaling city of New Bedford, Massachusetts.

When he's not touring or recording with Beaver Brown, Antunes often sits in with the local Cape Verdian bands, playing a hybrid he describes as similar to folk music, "like the theme from *The Godfather*. It also has a Brazilian and calypso flavor because Brazil was also settled by the Portuguese."



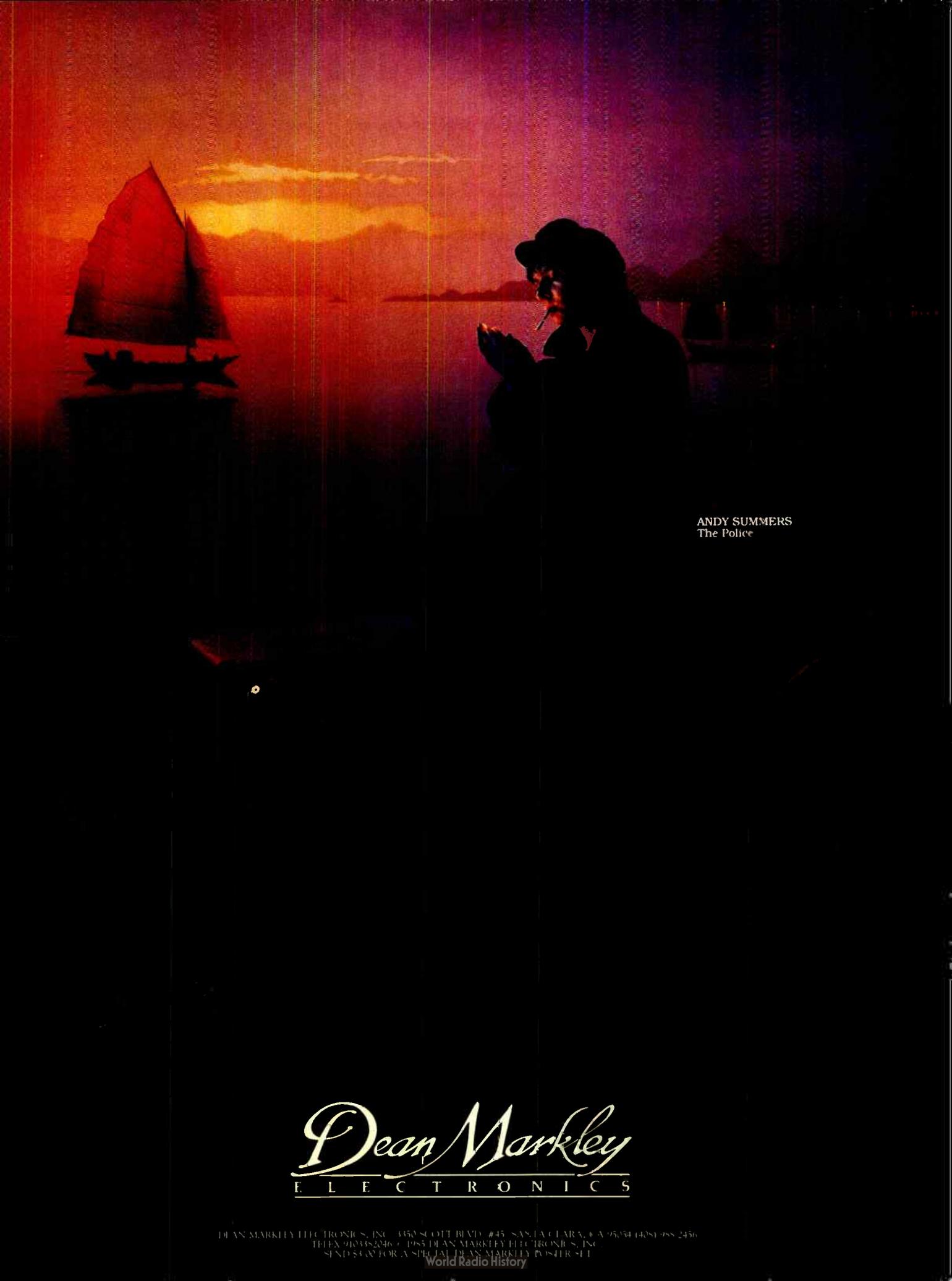
**Michael Antunes: Perseverance...**

Antunes plays the same Selmer Mark VI sax that's been his mainstay since the 1950s, and says he's used the same mouthpiece—a metal Berg Larson 110/2 with a Rico Royal No. 5 reed—since 1955, when he began his career while still in high school. He recently added a Yamaha YTS-62 to his cache.

Now in his seventh year with the 12-year-old Beaver Brown, Antunes sums up the group's career with just one word: perseverance. It wasn't until last year, with the #1 smash "On the Dark Side" from the *Eddie and the Cruisers* soundtrack, that the sextet enjoyed its first hit. "If you believe in something," declares Antunes, "you have to keep that faith in yourself." —David Gross

## Major LPs Expected This Month

**A&M:** Y&T, Simple Minds; **Arista:** Jermaine Jackson, Ray Parker, Jr., Icicle Works; **Atlantic:** Pete Townshend, Gary Moore, Stevie Nicks; **Capitol:** Bob Seger, Iron Maiden, Arcadia; **CBS:** Mick Jones, James Taylor, Art Garfunkel; **Chrysalis:** Midge Ure, Paul Hardcastle; **Elektra/Asylum:** Ruben Blades; **EMI America:** David Bowie; **Epic:** Clash, Arthur Baker, Molly Hatchet; **I.R.S.:** Alarm, Fine Young Cannibals; **MCA:** Damned, Kim Wilde, Giuffria; **PolyGram:** Everly Brothers, Bananarama; **Warner Bros.:** Chick Corea, Carla Bley, Joni Mitchell, Asia, Modern English, Peter Gabriel, Elton John, Tony Iommi, Replacements, Aerosmith, Violent Femmes, Siouxsie and the Banshees.



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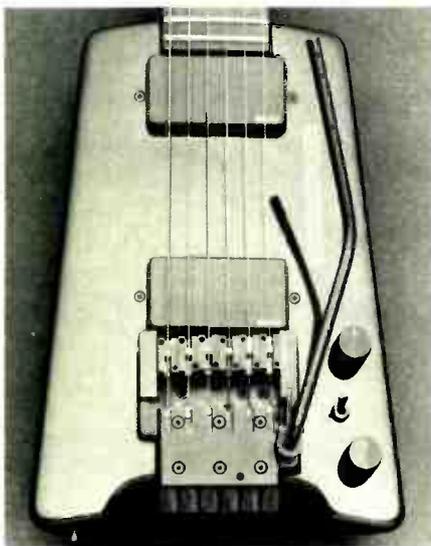
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# INTERNATIONAL MUSICIANS

## Bearsville, NY/DAVID TORN

The words "jazz guitar" conjure a definite image in most minds. But given half a chance, David Torn will change that image faster than you can say "Joe Pass."

Like a surprisingly large number of guitarists, the 32-year-old Torn's first instrument was a Kay acoustic, acquired with a few dozen books of green stamps. Immersion in '60s rock influenced his early playing heavily, but you'd never know it now; aside from a few feedback tricks, there's very little to pin on him. "When I was trying to figure out what I wanted to sound like," he says, "I stopped listening to music completely." What developed in that vacuum was a distillation of non-Western tones, Hendrixian feedback and expansive patterns that Torn calls "organized free improvising," with no part of the instrument left unexplored.

An expert at manipulating the whammy bar, Torn helped develop Steinberger's TransTrem—a transposing tremolo that not only keeps strings in tune and intervals intact, but allows you to change the guitar's open tuning with one slap. Proud of his work, he plays nothing but Steinbergers now. In fact, forced to use an older instrument at a recent European concert, the guitarist felt "like I was driving a truck."

Even on a "16-wheeler," Torn can perform some mighty interesting stunts. His pre-Steinberger work with the Everyman Band (whose new LP *Without Warning* is just out) and percussionist Mark Nauseef runs the

gamut from delicate tinkling (which he calls "piano guitar") to McLaughlin-esque howls. "Some of the things that sound like feedback are me holding up the guitar and singing or humming into the pickups," Torn reveals.

*Best Laid Plans*, his first solo LP, on the ECM label, combines plenty of adventurous playing with a further departure from convention: an excursion into what Torn calls "time without meter." Percussionist Geoffrey Gordon had his hi-hat and bass drum taken away, and played essentially at random. "It's definitely pulse oriented," Torn explains, "but there are no bar lines, no measures."

Perhaps surprisingly, it works most of the time. A vaguely African feel rises from the odd timings, and Torn's organic chordings sound almost orchestral, though few overdubs were used. His technique works the guitar to death, with tapping, string scraping and bending, and "lots of toys" let loose. Combined with a heavy picking style (and a heavy pick, made of agate), there's very little space. Ringing harmonics fill pieces such as "In the Fifth Direction" to the extent that his picking hand all but disappears in the overlay.

He talks a lot of spiritualism in his work, crediting that view to a stint with trumpeter Don Cherry, who gave him this bit of advice: "If you hear yourself as a sitar, or a koto, then at that moment, that is what you are." That, adds Torn, "will always stay with me."

—David Sprague

Management: EMB, Box 465, Bearsville, NY 12409; Booking: ECM Records, 3 E. 54 St., New York, NY 10022.





## Sydney, Australia/MIDNIGHT OIL

With politically insipid acts such as Ratt and Dead or Alive spending equally overlong amounts of time on the charts, and Live Aid being the exception more than the rule, relevant rock has rarely been further from America's mainstream. As you read this, it's about 9,000 miles away, in the guise of Midnight Oil, perhaps the great hope for intelligence in modern music.

"Yes, we write about issues," nods singer Peter Garrett, 31, "but we don't push an ideology." The 6'5" ex-surfer cuts an imposing figure with his wild onstage antics, but more importantly, he puts his money where his mouth is: the Oils claim to have donated over \$500,000 to various political causes.

## Huntington, NY/JACK STARR

Few of his neighbors in the sedate suburban community of Huntington are probably aware of Jack Starr's occupation as a hard-rock guitarist. And outside of a small but devoted colony of followers, few in the U.S. are readily familiar with his work. Over in Europe, however, this Starr is a veritable celebrity, a guitar hero that the British press frequently mentions in the same breath as Eddie Van Halen, Gary Moore, et al.

And Starr, 33, has the fan mail to prove it—approximately 10,000 letters, he claims with a mixture of pride and bemusement, stashed away in his music room. But because the majority of his audience resides on the other side of the globe, Starr often has difficulty fathoming his own popularity. The same artist who can get aired on only a handful of American radio stations recently received a letter from Radio Warsaw in Poland, informing him that his last album was voted in at #3 in a listeners' poll.

Like another Long Island-bred act, Twisted Sister—who, after a decade pinballing around the local circuit, sought refuge in England and last year skyrocketed to stardom in America—Starr is hopeful of transforming his overseas reputation into comparative success at home. His two independent LPs as leader of the metal outfit Virgin Steele sold 40,000 copies each, as did his 1984 solo album on Passport Records, *Out of the Darkness*, which featured Riot's Rhett Forrester and ex-Rainbow drummer Gary Driscoll among the musicians. For *Rock Is the*

Unlike most rock & roll artists, Garrett backs up political potshots with cranial ammunition—and guts. A trained lawyer, he spent much of last year—the band's most successful—making a serious run for an Australian senate seat as a candidate for the Nuclear Disarmament Party. And he came within a whisker of winning, receiving approximately 300,000 votes.

A decade ago, the Oils were a fixture in Sydney's tough beachfront surfer clubs (imagine bikers in swim trunks), releasing their debut, *Midnight Oil*, in 1978. Though Gretsch guitarist Jim Moginie insists they were just "a plain ol' pub band" back then, the nuclear issue rarely left the forefront on their first four LPs, particularly the harrowingly heavy *10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1*, which spent a year and a half in the Aussie Top 20, and was picked up by Columbia Records for their bow in the States last year.

*10,9,8...* also showcased the Oils' newly sophisticated and varied musical palette, with producer Nick Launay (PiL, Gang of Four) nudging them away from their brawling rock style and into more subtle, occasionally surreal territory. Their latest effort, *Red Sails in the Sunset*, entered the Aussie charts at #1 but was judged by some at their label as "too Australian" lyrically for American ears. Characteristically, the band, which has frequently fought pushes to tone down its nationalism, refused to change a word.

"You can't enter anything you don't feel comfortable in," Garrett muses; "record contracts, for example." Midnight Oil now

*American Way*, recorded on a Studer A800 24-track and a Trident console, the French-born guitarist assembled a band, Jack Starr's Burning Starr.

On its album, the group impresses foremost with its resoluteness not to fall hostage to prevailing metal trends. In place of a maelstrom of sound are songs that pivot on well-constructed melodies and arrangements, then are sliced open by Starr's tensile, Jeff Beck-influenced solos. Conspicuously and blessedly absent are such '80s metal-guitar clichés as two-handed tapping; instead, clarity and emotion comprise Starr's calling card. And though he does play a stock Charvel Stratocaster, he may possibly be the lone hard-rock axeman not to wield a locking tremolo system, which in Starr's opinion "changes the whole feel of the guitar; I'm very opposed to it." Both the Strat, his two-pickup ESP Explorer RS and his Lado Flying V go through two 200-watt Randall heads and two 4-12" Carvin bottoms.

Songs such as "Woman" and "Fight the Thunder" display another refreshing aspect of Burning Starr: the way they champion positive values rather than patronize their mostly adolescent listeners with gratuitous sex and violence, as do so many metal groups. The only pandering Burning Starr could be accused of is their LP's preponderance of songs that overreach in their attempt at being exultant metal anthems—e.g., the title track, "Born to Rock," "Live Fast, Rock Hard." Starr, however, has a ready defense for such criticism: "I knew I'd take some flak

insist on tape-lease deals to sidestep the ties that bind. Garretts shrugs, insisting, "They're only giving us our money back anyway." *Red Sails*, recorded and mixed at prestigious Victor Aoyama Studios in Tokyo, probably required a lot of it too. "It took about ten weeks," Garrett says, "but that's partly because we were in a Japanese studio with a Japanese staff, and after a couple of weeks we ran out of money for an interpreter.

"It was strange working there," he continues; "it's very rigid. They're in at nine a.m. and out at nine p.m. Drums go *right there*, piano *right there* and that's that." He laughingly recalls the staff's frustration over Fender Precision bassist Peter Gifford and Ludwig/Premier drummer Rob Hirst commandeering a stairwell for a live sound. The fifth Oil, guitarist Martin Rotsey, plays a stock '63 Fender Stratocaster through a 100-watt Marshall head and a Marshall cabinet.

While knowledgeable about the technical end of things, Garrett—who sings through a Shure SM58 mike and plays Hohner Marine Band harmonicas—would much rather discuss the state of the world. "Not very pleasant but not hopeless," he says. Though he concludes with the rock & roll platitude "The new record speaks for itself," aside from a few phrases an Aussie-English dictionary wouldn't elucidate, he's absolutely right.

—David Sprague

Management: c/o CBS Records, 51 W. 52 St., New York, NY 10019; Booking: FB.I., 1776 B'way, New York, NY 10019.

for that. But I think, as trite as this may sound, rock & roll has become a really big force in the world, so why not write about it?

"When I was a kid," he ruminates, "I always thought rock & roll was something that could have a very big impact. As the '70s wore on I began to think that maybe I was stupid to feel that way, but now I'm beginning to get that same buzz again, that maybe this music does make sense and is something people want to believe in."

To illustrate his point, Starr reads aloud one of his 10,000 fan letters, from a girl in apartheid-torn South Africa.

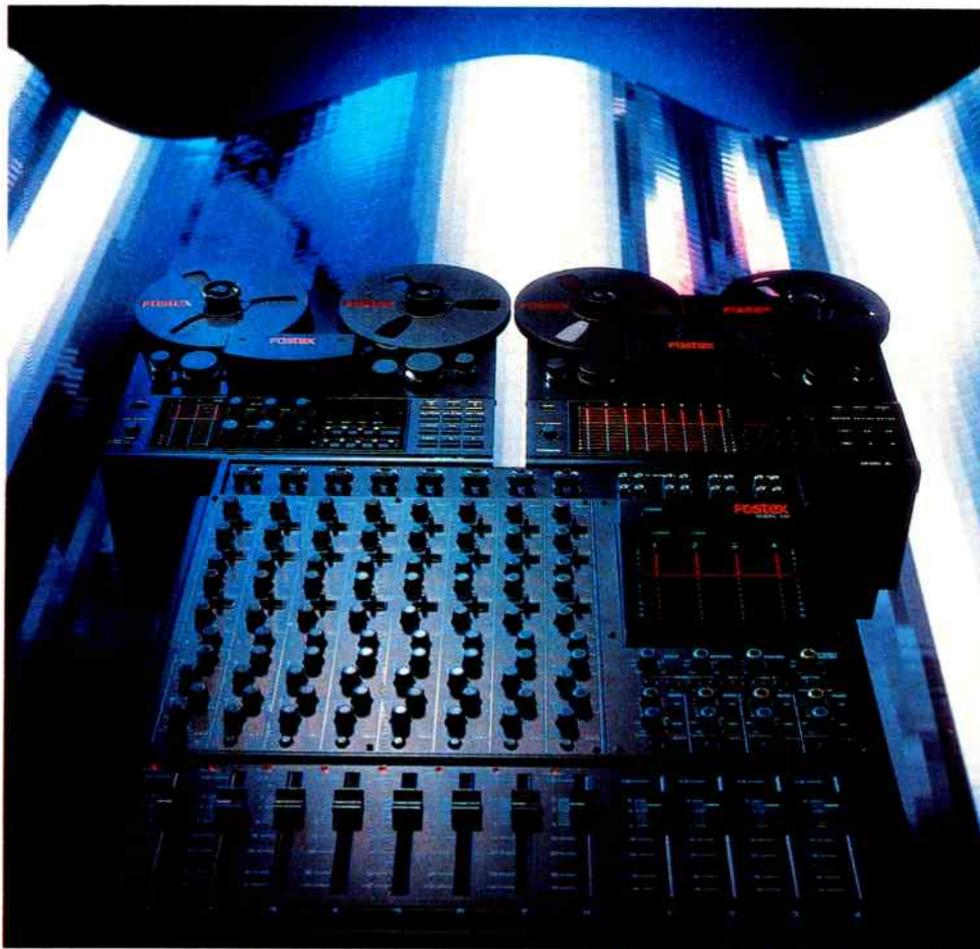
"She wrote, 'In this hellhole where I live, great records like yours are the only things that make my miserable life worth living.'"

Putting away the letter, Starr says soberly, "It really puts you in your place as a musician and makes you realize how seriously you've got to take your music." —P.B.

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## **RICHIE MORALES** Spyrogyra drummer

I've been experiencing a lot of trouble with cracking cymbals. I am already using heavy-duty cymbals—Paiste Rudes—but I can't seem to get them to last. I'm a hard player, but I've seen harder. What could I be doing wrong?

Paul Trust  
Hollywood, FL

The angle at which the cymbal is mounted is important. If you have it mounted perpendicular to the stand and you're hitting it edge on, that's the quickest way to crack any cymbal, no matter what its weight. Try to angle each one so that the surface is tilted toward you. Also, don't screw down the wing nut so tightly that there's no room for the cymbal to vibrate; make sure there's a lot of play.

In general, this sounds to me like a case of overplaying; if you're cracking Rude cymbals, there's something wrong, because those are essentially steel plates with no grooves. You might try other heavyweight cymbals, such as Zildjian's Impulse. It's along the same lines—a sheet-stamped heavy cymbal—and it's pretty musical sound-wise.

## **EARL SLICK** Phantom, Rocker and Slick guitarist

I play guitar in a four-piece band (guitar, bass, keyboards, drums) and am constantly switching between lead and rhythm parts. Any suggestions on going from lead to rhythm smoothly, especially in terms of volume? Do you A/B, using two amps? Help!

Rich Sutton  
Akron, OH

I had the same problem you have, and used to go through a lot of grief until I figured out what to do. I play custom-made DiMarzio guitars that have special capacitors soldered onto the volume pots. I don't know exactly what the capacitor's rating is, but with it, when you turn down the guitar's volume you still get a crisp, punchy sound. You can have this done at a guitar-repair shop.

So instead of your using switches, the guitar does the work for you. I keep my volume at ten for leads, just below five for rhythm. Of course, your other alternative is an A/B switch, going either from channel to channel on a two-channel amp with clean and overdriven sounds, or from one amp to another.

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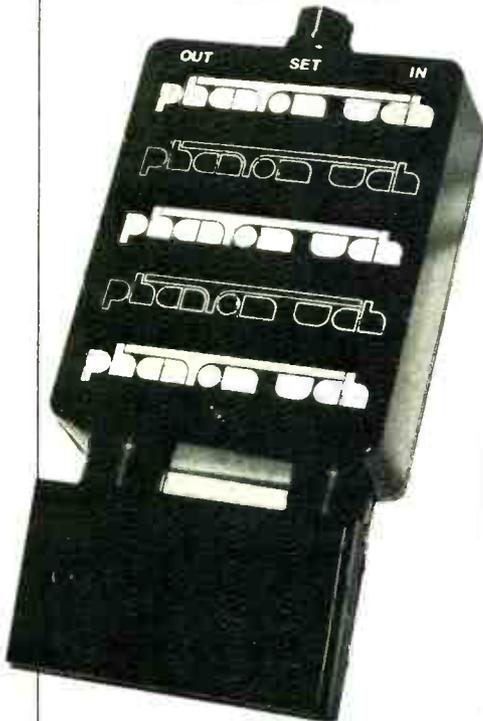
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IM&RW November 1985 13

# EQUIPMENT FILE



## THE MAGIC PHANTOM

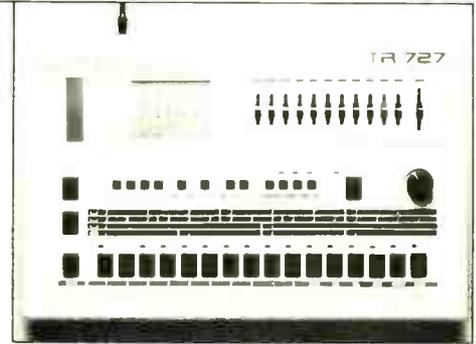
Phantom, Inc., announces the Phantom Wah, the world's first proximity-controlled guitar effects device. Unlike traditional units, center frequency is determined by the proximity of a foot to the sensor plate, and is continuously adjustable by moving the foot up and down over the plate. In addition, Phantom Wah electronically switches on when the foot nears the plate and off when it leaves. For the studio, Phantom Wah features expanded three-octave range (250Hz-2,000Hz) and state-of-the-art digital filtering for low noise, distortion and hum levels. Suggested retail price is \$189. For more information, write Phantom, Inc., 6350 Brooks Blvd., Mentor, OH 44060, or call (216) 257-1134.

Circle Number 100

## E ROLANDUS UNUM

Roland combines new Latin sound dimensions with programming ease in its new TR-727 Rhythm Composer. The new unit features 15 digitally recorded percussion sounds and all the same programming functions—including MIDI—found in the popular TR-707 Rhythm Composer. Percussion sounds include high and low bongo, high conga open and muted, low conga, high and low timbales, high and low agogo, cabasa, maracas, short and long whistle, quijada and chimes. The TR-727 can store 64 rhythm patterns and rhythm chains of up to 999 measures, and an optional M-64C memory cartridge can double this capacity. Suggested retail price is \$595. For more information, write RolandCorp

Circle Number 101



US, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA 90040, or call (213) 685-5141.

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Tascam designed its new 300 series boards to meet the demands of both studio recording and live sound reinforcement. Available are the new eight-channel M308 (\$1,795), 12-channel M-312 (\$2,695) and 20-channel M-320 (\$3,495). A sophisticated signal-routing system takes care of most complex foldback, effects-mixing, sub-grouping and monitoring requirements. Ample inputs and outputs combined with Tascam's convenient top-panel switch matrix virtually eliminate the need for patching. Four separate buss systems offer plenty of options for individual cue mixes in the studio, or separate monitor and house mixes at a show. For more information, write Tascam, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90604, or call (213) 726-0303.

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Circle Number 104



## TELL IT TO THE REV

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equalizer. The REV7 incorporates 30 instantly available preset ROM effects, and an additional 60 effects programs can be easily created, stored and instantly recalled. The REV7 also incorporates complete MIDI facilities. Suggested retail price is \$1,195. For more information, write Yamaha International Corporation, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622, or call (714) 522-9011.

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# EQUIPMENT FILE



## FOSTEX REPLACES A-8 SERIES

Fostex introduces its new model 90 1/4" eight-track recorder as a replacement for the company's well-known A-8 series. The new model features microprocessor-controlled transport, two-position memory, automatic repeat, remote punch in/out option, Dolby C, 15 ips and 72db s/n, and synchronizer with controller and auto-locator will soon be available. Suggested retail price is \$1,995. For more information, write Fostex Corporation of America, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA 90650, or call (213) 921-1112.

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## KAMAN EXPANDS KMD WITH NEW AMP LINE

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Circle Number 106



Circle Number 107

## DRIVE THIS

Korg (a division of Unicord) announces its new SQD-1 digital MIDI recorder with built-in disk drive. The drive is a 3" Quick Disk capable of storing up to 30,000 notes per disk plus fast load/unload time. Sixteen-channel recording/playback capabilities enable it to function as a tapeless recording studio for up to 16 MIDI-equipped devices. Other features include real- and step-time recording, drum and tape syncs, MIDI channel assignment for all 16 channels and LED display. Suggested retail price is \$695. For more information, write Unicord, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590, or call (516) 333-9100.

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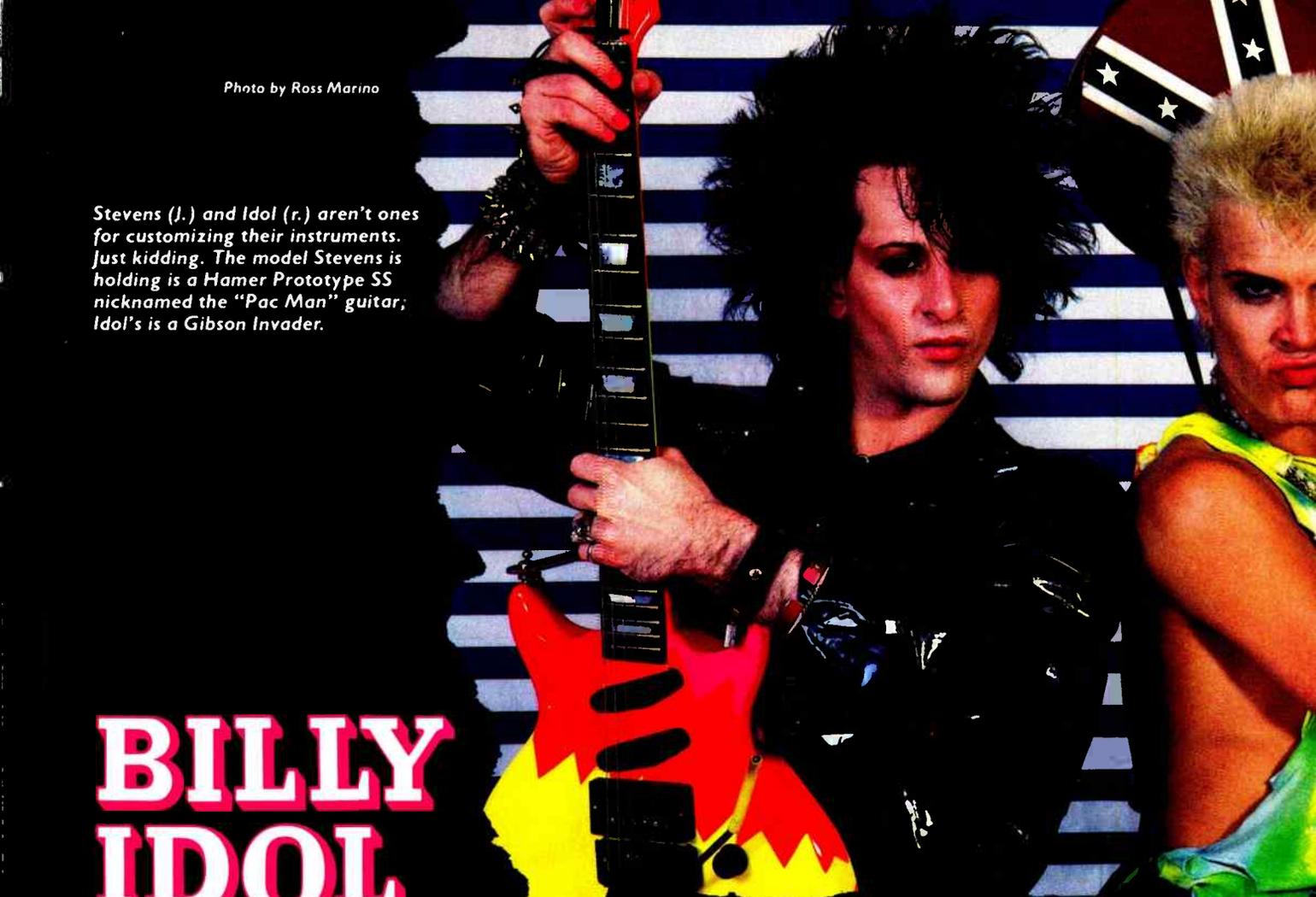
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Photo by Ross Marino

Stevens (l.) and Idol (r.) aren't ones for customizing their instruments. Just kidding. The model Stevens is holding is a Hamer Prototype SS nicknamed the "Pac Man" guitar; Idol's is a Gibson Invader.



# BILLY IDOL AND STEVE STEVENS

by Philip Bashe

This is the story of two distinctly different personalities, one of whom seeks to be taken seriously as an artist, and to that end has created a body of musical work which stands with the best of 1980s rock & roll. The other personality seems to undermine the talents of his better half, posturing, posing and in general carrying on like a teenager's composite sketch of a "punk" rock star.

This is not the story of Billy Idol and Steve Stevens—that comes later. The dual personalities are Billy Idol himself.

The singer's apparent confusion over which is his true self is understandable, given his past. Born William Broad 30 years ago this month in Stanmore, England, his early years were spent shuttling between Britain and America. When he was three, his father, a salesman, settled the family in Rockville Centre, New York, a homogenous suburb 30 minutes from Manhattan. When the Broads moved back to England four years later, their son spoke with a conspicuous American accent.

The family returned just in time for the proliferation of rock & roll bands such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones; the first record William bought was the Fab Four's "She Loves You," though he was more smitten by the Beatles' own influences—the Elvis Presley and Gene Vincent songs he'd heard on AM radio while residing in the States.

By the time he was on the cusp of 20, Broad was growing increasingly impatient with what by 1975 was a woefully staid pop-music scene. He was not alone. After work as a delivery-van driver he'd loiter at Sex, a clothing store on King's Road that was owned by impresario Malcolm McLaren, also the manager of the band the Sex Pistols. The shop quickly became the hub of the then-burgeoning punk movement and was frequented by members of the Clash, Siouxsie and the Banshees, et al.

Swept up in the do-it-yourself spirit of the day, Broad placed an ad in the *Melody Maker*: "I want to form a group." In August 1976 he and bassist Tony James began Chelsea, later renamed Generation X. He renamed

himself as well—Billy Idol—the pseudonym intended to trivialize pop celebrity. That was something roundly viewed as shallow and corrupt—until it became obtainable, which eventually contributed to most of the acts' downfall.

But for a brief time, Billy Idol and Generation X vied with the Pistols and the Clash for popularity, if not impact, recording three LPs under the guidance of such prominent producers as Martin Rushent, Ian Hunter and Keith Forsey.

In the States, however, English punk was received about as readily as new-formula Coke. One of its few fans was Steven Schneider, 18 years old at the time of *Generation X's* release. Schneider, who later amended his name to Steve Stevens (at the joking suggestion of former New York Doll Sylvain Sylvain), had been playing guitar since he was six and a half.

"My dad brought home a cheap Japanese guitar," he recalls sleepily, slumped in a chair at his publicist's

# THE PUNK MEETS THE GODFATHER OF SUPERSONIC GUITAR



ductor while clutching my guitar. I ended up sleeping in class all the time."

After one year he quit and moved into a New York City loft whose tenants included such local music scene denizens as Tom Verlaine, Sylvain Sylvain, Johnny Thunders, the Dead Boys and a struggling young singer named Cyndi Lauper. Stevens likewise became a fixture in the clubs, though he never played a note.

Nineteen eighty-one, Generation X had disbanded, by that time just more flotsam from the largely discredited punk movement. Already forgotten in Britain—now in thrall of new romantics such as the swashbuckling Adam Ant and the sartorial Duran Duran—Idol made the decision to relocate to New York City, which he remembered from his childhood as tingling with excitement and vitality. The next year his and Stevens's lives intersected, in one of the Manhattan nightspots that was playing Idol's solo debut EP, *Don't Stop*.

"When Billy first came to New York," says Stevens, "very few people knew who he was, so it was very easy to get to know him." The two struck up an immediate friendship, and when Idol mentioned that he was looking to put together a band, Stevens offered his services as guitarist for the auditions. Idol never bothered to try out guitar players, at least not to Stevens's knowledge; their partner-hip had begun.

**What sort of things do Idol and Stevens disagree on? "Oh, the usual," says Stevens, "where I want to play one hundred notes in four bars, and he wants only forty."**

Photo by Ross Marino

office after a late night of recording. "I think he wanted to be Burl Ives. He always liked music, but I guess his instrument was the phonograph." When Mr. Schneider lost interest in the instrument, it was passed on to Steven, though it was a full year before his parents would consent to paying for lessons. "They didn't think I was serious about it," Stevens chuckles. "Little did they know."

Stifling a yawn and rubbing his mascara-limned eyes, he goes on to tell of growing up in Far Rockaway, New York, where "We lived in our nice little house in our nice little Jewish neighborhood, and all of my friends were Puerto Rican. We'd hang out in the projects and listen to the Stylistics and to *Superfly* by Curtis Mayfield. I always liked that music. I *hadda* like it," he grins, "to get along with those girls."

"So it was a sort of head-on collision. They understood me. I was the wild, freaky guy; I'd play rock & roll."

Stevens's attempt at studying music at the School of the Performing Arts in Manhattan was short-lived. "By that time I was messing with a group in the Bronx, and so I'd take the subway from Far Rockaway to Manhattan to the Bronx, and then come back at two in the morning, sitting next to the con-

**B**illy Idol is running late, which seems to be the order of the day. To his management's lower Manhattan offices has just been delivered a gold record for British sales of "White Wedding," originally released three years earlier. And Idol's third album, *Whiplash Smile*, already behind schedule, was dealt a serious setback when equipment trouble at Electric Lady studios caused producer Keith Forsey to pull the plug on the project until another studio could be located. Release date has now been pushed back to early 1986, more than two years after the multiplatinum *Rebel Yell*.

And technical problems, apparently, weren't the only cause for delay. Electric Lady's studio manager concedes that there were technical malfunctions when Idol, Stevens, Forsey and engineer Dave Concours moved from studio B to studio A to record drummer Thommy Price. "However," he contends, "my opinion is that progress on the album wasn't developing as fast as they would have liked, and so there were increasing personal tensions within the sessions."

Nevertheless, Idol hardly seems perturbed as he is shepherded off the elevator by his linebacker-size bodyguard, who earlier had joked with a wink, "I'll wait downstairs for the little maniac." Idol, in fact, is in an expansive mood, dressed flamboyantly in black leather, black cape, black steel-tipped boots and black beret, which covers the famous blond protopunk spiked hair that Idol, whose natural color is brown,



began dying when he was 16. Dangling chains clatter noisily, and one hand bears enough silver rings to warrant being registered as a lethal weapon. The preponderance of black sets off his chalky complexion, yet Idol, a vegetarian, looks as healthy as he looks jovial.

(And, for those interested in such things, it should be reported that the famous Idol lip curl is for real. The result of heredity? Years of practice? Couldn't tell.)

The singer is philosophic when asked if the problems with the studio were demoralizing, especially since momentum was just beginning to roll.

"Naw," he says in his guttural accent, "not at all. We were going to have to take time off at some point anyway, just to get out and study what we've been doing. Plus, it gives me time to write more songs."

Advance word is that *Whiplash Smile* is Idol's most personal record of his career.

affected largely by his breakup with dancer-model Perri Lister after several years. Vulnerability is one emotion he's rarely shown; most Idol-Stevens compositions seem to be either war cries that course wildly ("Rebel Yell"), or cynical observations of romance that move as if in a dreamscape ("Eyes Without a Face"). Idol attributes his new first-person writing to, simply, growing up.

"There comes a time, when you've lived a certain number of years, that those things come out," he says thoughtfully. "The difficulty I'm finding in writing like that is getting the songs to be confessional without sounding like... *slop*. There's a huge difference between being honest and being some sort of wimp."

Luckily, Idol has his songwriting partner to help prevent that from happening. His and Stevens's creative relationship is one of a

series of checks and balances, though ultimately it's Idol who has the final say. Conflicts between frontmen are common in rock & roll, but Idol and Stevens claim to have their egos under control.

As for the sort of things they tend to disagree on, Stevens replies, smiling, "Oh, the usual, where I want to play one hundred notes in four bars, and he wants only forty." That's when Idol becomes the "Punk Police," a nickname coined by Forsey. "The Punk Police?" says Idol a trifle sheepishly. "Yeah. But," he adds, "it's not like it's the punk gestapo. We're both critical of each other, and I think Steve accepts it."

He does, in fact. Gratefully.

"Most guitarists need someone to force them to play something really memorable," asserts Stevens. "Many times I'll look to Billy for the final say, especially with him being the

*Continued on page 22*

## Steve Stevens's Select Selection

### It's Not the Quantity, It's the Oddity

Steve Stevens isn't one of those musicians who need a separate country estate just to house their guitars—he estimates that at most he owns 30—but his collection is noteworthy for its eclecticism and its customized peculiarities. Though his main instrument is the Hamer that bears his name, each of his Steve Stevens models is modified in fanciful, almost eccentric fashion, as if conceived in a dream.

Most extraordinary is the "Raygun" guitar, finished in black metal flake. Why is it called the Raygun? Hamer's Jol Dantzig explains: "Steve has this huge collection of toys, including robots and rayguns. We put one of the rayguns into the guitar and created a separate compartment in back for the electronics so that you could actually 'play' the raygun through the amplifier. There are three momentary buttons and a slide switch on the face, arranged just behind the bridge. The varying combinations of buttons give you different pulse patterns. Steve played it for the first time at Live Aid with the Thompson Twins, and I'm sure that most people thought it was a synthesizer." Pickups are a Seymour Duncan custom Allan Holdsworth model in the bridge and two Duncan APS-1s in the neck and middle positions.

The original Prototype SS Stevens is shown playing on the cover is called "the Pac Man guitar with the Barney Rubble paint job," because its cracked

day-glo finish has reminded some of Barney Rubble's shirt, according to Dantzig. It's gone through so many mutations by the finicky Stevens, guitar tech Jon "J. D." Dworkow refers to it as "the testing pad." Pickups are the same as those on the Raygun. "We also just threw on an old non-fine-tuning Floyd Rose tremolo," says Dworkow, "one of the very first ever made." Much of Stevens's work is done by Manhattan luthier John Suhr, who's serviced instruments for the likes of Mark Knopfler, Mick Jagger, Brian Setzer, Eddie Martinez and Jeff Golub.

Other unique examples of guitars that combine practicality and self-in-

Stevens debuted his black-metal-flake Hamer "Raygun" at Live Aid. Located just behind the bridge are three momentary buttons and a slide switch for "playing" the built-in raygun.

dulgence are a phosphorescent sea-foam-green Hamer with a built-in Roland GR-700 interface; "the Christmas Tree," a three-quarter-size, three-pickup Jackson Soloist painted in what Dworkow calls "this ridiculously grotesque purple-maroon metal-flake and strange green color"; and a 1976 Ramirez Spanish acoustic "built before they stopped using the really good rosewood. Steve picked it up in Chicago, and it's a beautiful guitar."

Rumors that Stevens is currently devising an electric six-string with portable bar, rotisserie, electric can opener and Waterpik are entirely unfounded. For now.

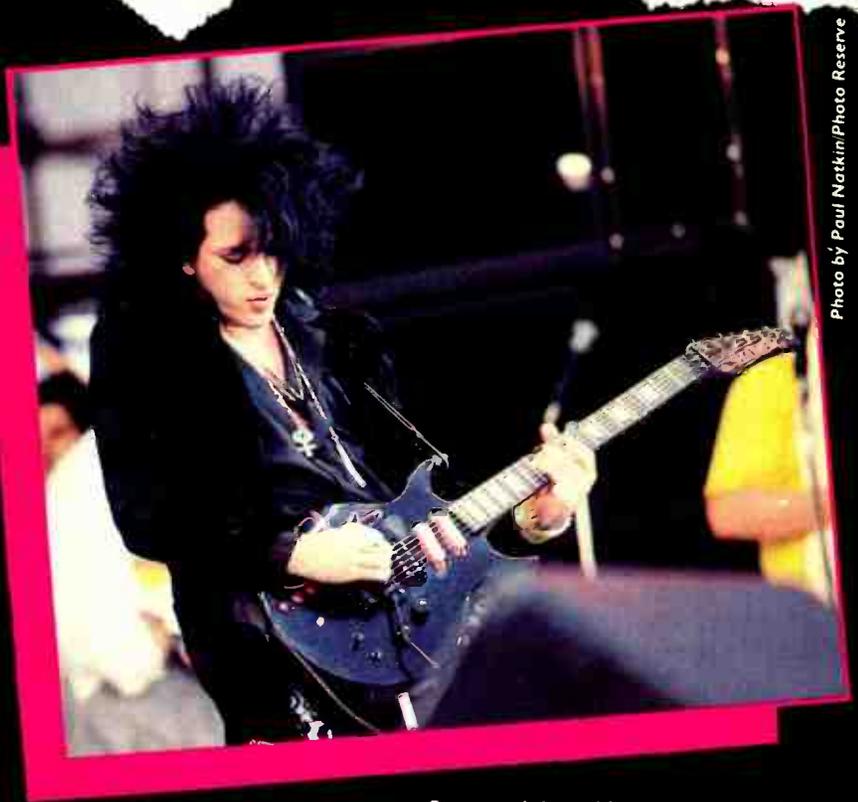
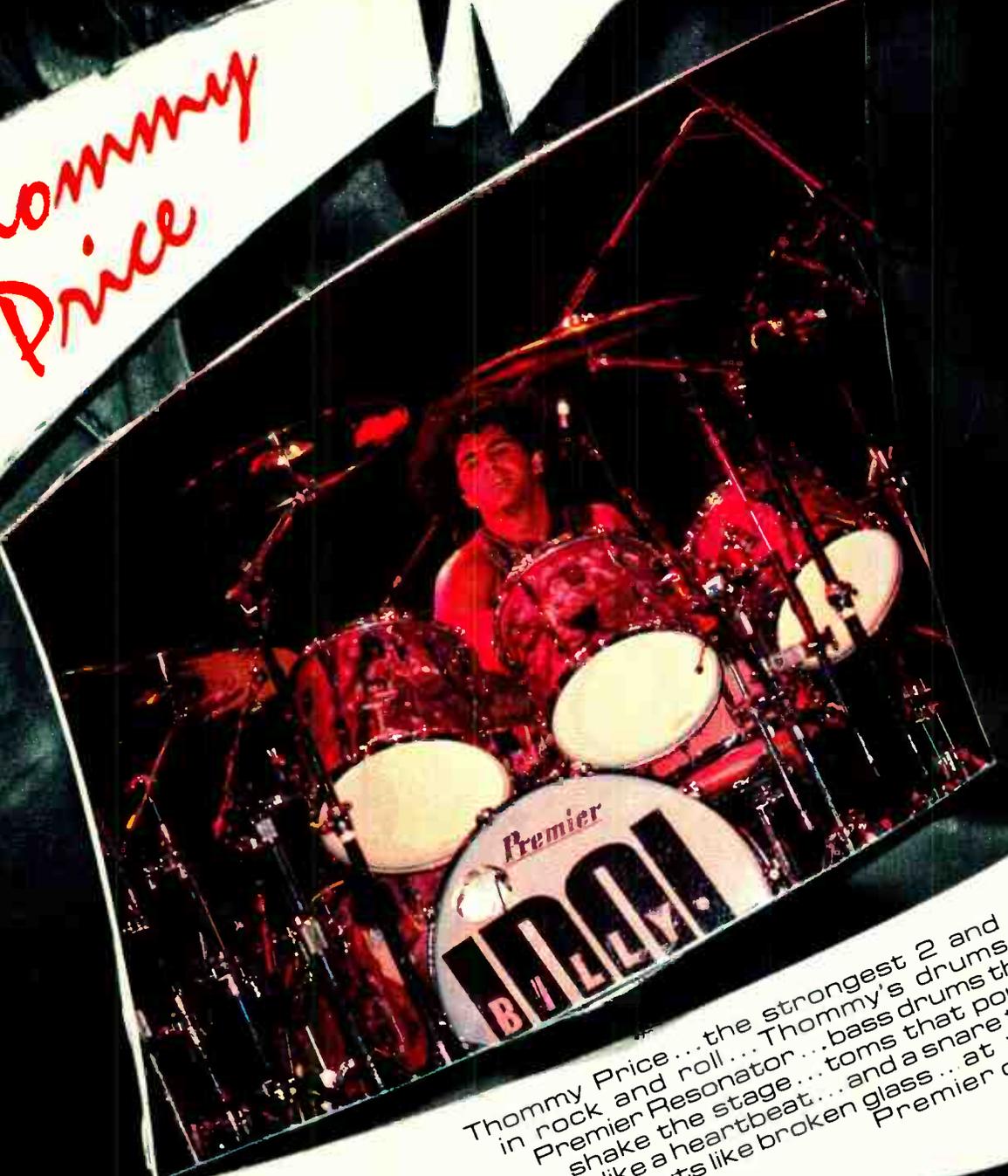


Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

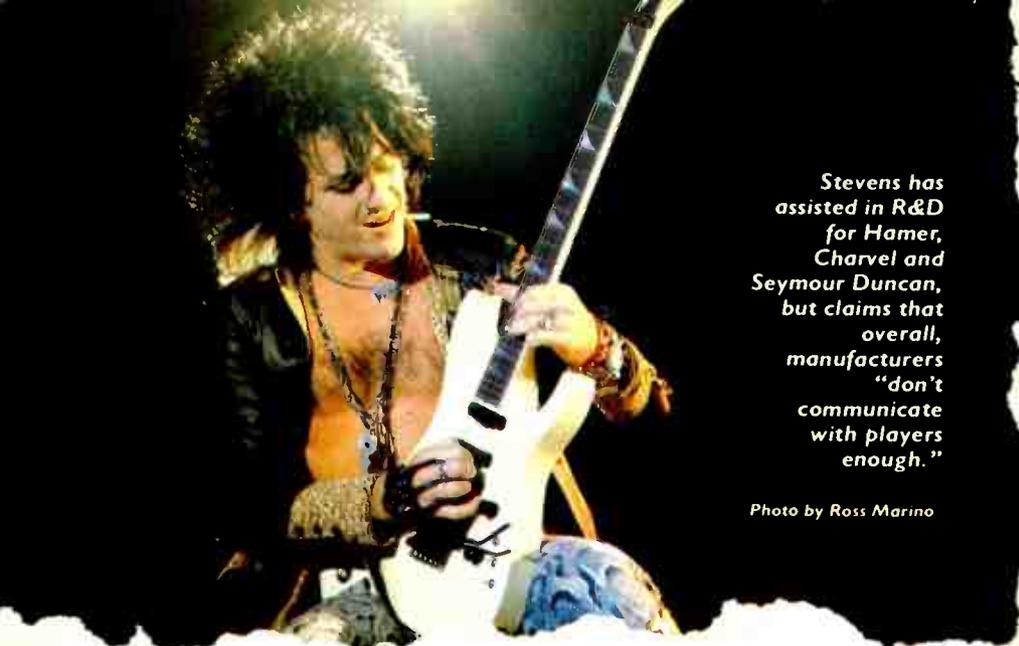
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Stevens has assisted in R&D for Hamer, Charvel and Seymour Duncan, but claims that overall, manufacturers "don't communicate with players enough."

Photo by Ross Marino

lyricist. Often songs are constructed before all the lyrics are finished, and I'll ask him what the mood is going to be, the attitude."

Attitude is something Billy Idol knows about in spades. He plainly admits that "I'm more of a songwriter than a musician, so I see things in terms of moods and feelings." Yet, though Stevens can run rings around him technically, Idol takes some responsibility for helping to shape his protégé's direction between the time of 1982's *Billy Idol* and *Rebel Yell*, on which Stevens became more than a highly capable hard-rock guitarist, but a circus ringmaster of tones, colors and textures.

"Steve always wanted to use all of his

effects," says Idol, puffing placidly on a cigarette. "I told him to just make noise, like sound effects. Fuck the guitar. Fuck playing music. Let's have some fun.

"And Steve was able to put a level of musicality into my songs, to make it more than just a three-chord bash, even though," he says self-effacingly, "it doesn't always sound like it."

Steve Stevens's musicality is considerable, and is especially evident in his highly compositional soloing. His playing is informed by the many different styles of music he listens to, from Bartok to rhythm & blues to Jimi Hendrix, the latter of whom, oddly

enough, is only a recently acquired taste. "I never listened to him until about three years ago," he shrugs, adding, "I don't listen to guitarists per se. I'm aware of them and I appreciate them, but I don't look to them for ideas."

Mostly he looks inward, not only for musical ideas but for technological innovations. Says his guitar tech, Jon "J. D." Dwor-kow, "Steve's motto is 'Have soldering gun will travel.'" When he was just 13, Stevens built the first of many homemade pedalboards, basing it on that of Yes's Steve Howe. "I got a copy of the Yessongs album," he explains, "and they had a photo of his pedalboard, with a Maestro fuzz-box and a Showbud volume pedal. I built my own."

He continues to do so, even though now he certainly has the financial resources to have one built to his exact specifications. "But I can never find anybody who understands what I want to do," he complains. For the last Billy Idol tour, Stevens's complex setup consisted of two pedalboards, with momentary switches for turning off all of his digital delays and for engaging his repeat-hold functions, "so that I could find a note, hold it and put whatever else I wanted on top of it."

The other pedalboard contained mostly Boss effects: CE-2 chorus, OC-2 octaver, CS-2 compressor, PV-1 Rocker volume pedal and a Pro-Co Rat distortion unit. In his rack were two Lexicon PCM41 digital delays, and also set up separately was a Boss GE-10 graphic EQ, though for the spring 1986 tour Stevens reckons he'll substitute a parametric EQ that will be switched in and out electronically. Another change he's considering is putting the majority, if not all, of his effects in a rack,



Photo by Michael Jachles

As exhibited by his forceful yet fluid playing on *Rebel Yell*, and before that for *Scandal* and *Mink DeVille*, Tommy Price is one of today's premier rock & roll drummers. He's also a Premier rock & roll drummer, favoring the brand used by his idol, the late Keith Moon of the Who.

"I started using Premier because I liked the way Moon's drums sounded," remembers the Brooklyn, New York-born Price, now 28.

## This Price Is Right

"Live or in the studio, they always sounded the same."

Price owns several Premier kits, though he's currently using the same eight-piece set in the studio and on stage. Dimensions are 24" x 16" bass drum, 14" x 6½" snare, 12", 13", 14" and 15" rack toms, and 16" and 18" floor toms. Like Stevens a fan of the color pink, Price had the kit finished in pink sparkle and then had figures of nude women airbrushed on the shells—suggestive of Moon's late-'60s drums, airbrushed with *au naturel* Victorian-era ladies, as well as the Who's logo and the slogan "Keith Moon: British Patented Exploding Drummer."

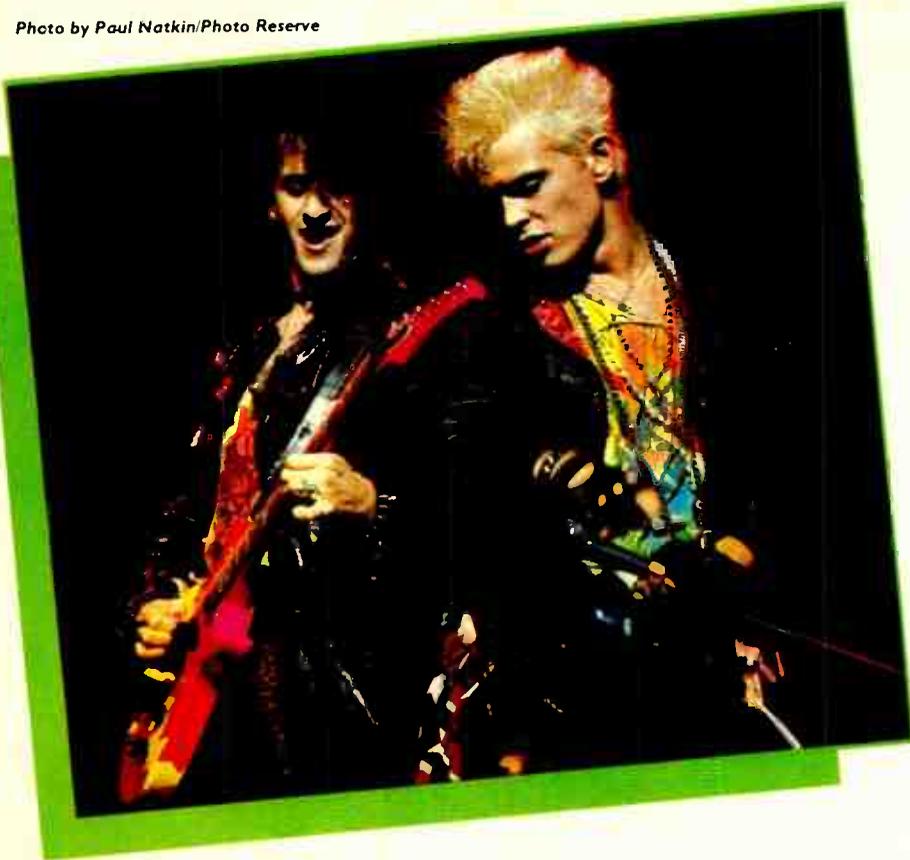
Moon is not the only drummer to inspire Price's interest in Premier. Hearing Phil Collins's colossal drum sound on the *Face Value* solo LP spurred him to purchase the natural-blond wood kit Collins had used in Genesis. "They have a special sound," he says of Premier drums, which he endorses, "and they hold up pretty well on the road too."

Price is also a Zildjian cymbal endorsee, surrounding himself with (from left to right) a 14" New Beat hi-hat, a 16" Chinese type, an 18" medium crash, a 16" medium crash, a 16"

thin crash, a 20" Impulse ride, a 19" medium crash and an 18" Chinese type. A brawny player, Price says he experimented with other cymbals but came back to "the ones that lasted the longest."

Drum heads are Remo white Ambassadors on the snare and Premier clear skins on the toms. "The clears don't last that long, but they sound the best." Heads must be changed before every show, though it's the snare drum that receives the brunt of Price's punishment: "I go through three or four snare heads per night," he says matter-of-factly. Drumsticks are not machetes, as you might suspect by this point, but are customized Calato Regal Tip 5Bs.

For the 1986 Billy Idol tour, Price plans to implement Simmons pads with his acoustic drums "more for sound effects than for actual drum sounds." And while he's an ardent fan of straightahead, physical rock & roll drumming, Price owns a LinnDrum, which he contends "is good for training, to make sure you can lock in with it. There aren't too many drummers who can." Billy Idol seconds that comment with a nod—and, based on experience—a sigh.



Stevens and Idol met in 1982, just as the singer was putting together a band. Stevens offered his services for the auditions; Stevens stayed.

"but how do you put the electronics to a Cry Baby wah-wah in the back?" he asks rhetorically. Stevens's floor setup was completed by a Roland GR-700 synthesizer, a Cry Baby re-wired for him by Roger Mayer and a Roland SDE-3000 delay, and for the GR-700, a Roland SRE-555 echo/reverb/chorus, a Roland Dimension D chorus and an Eventide H999 harmonizer.

Stevens may use so many effect pedals live that he sometimes appears to be tap dancing across the foot of the stage, but he records straight into one 100-watt Marshall head and a 4-12" Marshall cabinet stacked on top of another cabinet for clarity. "That way," he explains, "you're hearing the sound at ear level, as is the microphone, so you're not cranking up the treble because the sound is going by your knees."

Clarity is also the reason why he refrains from effects, for "a purer sound. For example, on the new album there's a heavy rock tune called 'World's Forgotten Boy,' for which I recorded the main guitar without effects. Then I decided which effects I wanted to use, and on the second verse, for instance, I overdubbed a guitar track recorded with a sixteen-millisecond delay. I usually use effects just for solo parts."

For this album, those solos are played almost exclusively on a Hamer Steve Stevens model, of which Stevens owns several (see sidebar), or its prototype. The guitar was codesigned by Stevens and Hamer co-founder Jol Dantzig, who describes its Honduras-mahogany body shape as "a cross

between a Les Paul Junior's and a Melody Maker's," with the thickness of the former and the symmetrical horns of the latter. The 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 22-fret neck is made of rock maple and comes with either ebony or rosewood fingerboards. Electronics are one volume control, one tone control and two-way and three-way pickup selector switches, while pickups are Hamer Slammers: a humbucker in the bridge, and single-coils in the middle and neck positions. Except for some specially wound DiMarzio pickups on his black-metal-flake "Raygun" guitar, and Seymour Duncans on some of his others, there are no differences between Stevens's personal models and those sold in stores for \$1,050. The guitar is continually being refined, says Dantzig, "because Steve is not easily satisfied, which is one of the reasons he's such a joy to work with."

According to J. D. Dworkow, the guitarist is involved in research and development with both Grover Jackson and David Williams of Charvel Mfg., and Seymour Duncan. But surprisingly, Stevens gripes that he rarely gets approached by manufacturers for input. "I find that musical-instrument companies don't really communicate with players enough, and when they do, they tend to pigeonhole musicians. Like the Japanese companies: 'Ah! We gotta get a lock stah!' You know, I still don't have an amplifier endorsement."

The logical choice for one would be Marshall, which Stevens has employed for years, varying between the new (two JCM 800s) and the old: an EL34 from the late 1960s that bears Jim Marshall's signature, and

## Soundcheck

### Selected Gear Used on 'Whiplash Smile' or on Tour

**PCM41 digital delay**, manufactured by Lexicon, Inc., 60 Turner St., Waltham, MA 02154, (617) 891-6790.



"It's the best DDL you can find," Steve Stevens says of the PCM41, which features a 16kHz bandwidth and up to 800 milliseconds of delay, as well as versatile sweep and mixing functions.

Suggested retail price: \$715.

**SM58 dynamic cardioid microphone**, manufactured by Shure Brothers, Inc., 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60204, (312) 866-2200.



Shure's ubiquitous SM58 has an impedance of 150, a frequency range of 50Hz to 15kHz, weighs 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds and comes in a gray enamel finish. Other features: -75dB sensitivity at 1kHz open circuit, and cable connector type is bare. But what so many vocalists seem to value most is the SM58's ruggedness.

Suggested retail price: SM58CN, \$186.50; SM58LC, \$164.75.

**LinnDrum**, manufactured by Linn Electronics, 18720 Oxnard St., Tarzana, CA 91356, (818) 708-8131.



Striking fear in the hearts of drummers the world over, Roger Linn's revolutionary invention features 98 rhythm patterns, user-changeable drum sounds, 16 separate drum outputs, a 16-input stereo mixer, tunable drums, external triggers and adjustable error correction. Easy to use, it was designed for nontechnical musicians.

Suggested retail price: \$2,495.

a Mark II. Not surprisingly, all have been hotrodded with special circuitry, and Stevens runs them into a Vari-ac, which, Dworkow explains, "takes in the voltage and distributes it through an ac box. It boosts the voltage from about eighty volts up to about one hundred thirty or forty volts and really gets the amp cooking."

While Stevens primarily purchases guitars from the new generation of manufacturers, Billy Idol favors Gibsons, his main model a 1957 Les Paul Junior that he bought at a pawnshop for \$475 two years ago. Amplification is a Fender Twin Reverb amp with Gauss speakers, and effects are, in contrast to Stevens's, minimal: an MXR flanger and an MXR analog delay. Idol, whose first guitar was bought for him by his grandfather, when

he was 10, says he prefers the Gibsons "for their grittiness and depth. They go with my singing better than a top-end guitar like a Hamer or Fender."

Idol's singing is distinguished by his resonant lower register, which provides him with a greater dynamic range. On an ominous, impressionistic song such as "Flesh for Fantasy" he'll intone the low notes to menacing effect. Or he'll vault a couple of octaves into a full-bodied scream, as he does to ignite the choruses to "Rebel Yell." On stage, however, that low range can prove problematic, making it difficult for him to hear himself.

"I've always had that problem, and sometimes there's not much you can do except to work with your soundman," says Idol. As mobile as he is on stage, he still handles a

Shure SM58 rather than a wireless mike.

"We talked about using one of them, but you have to be such a pansy with the goddamn things," he says disdainfully. "I like the 58, and not just for its ruggedness. It gives me a lot of sound without the guitar pouring through it, and it's a mike I can work with, using the bass-proximity effect, techniques like that."

Just as he's remained with the SM58 on stage, in the studio Idol has always sung into an AKG 414 dynamic multidirectional mike. "We've experimented with others but always come back to the 414. You can move around a lot while using it, and I find that with my vocal range I can get a lot of sounds out of it. Sometimes my voice sounds muddy in the studio, and the 414 can clear it up."

## CLASSIC TRACKS

one night," recalls Stevens, "and came out with 'White Wedding' pretty much the way it is on the record, including the spaghetti-western guitar part. The intro is me running my finger up the low E string while I play a sixteenth-note picking pattern. Keith Forsey then tracked the guitar twice.

"The Les Paul is a real solid-sounding guitar, with a tree trunk for a neck. Billy bought it for me on Manhattan's Forty-eighth Street. I haven't used it much lately because the pickups are so old, they've become microphonic."

**"Rebel Yell" (from *Rebel Yell*, 1983)**—Idol: AKG 414 mike; Stevens: Kramer/Schecter guitar, 100-watt Marshall amp, 4-12" Marshall cabinet.

"I did the raygun sound with a Lexicon PCM41 digital delay," Stevens explains. "It's got a mix control, and I just completely cut off my guitar signal from it and got the modulation. Then I played a harmonic on high G and used the modulation section to sweep that. Also, I had to use a compressor, to keep the note constant so that it could feed the PCM41."

**"Flesh for Fantasy" (from *Rebel Yell*, 1983)**—Idol: AKG 414 mike; Stevens: Hamer Prototype SS guitar (prototype of Steve Stevens model; not on market), 100-watt Marshall amp, 4-12" Marshall cabinet.

"Keith Forsey and I programmed the LinnDrum for that track," Idol notes, adding, "That's the first time I ever sang with that sort of funky feel, so it took me a long time to get my attitude right. Plus, I was using a part of my vocal range that I'd never used much before."

Steve Stevens's main guitar parts were played on his Prototype, on which he'd installed coil-tap switches "for a Strat-type sound. The guitar was put through a Rockman—which has two outputs—and both of



Photo by Terry Sesvold/Pix Int'l

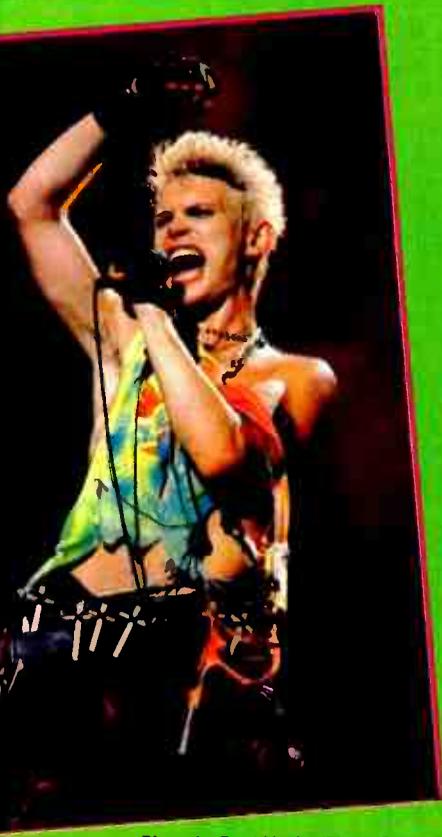


Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

**"Dancing With Myself" (from *Don't Stop EP*, 1981; track recorded in 1980)**—Idol: AKG 414 mike, Epiphone electric guitar, Fender Twin Reverb amp.

"There were two versions of this song," says Idol. "Danny Kustow played rhythm guitar, and this other guitarist, Steve, lead. That's the version on *Don't Stop* and the rerelease of *Billy Idol*. A few months later we put Steve Jones of the Sex Pistols on it; that version became the single and also appears on the last Generation X LP, *Kiss Me Deadly*."

**"White Wedding (Part I)" (from *Billy Idol*, 1982)**—Idol: AKG 414 mike; Stevens: 1953 Gibson Les Paul guitar, 100-watt Marshall amp, 4-12" Marshall cabinet.

"Billy came into Westlake Audio studios

those were fed into a Roland Dimension D chorus. The Rockman's output was actually just in mono, and I ran the chamber echo to the Dimension D, to enable it to be stereo. From there it went into two delay lines, each with a different rate time. For example, you can put a delay of two hundred milliseconds on the left side, and maybe a two-hundred-two-millisecond delay on the right, resulting in a sort of psycho-acoustic effect.

"For the heavy chords in the middle section I used a graphic EQ and the Marshall; the verse was recorded direct."

**Idol (above and above I.) sings into a Shure SM58 on stage. He experimented with a wireless system, but says disdainfully, "You have to be such a pansy with the goddamn things."**

**E**xcept for continuing to use the 414, little else has remained the same for the recording of *Whiplash Smile*, including the band. The only holdover musician from the *Rebel Yell* album and tour is Thommy Price, "the soul survivor!" Stevens says mock sinisterly. In place of bassist Steve Webster are Carmine Rojas and Stevens, who's using a pink Spector NS-2 four-string with gold hardware. And with keyboardist Judi Dozier off to pursue a solo career, the guitarist is also contributing much of the keyboard work, along with Forsey, arranger/producer Phil Ashley and possibly Harold Faltermeyer. Keyboards put to use thus far are two Yamaha DX7 synths; an E-mu Emulator II synth; a Yamaha QX1 digital sequence recorder; a Roland SBX-80 synchronizer; a Roland MSQ-700 sequencer; a Micro Sync, a syncing device manufactured by J. L. Cooper of Los Angeles; and Forsey's personal favorite, a Roland Juno-106 synth.

Idol emphasizes that with *Whiplash Smile*, "I want to give people Billy Idol music, not just a rock band." In other words, the band essentially is him, Stevens and Keith Forsey, the latter of whom gives new meaning to the old pop-music cliché about the producer being the fifth member of the band. He's its third member, even drumming on the hits "White Wedding" and "Hot in the City."

Price, who felt that the quintet was really jelling toward the end of the *Rebel Yell* tour, was disappointed that the band didn't go into the studio right away, and was even more disappointed when it became apparent that

his input on the new record would again be limited.

"I was hoping that there'd be some real band input," he says wistfully, "but it's Billy and Steve once again."

Told of Price's remarks, bandleader Idol is empathetic. "When it's at the beginning of an album," he says, shifting in his seat, "and people aren't totally involved, it's hard for them to see that what we're doing is getting things to a stage where they can be a part of it. Later it will make sense to them.

"But even though Thommy may not be there all the time, or it's not always him who's programming the LinnDrum"—which has been integral to the recording of *Whiplash Smile*—"we're all thinking in terms of the type of drums he would play and the type of attitude he'd bring to a song.

"It takes time, and you need the right personalities around you, people who understand that. Keith does and Steve does, and I think Thommy understands that as well; it's just his impatience, which is natural."

*Whiplash Smile* is taking time—probably too much as far as the record company is concerned—but it is a crucial record for Billy Idol, who with it seeks to change certain perceptions about himself. In that respect he has often been his own worst enemy, seeming to pander to expectations of what a punk-rock singer should look and act like: The contemptuous curl of the lips, the clenched fist are considered self-parodies even within rock & roll circles. Certainly the highlight of David Lee Roth's "Just a Gigolo"

video was the Idol impersonator who aped the singer's patented moves before getting electrocuted and flopping to the ground ("I thought it was real flattering," claims Idol). His music is of high quality and is imbued with thought-provoking lyrical content. Doesn't it get subverted by his prefab-punk persona?

Idol smiles in response, appearing neither offended by the question nor entirely surprised by it.

"Well," he begins, "the thing is, it takes a long time for people to get themselves across. I've been in rock & roll for nine years, and I just got my first hit record in England. A lot of people there had forgotten all about me and think I'm new, and American!

"So I've had to present myself in little bits, and it's only now that I've had a consistent enough relationship with my audience to change what I'm about, while still sticking to my own personality.

"So, yeah, there is this confusion—'How can he sing "Eyes Without a Face" yet look like that?' But I think I can clear it up; that's the idea behind *Whiplash Smile*."

As for the *Mad Max* mode of dress, however, that's staying. And while the world is about to witness the Maturing of Billy Idol, that other half of his personality is not going anywhere either, and in fact decides to resurface to field a final question.

"What does my manner of dressing say about me?" Pause. "That I'm a cheap bastard, that clothes shouldn't wear out easily, and that you can be dirty and laugh about it."

And Idol does, uproariously. □

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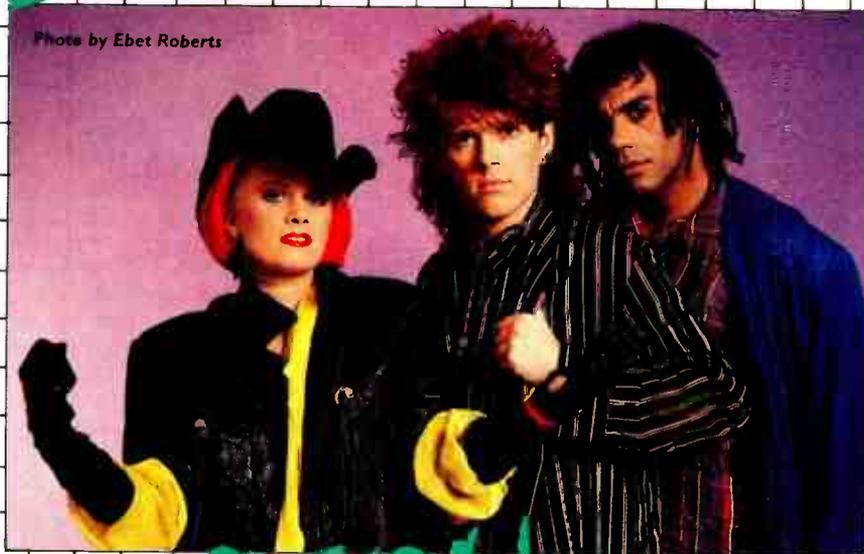


Photo by Ebet Roberts

# THOMPSON TWINS'

# PERFECT IMBALANCE

## Tom Bailey Leads a Pair of Novices Down the Platinum Path

by Dan Hedges

**"N**o, Tom." Alannah Currie says thinly, firing him a look that could boil water. "Not *Eurythmics*."

A second ago, Tom Bailey was feeling like he'd just gone double platinum, hanging out at Arista Records in New York with his fellow Thompson Twins, feet planted symbolically on an expensive company table. Excited at coproducing with Nile Rodgers on the final stages of *Here's to Future Days* (the British band's fourth U.S. LP), he'd been grandly citing the Twins' mentors, crediting everyone from Leonardo da Vinci to Sammy Davis Jr. with inspiring them to shrink from seven members to a trio and expand each member's role.

Currie, however, isn't swallowing it. "It was a nonmusical thing," Bailey tries to explain, thinking back to before *In the Name of Love*, *Side Kicks*, *Into the Gap*, and hits such

as last year's "Hold Me Now" and "Doctor Doctor," when production-oriented artists such as Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox...

"No, Tom," Currie repeats tersely; she's wearing this big hat. She and Bailey were once romantically entwined, and though it's anybody's guess whether or not the flame still flickers, it's clear who wields the cosmic rolling pin. "Eurythmics weren't already happening. They came along at exactly the same time as us."

Bailey looks sheepish. "Well... we were aware of them."

"No we weren't."

"Human League and ABC..."

"Tom, we weren't."

As Bailey realigns his faulty memory, third Thompson Twin Joe Leeway tugs his dreadlocks and gazes quietly at the ceiling. Obviously, he's been through this movie before.

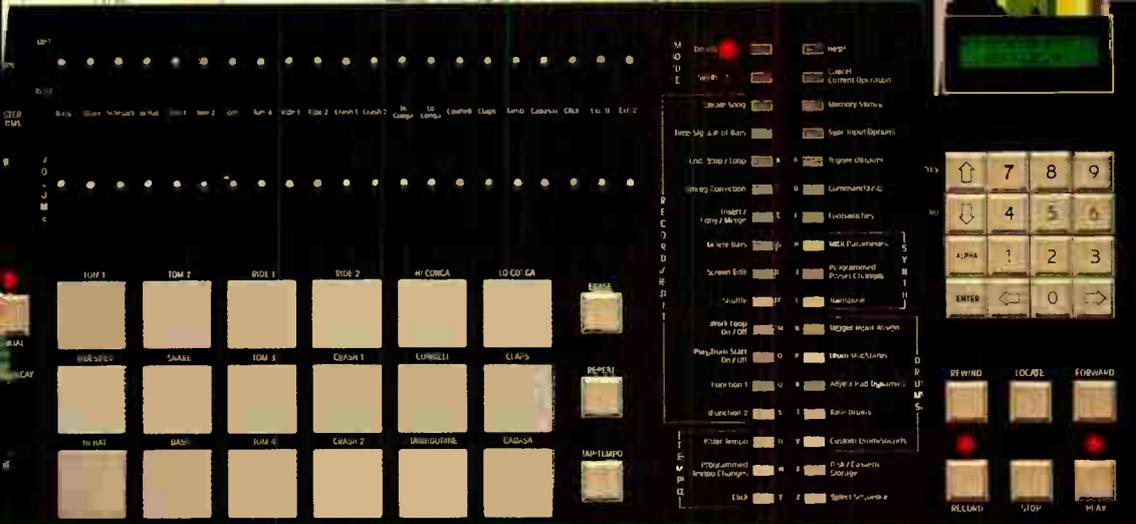
"The idea is that it wasn't 'I'm the bassist' or 'I'm the drummer,'" Bailey says cautiously. "It was people who'd combined songwriting, musical and production talents to create pop music."

Currie sighs. "But *not* Human League, Tom."

He shrugs. "You don't look at Eurythmics and say, 'Where's the drummer?' It's sufficient to know that the two of them are the source of the material. But like with Led Zeppelin re-forming for Live Aid—'Who's gonna play drums?' It was *essential information* as to who would be drumming with Led Zeppelin, whereas no one gives a shit about who drums with us. As long as they're good."

The Thompson Twins reckon that *Here's to Future Days* is their best record yet, spawned in Paris at Marcadet Studios and saved at

Continued on page 28



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Steve Stevens (far r.) joins Tom Bailey and Joe Leeway at Live Aid. Touring guitarist Felicia Collins, who according to Thompsons coproducer Nile Rodgers "plays just like me," is behind Bailey.



New York's Skyline Studios after running aground due to Bailey's sudden, As-Seen-on-MTV mystery illness, which he says was "as much a mystery to me as to everyone else."

In short, he fell over. "Sixteen-hour days, seven days a week," says the New Zealand-born Currie, 27, blaming it on Arista's tight deadline for the follow-up to the platinum-selling *Into the Gap*. "Joe and I could zap off, but Tom kept working. Like a workaholic."

"My central nervous system shut down," says Bailey, born in Halifax, Yorkshire, 29 year ago. Recording screeched to a halt; the ailing Twin was shipped to the Caribbean. Having recorded so much under stress, however, he was "really frightened that what we'd done in Paris wasn't as good as I'd thought it was. In Barbados, I tried not to listen to any of it, but I couldn't help thinking that the whole thing was just one gigantic turkey and that we'd have to start again. But when we came to New York, met Nile and played the tapes, they sounded fantastic."

Nobody denies that Rodgers—producer of Duran Duran, Madonna, Mick Jagger and Jeff Beck in just the past year—was brought in to put the derailed project on track. As Bailey recalls, "We said, 'Look, anything's up for grabs. Nothing's sacred. Suggest changes.'"

The producer did. "The only way I could do it was to look at it as a demo," says Rodgers, who'd never met the Thompsons before being contacted to work with them. "Because as soon as you start saying, 'Oh, wow, I really like the bass part,' or, 'I really like the guitar part,' you can't change one thing without it drastically affecting something else."

"So I told them that they couldn't think in terms of salvaging anything."

Strengthening the tunes, retooling the existing computer-programmed drums ("by building an echo chamber out of the elevator vestibule," says the producer) and percussion sounds, Rodgers was, says Leeway, "a blessing. What he brought to it as a musician was a guitar-based rhythm section, which you won't find on our other stuff. It created a new context for a lot of the songs."

A concession to a U.S. market turning cool toward all-synth bands? Leeway, 31, an ex-

actor from Islington, North London, who joined the original quartet as a roadie, claims the move is subtler. "It's not that we've gone to guitars. Nile's style of playing and producing is that the guitar doesn't leap out."

Then again, they'd already made the leap in Paris, when Steve Stevens of Billy Idol's band came over to play on "Roll Over" and a cover of the Beatles' "Revolution." "We wanted some guitar in a style I'd never played," Bailey explains. "Rather than screw around, we thought, 'Steve!' He flew over, and we had a crazy couple of days with him jet lagged, doing all this screaming and wailing. That broke down barriers, because we've never been keen on using other musicians on our albums. It meant that when we met Nile, we were curious about having him play rather than just produce." That attitude suited Rodgers fine. "The best way for me to start a relationship with an artist," he says, "is to do what I do best: play guitar. I tried to add just a little bit of my personality to their music, as if they'd hired me to join the band."

**W**ith only three pairs of hands and a penchant for merging kitchen-sink percussion with '80s technology, the Twins make no bones about being studio oriented. As Bailey points out, "It's a cardinal rule of ours to make records in the studio, not 'live' tracks—at least since we dissolved the old band, where the problem was," on the British releases *A Product of... Participation and Set*, "we were trying to re-create what we did on stage."

But there's an imbalance. As percussionist/vocalist Currie admits, Bailey (the only "trained" Twin) is light years ahead. "When we made *Side Kicks* in 1982, I'd played for only two years," she says. "I could do things like on-the-beat cowbell rhythms, but Tom was so far gone, he wasn't interested in those simple things. He'd do the complicated parts, I'd put in my bit, Joe his, and it added up to something. If I'd been a brilliant musician, we wouldn't have lasted. There would have been too much fighting over technique. Ego. We'd never have made the same songs."

They see themselves as part of a tradition dedicated to cranking out hits, where the hook is king and high art goes out the

window. The old experimental Twins "bull-shitted our way through God and country," Bailey says, recalling when they pushed serious issues on the antinuke rally circuit. "We were never going to have a hit like that. Don't know how we dreamed we would."

Writing those hits seems haphazard, though they do it "the same way we always have, in a relatively undistracted environment in the countryside," Bailey says. "Ireland and France this time. We get up in the morning and say, 'Right, let's write songs.'" Currie recalls "going to bed with my tapes. I was ill. We were in a snowstorm in France. They'd be downstairs with the Fairlight, I had these words spread out across the bed, and Joe would come running up and hurl these tapes at me. They'd put down a mood, I'd sift through the scraps and put words to them."

The Fairlight CMI (Computer Music Instrument) helped ease transforming rough arrangements into studio time. "What we try to do beforehand is program the parts that need programming," Bailey says, "so that on the first day of recording we can put down things which, whether or not they survive into the mix, are the foundation. Usually, that's a mess of drum computer and Fairlight stuff. Then you overdub the 'real' stuff to make the spirit of the song correct. Sometimes we leave blank areas, figuring once we've got the rest, we'll know what goes there."

Still, he cites the Oberheim OBX-a synthesizer as the Twins' "basic workhorse. We have quite a bit of Sequential Circuits keyboards as well, but you tend to stay with what you know well because you can articulate on it quickly. The Yamaha DX7 made quite a few appearances on the album too. Quite versatile. And we had one of those little Casio guys, the CZ-101, without the rhythm box and with medium-size keys. Makes it easy to play too many notes, but it gives three hundred dollars' worth of fantastic bass. We were totally knocked out."

Their gear also includes an E-mu Emulator II keyboard, a Synclavier computer music

Bailey owns two blue-finish ESP Tele-style guitars (pictured below) and an ESP Strat. "They're inexpensive, consistent guitars; real good."



Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve



O.K., all those who secretly yearn to work as Nikki Sixx's roadie, raise your hands: (l.-r.) Nile Rodgers, Alannah Currie, Tom Bailey and Joe Leeway at Skyline Studios' SSL console.

system and, says Bailey, "a mess of guitars. I've been playing an ESP Eclipse Telecaster." Bailey has two blue-finish models, plus an ESP Strat-shaped guitar made of jasper wood, with a sunburst finish, two single-coil pickups, one humbucking and a Kahler tremolo. Joe Leeway "is also quite into them," using two red Mirage models, each with two humbuckers. "They're inexpensive, consistent guitars," adds Bailey; "real good."

Then there were Nile Rodgers's myriad guitars. For *Here's to Future Days*, "I used more guitars than on any other record in my life." He estimates the number at 15, including several ESPs, some Tokais ("my usual guitars") and "a lot of double-coil-pickup guitars, which is strange for me." One such instrument was a vintage Epiphone Zephyr-Region, "which G. E. Smith of Hall and Oates turned me on to. He said to me, 'Nile, if you ever want to sound like Chuck Berry, buy yourself a Region.' I found one, and he was right. I used it on the song 'Tokyo,' when they make a reference to Elvis Presley."

To her racks of traditional percussion, Alannah Currie has added a custom Soundchest—a programmable MIDI drum computer designed by J. L. Cooper and distributed by Europa Technology, Inc.—and a custom-built MIDI marimba. "The technological breakthrough of the century!" Bailey exclaims. "With digital-chip memories. You can play horn parts. We've also got an all-metal drum kit called the Tin Buck II."

Currie's big hat quivers. "It's called the Brooklyn Trash Machine," she corrects.

But it was the Sony PCM-3324 24-track recorder that Bailey contends was "the real discovery, though we originally cut the album on a 3M digital 32-track, which is pretty slack." Leeway agrees. "We had to open the 3M's doors and keep fans blowing. Very temperamental to temperature changes."

"You'd hear drop-outs, clicks," Bailey adds. "Wouldn't play back on different machines. A total nightmare. We transferred to two Sonys, master/slave, and got the sweetest sound. The machines lock up at 1.5 seconds. They're a dream come true." Rodgers calls the PCM-3324 "the only machine I'll use." The console at Skyline was an SSL.

Another discovery, Bailey says, is the Clar-

ion XD-5 four-track cassette recorder with four-channel mixer. "We use them as preamps. Recording's a little weird. The compression grabs it so much that you want to back it off. But for writing, or as a preamp, they're heaven."

The Twins' use of recorded tapes on stage has drawn flak. But as Currie points out, the new LP spans 48 tracks. "How do you reproduce that live without twenty-four musicians? Do you really want to see someone playing a sequencer part?" On their recently underway eight-month world tour, however, there will be less of a reliance on tapes, because, says production manager Christy Pollard, "our keyboardist, Jan Pulsford, is really competent. Plus, with the Fairlight CMI, it almost removes the need for it."

Asked if the Twins were sensitive to the criticism during the 1984 tour, he replies, "Yeah. It was a drag. And now it's become fashionable for people to use tape. We did all the pioneering and took all the flak. But we don't care."

**B**ailey, Currie and Leeway do have a minor rep for cracking the whip over their hired musicians—Pulsford, bassist Mark Heyward-Chaplin, drummer Steve Goulding and guitarist Felicia Collins, the latter of whom was recommended for the Thompsons tour by producer Rodgers because "she plays exactly like me." Yet for Tom Bailey, musicianship "is not the first priority. What the audience should get, theatrically speaking, is something spectacular. Whether or not someone's playing the right notes shouldn't be in the debate." Adding to the theatricality on the Twins' '85-'86 tour is a robot—built to resemble a man (with Bailey's flaming-red hair or Leeway's dreadlocks?)—which will punch up programs on a Fairlight CMI. The audience will only realize that this additional "band-member" is a machine when its head rotates 360 degrees—*Exorcist*-style—during "Revolution."

The group "rehearses like mad before a tour," says Currie, who was sequestered with the others in Dublin, Ireland, for several weeks prior to hitting the road. "That way we don't have to think about the music; it's

Continued on page 65

## Soundcheck

### Selected Gear Used on 'Here's to Future Days' and on Tour

**PCM-3324 digital audio recorder**, manufactured by Sony Corporation of America, Sony Dr., Park Ridge, NJ 07656. (201) 930-6432.



The PCM-3324 is the heart of Sony's multichannel digital recorder series, featuring 16-bit linear quantization capability and a new code format, which together provide an incredible dynamic range of over 90db. Reliable electronic editing and tape-splice editing are possible with the PCM-3324, and the unit is equipped with both analog/digital and digital/analog converters, along with digital and analog terminals. The 24-channel machine also features a new pinch-rollerless tape transport system.

Suggested retail price: \$104,000.

**Prophet T8 synthesizer**, manufactured by Sequential Circuits, Inc., 3051 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95134. (408) 946-5240.



Sequential Circuits' Prophet T8 is a completely touch-sensitive (velocity and pressure), fully programmable eight-voice polyphonic synthesizer. Its 76-note wooden keyboard (A to C) has been packaged in a compact design weighing less than 60 pounds, and all together the T8 sports 128 programs. A built-in real-time sequencer has been included; with a memory capacity of over 600 notes, it will record up to eight separate sequences.

Suggested retail price: \$NA.

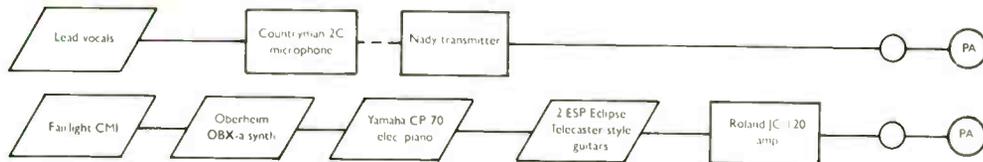
**CP70M electric piano**, manufactured by Yamaha International, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. (714) 522-9262.



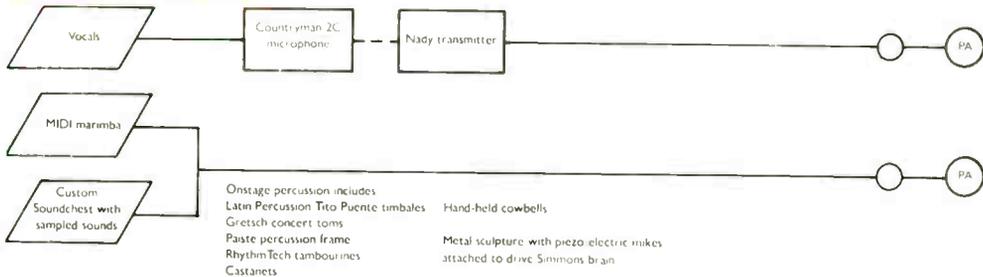
Just in time for the Thompson Twins' new LP, Yamaha unveiled the new CP70M electro-acoustic piano with full MIDI-out capability. While you're playing a dynamic, sensitive piano with real strings and real hammers, the sounds of synthesizers, drum machines and other MIDI-controllable instruments can be added to true acoustic tones. The CP70M is a 73-key electric piano featuring a built-in seven-band equalizer, two independent send and return loops, fully variable stereo tremolo, and each string bridge is fitted with a high-performance piezo-electric pickup.

Suggested retail price: \$4,695.

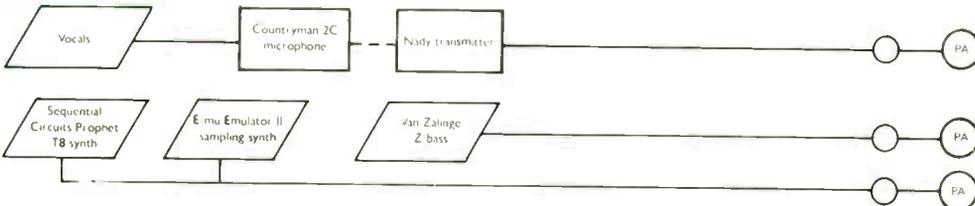
### TOM BAILEY



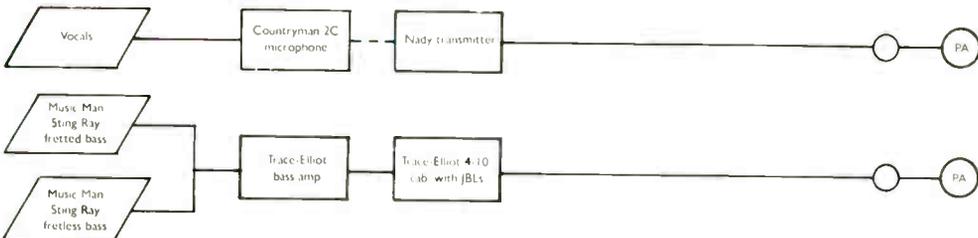
### ALANNAH CURRIE



### JOE LEEWAY



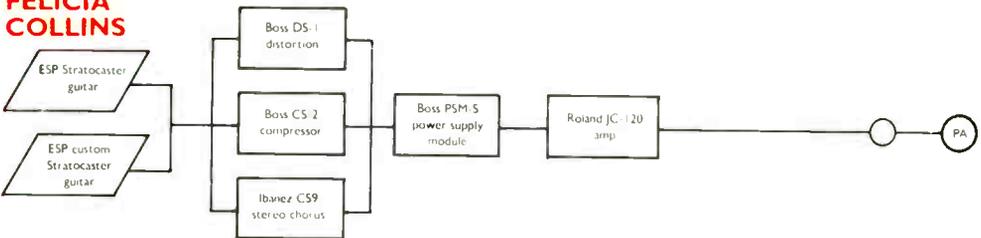
### MARK HEYWARD-CHAPLIN



### JAN PULSFORD



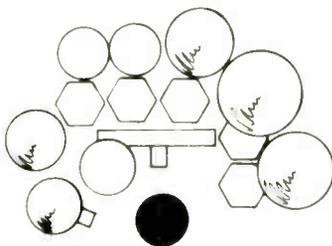
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From top to bottom: Tom Bailey, Alannah Currie, Joe Leeway

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## The Sessionmen

### Larry Fast: Sounds for Hire

by Dan Daley



*Besides being a much sought-after sessionman, Larry Fast is also the musician behind Synergy's six albums.*

Larry Fast is an adaptive creature, equally at home on stage and in the studio while surrounded by a copious array of synthesizers, many of which bear his personal modifications. His accommodating personality affords him an advantage in the rapidly changing world of synthesizers, the development of which he describes using the words "evolution" and "revolution" almost interchangeably.

Best known for his keyboard work with Peter Gabriel, with whom he has been touring and recording since the beginning of Gabriel's solo career eight years ago, Fast is also renowned for his synth-programming ability. He's been called for sessions where he doesn't play a note but makes his presence felt with his touch on the sound generators. In addition to Gabriel, Fast is heard on records by Hall and Oates, Foreigner and on his own series of solo albums, recorded under the name Synergy.

Fast, who grew up in Livingston, New Jersey, took piano lessons but switched to guitar in high school because it was more affordable. "When electronic instruments began to evolve, and it was a keyboard evolution," he says, "I really focused in on keyboards again." His fascination with electronics dates back to childhood, where tinkering with lightbulbs and batteries led to tearing apart tape recorders and then rebuilding them. "Electronic music was a perfect fusion of both of my interests: music and electronics," Fast explains.

It was Robert Moog's synthesizer that began it all for Fast. Moog and others like him "took music synthesis out of the institutional setting and the research labs and put it in the hands of individuals." Describing himself as "an advanced hobbyist" at the time, Fast's electronic talents were of value to the Moog company, and he became involved in the prototype stage of the Polymoog. His input was integral to the development of that seminal instrument. Today Fast stays in touch with the Moog people and with various other manufacturers such as Yamaha and Sequential Circuits. "I like having them bounce their ideas off me," he says. "I give them feedback, and I get a real good idea of where they're going next."

For all his technical competence, Fast, 32, doesn't dream in waveforms. For him, the melodic concept is primary and it "exists almost by itself. Then I've got to decide which of those electronic instruments will be the best one with which to get that expressed idea out of my head and committed to tape."

Fast's career began in earnest in 1975, when, after having met with little success with his first band, he decided to pursue his ultimate goal: composing and creating music for the synthesizer by himself. He approached Passport Records with the idea, and thus was born Synergy, which continues to be a vital force for him. "Synergy is an attempt to

present to the world that one person can do composition, production, engineering — all the aspects that are important in expressing music within the electronic medium — without deferring command to somebody else. Passport was small enough, visionary enough and flexible enough to take that kind of a chance."

Defined by Fast as "melodically based, richly orchestrated electronic music," Synergy has proved economically viable too over the course of six albums, with another album expected out this year. While he enjoys the artistic freedom that working alone affords him, "I very much like to be with other people for session work and for touring," he adds. "I think it's very important to keep a balance and maintain some kind of a reasonable outlook on the musical world. As long as I have both ends of the spectrum, I'm happy."

Around the same time that he initiated Synergy, Fast began playing live with Nektar, an archetypal European art-rock ensemble. They had in common a record label and a sense of adventure, and in 1975 Nektar invited him to play on their *Recycled* LP. The group then asked him to reproduce the recorded sounds for its 1976 tour, for which Fast brought along a minimoog, a Freeman String Symphonizer (later replaced by the Polymoog) and a Moog model 15, which he



*Fast's basic gear consists of a minimoog, a Yamaha DX7, a Roland MSQ-700, an Oberheim Xpander and equipment by RSF Kobol, a French company.*

still uses, though in some ways it almost constitutes a museum piece. A couple of early Oberheim sequencers rounded out his arsenal.

It was through Nektar that Fast connected with another pioneer in synthesizer music, Peter Gabriel. "Of all the people I've worked with," says Fast, "Peter probably has the most understanding of the equipment. He is capable of doing a lot of synthesizer work on his own, which frees me to really go chasing down the exotic and the esoteric for his records. I think he's much more attuned to the same emotional and musical goals that I find in the music.

"I would say that you could listen to just about any of the electronically based tracks on the last two Gabriel studio albums and see that. We really shared much of the keyboard synthesizer passages on those albums, but the coordination of the way that we worked together brought up some wonderful musical landscapes."

The track "Shock the Monkey" from Gabriel's 1982 album illustrates their teamwork. The synth line on that song was devised by Gabriel while working with a Prophet and a LinnDrum, and the sounds were a joint effort, with Fast combining a file sound he labeled "saxy — a sexy saxophone sound" and a marimba sound on a Fairlight. "They were combined into sort of a compiled file," he says, "so that it was an instrument made up of both the percussive front end of a marimba and the tail-off of a sax sound." The track was recorded with Gabriel playing the Prophet along with a LinnDrum, as well as with drummer Jerry Marotta and bassist Tony Levin. Then Fast went to work, adding the Fairlight and processing the signal with an Eventide harmonizer (and possibly a pitch shifter; his memory is vague on that detail).

In between tours and albums with Gabriel, Fast has also found time to work with Hall and Oates (*X-Static*, *Private Eyes* and *H.O.*), Foreigner (*4* and *Agent Provocateur*) and Air Supply ("Making Love out of Nothing at All"). In addition, he's worked with producer Jim Steinman on Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart" and Barbra Streisand's "Left in the Dark."

Many of the calls he gets involve programming and processing rather than playing. "A lot of that comes about because of the fact that there are a lot of really fine keyboard players out there who would like to be able to tap into the effects that I can give their music," he says, "but they can already play the piece of music, so there's really no point in them teaching me to play it. In that case it's a matter of being a very specialized kind of record production rather than being a musician." Synergy actually functions as a sort of calling card for Fast, a sampler that displays his abilities and his repertoire of sounds.

When it comes to his approach to programming, Fast says, "Many times it will be a

matter of working off something fairly conventional, a simulation of, say, an orchestral sound or some other pre-existing sound, and then taking it for a little trip and seeing where it ends up," he laughs. "Sometimes it's purely experimental and it's just a matter of some kind of serendipity with the music, whether it ends up as something interesting or not. Other times the programming approach will be more concrete. It might depend upon the piece of hardware that's being used, whether it's a sampling machine, a programmable digital machine, or one of the more old-fashioned analog instruments.

"One of the beauties of electronic music is that you really have such a wide spectrum open to you. But I find that I still need a home base, a working vocabulary with which to start out. Otherwise, there's no way to get organized."

Is there such a thing as a Larry Fast sound? "I suppose there is. Other people tell me there is, but maybe I'm too close to it to tell." However, Fast is able to objectively recognize what it is that makes him so sought after. The acts he's played with were "looking for the special kind of production technique that I can bring to a record," he explains, "in an area where nobody else connected to the album has much expertise. The artists usually know what they want. It's

*Continued on page 37*

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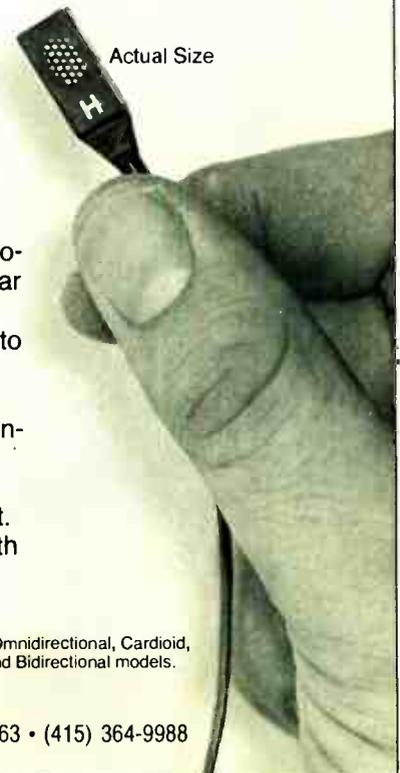
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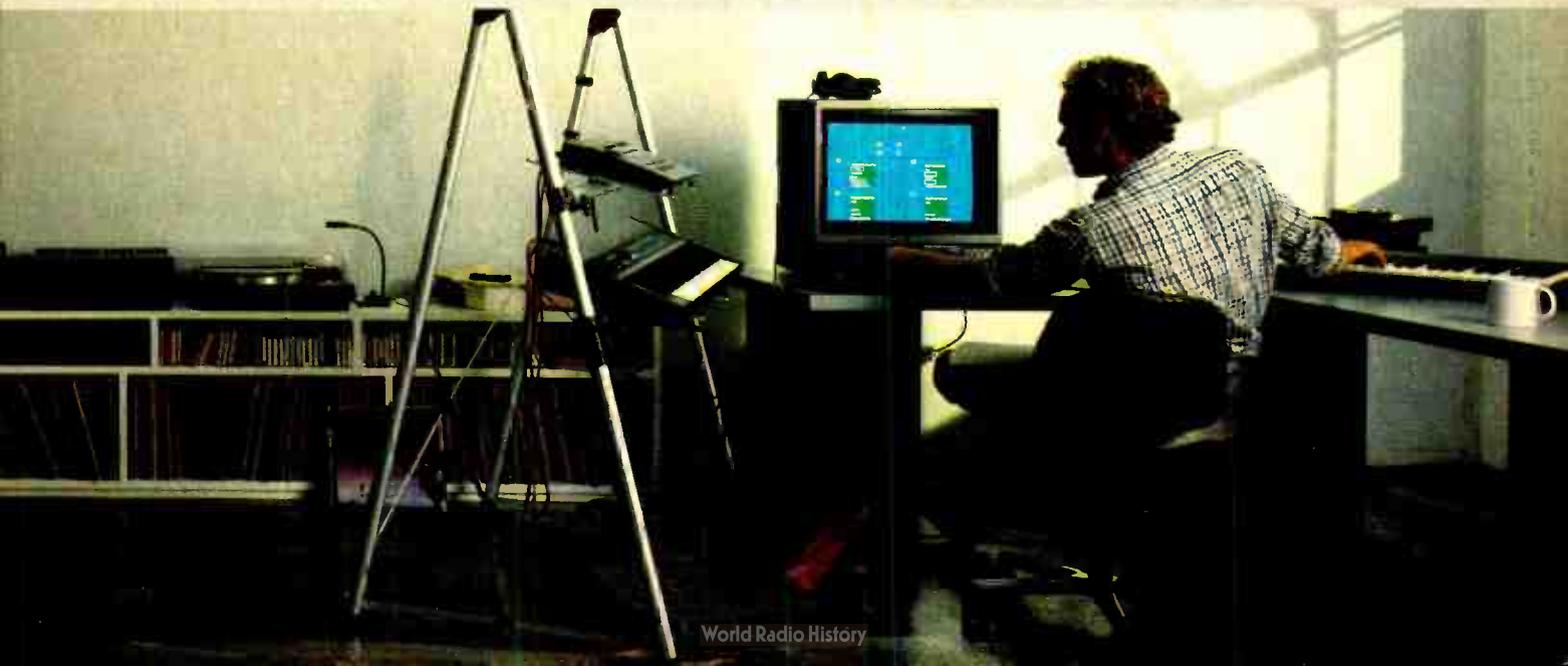
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## Home Recording Workshop Recording Vocals

by Julian McBrowne

If you have a friend who is a recording engineer or artist, you know that the one time you can expect *not* to be invited over is lead-vocal time. Overdub sessions can be fun to watch, and some background-vocal sessions threaten to break out into full-fledged parties, but when the lead vocalist steps up to the microphone, usually the only people present are the engineer, the producer and the artist. When you record at home you have the opportunity to wear all three hats at once.

Recording vocals at home doesn't have to be a complicated experience. If you use all of your recording skills and some common sense, your vocals will be the "icing on the cake." If you are lucky enough to be working in a soundproof room, you can record your vocals day or night; if not, you should find a quiet place to work, away from the children playing in the street, the TV and the telephone. Give yourself a good headphone mix,

get a good level on your voice, and you're all set.

In a professional multitrack studio, the best microphones are reserved for the vocalist. Some artists own a particular mike that they feel reproduces their vocal most faithfully. Condenser microphones are often the best choice for vocals. Their natural crispness can do away with the need for radical equalization. However, they react badly to too much pressure, so a pop filter is a good idea. If your mike doesn't have a pop filter, you can avoid the problem of popping *ps*, *ts* and *ds* by turning away slightly from the mike when those sounds come up. Acquiring this skill is the first step to learning mike technique.

You can learn to make the microphone work for you. For an intimate ballad, take advantage of what's called the proximity effect. If you sing softly, very close to the mike, the increased bass response will give you a warm, intimate sound. For a harder, more dynamic sound, try recording in a very live room. Don't worry about leakage: A

little ambient room sound on the vocal tracks can give some added dimension to an electronic rhythm section.

Punch-ins on vocal tracks can be difficult for the engineer and the artist, but there are things you can do to make life easier. When you rehearse the punch-in, try to go back to the same place on the tape every time. If you are recutting the second half of the chorus, roll tape from the beginning of the chorus every time. Let the artist know where the cue is and where the punch is. It's also a good idea to have the artist sing into the punch. This way you stand a better chance of matching the intensity and the inflection of the original vocal. Make sure you have enough room to get in and out cleanly. Generally the best place to punch in is between phrases. (A phrase is the musical equivalent of a sentence.)

Critical listening is essential to good vocal tracks. You may get away with an overloaded guitar track or a dull conga track, but no matter what kind of music you're doing, the vocals must be clear and understandable. This is equally the responsibility of the engineer, the artist and the producer. If you're taking on these roles, you should be especially careful.

Let's say you've written the song, played all of the instruments on the track and engineered as well. You've ping-ponged your voice into a massive chorus for the fade, and all you have left to do is the lead vocal. Now, we could suggest that you take a step back and get some perspective before you lay down your vocal, but perspective is pretty much out of the question. In the past 10 hours, you've probably listened to your song 50 or 60 times. You've sung it in the bathroom. You've quoted your lyrics to a friend who needed advice. In short, you *are* the song. However, if you record your vocal now, your first listener's response may well be, "Yeah. . . great track; have you got a lyric sheet for me?"

The best way to avoid this is to sing your lead vocal to someone who's never heard it before. They don't actually have to be there, but you have to imagine them clearly, and you have to make them understand you.

If you have three or four open tracks for the lead vocal, try this: Record three separate vocals, listen to them and make a composite bounce track of all three. Once you have a complete composite track, you can erase the other tracks and use them for doubling or ad-lib tracks.

**Q:** What is the vocalist's favorite song lyric?

**A:** "Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood." □

### Vocal Microphones



**AKG's D-330BT** is the premier microphone in that company's D-300 series. It features nine selectable combinations of bass roll-off/presence rise equalization, hypercardioid polar pattern and 50Hz-to-20kHz frequency response. Retail price is \$210.



The **Audio-Technica ATM63** has been designed primarily for close-up vocal work, where it delivers outstanding gain before feedback. Design features include a smooth 50Hz-to-17kHz frequency response, multielement windscreens and unidirectional polar pattern. Retail price is \$150.



The **Beyer M 69** is a professional dynamic moving-coil microphone with wide response and high output. It has a hypercardioid polar pattern, smooth 50Hz-to-16kHz frequency response, brass case, and comes with a pop screen and a swivel adaptor. Retail price is \$165.



The **Shure SM48-LC** utilizes a new, highly effective cartridge shock mount that drastically reduces handling and stand noise. Every bit as well built as its legendary big brother, the SM58, the SM48 has a frequency response of 55Hz to 14kHz and a cardioid polar pattern. Retail price is \$120.

## Larry Fast

Continued from page 33

up to me to know what the act sounds like and what kind of hardware I'm going to have to bring along to make it happen."

Computers are another favorite pastime, as is hooking them up to his synths. "That was another outgrowth of being an electronics hobbyist," he says. "When I left school I no longer had access to a computer, and I missed it terribly. So when the home-computer thing started around 1975, I was there right away." He began with early home computers and by 1977 was working with the Apple, on which he stores synth programs.

Ever the tinkerer, he relates: "Early on I had an Oberheim sequencer that was good but not overly flexible; it was not microcomputer based. By using a microcomputer, I could simulate what the Oberheim did and then enhance it. I came up with a sequencer that allowed for error correction, for moving blocks of notes around and stringing them together. If all that sounds familiar, it's because that's what current-day drum machines like the LinnDrum and current-day sequencers like the Roland family and others are now doing."

Fast's equipment collection is eclectic yet not burdened down with one-shot toys. "The basic synths that I drag around to sessions are the minimoog and a Yamaha

DX7, both MIDI'd. The sequencer I've been using is the Roland MSQ-700. And I still swear by Moog modular equipment; I've got several racks of that. I've got an old Oberheim Xpander and another rack of analog synthesizer equipment made by RSF Kobol, a French company; it's very much like the Moog stuff but has a more European sound. I also have two Prophet-5s." In addition, Fast has access to a Fairlight owned by Peter Gabriel's organization.

He considers his outboard equipment as important as the synths themselves. "One of the things that I find in dealing with electronic music is that it is a very lifeless form of music if you don't give it some kind of

acoustic environment," he says, "and I don't like to rely on somebody else saying, 'Sure, we'll put it on in the mix.'" His assortment includes an Eventide H-910 harmonizer, an MXR pitch shifter, a DeltaLab DL-2 stereo digital delay line, a Roland Dimension D ("for ambience") and a Lexicon PCM60 digital reverb.

This veteran of the synthesizer is pleased to observe that the use of synths and synthesized music in general is becoming more sophisticated, but, he says, "I tend not to take it too seriously, because it's all just for fun. I enjoy it and make my living doing it, but I try not to attach so much importance to it that it makes me crazy." □

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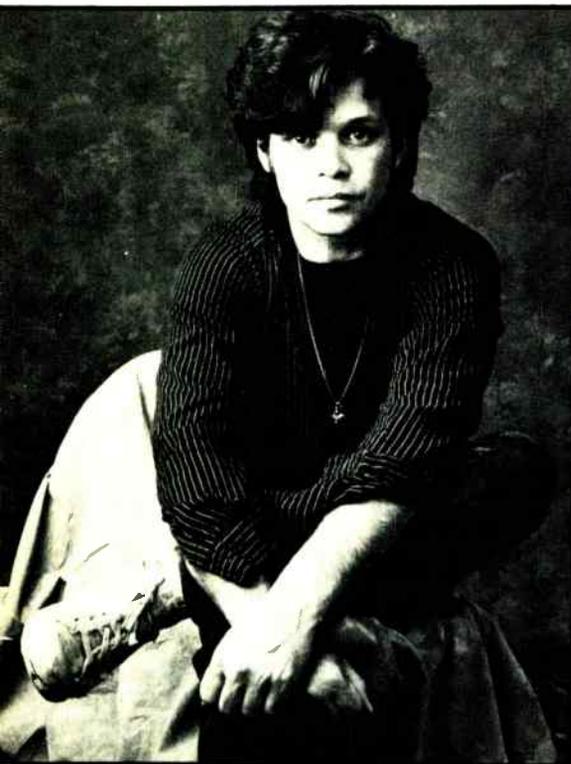
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## Producer's Chair The Recording of John Cougar Mellencamp's "Lonely Ol' Night"



John Cougar Mellencamp (l.) is a fast worker, says coproducer Don Gehman (above), laying down his lead vocal to "Lonely Ol' Night" in just 15 minutes.

by Don Gehman

John Cougar Mellencamp is a uniquely American artist, singing songs about the heartland. Coproducer Don Gehman, besides working the controls for Cougar's multiplatinum 'American Fool' (1982) and 'Uh-Huh' (1983), began his career working with two other all-American musicians: Stephen Stills and Neil Young, for whom he produced 'Long May You Run' in 1976.

Gehman and Cougar once again collaborated on 'Scarecrow,' recorded at the singer's new Belmont Mall Studio. Here Gehman details the making of the

LP's first single, "Lonely Ol' Night."

This was a brand new studio we were working in, Belmont Mall. We designed it with engineer Greg Edward, and a local contractor constructed it. It's owned by John and sits on a piece of rural property near his home. It has an Otari MTR-90 24-track, a Trident series 80-B console, and Fostex, Yamaha NS-10, Auratone and JBL 4313 monitors.

### PREPRODUCTION

This song, as well as a few others on the

Scarecrow LP, was written with late-night inspiration. John probably was up late singing softly with an acoustic guitar, which made the songs' melodies in lower keys than we ever did before. His voice has a more melancholy quality to it when it gets in the lower registers, and we had to compensate for that in the recording.

John works with the band for about two months before we begin recording, rehearsing the arrangements in a little bunker-type rehearsal space in his house, with a set of drums and a couple of little amps. They record it using one of those little ghetto blasters with the built-in mikes, usually taking two or three two-hour sessions per tune. John plays a song for the band on acoustic guitar with no intros or solo sections, and then the band begins adding parts, coming up with grooves and sections. Sometimes John will add another section, like a bridge; on "Lonely Ol' Night" it's a breakdown section with no bass. John has very specific ideas on how he wants things to sound, which is why his records come out as focused as they do.

### BASIC TRACKS

We recorded drums, bass and Larry Crane's guitar all at once. For Kenny Aro-noff's drums we had a set of mikes close in on the kit, then another tier of mikes—Neumann M-49s—about 10' to 15' away. The reason why is that the drums were in a small room—maybe 30' x 20' x 15'—but it's all plasterboard, so it was very loud. We used the very bright Sennheiser 451 to get that snappy sound on the snare drum, a 5" Ludwig metal snare tuned higher than probably anyone else has ever tuned a snare before. We also used a Linn 9000 drum machine as a click track. We later added a tambourine to the verses.

Toby Myers's bass went down at the same time with both a direct tap and through an

Song: "Lonely Ol' Night"

Engineer: Greg Edward

Recorded at Belmont Mall Studio, Belmont, IN

Track 1 Crane's guitar	Track 2 Cougar's vocals	Track 3 Wanchic's acoustic guitar/Crane's electric guitar	Track 4 Crane's acoustic guitar (doubled)	Track 5 Bass guitar	Track 6 Bass guitar	Track 7 Cougar's vocal	Track 8 Cougar's vocal	Track 9 Background vocals	Track 10 Background vocals	Track 11 Tambourine	Track 12 Snare drum
Track 13 Tom-toms	Track 14 Tom-toms	Track 15 Snare drum	Track 16 Bass drum	Track 17 Hi-hat	Track 18 Wanchic's electric guitar	Track 19 Crane's rhythm guitar	Track 20 Cougar's vocal	Track 21 Room sound	Track 22 Room sound	Track 23 Compilation lead vocal	Track 24 Crane's guitar solo

Ampeg B-15 amp.

Larry's guitar was a Fender Telecaster, put through an Ampeg V-7 amp, and we later doubled the part with a Gibson SG, although you can barely hear it.

Mike Wanchic's guitar part went on later; he played a Fender Stratocaster through a MESA/Boogie amp.

Then we recorded the acoustic guitar, made by a guy named Ron Volbrecht, who builds custom guitars in Nashville, Indiana. Larry played it, and we used what's called a Church mike—a Neumann U-47 with a custom set of electronics. A man named Frank Church made about five hundred of them in 1955.

## VOCALS

Next came John's vocal. The basic track had gone down without a reference. He sang through a Neumann TLM mike. In the past we had always used the Neumann U-67 on John, but because of the lower registers he was singing in this time around, this mike worked better. His lead vocal took about 15 minutes, and then we did the backgrounds, with Toby, Mike and Larry singing into the Church mike.

Then we left the song for a while. When we came back John wanted to try his vocal again, but he couldn't match his original performance. I did a few composite vocals, but that song is basically one track, other than a word or phrase here and there. On his voice there were two compressors and three equalizers going to tape, and when we mixed, probably that many again.

## MIX-DOWN

The mixing philosophy on this was that we always believe in doing things by hand rather than by computer. It takes a lot of hands to do a lot of things at once, and it takes a lot of movement to make a few parts sound like a lot; if you listen to the record you'll hear there's really not a whole lot of trickery on there.

There were three of us on that mix: George Tutko, Greg Edward and myself. We're all engineers. You want to be able to make each instrument have its own special kind of attitude. That means moving the faders: making the ambience greater in certain places, less on other instruments at other times; making the toms sound different than they do in the track if they're featured at some point. Or, some guitar figures need their own special echo at times and then have to be brought back down to sit in the track.

I usually run all the guitars, Greg runs the drums, and George runs all of the effects. We had eight digital reverbs, including a Quantec, two AMSs, a Publison, a Sony, an EMT plate and an echo plate. There's digital echo on the snare from three different digital devices. A Sony was on the toms, and the EMT plate was on the whole kit. The voice was generally a plate with a Sony digital echo program with discrete delays. We used multiple echoes on everything. There is no one thing on anything; everything is a blend of many different programs.

"Lonely Ol' Night" was a very difficult mix, and we spent a lot of time on it. □

— Edited by Dan Daley

# "When the music gets hot, this Telex wireless doesn't need to be pampered"

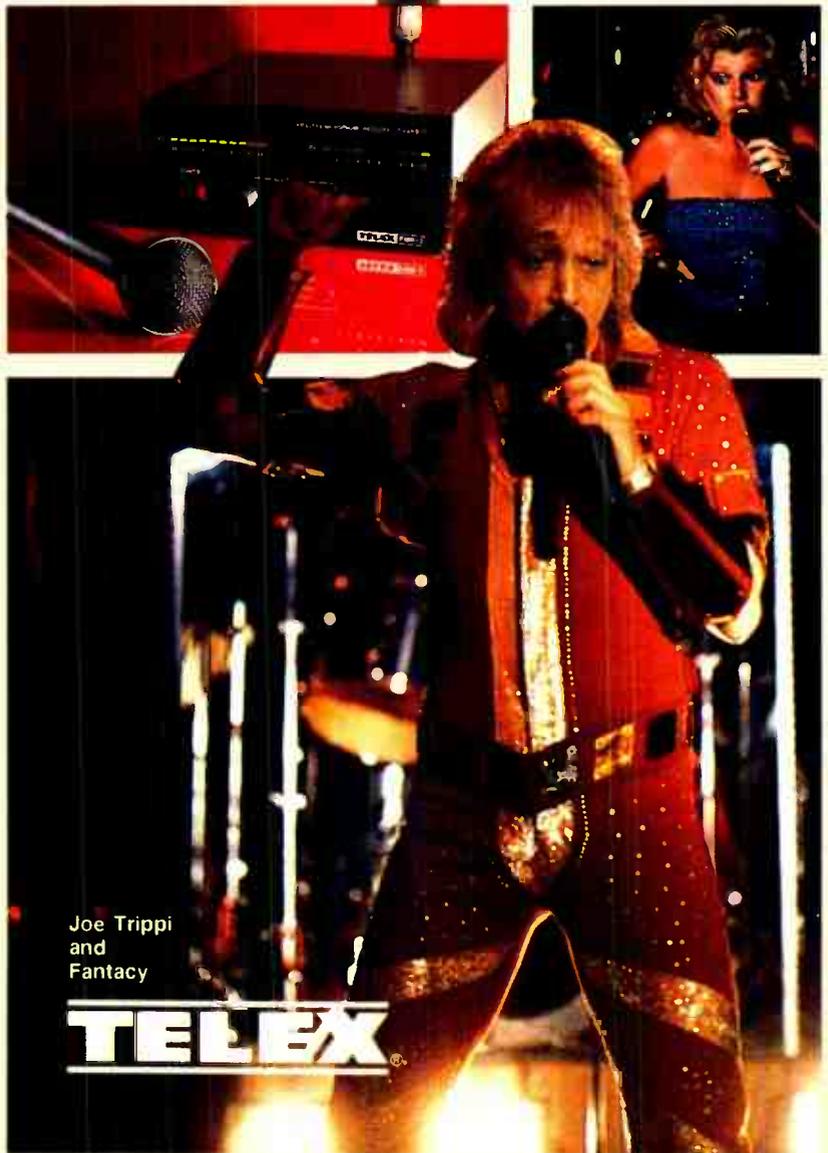
As the beat gets stronger and music louder, a microphone often takes more abuse than its designers intended. During these up-beat sessions the sterile, idealized test conditions of the engineering lab are meaningless. You need a mike that can take the heat and the beat. Telex wireless is the primary mike for Joe Trippi, a working musician just like you, whose equipment has to work just as hard as he does. He's the lead singer and manager of Fantasy, a popular high energy show band booked solid, and travelling nearly thirty-thousand miles a year. Joe has owned dozens of microphones throughout his career, but none that he likes as much as his Telex wireless.

Two years ago, when he began his search for his band's first wireless system he was justifiably skeptical. He had heard some really questionable systems over the years and those that did sound good cost a fortune. Then he discovered Telex, an affordable system that delivered the

BIG sound that Joe had come to expect from his wired system. His doubts about wireless faded when he took the system on the road and gave it a real workout. Joe loves the freedom and excitement that wireless brings to his act, and Telex hasn't let him down yet. He's never had an audio dropout because of the patented Pos-i-Phase Diversity system and his WHM500 has a great frequency response for his close-miking, high sound pressure vocal style.

So, if you're a musician/vocalist who wants an affordable wireless mike system that doesn't need to be pampered, write or call Telex for more information, then ask for a live demo at your favorite music/Pro Sound Store. Telex Communications, Inc., 9600 Aldrich Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55420

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Fantasy

**TELEX**

# SPECIAL FOCUS

## Power Amplifiers

by Michael Smolen

**T**he two most important things you can do when searching for a power amplifier is to decide *exactly* what it is going to be used for and make sure that it matches the rest of your equipment. Just because something says it will deliver 2,000,000,000 watts at .00000001 percent distortion doesn't mean that it's a great amplifier for you. Questions that you should be asking when shopping for a power amplifier include: What are the amp's specs and what do they mean to me? What kind of system protection does it offer? Will it pass dc to the speakers? Does it delay the signal to the speakers during power-up? Does it have protection during power-down? Does the amp offer thermal protection, or will it melt? Will the amp's protective circuitry compare input to output? Are the fuses easy to get to? What about warranties and loaners during downtime?

### SPECIFICATIONS

The key to matching up a power amplifier with the rest of your equipment is a specification called **input sensitivity**. The input-sensitivity spec is always rated in volts, and should always be checked in order to get a grasp of an amplifier's power output and how well it will match the rest of your gear. For example, if the amp you're checking out has a rated power output of 220 watts per channel into 8 ohms, needs 0.775 volts rms to achieve that rated output, and its **total harmonic distortion** (thd) rating is 0.03 percent, bringing the amp's power output up to 250 watts increases its thd to 0.01 percent. Not a big jump, but shoot it three more volts, and you'll hear nothing but distortion. Therefore, in this situation, your preamp must have some type of variable gain control in order to interface with this amplifier. Also keep in mind that thd is a measure of an amp's ability to accurately reproduce a single tone without adding any extra noise, whereas **intermodulation distortion** (imd) is a measure of an amp's ability to accurately reproduce two tones of a combined waveform, a situation that creates much more audible distortion.

**Load impedance and output rating** are also crucial specifications. Remember, if you start pumping 500 watts of power into a speaker designed to handle only 100 watts, you're going to go broke fast replacing drivers constantly. On the other hand, if your stage monitor array is designed to be run by a 2-ohm load, and the amp you buy goes down to only 4 ohms, you'll be replacing that amp before you even get your American Express bill for its purchase. We understand that these specs are fairly obvious, but how many of you have been in a club when a band's PA suddenly went up in a puff of smoke?

Another spec that you should be concerned with is **channel separation**, which simply means that if something is assigned to be heard on the left channel (side) of the audio spectrum, you don't want to hear it on the right. A good rating here would be 60db at 1kHz. A power amp's **signal-to-noise** ratio is a measure of the ratio of one parameter of a desired signal to the same or corresponding parameter of the noise the unit is capable of creating. The higher an amp's signal-to-noise ratio the better, with a good spec somewhere in the neighborhood of 90db unweighted, 100db weighted, or better. Lastly, we all know that manufacturers love to claim a **frequency response** (the variation with frequency of the transmission loss or gain of the amp) of 20Hz to 20kHz, nice and flat. While in a perfect world everything would have a frequency response of 20Hz to 20kHz, this spec really doesn't mean much unless accompanied by an actual response curve in graph form. Unfortunately, very few companies besides Crown and Soundcraftsmen actually include these graphs along with their amplifiers. What you will usually get is a series of numbers denoting an amplifier's maximum deviation from a perfectly flat response. Usually rated at a one-watt output, the lower the number here, the better.

### USING YOUR EARS

While discussing specifications is all fine and dandy, there is no greater test for an amplifier than a little subjective listening. What you want to do in this situation is to find a *reputable* dealer who will let you compare amps *on your own*, with your own

source material. Bring some recordings that you are familiar with to the dealer, and by using the same system and the same set of loudspeakers for each test, switch back and forth among different amps and see how they sound. Remember to listen in the context of what you intend to use the amp for; if you're a lead guitar player, you might be looking for a bright, punchy delivery, whereas if you're a bass or keyboard player, you probably need a little extra crunch in the low end. Then again, if you're looking for a good amp for driving studio monitors, the best amp for you would be one with as flat and natural a response as possible.

What follows here is an overview of power-amplifier manufacturers and distributors, to give you a good idea of what's available on today's market. Please assume that all specifications—in this case we've chosen to give you the amp's power rating in both 4-ohm and 8-ohm ratings (4-ohm/8-ohm)—are from the manufacturers and are not a result of testing by this magazine unless otherwise indicated. All prices reflect manufacturer's suggested retail price.

**AB Systems, Inc.**—11480 Sunrise Gold Cir., Rancho Cordova, CA 95670, (916) 635-0890.

Current line: Models 222 (75/50 watts, \$480), 221 (150/100 watts, \$480), 524 (200/150 watts, \$1,290), 600 (300/175 watts, \$635), 900 (450/300 watts, \$835) and 9130 (500/300 watts, \$1,249). AB Systems also makes 13 other models of power amps ranging in power from 200 to 500 watts.

**Altec-Lansing**—P.O. Box 100087, Nashville, TN 37210, (615) 366-2400.

Current line: Models 1268 (100/60 watts, \$747), 1269 (200/120 watts \$1,014), 1270A (400/220 watts, \$1,422) and 9440A (400/200 watts, \$2,025).

**Ashly Audio, Inc.**—100 Fernwood Ave., Rochester, NY 14621, (716) 544-5191.



**Ashly's FET-200 stereo MOSFET power amplifier.**

Current line: Models FET-200 (160/100 watts, \$769) and FET-500 (400/250 watts, \$1,095).

**Audio Media Research (AMR)**—P.O. Box 1230, Meridian, MS 39301, (601) 483-5372.

Current line: The model MPA 200 (130/100 watts, \$459.50).

**BGW Systems, Inc.**—13130 S. Yukon Ave., Hawthorne, CA 90250, (213) 973-8090.

Current line: Models 2125 (110 watts at 8 ohms, \$619), 250D (150/100 watts, \$839), 7500 (300/200 watts, \$899), 750C (360/225 watts, \$1,339) and 8000 (400/225 watts, \$1,099). There are 11 more models in the BGW line, ranging in power from 75 to 360 watts.

**Biamp Systems**—P.O. Box 78, 11000 S.W. 11 St., Beaverton, OR 90250, (503) 641-6767.

Current line: Models 1200 (290/175 watts, \$849) and 2400 (580/360 watts, \$1,199).

**C Audio**—Unit 9, 23-25 Gwydir St., Cambridge, UK CB1 2LG, 44-223-321732.

Current line: Models CA1 (110/80 watts, \$NA), CA2 (250/150 watts, \$NA) and CA4 (400/250 watts, \$NA).

**Carver Corporation**—19210 33 Ave. W., Lynnwood, WA 98036, (206) 775-1202.

Current line: Models PM-200 (150/101 watts, \$549) and PM 1.5 (600/450 watts, \$995).

**Carvin Corporation**—1155 Industrial Ave., Escondido, CA 92025, (619) 747-1710.

Current line: Models DCM151 (100/70 watts, \$299), DCM301 (160/100 watts, \$369), DCA300 (150/100 watts, \$399) and DCA800 (300/200 watts, \$549).

**Cerwin-Vega!, Inc.**—12250 Montague St., Arleta, CA 91331, (818) 896-0777.



**Cerwin-Vega's A-300 amplifier.**

Current line: Models A-300 (325/225 watts, \$850) and LPA-600 (600/350 watts, \$1,020) power amps.

**Crest Audio**—150 Florence Ave., P.O. Box 129, Hawthorne, NJ 07507, (201) 423-1300.

Current line: Models 1001A (50/35 watts, \$649), 1501A (125/80 watts, \$799), 2001A (200/125 watts, \$999), 300 (300/200 watts, \$879), 400 (400/275 watts, \$1,079), 4001 (500/300 watts, \$1,879) and 5000 (600/375 watts, \$2,439).

**Crown International**—1718 W. Mishawaka Rd., Elkhart, IN 46517, (219) 294-8000.

Current line: The incredible new Micro-Tech 1000 (1,000/800 watts, \$995) plus models D-75 (55/40 watts, \$499), D-150A (125/80 watts, \$729), PS-200 (135/90 watts, \$769), DC-300A (250/155 watts, \$1,149), PS-400 (260/160 watts, \$1,179), PSA2 (350/220 watts, \$1,699) and Delta Omega 2000 (1,300/730 watts, \$2,995).



**Crown's Delta Omega 2000 interface velocity-controlled amplifier.**

**Fender Musical Instruments**—1300 E. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92631, (714) 879-8080.

Current line: Models 2224 (240/120 watts, \$795) and 2244 (440/220 watts, \$1,150).

**The David Hafler Company**—5910 Crescent Blvd., Pennsauken, NJ 08109, (609) 662-6355.

Current line: Models P500 (400/255 watts, \$950), P220 (220/150 watts, \$600) and P225 (175 watts at 4 ohms, \$510).

**Hill Audio, Inc.**—231 Marquis Ct., Lilburn, GA 30247, (404) 923-3193.

Current line: Models dx201 (200 watts at 8 ohms, \$849), dx501 (400/250 watts, \$999), dx701 (500/250 watts, \$1,259), dx1000 (600/375 watts, \$1,499), dx1000A (800/500 watts, \$1,699), dx2000 (600/400 watts, \$1,849) and dx3000 (900/550 watts, \$2,499).

**JBL/Urei, Inc.**—8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329, (818) 893-8411.

Current line: Models 6230 (150/75 watts, \$618), 6150 (80/80 watts, \$746), 6260 (300/150 watts, \$870), 6250 (200/150 watts, \$896), 6300 (380/225 watts, \$1,346) and 6500 (450/275 watts, \$2,396).

**Dean Markley Manufacturing**—3350 Scott Blvd., #45, Santa Clara, CA 95054, (800) 538-8330.

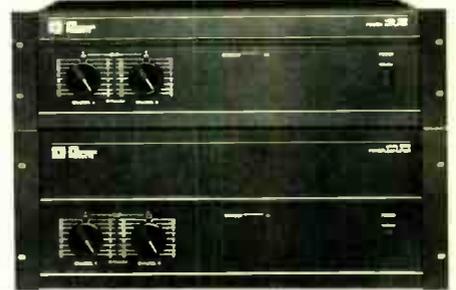
Current line: Model RM100MT (100/100 watts, \$599).

**Peavey Electronics**—711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301, (601) 483-5365.

Current line: Hartley's new DECA-700 (350/700 watts, \$799.50) and DECA-1200 (600/1,200 watts, \$1,099.50), both in a bridged mode, and models M-2600 (130 watts into 4 ohms, \$359.50), M-3000 (300 watts into 2 ohms, \$359.50), CS-400 (200 watts into 4 ohms, \$599.50) and CS-800 (400 watts into 4 ohms, \$799.50).

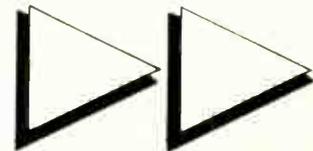
**QSC Audio Products**—1926 Placentia Ave., Costa Mesa, CA 92627, (714) 645-2540.

Current line: Models 1080 (50/35 watts, \$438), 1200 (150/100 watts, \$498), 1400 (300/200 watts, \$698), 1700 (500/325 watts, \$998), 3350 (300/200 watts, \$1,148), 3500 (450/300 watts, \$1,398) and 3800 (600/360 watts, \$1,798).



**JBL/Urei's models 6230 and 6260 amplifiers.**

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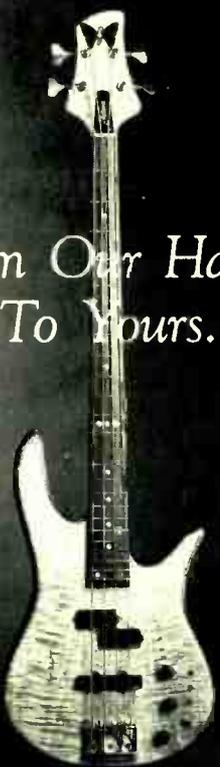
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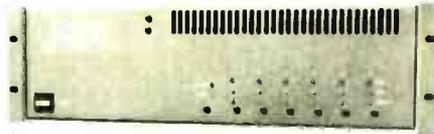
**Ramsa (Panasonic Industrial Company)**—One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, NJ 07094. (201) 348-7000.

Current line: Model WP-9210 (350/200 watts, \$995).

**Randall Instruments, Inc.**—1132 Duryea, Irvine, CA 92714. (714) 261-6304.

Current line: Models RDA2-125 (250 watts at 4 ohms, \$499.50), RDA2-500 (1,000 watts at 4 ohms, \$1,199.50), RRM1-120 (120 watts at 4 ohms, \$359.50), RRM2-120 (300 watts at 4 ohms, \$569.50) and RRM2-250 (500 watts at 4 ohms, \$798.50).

**Rane Corporation**—6510 216 Ave. S.W., Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043. (206) 774-7309.



**Rane's MA 6 multichannel amplifier.**

Current line: Models HC 6 (450 mw - 6, \$349) and MA6 (150/100 watts, \$1,299).

**Roland Corporation US**—7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA 90040. (213) 685-5141.

Current line: Models SPA-1200 (60/90 watts, \$420), SPA-2400 (120/180 watts, \$695) and SPA-4800 (240/360 watts, \$1,795).

**Ross (a Division of IMC)**—P.O. Box 2344, Fort Worth, TX 76113. (817) 336-5114.

Current line: The 5KW (225/135 watts, \$749.95).

**Soundcraftsmen, Inc.**—2200 S. Ritchley, Santa Ana, CA 92705. (714) 556-6191.

Current line: Models RA5501 (190/125 watts, \$549), RA5502 (190/125 watts, \$649), RA6501 (375/250 watts, \$799), RA7501 (375/250 watts, \$899), RA7502 (375/250 watts, \$999), RA7503 (375/250 watts, \$1,199) and PR1800 (600/375 watts, \$1,199).

**Sunn Electronics**—19350 S.W. 89 Ave., Tualatin, OR 97062. (503) 692-4650.

Current line: Models SGA107 (100/60 watts, \$369), SGA310 (200/150 watts, \$519), SA10 (300/200 watts, \$579), SA11 (300/200 watts, \$629), SA20 (600/400 watts, \$679), SA21 (600/400 watts, \$729) and SPL 6800 (1,200/800 watts, \$1,299).

**Yamaha International Corp.**—P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. (714) 522-9011.

Current line: Models P2050 (45 watts at 8 ohms, \$425), P2100 (85 watts at 8 ohms, \$659), PC1002 (150/100 watts, \$780), P2201 (200 watts at 8 ohms, \$1,095), P2200 (200 watts at 8 ohms, \$1,195), P2002 (240 watts at 8 ohms, \$1,250), P2002M (240 watts at 8 ohms, \$1,350) and PC5002M (750/500 watts, \$3,550).



**Yamaha's PC5002M amplifier.**

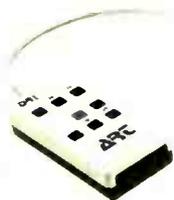
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"Our new Carver amp racks pack twice the number of channels in about the same truck volume as the conventional racks they replace. In addition the average power per channel has increased while the average weight per channel has decreased. In the low end, for example, we now have 1,200 watts per cabinet where 650 watts were previously available. They take less room on the truck, they weigh less and our systems have more headroom than before. The Carver amplifier has allowed us to take a significant step in improving our sound systems." **CLAIR BROTHERS**

And not only a sound industry giant like Clair Brothers tours with Carver.

"We have toured Carvers with the following artists: Softcell, Paul Young, Johnny Mathis, Donna Summers, Howard Jones, Pointer Sisters, Psychedelic Furs, Lee Greenwood, General Public, George Thorogood. This is exclusive of our numerous one-nighters. The consensus of the performers is that the equipment sounds great. They have been amazed by the sound of the amps as well as their size and weight. As for reliability, out of 50 amps we had only one fail in the past year of touring. This is by far the best record we've had with any manufacturer of amplifiers. Sonically, the extra headroom is readily apparent. We, at Manticore unanimously agree that the PM-1.5 is incredible and is the only amp we intend to buy."

*Tom Whisner (owner) MANTICORE*

**In the Laboratory** The Carver PM-1.5 was rigorously tested by Len Feldman for MODERN RECORDING (February 1985). His laboratory test results also prove that the PM-1.5 really delivers. The following quotes from the Lab Report are reprinted with permission of MODERN RECORDING & MUSIC:—

"The first thing we noticed when we began to work with the Carver PM-1.5 was the ease with which the amplifier delivered almost limitless power to speaker loads which we had previously considered to be difficult to drive to loud levels. This is the sort of amplifier that just refuses to quit."

"The amplifier delivered a clean 480 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads with both channels driven for its rated harmonic distortion level of 0.5%. Even at the frequency extreme of 20 Hz, power output for rated THD was 470 watts as against 450 claimed by Carver. Furthermore, at rated power output, distortion decreased to an insignificant 0.015% at mid-frequencies and 0.007% at 20 Hz. When connected to 4-ohm loads, the PM-1.5 delivered 750 watts per channel for rated THD of 0.05%—far more than the 600 watts claimed by Carver. Clearly, when it comes to specs for a professional amplifier, Carver has taken a very conservative approach... All (manufacturer's claims) equaled or exceeded published specifications—usually by a wide margin."

"Carver has managed to deliver a tremendous amount of power in a small lightweight package at a very reasonable cost..."

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World Radio History

# MOUNTAIN



Photo by Mark Weiss

## CLIMBING AGAIN

AT LAST, A REUNION WORTH WELCOMING BACK

BY PHILIP BASHE

One by one they've come lumbering back, lured mostly by the prospect of potential money to be reaped from the '80s heavy-metal revival, but also, one suspects, hoping desperately to recapture even a fraction of their former fame: Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Grand Funk, Blue Cheer. (*Blue Cheer?*)

Save for the resurrected Purple, none has come close to succeeding, and in that group's case, how could it have failed, when its *Perfect Strangers* reunion LP calculatedly reconstructed a proven sound piece by piece, using the original blueprint?

Also vying for a comeback are Mountain, who a decade and a half ago were among the most popular hard-rock bands, and to some,

the American challengers to Led Zeppelin. Their sound covered a broader spectrum than most metal bands': deafeningly loud, of course, but counterpointing bassist/leader Felix Pappalardi's sweet, boyish tenor and hulking guitarist Leslie West's voice, which tore the songs apart; and West's near-impenetrable guitar chords and Steve Knight's ornamental organ. However, aside from a handful of classics—"Mississippi Queen," "Nantucket Sleighride" and "Theme for an Imaginary Western," the latter written by Jack Bruce—Mountain were mediocre songwriters, a weakness that would ultimately prove fatal.

So what makes West's and drummer Cory Laing's new Mountain one of the rare reunions worth welcoming back? For one thing, good material, but also good intentions.

"There aren't any ulterior motives involved," contends Laing, now 37. "We got together because we wanted to play together again and because we felt that people wanted to hear us again." A few nights earlier at a Brooklyn, New York, hard-rock palace called L'Amour. "We got a standing ovation just for walking on stage," he says proudly. "Yeah," volunteers Leslie West in his perpetually frayed voice, "just for being alive."

Truth is, a little desperation and "Hard Times"—the title of their recent single—played a part in their decision to reunite, for the years between Mountain's final studio LP, 1974's *Avalanche*, and 1985's *Go for Your Life* had been full of hurdles, summed up by West and Laing in another song title, "Little Bit of Insanity." By 1972 Mountain had already

(L): Back after some "Hard Times": Leslie West, Corky Laing and new bassist Mark Clarke.

peaked and over the next few years played together only intermittently. West and Laing, frustrated by the slowdown, formed with Jack Bruce what portended to be one of the major groups of its time, West, Bruce and Laing. But after just two albums, WB&L went the way of Bruce's former power trio, Cream, after whom they were modeled. Says West frankly, "Drugs fucked us up."

In 1975 and 1976 the guitarist recorded two musically stagnant solo albums that went nowhere. Confused about which direction to proceed in and discouraged by the prevailing musical climate, he set aside his guitar for 18 months and became deeply immersed in hard drugs. Laing was unable to offer support due to his own substance problems, "and when you're like that, you pretty much don't think about anybody else." At least he kept active, drumming on sessions and leading a new-wave band called the Mix. "If you don't play," he says by way of explanation, "you're not a drummer, you're a drum owner."

West, meanwhile, had relocated to Milwaukee to seek treatment but primarily to escape the pervasive New York City drug culture. The time away from the music business, plus the drug-related death of Who drummer Keith Moon—which West says affected him greatly—made him reassess some of the wasted opportunities of the past.

"I thought to myself, 'What if something happened to one of us? I'd really be cheating myself if we never got to play with one another again.'" (His premonition proved prophetic: On April 17, 1983, Pappalardi was shot to death by his wife and frequent songwriting collaborator, Gail Collins Pappalardi.) The bassist/producer declined to participate in a reunion, so West and Laing, who hadn't spoken to each other during the late '70s, decided to start anew without him

in the Midwest. When they drove to the airport to depart for their first dates as the new Mountain, "I said to Leslie, 'Let's not talk about the past,'" recalls Laing. West nodded in agreement.

**T**he road back was long, nearly four years long. "At first we just took it day by day," Laing continues, "and kept on playing," with interim bassists. "There were a lot of really terrible shows and a lot of really good ones." One benefit, as far as Laing's drumming was concerned, was that "many times the opening act had more money than we did, so we'd use their equipment. I'd be playing a different setup every night, and it taught me to become very flexible as a player."

And along the way he and West became capable songwriters, which is reflected in tracks such as "Hard Times" and the lecherous "I Love Young Girls," which combine pop tunefulness with hard-rock pugnance. Laing and new bassist Mark Clarke set up a meaty backdrop for West, who is clearly the keystone and has never sounded better. Or looked healthier, despite having just turned 40 and having been diagnosed as a diabetic several years ago. In lieu of insulin, he's been controlling the disease through a careful diet, and is noticeably thinner, though he remains an imposing figure, with a shock of reddish hair that comes close to rivaling boxing promoter Don King's for architectural splendor. Musically, West ignites *Go for Your Life's* tracks with three-alarm guitar solos, and screams as if he's on fire—or as if he'd been forced to listen to yet another 10-appendages-on-the-fretboard, careful-with-that-whammy-bar-Eugene '80s metal guitarist. Speaking of which...

West, who was as significant to his era as Eddie Van Halen to his (Jeff Beck once called him "the greatest living guitarist in the world"), has some opinions about contemporary hard-rock players, none of which is too favorable. Their overreliance on the tremolo



West formerly strummed a Gibson Melody Maker but today plays guitars by Washburn (shown here), Guild and DiMarzio.

bar and multifinger technique, he feels, is further exacerbated by what seems to be a dearth of fresh ideas.

"Most of the guitarists today," he begins, lighting a cigarette, "after hearing just two seconds of their solos, I can tell you exactly where they're going to go." West's leads can be predictable, but for a different reason: It's his trademark to construct solos that conform to a tune's melodic structure, almost like a song within a song, "with a beginning, a middle and an end." West doesn't require a tremolo bar to climax every solo in a squall of histrionics, he resolves each one compositionally.

## MOVING A MOUNTAIN

**I**t's not as arduous as you might think, especially when the trio can hook up on a major tour, as it did earlier this year with Triumph. In cases like that, says production manager Sonny Weber, Mountain borrow the headliner's sound and lights, and only have to carry around their stage gear.

"Mountain travel with a crew of three: Weber, his brother Michael in the capacity of stage manager, and sound engineer Michael Scott, who owns Wizard Sound Studios in Westchester, New York, where the demos for *Go for Your Life* were recorded. All take turns driving the band bus and the equipment truck, Michael oversees Corky Laing's and Mark Clarke's gear, and Sonny has the easiest task of all: looking after Leslie West's Guild, DiMarzio and Washburn guitars, and Marshall amps and cabinets.

"You don't have to do anything for Leslie," he chuckles, "he doesn't even like to change his strings." West's only idiosyncrasy is having

his signal routed through a Rockman on stage, "to make it a little fuller sounding and also to have in case of a Marshall power failure," not unlikely when you consider the overwhelming volume to which West is partial.

Liverpool-born Mark Clarke also requires little fussing over. He carries two Guild custom basses fitted with EMG pickups and a '61 Fender Precision with Seymour Duncans, all strung with medium-gauge Guild stainless-steels. The 35-year-old Clarke, who's worked with Uriah Heep, Ian Hunter, Colosseum, Natural Gas and Billy Squier, goes directly into 100- and 400-watt Marshall bass heads and four 4-12" cabinets. He also plays an Oberheim OB-8 synthesizer on stage, "a split keyboard," according to Weber, "so we use a mono out and a stereo out, left and right, into a couple of direct boxes and into the monitors."

As an opening act, expediency is essential.

Weber claims that with the aid of union hands, Mountain's equipment can be set up in approximately one hour, including 20 minutes for Corky Laing's sizable kit. Breaking down is quicker, "because you've got a million people throwing your shit off stage," he laughs. "Then it takes about fifteen minutes to get it into an area in which you can break it down and put it in its anvil cases, plus another half-hour to load the truck."

West and Clarke both sing through Electro-Voice PL78s; Laing, through a Nady Headmic, which utilizes a Countryman Isomax element. The group travels with a total of seven monitors: two wedges for West, two for Clarke, one for Laing and two side fills.

"They don't need a lot of gear," says Weber. "They just go for it." It must have made Triumph's road crew, which has to start hanging the rigging nearly 12 hours before showtime, a trifle envious.

"Well," he grins, "they were getting that way."

## Soundcheck

### Selected Gear Used on Tour

**Rockman X100 portable amp**, manufactured by Scholz Research & Development, Inc., 1560 Trapelo Rd., Waltham, MA 02154, (617) 890-5211.



*On-Go for Your Life*. West utilized the Rockman, Tom Scholz's original. The newer model is the X100, which features four equalization settings; high-energy distortion setting, providing plenty of overdrive and sustain; edge setting; gain control; two "clean" settings; solid-state reverb; stereo echo; and the highly acclaimed Scholz stereo chorus.

Suggested retail price: \$319.95.

**Model 3540 bass head**, manufactured by Marshall, distributed by Unicord, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590, (516) 333-9100.



The top-of-the-line 3540 combines a versatile integrated bass preamp with twin 200-watt rms power amps for 400 watts full range or biamped operation. Other features include five-band rotary equalizer (50Hz, 400Hz, 1kHz, 5kHz and 10kHz), continuous low and midrange control; and variable gain input section.

Suggested retail price: \$925 with wood cabinet.

**Light-gauge guitar strings**, manufactured by Sfarzo String Co., Ltd., 994 Geneva Ave., San Francisco, CA 94112, (415) 585-5300.

Greg Sfarzo's strings include nickel-plated Super Screammers, in nine gauges; Super Spares, a half-dozen singles with a choice of gauges from .008 to .017; and Super Bronze 85/15 alloys for acoustic, classical and concert guitars.

Suggested retail price: Super Screammers, \$6.95 per set; Super Spares, \$3.50 per box; Super Bronze 85/15 alloys \$8.95 (for acoustics), \$6.50 to \$8.50 (for classical and concert guitars).

## AT A BROOKLYN HARD-ROCK PALACE, MOUNTAIN RECEIVED A STANDING OVATION "JUST FOR BEING ALIVE."

Speed has never been his primary weapon: in fact, he says, "I know how fast I am, and it ain't shit compared to some of these new guys. Believe it or not," he reveals, "I can only play with two fingers." West has other strengths, such as tonal concept, and resists the temptation to sound like everybody else. Instead of the scraping, metallic tone that's become *de rigueur* in hard rock, he opts for a fat, growly chordal sound and an incandescent, bluesy tone for solos.

In the '70s he achieved that sound with a Gibson Les Paul Junior TV Special, which was often mistakenly identified as a Gibson Melody Maker. West has since sold or traded away all of his Juniors except for one, and now switches among a Guild X-82 with two DiMarzio custom-wound humbucker pickups (similar to the Al Di Meola Signature series model), three Washburns and a custom-made DiMarzio. The latter, of which he owns two, is a Strat-style instrument featuring alder body, maple neck, cream-colored prototype finish, gold hardware and Super Distortion pickup. The Washburns are a model HM-20 and two HM-5s, with a combination of DiMarzio DP107 MegaDrive custom-wound humbucker, Rick Derringer Signature series and HS-2 pickups. West strings his guitars with light-gauge Sfarzos and uses thin picks.

When it comes to amplifiers, he sticks with tradition, playing through three 100-watt Marshall JCM 800s and six 4-12" cabinets, despite the fact that, in his opinion, their 65-watt Celestion speakers aren't as good as the vintage models' 25-watters, though they don't have to be reconed as frequently. "The secret with Marshalls has never been the head," he claims, "it's the speakers."

West also discloses, after some prodding, that he uses a Scholz Rockman portable amp live and even employed it on most of *Go for Your Life*. "But I didn't use it like a preamp. I had it plugged right into the board—stereo, left and right—and put the Marshalls in another studio, miked." West is not keen on effects—using only a Washburn WEQ-31M graphic EQ and a Boss OC-2 octaver live—and stresses that the basis of his sound will never be derived from any pedal, it will always come from his picking technique.

"On a softer part of a song, for example, I don't use a volume pedal to turn down, I pick softer, because when you turn down the volume you lose all the harmonic overtones. By simply softening your picking technique, you can retain them."

Like West, Corky Laing has also modernized his setup without sacrificing his style. His major innovation equipment-wise back in the '70s was his use of timbales in place of tom-toms, simply because, he says laughingly, "I couldn't afford 'em. But they cut like bullets, especially on stage."

Today he plays a Yamaha Recording series kit with two 24" bass drums, a 14" x 8" snare,

6", 8", 10", 12", 13" and 14" rack toms, and 16" x 16" and 18" x 16" floor toms. Cymbals are a combination of Zildjian and Sabian, but it's an integral aspect of Laing's style not to rely on them exclusively for dynamics; he's just as apt to accent a beat on the floor tom as he is to swat a crash cymbal. "A lot of times when I practice," he explains, "I don't even set up any cymbals except for the hi-hat." Because he doesn't require such a long reach, unlike drummers who keep their myriad cymbal stands a whole zip code away, Laing is presently using a shortened version of the old Slingerland Corky Laing sticks, which are 5Bs. Between splintering them and ricocheting them off his cymbals, he claims to

*Continued on page 65*

## Go West, Young Man

### The Story Behind The DiMarzio Super Distortion Pickup



Thirteen years ago Larry DiMarzio designed the Super Distortion pickup with a sound in mind.

Leslie West's.

"Absolutely," says DiMarzio, who later began his own company, DiMarzio, Inc., in 1975. "Leslie's sound was big, loud and distorted, but it wasn't painful, it was smooth and articulate. And you certainly couldn't get that sound with a fuzz-tone or in a small club, because if you brought a one-hundred-watt Marshall to the gig, you'd peel the paint off the walls." In developing the Super Distortion humbucker, DiMarzio was after a pickup that would "cause an amplifier to break up at a reasonable volume."

DiMarzio's original, the DP100, retails for \$79.

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Patrick O'Hearn (Missing Persons)  
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# ON SONGWRITING

## Janna Allen: Hits on Her List

by Dan Daley

**W**riting lyrics came easily and early to Janna Allen. By the time she was a teenager, she'd had one of her poems published in *Mademoiselle* magazine. "I started rhyming words rhythmically when I was younger," she recalls. "Rhyming and rhythm were the most important things."

Allen's name may not be well known to the public yet, but thanks to Daryl Hall and John Oates, several of her songs are: "Kiss on My List" and "Private Eyes"—both #1s in 1981—the Top 10 "Did It in a Minute" and "Method of Modern Love," and numerous LP cuts. The blond, freckled native of Columbus, Ohio, did have one slight advantage in that she is the younger sister of Sara Allen—Hall's longtime companion and the subject of the song "Sara Smile"—thus giving her easy access to the duo. That's the kind of opportunity—the big break, as it were—every writer and performer hopes for. In Janna Allen's instance, she was ready for it when it came.

While attending high school in Los Angeles, she began plugging that knack for poetry into the city's musical milieu, writing with the likes of Louise Goffin (Carole King's daughter) and Warren Pash (late of the Cheaters). Some of her early efforts were recorded on demos by local bands, though

none was ever released commercially; then Allen began forming and joining bands of her own. "Actually, getting into bands is what got me writing and cowriting more," she says.

Allen, 26, has known Hall and Oates for quite some time now, and their future songwriting relationship was perhaps prefigured when Daryl bought her her first guitars as a birthday present: a maple Fender Strat and a black Gibson Les Paul. (One wall in her New York City apartment is lined with a varied collection of axes, including a Hamer 12-string bass and a custom Telecaster set up as an eight-string mandolin.)

Hall and Oates provided a model for the self-taught songwriter. "They were like my perfect example," she says of the duo that's charted 17 songs into the Top 40 since 1980 and 24 overall. "I could watch them as they worked, and it really was an education. Daryl or John would get an idea—it might be a musical idea, or even two chords and a nice chorus and lyrics—one would say to the other, 'What do we do with this?', and a song would come out of it." Their ability to bounce things off each other helped her become even more at ease with collaboration.

But in addition to studying the method, she was also analyzing the artists. As she picked up their pace and approach, "I tried sticking lines into their songs." One day in

1980 she approached Hall with a tune. "I started singing it to him, and he said, 'We gotta find a piano *immediately*.' I had written the lyrics and had a melody idea, we found a piano, and Daryl polished it up right there." The song was "Kiss on My List."

"Private Eyes" was a joint effort between her and longtime friend Warren Pash. "He had some bits and pieces and I had some bits and pieces, and we put them together. The song was originally his idea, but I changed the melodies and the words and cut out some pieces that weren't necessary; just rearranged it."

"Method of Modern Love," from last year's *Big Bam Boom*, has a rather interesting story behind it. "I was sitting around looking for titles in a bad way; the worst writer's block of the century," she recalls, walking over to her bookcase and producing an instructional volume entitled *Modern Method for Guitar*. "I looked up and saw this book, turned the words around in my head for a while and said to myself, 'How about a Method of Modern Love?' I wrote some words for it, but they didn't really knock me out. Mark Bosch [Elliot Easton Band guitarist and a frequent *IM&RW* contributor] and I wrote some music for it, but it was really sort of a heavy rock ballad, nothing at all like the Hall and Oates song. I wanted to tear it apart and make it even better."

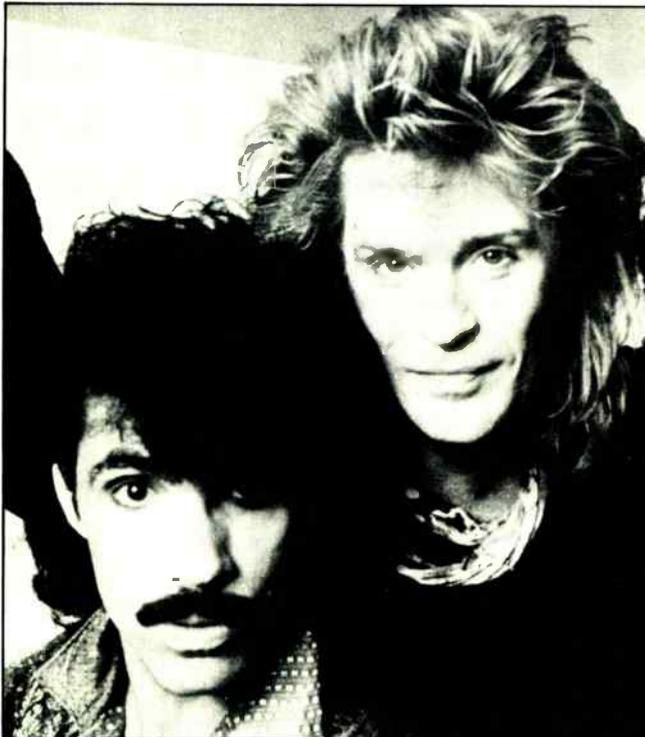
Janna gave it to sister Sara to rewrite. It then found its way to Hall. "I went over to his place one day," says Allen, "and he was singing, 'M-E-T-H-O-D-O-F...,' and he had this great keyboard part." You heard the results on your radio this past spring.

The original problem Allen faced in this case was that once she had written the first version of the song, she found it hard to rebuild from scratch because she was so used to the song as she had written it. Playing it with her own band reinforced that pattern. It was hard, if not impossible, to look at it with the objectivity necessary for a complete rewrite. This is a problem most writers face at some point: a song that doesn't live up to the original inspiration. By letting other ears in on it, Allen wound up with a better song, and a hit to boot.

### HOW TO COMBAT WRITER'S BLOCK

Sufferers of writer's block are prone to more snakeoil remedies than a batch of carny barkers could dream of. Allen's remedy to the problem is to change her whole approach to writing. "I generally set aside time for writing," she explains. "That's important. But then there's pressure to get something done. I might start looking through my notebook,

Photo by Lynn Goldsmith



**Janna Allen (above) has cowritten two #1 and two Top 10 hits for John Oates and Daryl Hall (l.). As she was developing as a songwriter, "I could watch them as they worked, and it really was an education."**

and nothing will come to me; that's the worst feeling.

"Now I've changed my formula of writing into a stream-of-consciousness approach. Instead of coming up with a chorus and trying to write a verse to it, I'll just write down a train of thought, like a diary. I've heard that Chrissie Hynde does that too. I'll make a little index of the title and the ideas that have to do with it. I'll work around key words."

Her erstwhile approach was limiting, she claims. "It's like editing your thoughts before the pen hits the paper, and that's dangerous." With her more innovative method, "You have all this stuff coming out, you put it aside, you look at it later, and you pull out the best ideas and make something out of that."

"The best part of stream-of-consciousness is that you have more ideas to work with," she goes on. "Any thought that comes to mind you put down. It could be the noise downstairs or the people next door. I put that in songs."

"A lot of writers I know are caught in writer's block because of being too introspective," she contends. "That can drive you nuts. You have to step outside yourself and look at your surroundings."

In her old format, the sound of a radio playing on somebody's fire escape would have been a distraction. "Now I integrate it into the work. Another thing I've been incorporating lately is actual movement, physical articulations, like the sound of ice when someone picks up a glass. It works well in a song because it's an immediate image."

What Allen is talking about might be familiar to anyone who has ever taken a

creative-writing course. Many teachers employ a method called "clustering," which involves a similar principle of taking one thought and then letting the mind wander aimlessly, freely associating, then editing later—essentially letting the two sides of the brain function in sequence.

When Allen does come up with something she likes, she puts it down on a new Fostex model 250 four-track cassette deck in her apartment. She doesn't use any outboard equipment other than a Scholz Rockman. Her guitars and Shure mike run through a Fender Princeton Reverb amp and a Gallien-Krueger 250ML amp. That all-important rhythm she spoke of earlier is supplied by an MXR drum computer. The guitars she uses to write on are a '57 Gibson Les Paul Special, a Gibson 12-string acoustic and a white '59 Fender Stratocaster.

Unlike Hall and Oates's sleek recorded sound, Allen's demos have a raw, powerful quality to them, which suits the kind of music she is writing in hopes of securing a record deal for herself and present collaborator Tom Peterson, formerly of Cheap Trick. "Power pop is what I write personally, and when I present songs they're in that form," she says. Surprisingly, the cowriter of so many Hall and Oates hits is "a Led Zep freak." She sums up her criteria for a quality composition by saying simply: "I like really powerful music with a good melodic sense." □

*Dan Daley is a songwriter whose credits include "Still in Saigon," recorded by the Charlie Daniels Band, and "This Could Be the Night," a Top 10 single for R. B. Hudman.*

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## Your Questions Answered

by Ron Bienstock

**W**e love readers' questions. They show us that many of you are having many of the same difficulties and tribulations that our stable of fictitious "On Law" acts such as Fracas and the Lifters have encountered in their spiraling careers:

**If a band that is temporarily on hold has a name (for the group itself, that is) which it wants protected so that it might use the name indefinitely when it starts playing, is there a way to protect it? Can this name remain our own even during our period of inactivity? Also, how do we find out if our name is already in use, and if so, can we use the name even though another group is using it as well? How can we protect ideas and concepts? Instrument design? Music?**

**Timm Wagner, Milford, PA**

In the U.S., trademarking of a name actually comes into play from use, not from registration. Priority in use, or "prior use," of a name is central to establishing and protecting a band's name. If you have used a band's name in providing entertainment services—e.g., playing several gigs and having ads appear in a local newspaper, thus establishing use—you can file for an application trademarking that name. While it is not essential, if you are serious about keeping your name, you should apply to register by complying with state and federal procedures.

It should be noted that what you're applying for is actually a service mark: that is, protection of a name used in providing a service; in this case, entertainment services. A trademark for products and a service mark for services can be used in conjunction. For example, when a band seeks to merchandise its name by selling T-shirts bearing that name, it is, in effect, using its name as a service mark with a trademark for a product.

But before printing up those T-shirts, the band should complete a search to see that no one else has prior use of that name. An inexpensive (and incomplete) method of a search is to check *Billboard* magazine's yearly directory and record catalogs at major record stores, or with the American Federation of Musicians, for bands that are currently using the same name.

What if you go ahead and use your band name and then find out someone in another part of the country is using the same name? Under the legal concept of territoriality, if two groups *in innocence* are using the same name, they may be able to share the name, but only in their respective territories.

In addressing the point of how to protect concepts and ideas, under U.S. copyright law,

ideas do not represent sufficient modes of expression and cannot receive copyright protection. Protecting an instrument design is based primarily on patent concepts. There are several different types of patents, depending on—among other features—what it is you're claiming is patentable. Machines, or in the preferred patent terminology, "apparatus," are patentable. Designs are also patentable. The patentability of a design is based on appearance. In patent-law terms, a design is "that characteristic of physical substance which, by the like, taken as a whole, makes an impression through the eye upon the mind of the observer." (Isn't legalese wonderful?) In other words, a design patent—which is granted for 14 years—is not to be confused with a machine-based or utility patent. Instead it must be ornamental and cosmetic, in addition to being unobvious and original.

For more information on the following subjects, refer to "On Law" in the February '84, May '84 and NAMM Special '85 issues.

**My husband, Gary, is a songwriter and has recently recorded a cassette of four songs. Several people have commented that they are very good. I am now becoming more interested in helping him to promote his cassette.**

**I would like to know if there is a book available that has addresses where we may send his cassette. Any information on how I can help him promote his tape would be helpful.**

**Pauline Heinz-Strauss, Owosso, MI**

Promoting a four-song tape can be made easier if you define your goals for the tape. Are you seeking a recording deal? A publishing deal? With regard to the major labels, approximately half no longer accept unsolicited material. Lack of time and manpower is one reason. The major reason, perhaps, is the recent proliferation of copyright-infringement lawsuits filed against artists such as Billy Joel and the Bee Gees by aspiring musicians who'd sent their demos to those artists' respective record companies. In any case, the majority of the labels will return unsolicited tapes, and then only if an SASE is enclosed. Unfortunately, this policy hinders many new, talented artists from getting their material—the potential hits of tomorrow—heard.

A high-powered attorney or manager can help you gain entrée to the companies. Again, unfortunately, attracting *their* interest in your music is often as hard as trying to attract the labels themselves.

But there are things you can do, beginning with tailoring your demo to a record company's requirements. Make sure that the label to whom you wish to send a tape is even

accepting demos at the present time. And if a record company's roster is comprised exclusively of rap acts, and you're a country singer, you'd be wasting both your and its time by mailing that label your tape—not to mention the money for the tape plus postage and handling.

As for format, most A&R personnel we've spoken to agree that a four-song demo best enables them to properly judge the quality of your tunes and talent. Other points to consider: Is the strongest song first? Is there a lengthy intro? How long are the songs? Remember, your tape is just one of hundreds—or thousands—that an A&R staffer might hear in a month.

The one question most often asked concerning demos is, How vital are production values? The advent of affordable home-recording technology has definitely affected the old philosophy "All we need is a piano and a tune." But ultimately, your tape should exhibit the essence of your songs, and an overproduced demo can mask your melodies and hooks, and in general confuse the listener.

Mark your tapes professionally, making sure to number the songs, provide song titles and song lengths, and include a lyric sheet if you feel it will enhance the listener's appreciation of your music. Most important, include the name, address and phone number of your group's contact (i.e., your manager, etc.). Also, the record company wants to see what the act it's considering signing looks like, so include a professional-looking 8" x 10" glossy, a bio and any newspaper or magazine clippings you think are essential.

Finally, use high-quality tape for your copies, for you can't assume that your demo will get listened to on a Nakamichi; it could get listened to on a Nimrod instead. And if you have access to a noise-reduction system (Dolby A, B, C, D or Z), utilize it and indicate this information as well on the tape.

A complete listing of all the major record companies as well as selected independent labels was published in our article "Group Therapy—Getting Your Band Signed," which appeared in the August '84 *IM&RW*. □

### Next Month: What Constitutes Copyright Infringement?

*In "On Law" we seek to provide general information about legal issues affecting musicians. We hope to educate our readers to recognize legal issues when they arise and to obtain further legal assistance to resolve those matters.*

*All characters contained in the above are fictitious; any similarity to actual persons is purely coincidental.*

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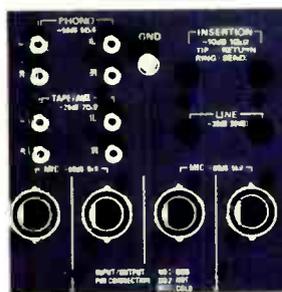
to-read LED bar graph so you can instantly monitor each input channel individually.

Standard equipment also includes three auxiliary send circuits. A pre-fader monitor foldback circuit. A post-fader effect send. And a switchable pre/post fader send for either foldback monitoring or effects.

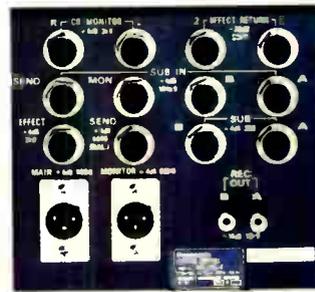
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IMRW

# Panasonic Industrial Company

# ON TEST

## Product: **Electra EP-401 Digital Delay With Modulation**

Manufacturer: **Omni Music Products, a Division of St. Louis Music Supply Company, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63133, (314) 727-4512**

Suggested Retail Price: **\$279.99**

It wasn't so long ago that digital delays were fairly exotic items—with prices to match. But as the industry pays off its research and development costs on DDLs and items like it, the prices begin to come down. Other factors also affect prices, such as the type and range of effects on board a unit and the features it offers. The recent proliferation of DDLs gives the buyer a wide

*Omni's EP-401 digital delay with modulation features color-coded front panel controls, making it easy to work with on stage.*



range of choices when it comes to features. Omni Music Products is offering its new EP-401 with basic DDL features and some extras at a price that makes a rack-mounted unit readily affordable.

### CONSTRUCTION

The EP-401 is a rack-mounted unit weighing four kilograms. The front panel controls are made of high-impact plastic and are color differentiated so that working them on a darkened stage is easier. The level section has a single knob (all controls are knob types or buttons) for input level, with a four-bar LED display. There's also a feedback level control and a high-cut button, which cuts 12db off at 10kHz.

Moving from left to right across the panel: The modulation section has the standard sweep and depth functions. The delay section has two controls: a range control—calib-

rated in 2ms, 8ms, 32ms, 128ms and 512ms settings—and a delay-time selector knob, which allows variations of the indicated delay times, ranging from half (.5) to double by multiplication. In other words, a 32ms setting on the range knob gives you just that when the delay-time selector is set at 1. At .5 it's 16ms and at 2 it's 64ms, etc. Therefore the unit's actual delay range is from 1ms to 1.024ms.

The output section has level controls for delayed and dry signals, along with a mixed output jack. Finally, there are buttons for bypassing the delay line, a hold feature (which can be engaged only with the range control at 512ms) and the primary power button.

The rear panel has inputs for bypass and hold foot switches (optional), separate mixed, delayed and dry outputs, and another guitar or instrument input.

The EP-401's frequency response is 10 to 50kHz, -3db direct, and 20 to 16kHz, -3db delayed. The modulation section has a rate of .1 to 10Hz.

### FEATURES

The EP-401's main feature is the addition of modulation on such an inexpensive unit. As a result, you're able to get all the flanging and chorus effects you could get on higher-priced DDLs. Another feature is the placement of input and output jacks on both the front and rear panels. If you're not using a rack, being able to plug in everything through the front makes life a lot easier, especially on stage. The mix jacks on the front and the rear are

Circle Number 32

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Song Producer interface and MIDI COMMAND, SONGSTEPPER, and SYNC COMMAND software bundled at a suggested retail price of \$395 U.S. Owner's manual (250 pages) and color photos of 12 software screens for \$15 U.S. Free product description:

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Circle Number 33



## EXTENDED PLAY

- **Debut solo recording from the poll winning keyboard whiz from the Dregs**
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Produced by Eddy Offord and T Lavitz

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identical; however, the rear input jack is automatically bypassed when the front one is in use.

One of our few complaints is the lack of precision with which the delay times can be set. Without a digital readout, you can't recall exact settings to match rhythms; you have to go by feel once you're in the approximate neighborhood. But here too, you have to keep in mind the low price of the unit.

**STAGE AND STUDIO**

Running the EP-401 through a Fostex X-15 four-track, we employed an ESP Strat-type guitar, a Casio CZ-101 synth and a Shure mike for our test.

The flange and chorus effects on this unit are all you could ask for, with no distortion of the original signal noticeable. Long delay settings brought the delayed signal back crisp and clear, and the unit's ability to deliver precisely the amount of feedback and wet-to-dry signal is rather remarkable in a unit with knob-type controls. The signal-to-noise ratio is not listed in the unit's specs, but we did notice that it is just a hair noisier than other DDLs we've used; however, that does not limit its use on home-type equipment at all.

On vocals, the EP-401 delivered fine slap effects with no coloration of the vocal signal. Using the keyboard and a little patience, we were able to get synth lines to match rhythm patterns right to the beat.

Running the ESP through a Marshall combo in a rehearsal studio, we found the EP-401 easy to use on stage. Here is where the color-coded controls and the front panel input/output access really came in handy. The high-cut button sometimes seemed to mellow the attack too much, but its use really depends on personal taste. (It should be noted that to prevent damage to your equipment, you should hit the bypass button when switching delay ranges.)

We had two small bones to pick with the unit. First, when switching the range knob from setting to setting, it sometimes gave off a squeal that was equal to the gain setting on the amp and could be quite annoying on stage. Flipping it a bit eliminated the problem each time, although it would occasionally recur when the unit was switched on again after being off for a while.

The other point is the owner's manual. For someone with a limited budget looking for a first DDL, this is an excellent unit. However, someone like that might not know off the top of his head exactly how to achieve chorus and flanging effects or how to maximize the use of the unit in general. We think Omni should recognize that it is probably this type of consumer that will comprise its greatest potential market for the EP-401, and expand the manual accordingly.

**CONCLUSION**

Other than the small problems we have noted, we can say that the EP-401 is a unit well worth the little money it costs. Not only is it a great starter unit, it's a good second one for players requiring more complex delays, and also for limited home-studio use.

— Dan Daley

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54 November 1985 IM&RW

# ON TEST

## Product: SD1012C and SDF50C Amplifiers

Manufacturer: **Sundown Technology, Inc., 37C Cinder Rd., Edison, NJ 08820, (201) 321-1155**

Suggested Retail Price: **SD1012C, \$1,099; SDF50C, \$799**

**D**ennis Kager and his company, Sundown Technology, have reintroduced a small line of high-quality tube amplifiers, separate heads and 1-12" and 4-12" cabinets. While in this "On Test" we'll review Sundown's 50- and 100-watt combo models, the line also features the SD1000H 100-watt head (\$979), the SDF50H 50-watt head (\$729), the SDR100H 100-watt super lead head (\$899), the SD12 1-12" cabinet (\$239 to \$399, depending on driver, with Celestion, Electro-Voice and Sundown options) and the SD412T 4-12" cabinet (\$529 with Sundowns; \$699 with Celestions). All Sundown amplifiers have a one-year warranty.

### CONSTRUCTION

Both amplifiers are constructed of a combination of industrial-grade particleboard (the good stuff) and plywood. Finish is a choice of black or gray Tolex, with black

grille cloth and black panel completing the face, and each of the heavy-duty plastic end caps is notched for safe stacking. Both amps also have a carrying handle across the top. Graphics are clean, clear and white in color, and on the upper righthand corner of the face the Sundown logo lights up when the amp is switched on. All knobs are standard black plastic with white lettering, and no, the gain control does not go up to 11.

### FEATURES

Both amplifiers are of an advanced all-tube design featuring extremely low intermodulation distortion, and lead/rhythm channel switching can be controlled from the front panel or by foot switch (provided). Output on the SD1012C is 100 watts and on the SDF50C, 50 watts. A Celestion G12H100 driver is standard in the SD1012C, while a custom-design, heavy-duty Sundown 12" driver is standard in the SDF50C. Both amps feature a full-size Accutronics (Hammond) reverb system and Sundown's exclusive Governor™ control, which monitors the clip limit of the output stage (see Stage and Studio).

Performance features found on the SD1012C include two independent effects loops, LED channel indicators, presence con-

*Continued on page 56*



**Both Sundown amplifiers come with a choice of black or gray Tolex, with black grille cloth and black panel completing the face. Each also has heavy-duty end caps for safe stacking.**

Circle Number 38



## GIL MOORE

### of Triumph Talks About Drumsticks



I always had a problem with sticks snapping and hitting me in the face. One time at a show in London, Ontario, one hit me in the eye. I thought I was blind; I couldn't see for two days.

Another time a stick nearly tore off my ear—blood was coming out all over the place. So I finally decided that I had to use a synthetic stick. I tried them all, and the problem was that they felt too heavy; plus, of course, they didn't feel like hickory sticks, which is what I'm used to. So I looked around and found that Aquarian Accessories Corp. (1140 N. Tustin Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807, 714-632-0230) solved the problem. Their sticks feel and sound great. I'm using the Formula X-10™ Combos with Shock Grips™ as pictured.

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Circle Number 40

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control, line output, 4-ohm and 8-ohm speaker jacks, dual-sensitivity input jacks and ac convenience outlet. Performance controls on the SDF50C include high- and low-sensitivity inputs, extension speaker jack, LED overdrive indicator, wide-ranging tone controls, chassis ground-lifting capability to reduce hum, and ac convenience outlet.

Moving left to right across the SDF50C's front panel, controls include overdrive, which controls the amount of preamp overdrive; high-sensitivity input for low-level signals such as single-coil pickups; normal sensitivity for high-level signals such as humbucking pickups and general applications; gain control; high-, mid- and low-frequency controls; overdrive LED; Governor control; and pilot light/logo. Rear panel features include ac power cord, ac convenience outlet (500 watts maximum; always live when amp is plugged in), fuse holder, power/standby switch (three-position), ground switch (center: earth ground; left: polarity one; right: polarity two), extension speaker jack (8 or 16 ohms), foot-switch jack (for overdrive and rhythm modes) and reverb control.

Front panel features on the SDI012C are (left to right) channel-indicating LEDs; gain control (also a pull-switch for channel switching); high and low controls for green channel; inputs one (high) and two (normal); gain control for red channel (also a pull-switch for extra preamp gain); master (red channel preamp volume); high and mid controls; low control for red channel (also a pull-switch for midrange boost or total gain boost); Governor control; and rms control (see Stage and Studio). Rear panel features are the same as the SDF50C's, with the addition of a presence control for adding high-end clarity and an effects loop for each channel.

## STAGE AND STUDIO

For our stage test, we ran the two Sundown amps in stereo, using a custom-made Strat of ESP parts, Seymour Duncan Hot Rail and Classic Stack pickups and a custom-wound Charvel pickup. Stereo, you ask? How'd it sound with one 50-watt and one 100-watt amp? No problem with a Sundown. On the far righthand side of the SDI012C is a Sundown innovation called an

Continued on page 63

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# ON TEST

Product: **Song Producer**  
 Manufacturer: **Moog Electronics, Inc., 2500 Walden Ave., Buffalo, NY 14225, (716) 681-7242**  
 Suggested Retail Price: **\$395**

Just when you've run out of hands, Moog introduces its new Song Producer, a real-time/step-mode hardware/software MIDI/drum/sync color video computer music system (whew!). Designed to interface with Commodore computers, the Song Producer requires a disk drive and a monitor; preferably color. All software is menu driven and musician designed, and your monitor lets you see and edit exactly what you hear. For you lightfingered hackers, the software package is *not* copy protected, and additional software is always under development.

## CONSTRUCTION

The Song Producer hardware interface comes housed in a rugged two-piece steel chassis finished in black, with easy-to-read gold lettering for labeling ports and signal flows. Within the interface is a solid-state circuit board. Connection to your Commodore is accomplished by way of a multipin plastic connector that runs from an expansion port on the Song Producer to the expansion port on the function-keys side of the computer. To avoid damaging the multipin connector, be sure to slide in the connector until the locking fasteners snap into place,

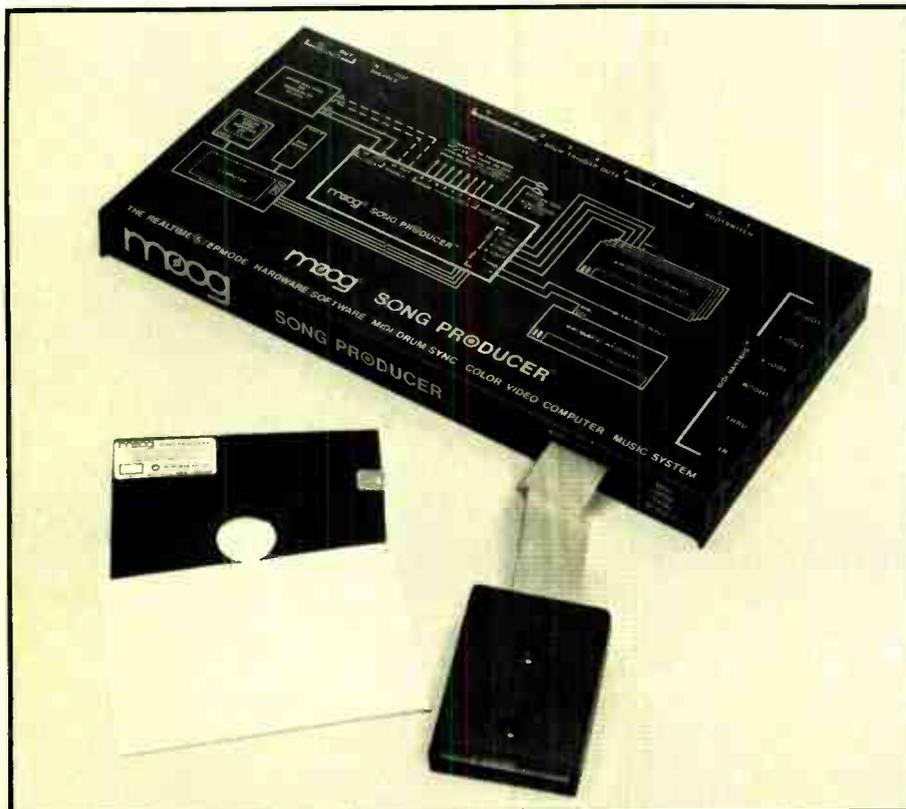
and be sure the flat cable is not twisted. The software programs are provided on Verbatim Datalife single-sided/double-density disks. Software provided are Moog's MIDI Command, SYNC Command and Songstepper programs, written by musician/computer genius Bob Makar.

## FEATURES

The Song Producer features MIDI-in, -thru and four full-bandwidth MIDI-outs. Clock capability is supported by clock in/out and start/out. There are two foot-switch jacks—software definable—that can be used to advance "quadchains" (moving pages or programs) during performance. In addition, there are eight drum trigger outputs that may be used as clock dividers or a drum machine's individual gate input drivers.

The Song Producer's bundled software is diskette based for easy updating, and includes MIDI Command, Songstepper and SYNC Command. MIDI Command turns any MIDI keyboard into a "motherboard" that independently controls MIDI program numbers, and eight split/layer and transpositions of four slave MIDI instruments without regard to MIDI channel assignment. Multiple sets of 100 "pages" of split/layer/transpose configurations may be chained, stored and retrieved for easy foot-switch control of a keyboard stack during performance. Each page may contain up to 32 MIDI program numbers.

Songstepper is a sophisticated multivoice, multitimbral composition program with real-time/step-mode linear entry and scoring for



Features of Moog's Song Producer include MIDI-in, -thru and four full-bandwidth MIDI-outs, plus two foot-switch jacks and eight drum trigger outputs.

Circle Number 41

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# ON TEST

Product: **Diversity Wireless Microphone System**  
 Manufacturer: **Telex Communications, Inc., 9600 Aldrich Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55420, (612) 887-5550**  
 Suggested Retail Price: **\$1,390**

**W**ireless has been around for too long now for anyone to confuse it with the Philco monster lurking in your grand-

father's attic. However, there have been some giant strides forward in technology lately, and wireless systems have become *de rigueur* for a lot of lead singers, freeing them from the constraints of cables. Telex Communications has a new entry in the market, a system consisting of the FMR-2 receiver and the WHM-500 hand-held microphone/transmitter.

## FEATURES

The system consists of the two items mentioned above. No belt pack is needed,

since the WHM-500 contains its own transmitter in the mike's handgrip. The FMR-2 receiver utilizes the latest in CMOS (Complementary-symmetry Metal-Oxide Semiconductor) circuitry and boasts powerful avoidance of unwanted interference from TV, FM, CB or business-radio frequencies. Enhanced frequency selectivity is attained by means of low distortion, linear phase IF filters and, according to the manufacturer, permits the operation of more than a dozen systems in a single location simultaneously without interference.

The FMR-2 has a frequency response of 50Hz to 50kHz and an RF sensitivity of less than 0.5 microvolts. It operates on U.S. standard 115v current, with a 220v model available.

Volume level is reflected visibly by a 10-step peak-reading indicator. In addition to a power-on LED indicator, the unit also has another 10-bar LED scale to measure RF field-strength. The receiver provides adjustable mike and auxiliary (headphone) output capability, plus a fixed-line level output. The receiver is free-standing but can be rack mounted.

The WHM-500 microphone/transmitter is a hand-held electret condenser type with a cardioid directional pattern. It has a frequency response that matches the FMR-2's (50Hz to 50kHz). It weighs 14 ounces with its two 4.5v (9v total) batteries inserted. (Batteries are alkaline, mercury or Nicad type.) Battery life is claimed by the manufacturer to be 20 hours, and rechargeable types are available.



Telex's Diversity wireless mike system consists of the WHM-500 hand-held microphone (l.) and the FMR-2 receiver (r.).

Circle Number 43

Circle Number 44

## M. V. PEDULLA



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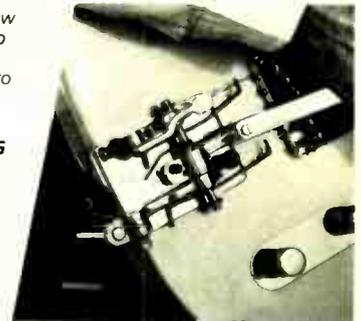
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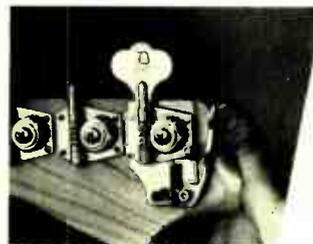
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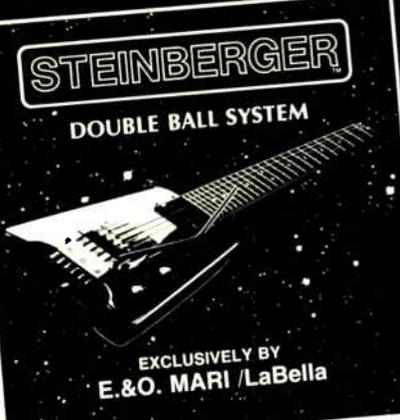
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The mike has its own on/off control. Its operational range is up to 600' line of sight, while under less optimal circumstances, the range is reduced to 250'. The WHM-500 has its own internal compression (although compression ratios are not listed in the manual). Significant aesthetically as well as for maintenance is the fact that the WHM-500's antenna (omnidirectional) is integral to the case. Nothing to accidentally poke out your lead guitarist's eye with.

The FMR-2 contains two antennae, and that is at the heart of Telex's revolutionary Pos-i-Phase diversity system. Many wireless systems use two receivers to avoid signal dropout caused by signals becoming out of phase. Such systems would search for, and then automatically choose, the best signal by switching back and forth. The Telex system uses digital logic in a single receiver with the two antennae to avoid blind spots—called "negative phasing points"—where one signal cancels out the other. The Telex system modifies the phase relationship between the two signals. A programmed control logic circuit continually monitors amplitude and anticipates potentially troublesome phase relationships between the two signals. When impending trouble is detected, the so-called "smart" digital circuit instructs its companion phase-shift modifier to instantly alter any signal that approaches an out-of-phase relationship with another, thus avoiding signal dropouts before they can happen.

The system is ingenious, and Telex claims

to hold the only U.S. patent of this type in the industry. Since both antennae are active, by placing them in diverse locations around a stage area, signal loss due to physical obstructions is negligible.

### STAGE AND STUDIO

Running the FMR-2 into a Tapco board with a Crown amp, we gave the system a run-through, placing several gobos and other obstructions in between the two components.

Regardless of mike and/or body positioning, the Telex system had no signal loss of any degree. The frequency response lived up to its manufacturer's claims; vocals were clear and uncolored beyond what coloration you'd normally expect from a condenser mike. The onboard compressor seems to have a low sensitivity threshold; thus we didn't notice any "grabbing" or "bumps" as the intensity of the vocal changed. The on/off switch appears to be active, since there was no popping when it was switched. One addition we thought would make sense is an on/off LED indicator on the mike itself. Those stages get awfully dark sometimes, as do their entry/exit ramps.

### CONCLUSION

If you're thinking of getting into wireless, the Telex system is one worth checking out from the beginning. Our tests with it indicated that it is a good piece of workmanship and ingenuity. □

—Dan Daley

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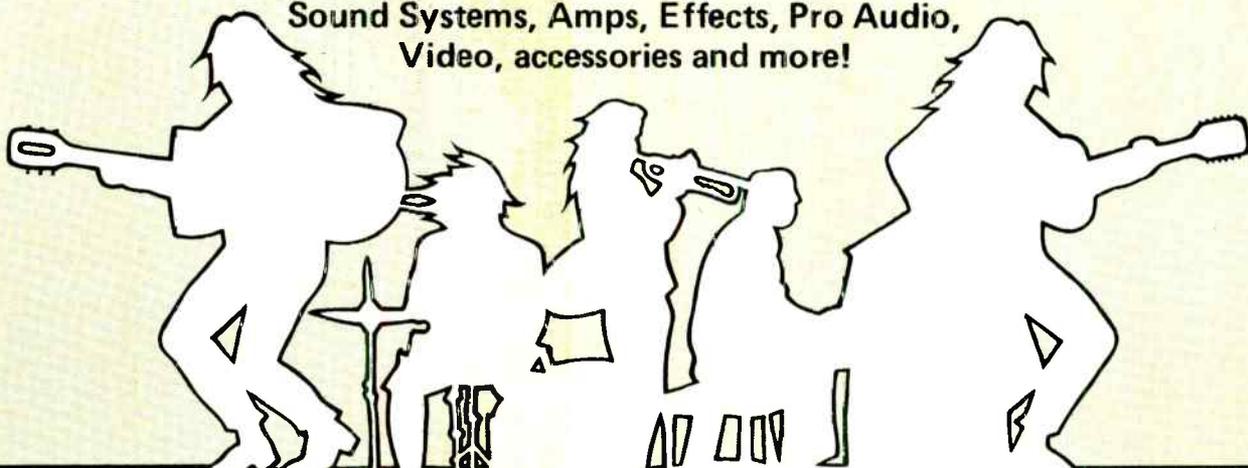
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# ON TEST



*The dbx model 166 is a combination gate and compression unit that may be operated as two independent channels, or as an overall stereo outboard device.*

## Product: Model 166 Professional Dynamics Processor

Manufacturer: dbx, 71 Chapel St., P.O. Box 100C, Newton, MA 02195, (617) 964-3210

Suggested Retail Price: \$549

**T**he name dbx is no stranger to most top-flight recording studios, and now, as technology progresses, dbx equipment is readily available and affordable for home recording use. And for those who demand the electronic equivalent of a Cadillac on stage, for live use also.

### CONSTRUCTION

The model 166 is a combination gate and compressor unit. The push of a button turns the device from a dual-mono unit with two identical, independent sets of controls into a stereo unit. Dual side-chain inputs (effects return) on the rear panel allow for additional signal-processing devices such as graphic equalizers to be integrated into the 166, making the unit as flexible as any on the market. The chassis has integral brackets (rack ears) for mounting into any standard 19" equipment rack, and it requires no special mounting or cooling considerations. Side panels are metal, while the unit's top and bottom panels and all knobs and switches are made of plastic.

The 166's frequency response is 20Hz to 20kHz. Maximum input and output ratings are +24dbv and +21dbv respectively. The compressor threshold range is -40 to +20dbv; for the noise gate it's +10 to -60dbv, with an overall peak-stop range of 0 to 21dbv.

### FEATURES

The model 166 features the now-famous dbx "Over Easy" compression circuitry. Controlled by threshold and ratio knobs on the front panel (one for each channel), the compression attack times have a broad range, from three to 15 milliseconds. The release times are equally impressive; between eight and 400 milliseconds, with maximum compression greater than 60db.

The gating capability has an attack time of two milliseconds and a 100-millisecond release with both slow and fast modes, 1 db and 100db respectively. In addition to a threshold control, there is an in/out button to select slow or fast decay rates.

Rounding out the front panel are eight-step gain-reduction LEDs, which reflect signal attenuation for both the gate and the compressor; a peak-stop control for setting

maximum output levels; the side-chain monitor in/out button for monitoring the side-chain signal during setup; an output-gain knob for setting overall level (precedes the peak-stop circuit); and a bypass switch.

These controls are redundant on either channel, and a single master stereo-couple switch in the center allows you to select between unified and independent channel operation.

### STAGE AND STUDIO

The model 166 elevates the level of any home recording operation. Having both compression and gating, an effect necessary in conjunction with digital reverbs to achieve many of the most recent Phil Collins-influenced drum sounds, is a real plus. The compressor and the gate together on a Shure Unisphere mike into a Tascam Portastudio gave us new flexibility in home-recorded vocals. The compression was smooth and without the bumps that many compressors will give at threshold settings. The "Over Easy" compression circuitry also continues to live up to its name. In a city apartment, the gate proved crucial to keeping not only unwanted electronic noise off the track, but it also closed off street noise without clipping the vocal signal.

With a digital reverb, the gate allowed for many new approaches to drum sounds; laying on thicker doses of reverberation and being able to cut them off neatly to leave the space effect in between hits. All connections are made through phone-type jacks located on the rear panel, which meant no converters for our mikes. The unit handles both balanced and unbalanced inputs.

Operations presented no problem right out of the box. dbx should be complimented on a clearly written, cogent owner's manual, which greatly facilitated the use of the unit. You don't have to be an engineer to start sounding like one soon after you hook it up.

Loading the model 166 into a stage rack, we ran it through a Fender Twin Reverb amp in a rehearsal studio and played both a Washburn guitar and a Korg Poly-800 synth through it. The results were as good as we had achieved in the studio. The function-indicator LEDs were a big help on stage. Of course, all levels have to be preset—there is no remote for this unit—but for keyboardists especially, it's a good device. If you can keep the unit in a rack near your rig, you can make adjustments quickly and easily. To be able to vary the release and attack times of your effects with this much control, sensitivity and accuracy enhances not only the sound, but your performance as well.

**CONCLUSION**

The dbx model 166 dynamics processor is a gem. Whether you use it for recording, live sound mixing or for stage use, you'll find it handles any job it's assigned with ease and precision. Specialty electronics don't get much better than this. □

— Dan Daley

**Sundown Amps**

*Continued from page 56*

rms control (patent applied for), which varies the rms output power of the amplifier from 0 (15 watts) to 10 (100 watts). The rms control works on both channels. Beware, this is not a volume control but a true power-varying control that affects the "size" of the amp's sound, most notably at higher volumes. As the rms control is increased, the amp's output power level increases, improving its ability to reproduce bass frequencies and high-level transients.

We balanced the output of the 100-watt SD1012C to match that of the 50-watt SDF50C and came up with an equal amount of sound on both sides of the stage. Next, we ran one of Ibanez's new digital stereo chorus pedals into the line and — bang-zoom — between the Sundown amps and the digital chorus, our 300-seat club was rocking with arena-size ferocity. We preferred the clean sound on the SD1012C and the dirty sound

on the SDF50C. Not that the other sound on each amp was poor, but every piece of gear has its forte. Another interesting feature of both amps is the Governor clip-level control. When set to 0, it has no effect, while on 10 it has maximum effect. On the SD1012C, this control is also a push/pull switch, to change the Governor action from the red channel to the green channel, and on the SDF50C the push/pull switch changes between overdrive and rhythm modes of operation.

In the studio we were tempted to just run line-out directly into the board, but once we got the hang of squeezing different tones out of the amps in conjunction with the Governor control and the SD1012C's rms control, we found that by placing a single mike (in this case a Shure SM57) in front of the cabinet, we could make these amps sound like a stack of Marshalls at full tilt and yet still carry on a conversation at a normal level. We can't tell you how nice it was not having to worry about poor room acoustics, creative baffling and ambient noise. All in all, both of these amplifiers are quite good, though each requires some noodling around in order to achieve great tones.

**CONCLUSION**

There must be a reason musicians such as Jan Hammer, Allan Holdsworth, John Scofield and Peter Frampton are using these amplifiers, and we think you too will find them a terrific addition to your own sound. □

— Michael Smolen



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## Thompson Twins

Continued from page 29

automatic. You concentrate on energy. Power. Making people excited."

So the hired hands aren't allowed to cut loose?

Bailey grins. "Occasionally we throw them a morsel."

"We're cruel," Currie says craftily. "But we pay them a lot."

Calculated? Bailey reckons that the Twins survive "by being good at what we do writing-wise. If we employed a band that was constantly saying, 'It'd be better if we did it this way,' I'd think they weren't into the music, because they wanted to change it. Anyone who does that with us doesn't last long."

Tough customers? Sure. But it's their confidence that they can build better hits than the band next door which has been the Thompson Twins' trump card all along.

"When I get into technical ruts, the others pull me out," Tom Bailey says, and this time the lady in the big hat doesn't argue. "But believe me, a lot of the great moments in Thompson music history have come out of lack of knowledge or just plain naiveté." □

## Mountain

Continued from page 46

go through as many as 50 pairs per show.

And what about the famous cowbell that powered "Mississippi Queen" and "Never in My Life"?

Laing frowns.

"It finally conked out after twenty years," he replies with a tinge of sorrow in his voice that any musician would understand. "I literally went right through it."

However, according to production manager Sonny Weber, Latin Percussion was in the process of making Laing a five-foot replacement. "When Corky called them and told them who he was, they said, 'the Corky Laing? You're responsible for us selling a lot of cowbells, Corky.'"

Just as Leslie West is certainly responsible for inspiring innumerable guitarists to first pick up the instrument. And his firebrand playing on *Go for Your Life* could similarly influence a new generation of players for whom Leslie West and Mountain were names from history. With their personal lives now in order, West and Laing hope to remedy that situation.

"Leslie's in the best state I've ever seen him," declares Laing, who first met the guitarist some 23 years ago, when both were playing the Long Island circuit and West was still Leslie Weinstein from Queens. In answer to the question "Will this reunion last?," Laing points out that "the new band has already lasted longer than the original."

"The difference is," chimes in West, "there aren't fourteen egos involved here; it's just me, Corky and Mark."

"And it's all based on trust and understanding," adds Laing, looking at Leslie.

Trust and understanding?

"Yeah," he says, delivering the punch line in his best Groucho, "he doesn't trust me, and I don't understand him!" □

# LETTERS

## 25 or 6 or 4

I have been playing six-string guitar for many years and would now like to start playing bass. Could you please tell me if there are any nontheory books available offering tablature and notation for popular songs.

Ken Goldstein  
Northbrook, IL

We know of four books that might interest you: *Basically Bass* and *The Modern Bassist* (\$8.95 each) from Warner Bros. Publications, 265 Secaucus Rd., Secaucus, NJ 07094, and *Teach Yourself Rock Bass* (\$6.95) and *Super Group Bass Lines* (\$9.95) from Cherry Lane Books, P.O. Box 430, Port Chester, NY 10573. Also worth contacting is Carol Kaye Books/Gwyn Publishing Co., 5555 DTC Pkwy., #1017, Englewood, CO 80111.

## Are You Crazy?

I am very interested in joining a road crew for a rock band but have no idea how to get started. I've been into music since I was a little kid, have played guitar for nine years and have an electronics degree (A.A.S.). Do you have any advice for a fast learner and hard worker such as myself?

Steve Jones  
Birmingham, AL

We admire your masochistic tendencies, since life on the road is definitely not for everybody. Check with rehearsal halls, recording studios, sound and lighting companies, band management offices, booking agent offices, record companies and the classified ads of every music paper you can get your hands on. Good luck, and let us know how you found your gig when you do.

## Search for Lost Bass

I read your magazine all the time and often see a reference to a separate *Bass* magazine. This magazine is

not available at any of my local newsstands, so can you give me the mailing address and subscription price for it?

Reese Nearing  
Nova Scotia, Can

*Bass* is a minimagazine found inside your regular December issue of *IM&RW*, free of charge. In 1984, we printed *Bass* in both July and December.

## More Missing Basses

I have found it very difficult to gather any information on both Alembic and Villet-Citron; can you help me out?

Mitchell Cerrone  
Skokie, IL

Alembic may be reached at 45 Foley St., Santa Rosa, CA 95401, or by calling (707) 523-2611. The Villet-Citron company is long out of business, but you can reach Harvey Citron, who's still making wonderful instruments, at Guild Musical Instruments, 225 W. Grand St., Elizabeth, NJ 07202, (201) 351-3002.

## Congratulations

The loser in our "50-50 Proposition" giveaway (Summer Percussion Issue 1985) is Triumph drummer Gil Moore. The winner is 19-year-old Bruce Procell of Zwolle, LA, who acquired Moore's 15-piece Tama drum kit, an Imperialstar Custom. We hope Bruce has as much success with the set as has Moore.

Congratulations to Mr. David Herman, 37, of Montreal. David is the very lucky winner of our Summer Giveaway of a Player MDS-1 modular-pickup guitar and a Sundown SD1012C 100-watt combo amplifier. A grand retail total of \$2,619 worth of hot equipment to keep him happy during the upcoming winter months. Nice goin', Dave.

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