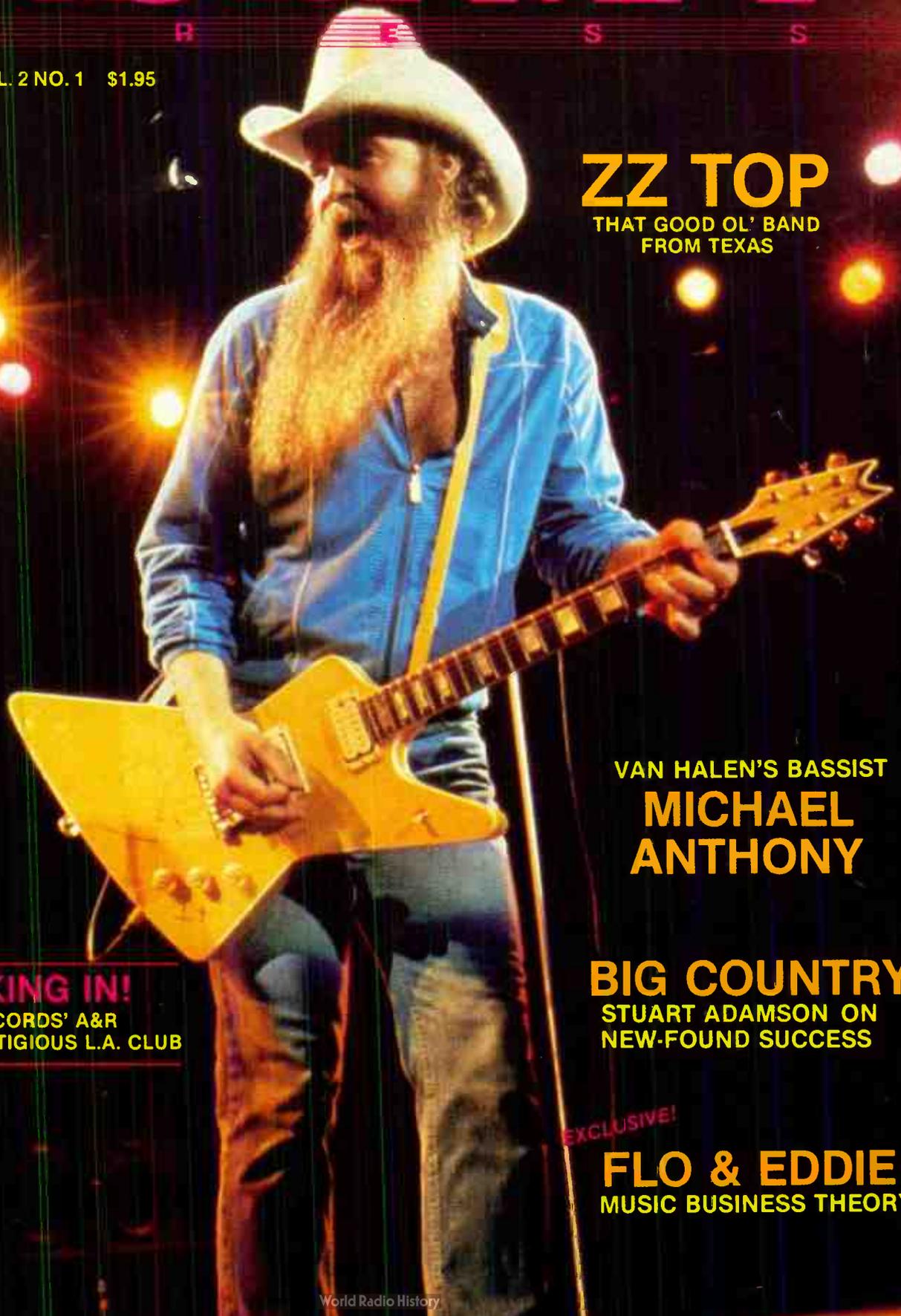


# ROCK

P R E S S

VOL. 2 NO. 1 \$1.95



## ZZ TOP

THAT GOOD OL' BAND  
FROM TEXAS

VAN HALEN'S BASSIST

## MICHAEL ANTHONY

## BIG COUNTRY

STUART ADAMSON ON  
NEW-FOUND SUCCESS

EXCLUSIVE!

## FLO & EDDIE

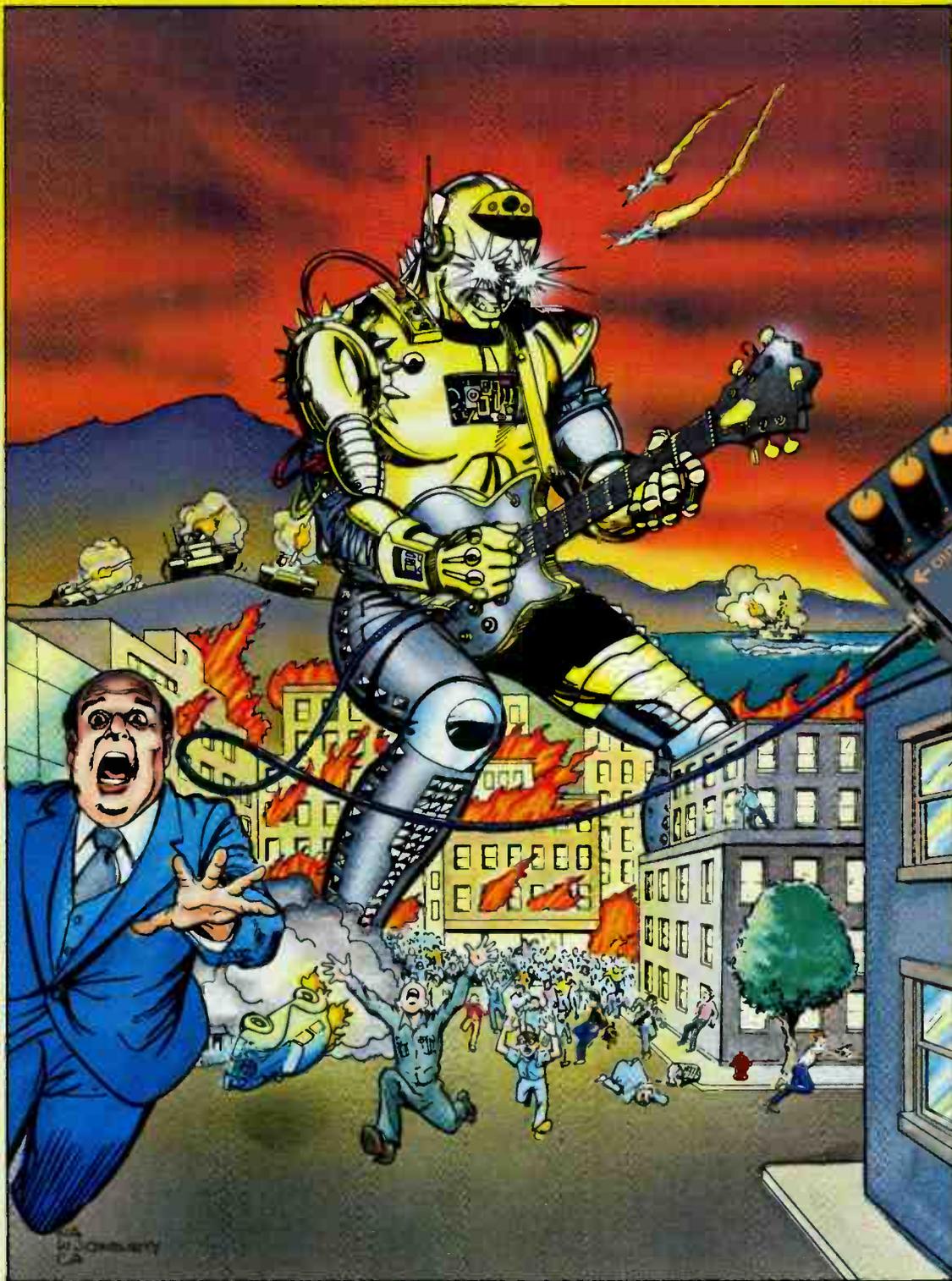
MUSIC BUSINESS THEORY

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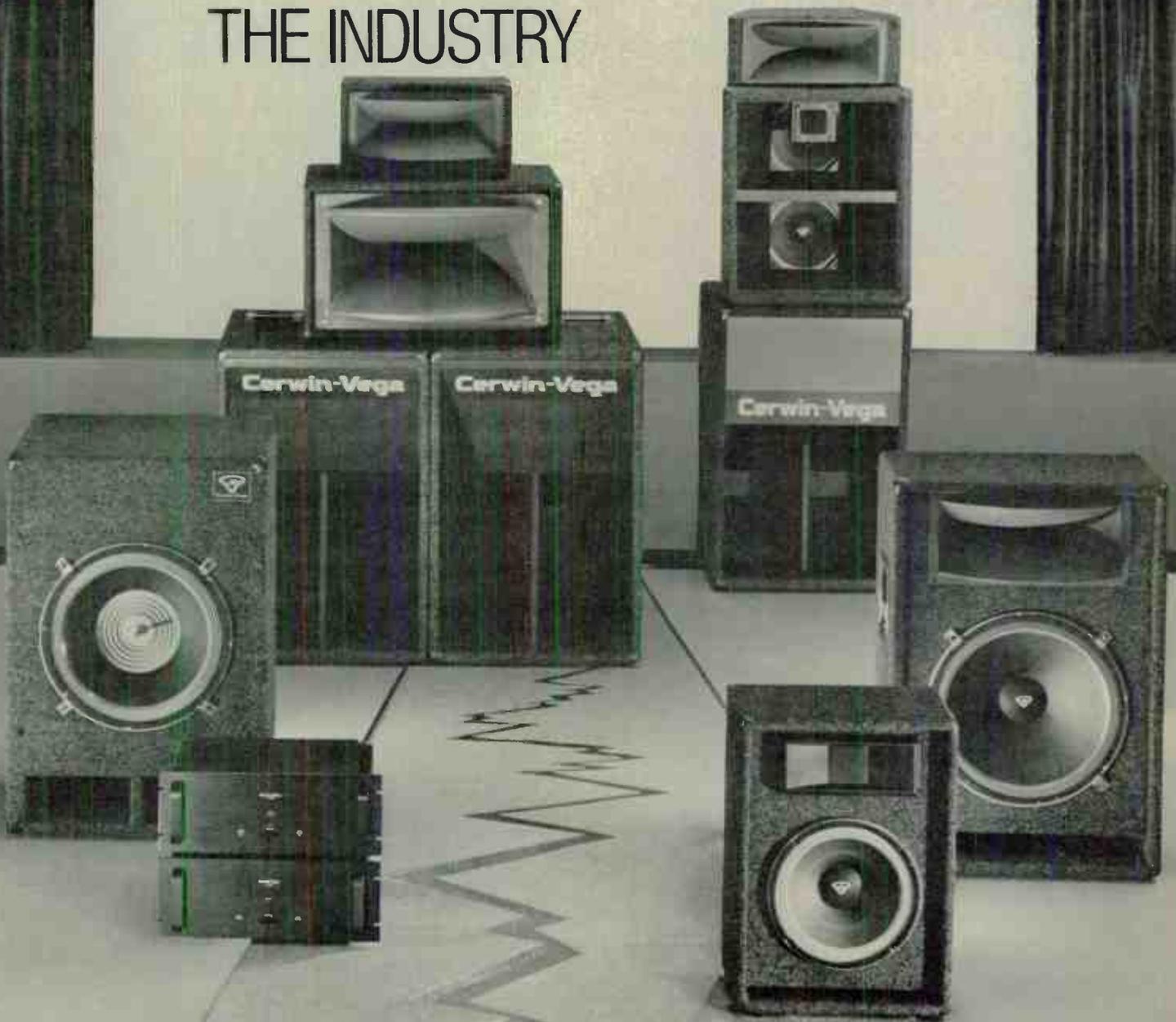
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World Radio History

# ROCK IT

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**READER PRODUCT REQUESTS**  
**CLASSIFIEDS**

Welcome!

You are about to witness and participate in the growth of a relevant and important music magazine dedicated to a select group of musicians. From the ranks of new, up-and-coming artists and bands to veterans, who have been on the music scene since the first electric guitars were plugged in, **Rock It Press** will draw a wealth of insight into the music business and report every aspect of it from the competence of the industry, and direction of its "prime movers" to even an occasional, wry introspective of our peer's lighter moments.

Rather than a lightheaded fan magazine or a droll technical periodical, **Rock It Press** will be more of an ongoing conversation with old friends in the ever-evolving music business. Sometimes we'll feature an interview with a legendary artist who has pioneered a style or sound that thousands of musicians have since emulated; often present an "insider's" view from a veteran willing to share an inner view or "behind the scenes"; occasionally take a close look at the tools of the trade; and always present an interpretation of the important and relevant events of the music industry you want to read about.

"Taking Sides" will regularly express the opinions of divergent "movers" in this business. There's always more than one way to get where you're going and **Rock It** solicits the outlook of those authorities who have taken different paths down that sometimes long and winding road.

We are very pleased to offer "Flo & Eddie's Music Business Theory 101" where former Turtles and Mothers Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan give advice in their unpretentious, off-the-cuff, slightly warped manner. Experience everything from choosing a studio and cutting a demo to publishing your songs to finding the right manager.

**Rock It** will regularly profile prestigious clubs nationwide that book unsigned talent. The club's manager or booking agent will tell you what they look for in talent, the best way to approach them as well as what you can do to make the most out of each performance both creatively and financially.

Additionally, as in this issue, we'll present that same outline from top Artist and Relation directors in the record business: What *does* it take to break in?

The already popular "Short Circuits" will continue to provide short-cuts and novel ideas on how other musicians create their own sounds on stage and in the recording studio. Each issue, one of our readers will contribute a helpful tip in "Brainstorm."

"Studio Sync" will help you turn your garage or basement into a legitimate recording facility. Naturally, "New Products Section" will premier musical innovations and the latest gear for stage and studio.

Our independent record review section will focus on that first record, either from a small independent label or one put out by yourself. Exposure and constructive critique will be provided for those efforts, and of course, we won't be forgetting major releases and record industry news stories on issues that can effect your career.

Our "Feature Interviews" will spotlight popular rock artists, groups and soloists. In their own words, they will detail the unique ways they create their music as well as direct their careers. Hopefully, their thoughts will stimulate your creativity and direction, making your music more meaningful.

Last, but not least, we'll retain our own sense of humor about this crazy business. If you can't enjoy this profession and get a few laughs out of it, you might as well be a plumber.

Adding to the uniqueness of **Rock It Press** is the fact that this magazine is *not* available on newsstands, nor to the general public. It is available only to *you*, and thousands of other musicians across the country: from the top professionals, session musicians, studio engineers, road/tour support, equipment experts and design innovators as well as gadget freaks...to thousands of aspiring musicians and artists on-the-way-up nationwide!

Your personal subscription will be maintained as long as you continue to be an active musician, improving your equipment and involvement with selected music stores nationwide.

The success of **Rock It Press** will be your success. We'd like to hear from you and what you're doing with your music. With your creative input to share with over 140,000 other musicians, we'll continue to develop and grow as not only a magazine well worth reading, but well worth keeping, too.

Sincerely,  
Jeff Silberman

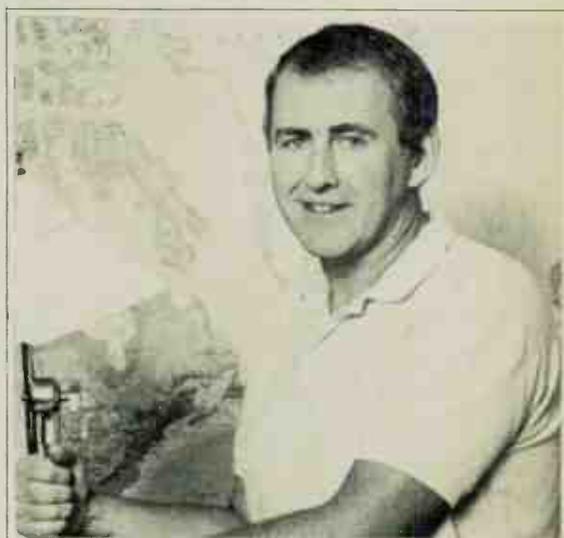
# TAKING SIDES

## Traditional Drums vs. Electronic Drums



PHOTO BY RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS

*Bruce Gary, former Knack drummer and spokesperson for Gretsch drums, speaks on behalf of traditional drummers. Glyn Thomas, for Simmons, speaks on behalf of electronic drums.*



### DURABILITY:

THOMAS: There are 1,500 Simmons kits in use today, and returns for service are under 5 percent. The surfaces have an unbreakable polycarbonate playing surface. Because there are a great number of microchips and electronic parts, they have a one-year warranty. If a Simmons needs repair, you have to take it back to the original store or a repair station. Certain problems common to keyboards might crop up, but they are easily repairable and the repairs can be done quickly.

### "FEEL"

GARY: The thing I don't like about Simmons drums is their feel. It's like hitting a coffee table. There's no resonance or give that comes from hitting a drum head.

THOMAS: That doesn't mean that there's a lack of dynamics. These drums are sensitivity controlled. Drummers like Jeff Porcaro have complained about our "lack of feel," but if you don't take the time to fully investigate the drums' potential, how can you complain? If you know how to use the sensitivity controls, you can go from *ppp* to triple fortissimo without continually working the controls.

GARY: I used Simmons drums during a record I cut with Jack Bruce in Europe. After three days, my elbow started feeling the effects of hitting such a hard surface.

THOMAS: This is a completely new concept. Simmons is like hitting a table top, so drummers will have to adjust their playing styles accordingly. This is a completely new instrument; you have to treat it and play it as such. A big advantage of a Simmons in the studio is that you can record direct — just plug it in and go. Studios are frightfully expensive and having the same facility offered to drums as there are to guitars and keyboards saves a lot of time and money in getting the right drum sound.

### STUDIO USE:

GARY: They are great for studios; they do make set-up time a breeze. But I'd like to combine the two. Use the Simmons electronic brain with contact mics on real drums. Have the real drums trigger the Simmons brain, which will give it a good balance. Then you'd get the feeling, the echo, and the noise of real drums. It's essentially the same as what Peter Gabriel's drummer and Phil Collins do.

THOMAS: A lot of people are integrating Simmons with acoustic sets. Alex Van Halen has installed Simmons pads into the heads of his Ludwig set. He loves the Simmons sound, but realizes that his audience isn't into the techno image of Simmons. But we're not going to change our image whatsoever. We expect drummers to eventually change theirs. We've made a very revolutionary product, and we hope people will approach it in that vein.

GARY: The problem may be a sense of overkill. There's so much emphasis on electronic drums. Eight out of 10 songs you hear on the radio has it. You can get sick of the sound after a while. It's like what happened to Syndrums; the novelty just wore off. Sure, I'll have to get into them sooner or later. But they'll have to be used very selectively.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE 38

# JAN BALLARD

The Music Machine  
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West L.A.  
(213) 820-0947



PHOTO BY ED COLVER

Jan Ballard is probably the most experienced club booker in Los Angeles. Over the past five years, she has booked *Madame Wong's Chinatown* and *Madame Wong's West* in Santa Monica, *Blackie's*, *Cathay de Grande* and *Pirate's Pizza* in Hollywood, *Roxanne's* in Arcadia and the *Corral* in Topanga Canyon.

Her current stint is with the *Music Machine*, a 600-capacity venue in West L.A. that gained recognition during 1983 as one of the top rock clubs in the country — the first time any L.A. room outside of Hollywood achieved that status since the decline of the *Country Club* in the Valley. Nationally- and even internationally-known groups such as the *Blasters* (they rang in New Year's there, officially unannounced), *R.E.M.*, the *Violet Femmes*, *Albert King*, *Rank & File*, the *Bluebells*, the *Suburbs*, *Bo Diddley*, the *Raybeats* and the *Fleshtones* played to often turnaway crowds, usu-

ally liberally sprinkled with top A&R and agency types. Musicians of all ranks showed up to listen, including *Billy Idol*, *Tommy Tutone*, *Dolly-Linda-EmmyLou*, the elusive *Mr. Dylan*, and members of *Van Halen*, *Motley Crue*, *Quiet Riot*, and *Circle Jerks*.

Besides the name attractions, Ballard and the *Music Machine* have become known for adventuresome bookings: a wide range of styles and pairings that most bookers wouldn't consider "safe." Owner Leon McNabb thought enough of Ballard's talents that he wooed her back last year, after a five month absence, with an offer virtually unknown in the mercurial world of booking agents: a one year contract, with a one year option. Ballard's response to the unheard-of job security? She went on a crash fitness program, slimmed down dramatically, and set her sights on an acting career.

## By Jeff Silberman

RP: How many acts do you book in a month, and of those, how many are from out-of-town?

BALLARD: We feature about 20 acts a week, 80 a month, and approximately 15 a month are from out-of-town.

RP: How do most acts initially contact you?

BALLARD: They usually call first, then they mail their stuff. We usually get calls through recommendations. A *Fleshtones* and *R.E.M.* show was responsible for a lot of out-of-town bands' interest.

RP: What in a band's mailing influences you to book them?

BALLARD: It depends on what happens when I get the press kit. I'll open it up, and almost instantly, I get a certain feeling. If I'm impressed, I'll pop in the tape and if that's decent, I'm right there with them.

RP: What interests you in a band's press kit?

BALLARD: It's a gut feeling. You don't need to stuff them with a lot of good reviews, or elaborately put it together. I usually can tell from the band's description of themselves; how their bio is written. If there's a sense of humor or sarcasm, that's a plus. Also, the way they look in their photos is important. If they're all dolled up and posing very formally, that personally turns me off. Sometimes, a band might look really great in their press kit, but their tape would be awful. Other times, it's the other way around.

RP: How do you set the guarantee?

BALLARD: That depends on how much I know about the band, as well as an intuitive feeling. I listen to certain sources who tell me about the buzz a band has. It also depends on exclusivity. Bands like the *Bluebells* and the *Raybeats* will get more because the only place they'll play in town is the *Music Machine*. That makes the show special, so it's worth the extra money.

RP: Aren't there occasions where you were impressed by a band's press kit and tape, but later found out that they put on a lousy live show?

BALLARD: Sure, but that's when I rely on other people's opinions. If the tape is decent, I'll call up someone I know who lives where the band's from, and they'll tell me what they're like.

RP: Must you like a band's music in order to book them?

BALLARD: No, there are a lot of times where I'll book a band even though I don't care for their music. If 2-300 people like somebody, who am I to try to deny that band its right to play?

RP: A typical problem for out-of-town bands is that because nobody here knows about them, few will come to see them play. How do you combat that?

BALLARD: I can put them on a bill with a popular local band as the headliner. Or I try to work harder at getting them some advance recognition. If their manager has his shit together, I'll give him phone numbers of local music journalists and critics to contact. If they don't get any press in L.A., nobody's going to know them.

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## ROAD TALES

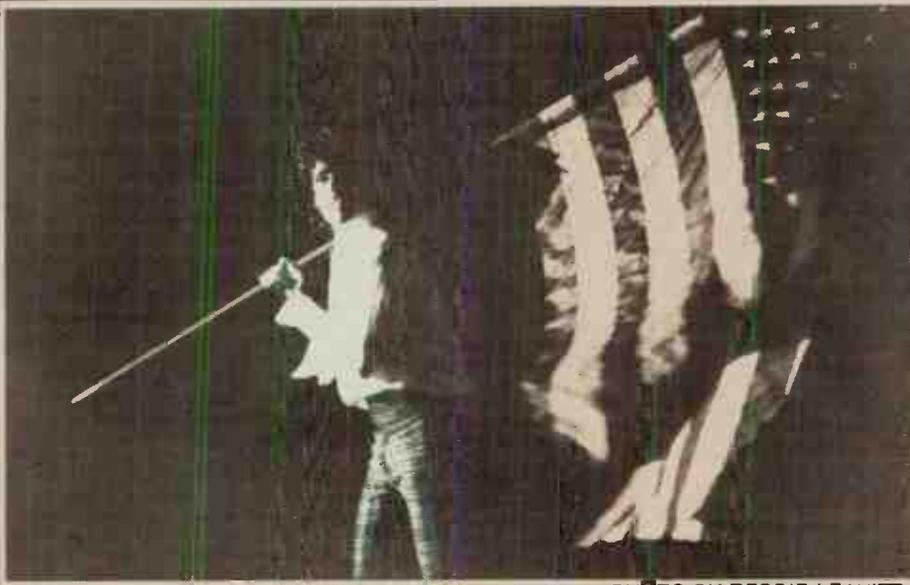


PHOTO BY DEBBIE LEAVITT

Those who have seen U2 live or in their videos of their Denver concerts know that singer **Bono Hewson** has this thing about parading onstage with a white flag. During a show at the Sports Arena in Los Angeles, he tried to parade in the balcony with the flag, only to have overzealous fans pull the stand down and rip the flag to shreds. Not to be outdone, Hewson then walked to the edge of the balcony, and with a security man holding him for dear life, he sang while walking on the balcony railing. Tiring of the feat, he decided to go back to the stage, but the balcony was packed with fans, so he decided to gingerly fall to the main floor. He never touched the ground; instead he landed on a delirious mob of fans who carried him for a while before letting him down, so he could struggle back to the stage. In an interview conducted after the show, even he conceded that he may have gone a bit too far to arouse the audience. But that's show business...

Before **Dream Syndicate** signed to A&M records, they thought it would be a noble gesture to put on a benefit performance for the inmates of Chino prison. Prison officials thought it was a good idea too, but they were unaware that the band's bassist, **Kendra Smith**, was a woman, and females aren't allowed in a men's correctional facility.

The solution? Right out of the movie *Victor/Victoria*: The band snuck in Smith, who dressed like a man. And the show itself? You could say Dream Syndicate played to a captive audience...

Big-name rock acts are used to certain luxuries while touring; they often travel in limousines or coupéd-up customized buses, and stay at the poshest hotels. Such a work-style won't be available for the **First Airborne Rock & Roll Division**, a makeshift supergroup set to embark on a three-week USO concert tour overseas beginning in a few weeks. Composed of members from **Kansas**, **Cheap Trick**, **Pablo Cruise**, and **Le Rous** plus former **Doobie Brother Patrick Simmons**, the 11-member ensemble will have to sleep in barracks, get up each morning at eight and fly by helicopter to some of their gigs on aircraft carriers. This is the first time a group of major rock artists will tour through the USO, and shows have been scheduled in the Philippines, South Korea, Okinawa, and the Indian Ocean. "It'll feel like being in the army," stated Rick Neilson, guitarist for Cheap Trick. "But we'll get to leave, with an honorable discharge."

JAN BALLARD CONTINUED

*RP: What is the average break-even point for the band and the club, in terms of draw?*

**BALLARD:** That depends a lot on the cost of the show. Some local acts can do 200-250 paid and make a profit. With a more expensive show, like an out-of-town band on a major label, we'll need from 5-600 people to turn a profit.

*RP: Would you rather work with a booking agent or deal directly with the band itself?*

**BALLARD:** It doesn't matter, and I really don't care. As long as they're professional, that's all that matters. It could be an agent, it could be the band's manager, it could be the lead singer. But just because a band does it by themselves doesn't mean they'll make that much more money. You might pay an agent 10%, but it's worth it because the agent will handle all the deposits and the bullshit. If you're going to book a national tour, the phone bill alone would use up that 10% in a hurry.

*RP: You've been involved with the L.A. music scene for five years now. Describe its current state.*

**BALLARD:** It's both good and bad. The scene is better than it was. When I first started, it seemed fresh and really new. But the quality of bands is better now.

*RP: A lot of people were nostalgic about the "golden era of L.A. punk," when X, the Go-Go's and the Motels were just starting. Why do they do that, and why do you think it's better now?*

**BALLARD:** That scene was the first thing happening in the nightclubs since the late '60s. The music in 1979 was really different, fresh and raunchy, as opposed to the sterile, polished rock of the early and mid-'70s. The scene then was real accessible for people to watch these bands develop. Then everybody discovered it was a gold mine, and I mean on every level. Bands got real serious, treating each gig like it was their only chance to get signed. Everybody got greedy; club owners kept raising their door prices. That's not so prevalent today, because the public turned on the clubs. Suddenly, the clubs that were making money hand-over-fist weren't making so much anymore. But it was everybody's fault. A lot of clubs opened and the bands upped their prices. There was an oversaturation of simply awful bands. It got the public pissed off. They'd go to any club on any night of the week and see the same bullshit as before. It wasn't exciting anymore. Bands became quite similar to each other. So the scene died out a bit a while ago. Then door prices came down, and some new bands — that didn't have that "sign me or else" attitude — renewed people's interest.

*Here's the situation: Your band has been on the road, touring practically non-stop, for eleven straight months. Right now, however, you're fogged in somewhere on the barren tundra of Montana. The TV in your hotel room is on the blink, and you're wondering if it will ever turn on again. Your challenge:*

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR ENTERTAINMENT?

PHOTOS BY GARY MAGDALIK

### BY JEFF SILBERMAN

Would you call up a journalist in Los Angeles for a long-awaited phone interview, and before introducing yourself, play him a two-minute, finger-popping soul food restaurant commercial, with funky singers praising their greens, chitlins and ribs? *Hot damn!*

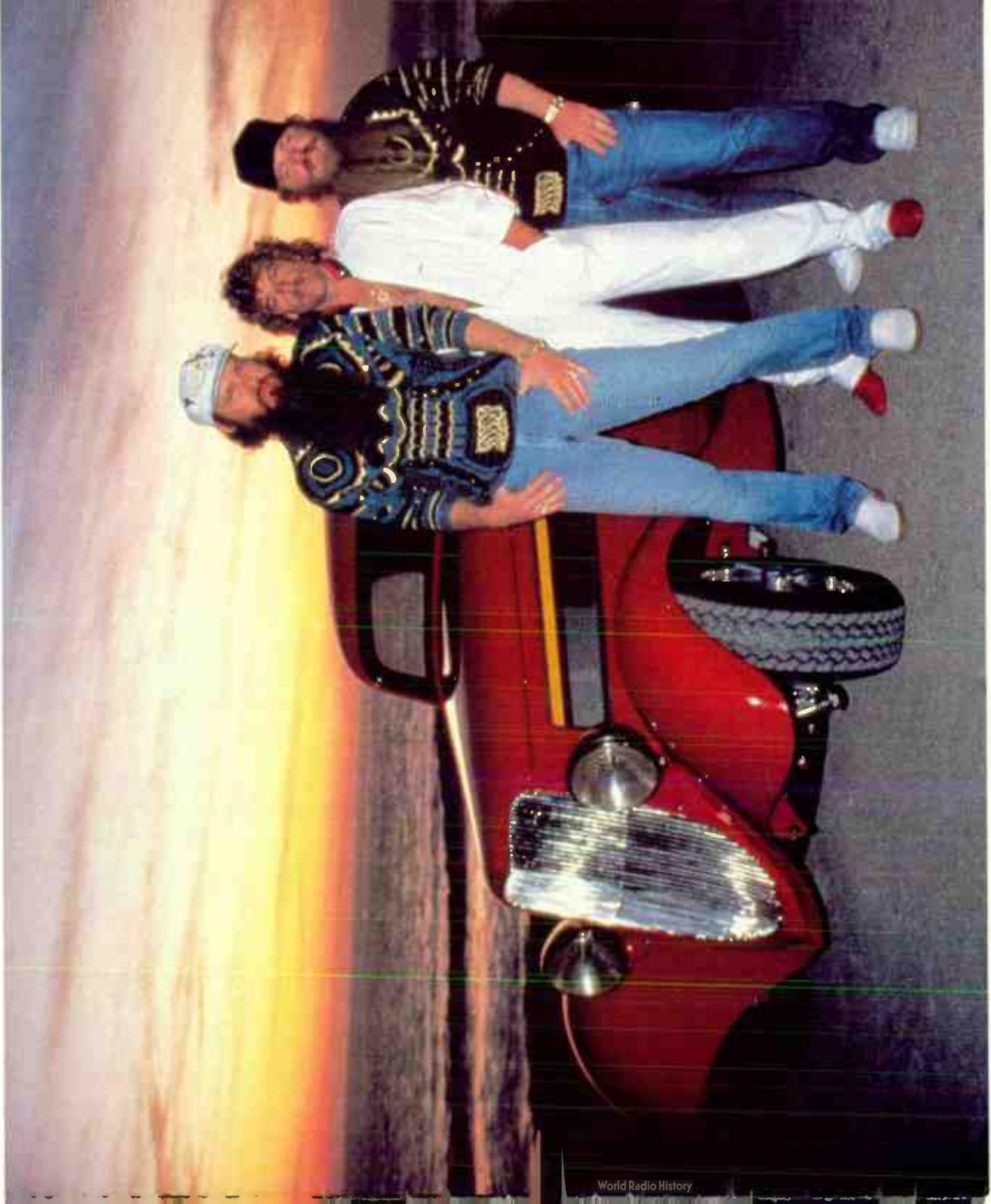
You would if you were guitarist **Billy Gibbons** of that good ol' band from Texas, ZZ Top. Hell, these guys can afford to feel rambunctious. Not even a thick Montana fog can shroud the accomplishments of **Gibbons**, bassist **Dusty Hill** and drummer **Frank Beard** (who ironically, is the only one in the band *not* sporting foot-long facial hair).

At one time, ZZ Top was dismissed as a relic of the '70s, the dreaded Southern rock boogie band. That, of course, was before they released **Eliminator**, which a year after its release, is still getting heavy AOR airplay. After playing "Gimme All Your Loving" and "Sharp Dressed Man" to death, radio is now overplaying "TV Dinners." Their initial American tour wowed sell-out audiences with an encore featuring live animals. (Pity the poor roadie who had to clean the buffalo pies off the stage every night.)

**Eliminator** is nearing the three million mark in sales — easily their best showing ever. But as good as the album is, and as much as radio has been playing it, the real catalyst for their rejuvenated success is MTV exposure of their three videos. Clad in trench coats, overalls, and sunglasses, they've crafted an unmistakable identity. Their synchronized movements turn them into offbeat part-time elves as they offer some lucky stiff the keys to ZZ Top's cherry red hot rod, loaded with a trio of voluptuous women.

The scantily clad women have drawn criticism from some quarters, which consider the videos sexist. But the charge

CONTINUED



World Radio History

**ZZ TOP**

# WHO IS

# MICHAEL ANTHONY?

by Glenn Lambert

PHOTOS BY NEIL ZLOZOWER

*Who is Michael Anthony?*

*TV Trivia buffs remember Michael Anthony as the suave character on "The Millionaire." He changed people's lives when he appeared at their front doors, saying "Hello, my name is Michael Anthony, and I have for you a cashier's check for one million dollars."*

*But to legions of rock fans, Michael Anthony is another millionaire: the hard-driving bass player for Van Halen. One recent morning at the supergroup's Sunset Boulevard headquarters, Michael Anthony offered not a generous cashier's check, but a generous slug of Jack Daniels as he settled in to talk about himself and his music.*

Anthony, 28, was born in Chicago into a musical family. "My father played trumpet with Kay Kyser's band. I used to go see them play at the Aragon ballroom in Chicago — which I don't remember 'cause I was too young — but ironically, that's where we played our first professional show as Van Halen."

When his family relocated to Southern California when Michael was "12 or 13," he started getting into electric music. "The first rock that I ever got turned on to was when my older sister, during the hippie days, got into Blue Cheer. She said, 'Hey, ya gotta hear this album!'"

From that moment on, it was loud rock and roll all the way. Anthony first played bass in junior high. "Actually, I started playing it on a guitar. A friend of mine wanted to start a band, and I was into it but I didn't have a bass or any equipment. And he had a couple of old Teisco guitars. So I took the two top strings off and played like that until I got my first bass.

"I liked playing guitar, but there was something about hearing bass, just feeling it. It's hard to describe. Even now, I get off just as much playing one note, and feeling that sucker vibrate all over the stage, as playing a lot of notes."

In his teenage days, it was Blue Cheer and high decibels all the way. "That's what I was going for. I remember one of their album covers. I opened it up and all I saw was stacks of Marshalls, and this guy with his bass slung down to his knees,

and hair like this," he says, pointing to his waist. "And I was thinking, God — that's what I want to do! I want to stand in front of that and blow everything out!"

"The first band I started did that, and somehow I got forced into screaming the vocals. I could scream higher than anybody else I knew at that time."

He went on to play in a series of L.A. bands, with names that he can hardly remember: "Poverty's Children...Black Opal...I remember being in a band called Balls. We had to change our name for every gig!"

Along with the bands, Anthony went through a series of influences. "A lot of the early stuff I played was really blues-oriented," he says. Later, his range expanded: he names players like Harvey Brooks, Jaco Pastorius, Jeff Berlin, and Jack Bruce in his list of favorites. "Beck, Bogert, and Appice — that one album they put out, I used to listen to over and over again. And all the Cream stuff too."

By around 1971, Anthony was playing bass and singing with a band called Snake by night, and attending college by day. Among his classmates were the two Van Halen brothers, whose band was already playing gigs on the Sunset Strip.

"I always knew about Alex and Ed. We were all going to Pasadena College. I'd see Alex coming from a jazz improv class, and I'd be going to the same class next period, and we'd kind of look at each other like 'grrrrrr,' since we played in rival bands. Then we did a show with them at

Pasadena High School, and afterwards I remember talking with Edward in the parking lot. About two or three weeks later, through a mutual friend, I found out that they were getting rid of their bass player, and my friend recommended me.

"They called me up and we played in this little garage where they rehearsed, and they put me through all kinds of beat changes. We jammed about two hours and Ed said, 'Hey, how'd you like to join the band?' I was playing backyard parties and they were playing Gazzari's in Hollywood, so I said 'Yeah, sure!'"

At that time, David Lee Roth had been with the band for about a year. With the addition of Michael Anthony, the band was complete.

"When we got together, the band already had a repertoire of around 300 songs. When I joined, I had to learn 10 songs at each rehearsal. I was trying to get all this stuff in. We were going to play Gazzari's in two weeks, and I was going 'Oh, shit!'"

"I was booted out of the house for dropping out of school after I joined Van Halen. My father got really angry. But that all changed after our first tour; I bought him a car. Now he's my biggest fan! That does it every time," he laughs.

"We played three nights for \$125. I remember a couple of times listening to Dave talking to Mr. Gazzari in the back of the bar, and he'd slip Dave an extra 50 bucks. Then Dave would turn around and divvy up that money."

CONTINUED  
ON PAGE 22



# DIGITAL DELAY DIGITAL CHORUS DIGITAL FLANGER



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CONTINUED

ZZ TOP FROM PAGE 10

pales in the face of a healthy sense of humor. Anyone who's seen "TV Dinners," where the band plays second fiddle to a little green gremlin, can attest to their zany brand of humor.

Gibbons gives all the credit to video producer Tim Newman. "We had no idea what we wanted when we started," he said. "He blocked out each scene, and we practically made it up as we walked through it. We did have the hot rod and wardrobe down before we started. Hell, the car is a star in itself, and we have yet to put more than 200 yards on it personally."

Another visual twist for the band was their headless guitars, which were custom made at Charlie's Guitar Shop in Dallas. "He just ripped those out for us," Gibbons said. "We were struck by the visual impression. There were already several on the market, but Charlie suggested that he slice off the heads of the guitars he had already built for us. So he did it and put a tuning device at the bottom.

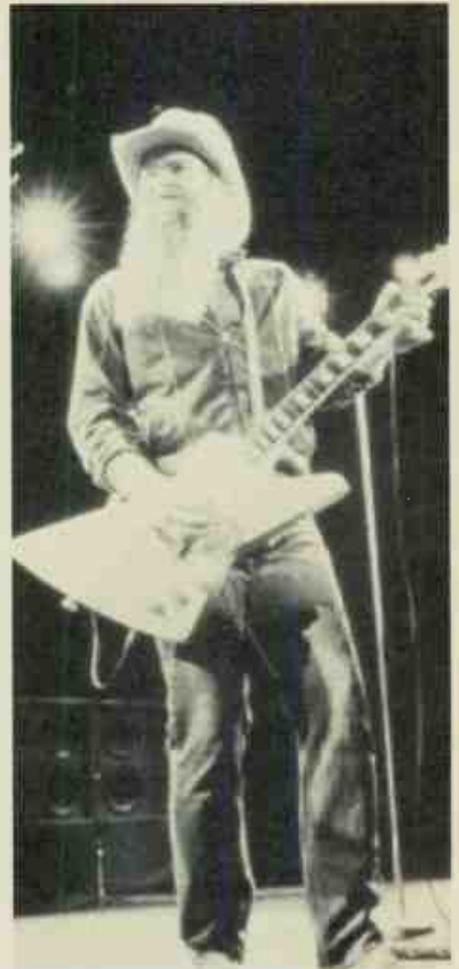
"There's no major difference in playing them," he added. "I don't know what the story is about them being difficult to play. The way I look at it, every instrument has to be taken in stride."

---

*Their most recent swing, from the Pacific Northwest to the Plains states, doesn't feature the live animals. "This is a more streamlined tour," he confided. "The only animals left are Frank, Dusty, and me."*

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ZZ TOP PHOTOS BY GARY MAGDALIK



Everything ZZ Top does is taken in stride, since their basic philosophy is that nothing's worth doing if it's not fun to do. "No question about it," he declared. "Whether we're recording new tunes or what you're seeing in our videos, it's an attitude. We're not doing anything so much differently than before. We just have a better understanding of ourselves now."

That "better understanding" has changed the way they write songs. "In the earlier stages of the band's career, we'd often thrash out our tunes and spend a lot of time recording them. But even then, our most memorable songs were the ones that took the least amount of time. 'Tush' took three minutes to do, and 'La Grange' came about by accident. All of the songs on *Eliminator* came out real fast. Let's face it: we're not your great message band."

The ideas for new songs are first conceived while on tour. "Everybody's always got ideas," Gibbons noted. "Of course, they may change drastically by the time they get on record. When you tour a lot, you get a lot of time between shows to talk about songs and ideas. But hell, we're still learning about the intricacies of *Eliminator*."

The ideas took what he called a "funny kind of development" when the band entered the studio to cut the latest album. "We had a good time making it," he recalled. "We showed up two days early. While the engineers were setting things up, they let us mess around for two days. So we started playing like we do on stage, in close proximity to each other. When the engineers heard us, they told us not to move because it sounded great. So we recorded the entire album like we were playing it on stage. All we had were these rough skeletons of songs, including five or six that didn't make the LP. Still, there was some pretty heavy meat on the bones, and we were prepared."

The result was a very live sounding album that didn't need a lot of time-consuming overdubs. "Most of it was cut spontaneously," he said. "There were little synthesizer undertones in some of the tunes. We fooled around with a Memory Moog, a great little instrument. I don't know what ZZ Top fans are going to think of us going into synthesizers. Dusty uses one for "TV Dinners" on stage, but that's as close as we're going to get with them."

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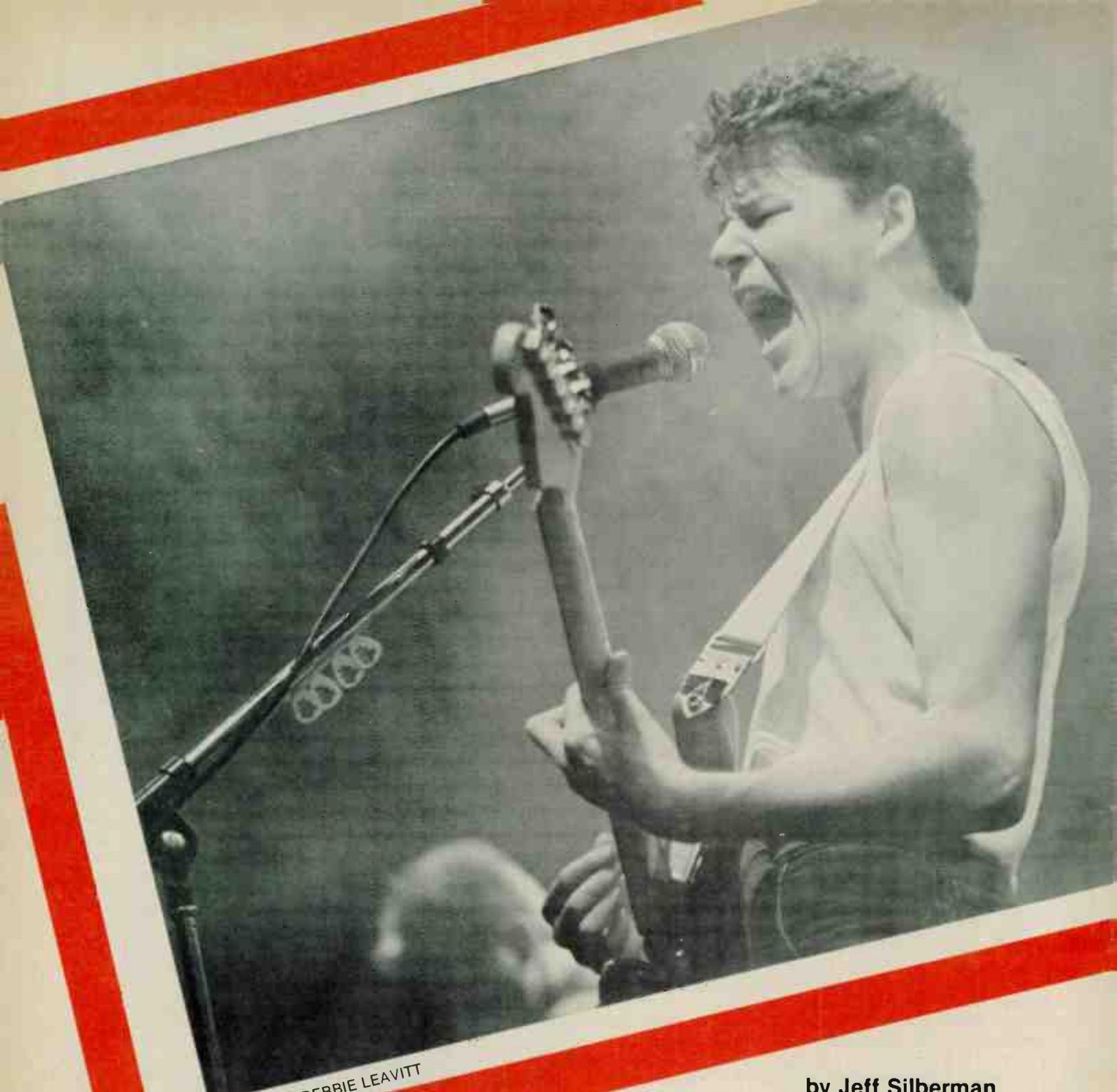


PHOTO BY DEBBIE LEAVITT

by Jeff Silberman

STUART ADAMSON  
TURNS PUNK BAND  
DISSATISFACTION INTO  
BIG BREAKTHROUGH

# BIG COUNTRY

In any popular art form, success can be measured through two separate criteria: artistic and commercial acclaim. It is quite rare to see an artist achieve both by manufacturing a career. More often, simultaneous success comes from the creative interpretation of one's own experiences and background.

Case-in-point: Stuart Adamson. A few years ago, he was a dissatisfied member of the British punk act the Skids. Disillusioned with the business side of the record industry, he quit the group and took stock of himself. Using a dynamic, ringing guitar sound he crafted with the Skids as an aural foundation, he then tapped his Scottish heritage and environment as his major creative resource, and eventually formed the group Big Country.

As they say, the real is history. After achieving moderate success in Britain with two independent singles, they picked up the services of producer Steve Lillywhite (XTC, U2, Joan Armatrading) to work on their debut album. They signed an American deal with PolyGram, and *The Crossing* took off. Songs like "In A Big Country" and "Fields of Fire" garnered mass radio exposure nationwide, the album's a sure bet to go gold, and they were accorded two Grammy nominations, including "Best New Group."

Adamson, the lead singer and main songwriter, talked to *Rock It* as they were just beginning their first American tour, about Big Country's burgeoning success. In his eyes, the decision to inject his Scottish roots into their music was the creative turning point for the band.

"My first contact with music was through going to gatherings, where people would stay up late and sing Scottish and Irish folk songs," he said. "I suppose

that subconsciously influenced me, because a lot of that comes through our music."

Of contemporary music role models, Adamson pointed to '70s acts like Mott the Hoople and Roxy Music as those who "not so much influenced me, but inspired me. Those bands were doing things that were different from the mainstream," he stated. "They had their own identity and stuck by their own guns. They didn't change their sound to suit the tastes of that time."

In turn, he stressed that from the outset, Big Country's sound and direction would be off the mainstream. "(Recreating the popular sounds) is a very dangerous thing to do," he declared. "To look at what other people are doing, and to try to copy that for yourself, shows a lack of self-respect. It shows that you don't have faith in your own ideas and the things you feel or want to talk about."

*The Crossing* is a unique album in many ways. Unlike the synthesized tech-

no-pop of other popular British acts, Big Country's sound is heavily guitar-oriented, with strong powerchords and ringing guitar riffs accentuating the melodies. Thematically, the songs depict grim scenarios of life in turmoil, yet there's always an optimistic, reaffirming ray of hope. "I'm not expecting to grow flowers in the desert," Adamson sings in "In A Big Country." But I can live and breathe and see the sun in wintertime."

"That goes back to a Scottish trait of having optimism in the face of total adversity," he noted. "I always write about things I see happen in my community in Scotland. I write about whatever I'm feeling or thinking about at that certain time, and I don't worry about it becoming too depressing. My songs are definitely about human situations; I'm not fantasizing myself in certain situations."

Adamson's writing style is not just story-telling; he masks those situations in image-laden lyrics that make it relatable

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



# JAMIE COHEN

*An A&R rep's job is not the most secure position in the world. Not only would your job be in jeopardy if you signed a string of unsuccessful acts (which is often out of your control), but an A&R rep must at least be tolerant of all kinds of music.*

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by Jeff Silberman

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One of the more aggressive record companies, in terms of recent new signings, is EMI Records. 1983 was the best year in the label's five-year history, in large part due to the tremendous success of David Bowie and the Stray Cats.

In recent months, EMI has bolstered its roster with a wide variety of new talent. LA's Great White and Seattle's Queensryche add heavy metal to the roster, while Nashville's Jason & the Nashville Scorchers supply a spunky dose of country-rock. In a funk/rap rock vein comes LA's Red Hot Chili Peppers. EMI is also involved in the distribution and promotion of talent on Enigma Records, which represents the techno-pop of SSQ and the gothic horror-rock of 45 Grave.

Deeply involved in the recruitment and development of new talent is A&R rep Jamie Cohen. At 30 years old, Cohen has already worked for A&M Records and Slash Records; his EMI position also has him in the role of liaison with Enigma Records, as well as scouting talent for EMI. In his eyes, the rejuvenation of David Bowie's career was a major key to a successful 1983.

"Bowie was coming out of a situation that wasn't real effectual for him," Cohen said. "His image was too diffused. Every label wanted him; he chose our company because we were willing to discuss and even argue about his songs and presentation. Initially, he didn't necessarily want to release 'Let's Dance' as the first single. After hours of discussion, everyone finally agreed to come out with his strongest suit, his most commercially accessible song. It would reach more people, and once that happens, the audience would immediately be interested in other songs from the album as well."

Revenue from Bowie's smash album, *Let's Dance*, gave EMI the funds needed to procure new talent, but Cohen stressed that "it wasn't an event, like the selling of one record. We still want to keep the label

CONTINUED

NEXT PAGE

small. With no more than 40 artists, we can manage to give each artist the attention they need. Even before Bowie broke, we had plans for new acquisitions. Certainly a hit record helps, but we really plan the future on a day-to-day basis. Bowie's success gives us the money to speculate and take more chances with bands from different genres."

Cohen noted that the label's A&R staff held a year-end meeting to decide what direction the label should go in acquiring new talent. "We talked with business reps, promotion reps and marketing people to see what they could work with, then we discussed all the bands we were interested in," he said. "In a sense, you have to restate the obvious. If you believe in somebody, the object is to work effectively with the people you dig and admire."

He asserted that the A&R reps didn't necessarily look for new talent in genres that the label isn't strong in. "We're into making history, not living it," he stated. "You can't follow trends and have them dictate your tastes. So the necessity of having a band fit a particular genre is not that crucial. We may be lacking in certain areas, but regardless, we'll sign a band only when we believe in it. It has to affect us on an emotional level."

With such a wide variety of talent signed to EMI, it seems apparent that the label is not looking for a similar level of commercial accessibility in their music. "The parallels may not be in the music, but all are *dying* to get heard," Cohen said. "Any artist that wants a label's help to get heard has to be holistic. They have to be confident of their songs, of their live performance potential, they have to be interested in video, they must know what they want visually even down to their album cover, they should know where to play and who they should play to. They should leave as few 'x' factors as possible for the label. There's a media system out there, and the more you plug into it, the more people will be aware of you."

Although video presence is a growing necessity for new talent, it has yet to become the overriding factor in the signing of a band. "Solicited tapes comprise 20 percent of the things I hear," he said. "Independent records comprise 40-45 percent; I'm attracted to bands with a track record, who have the wherewithal to put out music by themselves. Twenty percent are videos, and the remaining percent are groups leaving other labels. I get about 3-4 videos a week; they're just another selling tool. There are a lot of different ways to get a record company to pay attention to you. Be it a tape, a video, a live show, a record, or knowing somebody, how you get their attention doesn't matter. No one particular method is preferred." He did acknowledge, however, that sending in unsolicited tapes by mail is by far the least effective and hardly worth the price of stamps.



QUEENSRYPHE

An A&R rep's job is not the most secure position in the world. Not only would your job be in jeopardy if you signed a string of unsuccessful acts (which is often out of your control), but an A&R rep must at least be tolerant of all kinds of music. "To be effective, you should be open to hear almost anything," Cohen stressed. "You have to be aggressive. Of course, A&R reps make mistakes, but you've got to grow. The name of the game for an A&R rep and for a record company is essentially risk. The object is

to put your ass on the line, and really believe an act can happen when several indicators, or different sources, think it will happen, too. You've got to be zealous about an act; you'd go to the end of the world for it."

Even with all your efforts, however, it's inevitable that some acts won't break. "It's a very difficult situation," he acknowledged. "If you do the best you can, get the finest talent and support, and it only goes so far, it makes your next decision very difficult. You have to separate your friendship from your business sense. It's a very individual thing. Sometimes a change of labels would be good for the artist. Peter Gabriel did well every time he switched labels."

Although there's no set rule, most labels will give an act two to three shots at breaking, depending on whether the act has released just albums or a mix of LPs and EPs. "Naturally, you'd want each record to do considerably better than their previous effort," he said. "But even with someone like Jules Shear, who has yet to break, we're going to pick up his option because we really believe in him. A&M will probably work with Joan Armatrading for the rest of her career regardless of how well she does. When you're working with great people, you want to continue to work with them."



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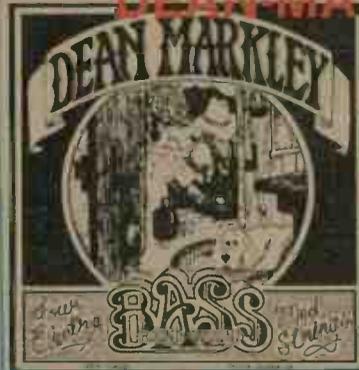
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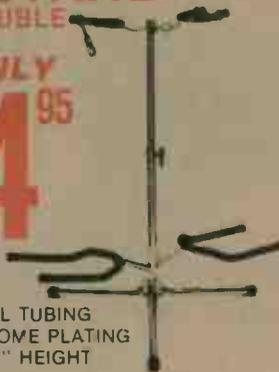
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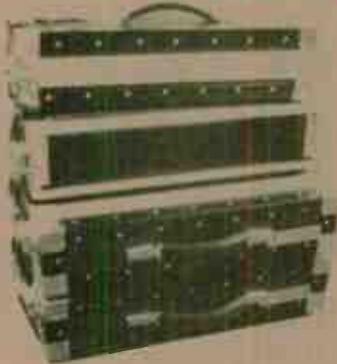
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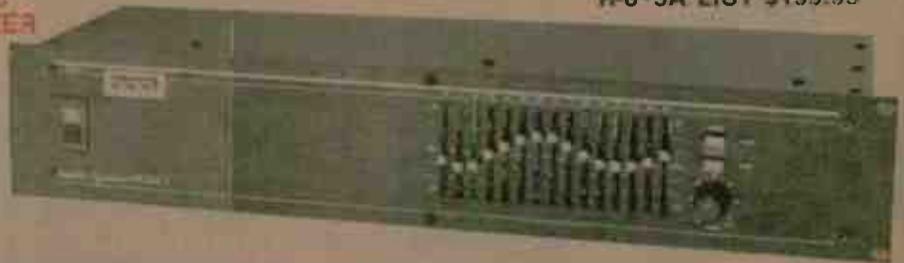
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A TRUE SPRING-TYPE REVERB SYSTEM  
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 \*100 WATT  
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AS LOW AS \$229<sup>95</sup>

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\*60 WATT RMS  
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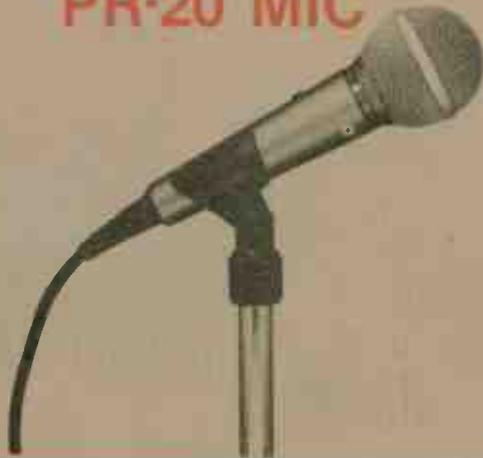
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# AUDIO-TECHNICA

*The Performance of Spikes*

**MARCH SPECIAL!**

## PR-20 MIC



THE PR-20 IS VERY RUGGED FOR YEARS OF DEPENDABLE HI-Z USE ON STAGE

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NOW YOU CAN HAVE A CLEAN, DEPENDABLE SOUND FROM A SENSIBLE MICROPHONE DESIGNED FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

**...PLUS A GREAT PRICE!**

GET INCREDIBLE SAVINGS LIKE...

audio-technica



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AN ALL-NEW DYNAMIC MIC DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR CLOSE-UP VOCAL AND INSTRUMENT USE

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**PLUS GET**

PROFESSIONAL TRIPOD STAND AND BOOM COMBINATION

EXCELLENT FOR DRUMS & RECORDING

WITH EACH A.T. PR-60 MIC ...GET YOUR STAND/BOOM...

**FREE!**

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- A NEW, ALL-STAR MIC THAT'S PERFECT FOR YOUR VOICE!

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A NEW PRICE LEADER IN LOW-Z MICROPHONES

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# PRO AUDIO

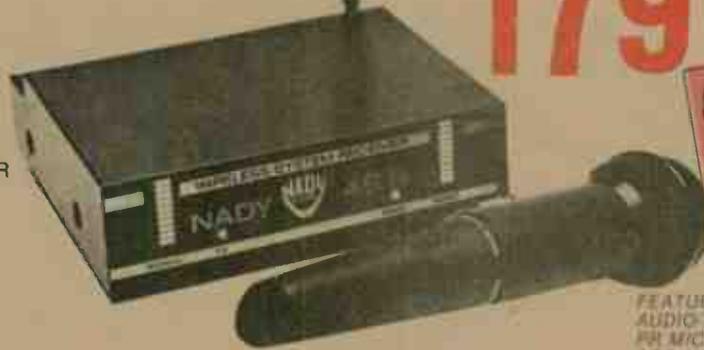
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- \* WIDE DYNAMIC RANGE
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AUDIO QUALITY INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM A WIRELESS SYSTEM WITH A WIRE ANTENNA



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FEATURES AUDIO-TECHNICAL PH MIC ELEMENT FOR HIGHER QUALITY!

GET A FREE DEMO TODAY!

## SHURE SM-10A HANDS-FREE HEAD MIC

PLUS ASK TO TRY MORE HANDS-FREE HEAD SET MICS!

NO STANDS OR BOOMS IN YOUR WAY



AN INCREDIBLE VALUE ONLY

\$99<sup>95</sup>

THE SM-10 IS AN EXCELLENT SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF MICS FOR DRUMMERS, AND KEYBOARDISTS!

- \* FREE FROM UNWANTED BACKGROUND NOISES
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- \* CLOSE-TALKING DESIGN



## STEWART ADB-1 DIRECT BOX

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- THIS ACTIVE SPLITTER HAS:
- \* 20 Hz TO 20 KHz FLAT RESPONSE
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## MIC CABLE AMERICAN-MADE CANON TO CANON

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15' LENGTH

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6-VOICE SYNTHESIZER

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FOR ONLY \$

799

THIS 61-KEY, 5 OCTAVE SYNTHESIZER HAS A PATCH MEMORY OF 56 DIFFERENT SOUNDS!

## KUSTOM PA-30



- \* 50 WATTS RMS
- \* FOUR CHANNELS WITH 1/4" INPUTS
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THIS POWERFUL PORTABLE IS PERFECT FOR EVERY CLUB OR REHEARSAL SYSTEM!!!

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A \$349<sup>00</sup> VALUE

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INTRODUCTORY PRICED ONLY... \$59<sup>95</sup>

- THE LL-1 STAND HAS
- \* CONTINUOUSLY ADJUSTABLE SLIDING BAR FOR WIDTH FROM 37-NOTE TO 88-NOTE KEYBOARD USES
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FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...

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**THE NEW STATE OF THE ART  
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FEATURING:

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- \* NEW! 98 RHYTHM PATTERNS - ALL PROGRAMMABLE IN REAL TIME
- \* 16 VOLUME AND PAN CONTROLS
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**\$1995<sup>95</sup>  
ONLY**



CENTRAL MODULE PAD NOT INCLUDED  
STANDS AND HARDWARE NOT INCLUDED

**BELIEVE IT!!! NOW YOU  
CAN GET A 5-PIECE  
SIMMONS SYSTEM WITH  
CONTROLLER...COMPLETE!**

**LIMITED SUPPLIES—HURRY FOR YOURS!**

**SAVE  
50% OFF!**

## Electro-Voice® MONITOR SYSTEM FM 12-2

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\$229<sup>95</sup>**

THE E.V. FM 12-2 IS AN ALL-PRO MONITOR WITH \*T35 TWEETER \*EVM 12 L SPEAKER WOOFER MODEL \*CABINET USES "THIELE SPEAKER" DESIGN SYSTEM TO COMBINE LOW-END MAXIMUM RESPONSE WITH AN EFFICIENT, SMALL, PORTABLE ENCLOSURE.



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NOW YOU CAN GET AN 052 KIT WITH:  
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\* HAND-SELECTED 3 PLY WOODS!

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## 5-PIECE DRUM KIT

NOW ONLY \$ **399**<sup>95</sup>

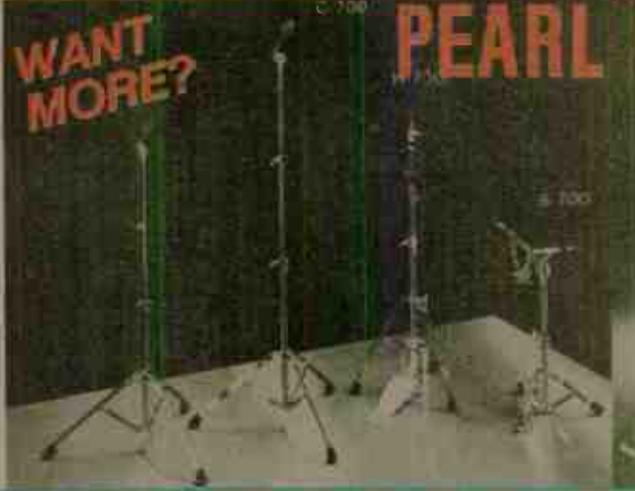
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COMPLETE WITH:  
TWO- C700 CYMBAL STANDS  
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THIS ALL-PRO INNOVATION IS PERFECT FOR THOSE LONG SHOWS & SESSIONS  
\* REINFORCED 4 LEGS  
\* ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT OF SEAT WITH LONG LEVER  
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PERFECT FOR KEYBOARD PLAYERS, TOO!

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6", 8", 10" 3-PIECE SET

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\* DISTINCTIVE, TIMPANI-LIKE SOUNDS  
\* CAN BE TUNED RAPIDLY OVER AN OCTAVE RANGE!!!

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# Roland HOT DEALS

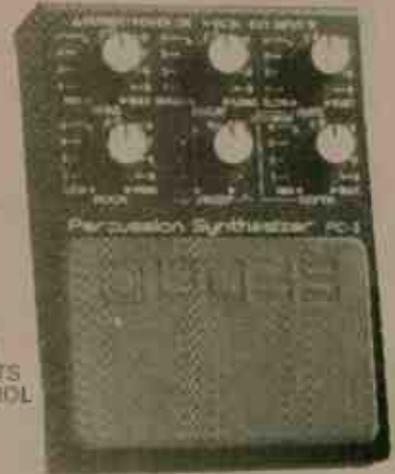
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## HAND CLAPPER PERCUSSION SYNTHESIZER



HC-2

YOUR CHOICE!  
\$99<sup>99</sup>



PC-2

THE NEW CONCEPT IN ELECTRONIC SOUNDS

- TOUGH SENSITIVE STRIKE PAD
- SENSITIVITY CONTROL "DRY" AND "HALL" VARIABLE FOR TONE AND DEPTH OF HAND CLAPS

- REALISTIC, LIFE-LIKE SOUNDS, INCLUDING SYNTHESIZER, DRUMS, TRIANGLE & CASTANETS
- SIX SEPARATE CONTROL SECTION
- TOUCH SENSITIVE STRIKE PAD

## BOSS PLAY BUS HA-5 HEADPHONE AMP AND HEADPHONE WITH MIC

LIST SET \$270.00

NOW COMPLETE



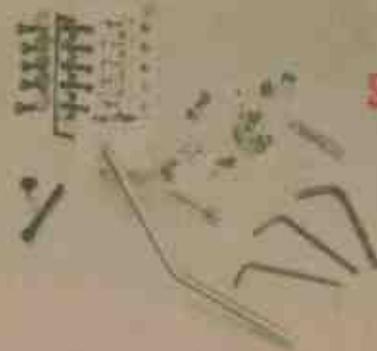
\$189<sup>95</sup>

SING THROUGH YOUR SYSTEM, AND LISTEN TOO!

- ROLAND'S HA-5 HAS IT ALL!
- BUILT-IN CHORUS
  - TREBLE & BASS
  - CASSETTE INPUT
  - MIC INPUT FOR VOCALS
  - HI GAIN/OVERDRIVE
  - TWO HEADPHONE JACKS
  - VARIABLE SLIDERS ON ALL MAJOR FUNCTIONS

## FLOYD ROSE LOCKING TREMOLO

NOT \$249.95



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NOW AVAILABLE AS A REPLACEMENT TO UPGRADE YOUR GUITAR!!!

WCH-TECH DISCOUNTS \$15.00

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YOUR PREFERRED CUSTOMER STATUS

*[Faint, mostly illegible text describing Guitar Center's Buyer's Guides and membership benefits.]*

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FOR ALL:

**KEYBOARDS**



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SS-2 DOUBLE  
KEYBOARD  
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGE 10



MICHAEL ANTHONY

CONTINUED  
FROM PAGE 12

Over the next six years, Van Halen built a reputation as one of the hottest bands on the L.A. scene — but that didn't guarantee big paydays. "A lot of times we played for nothing," Anthony remembers. "In fact, the night we were actually discovered at the Starwood was the last in a series that we were playing for nothing, because at that point they couldn't afford to pay any unsigned acts.

"We finished playing our set to a handful of people there. Mo Ostin and Ted Templeman came into our dressing room, and everybody's jaw dropped on the floor. We'd heard that somebody was there from Warner Bros., but different agents always told us 'there's somebody here from Capitol,' and we'd go out and play, and it turns out to be two empty seats at the reserved table. So we figured it was just another night like that, and we just got crazy like we always did.

"Mo Ostin came backstage and said 'I really loved your version of "You Really Got Me" — which led to that being on the album. And Ted Templeman really wanted to produce us."

The band had to wait until 1978 to record, because of Templeman's prior commitment to the Doobie Brothers. But when their album was released, it soon went platinum. Every Van Halen album has achieved that status.

Anthony now grinds out his music to arenas full of fans, playing a truckload of equipment — a long, long way from his garage-band days.

"I had a Gibson EB-0 bass guitar, and I was playing out of two Acoustic 150-B bass amps when I joined the band. They said that wasn't loud enough! So I shucked those, and I worked all summer as an intern-janitor at a mental hospital, and I bought myself my first Ampeg SVT. Now I have about nine SVTs.

"I've become an avid bass collector. I never liked to collect basses; I figured if I had one good bass, why play anything else? And then every year Dave would say 'Play something new! New look! New look!' Now, I find myself in every city going out and looking for new basses.

"I don't build my stuff from scratch like Edward does. If I play something that I like a lot off the rack, I take that and then I cut it all up — rework the neck, the body, change pickups, and stuff like that. There's a lot of good stuff out there; the way it's being put together is just like total trash. If I can pick up something really cheap, I just take a hacksaw to it and shape it to how I like it.

"I'm taking about five or six basses on the road; I'm almost counting on destroying three of them. My main bass is a Yamaha bass 2000, which I got in Japan. That's totally trashed — it's held together

by blood, sweat, and a little bit of duct tape now. I use it through most of the set. I've also got a little 3/4 scale P-bass called a Di Mini; I use that on 'Little Guitars.' It's not the greatest playing or sounding bass; it's more a showpiece. A lot of people will trip out when they see that. Other basses that I'm using include a '65 Fender Precision bass, and then I've got various other basses that people have built for me.

"I'll be destroying a few basses this year as part of my bass solo. I'll be going through basically one a night, or as many nights as we can re-piece it back together." Anthony's destructo-basses have been custom fitted with aluminum necks in the hope that they might survive as long as three nights apiece.

As far as amps, speakers, and the rest, Anthony's equipment long ago surpassed his early Blue Cheer fantasies. "On stage, I'm blowing out of six SVT heads which have all been beefed up to like 600 watts apiece. The cabinets are made for us by Flag Systems, out in Orange County. I'm using four 15's and eight 12's, and they're all Gauss. That's the only speaker I've found that I could play and not blow up."

Then there's the special effects panel, with flangers by MXR and ADA, a Roland chorus/echo, Yamaha delay, Color Sound tone bender, and Electro-Harmonix micro bass synthesizer. "I usually run my stuff right in line with the output of my amp so I'm not overdriving anything. If I want to do that, then I use the micro bass synthesizer to kick in a little bit more of an edge or a grindier fuzz-type sound."

As if that wasn't enough, Anthony has another set of equipment reserved for studio use. "We play loud in the studio. We strive to get that live sound on record, because then you can reproduce it really well on stage.

"One thing that I use only in the studio is a Steinberger. I won't play one on the stage because I don't like the way they look. I use that in the studio, and I use SVT's, and on a few things I use Ampeg B-15's. It's one of the best small amps that I've ever played through. We basically took that direct and miked for all the stuff on the album."

One new feature on Van Halen's new album, and on their tour, is the use of synthesizers in a big way. "There's a couple of things on the album that are actually synthesizer dominant," Anthony says. One of them is the band's current single, "Jump."

"On 'Jump,' Edward's playing the lead on a synthesizer, and I'm playing the rhythm parts on another synthesizer — Oberheim-8's — and it's a really neat sound. It's gonna be a lot different. I think

CONTINUED  
ON PAGE 36

# RECORD REVIEWS

Every year, dozens of new groups land deals with major record companies. However, far more bands will sign with a small independent label or, most likely, put out a record themselves. This review column is devoted to the acts who won't get the big money promotion and publicity accorded to major label

signees. While their music lacks mass exposure, it doesn't necessarily reflect a lack of talent. **Rock It** encourages readers to submit their own albums and EPs for review: send your product to **Rock It** 1765 N. Highland Suite 145, Hollywood, CA 90078.

**THE JAMES HARMAN BAND**, *Thank You Baby* (Enigma): There's a fine line between respecting one's musical roots and recreating its sound. The former can be used as a foundation for creating a timeless, yet fresh sound. The latter does little more than produce dated nostalgia flashbacks. The James Harman Band succeeds more often than not. Mixing the Philly soul sound once found on Stax/Volt Records with traditional Chicago blues, Harman's original material meshes seamlessly with a sprinkling of covers. Most successful are "Snatching It Back" and "The Big Dance," which feature bump-and-grind rhythms and crisp, biting guitar work by Hollywood Fats and Kid Ramos. Harman's smooth, high voice suits the bluesy tunes to a T, but "If That Ain't Love" doesn't jell as well because they stuck too closely to the decades-old formula. More often, however, the music here is boisterous, danceable, and inviting. Good music in this vein may not be trendy, but it can become timeless.



**THE SLICKEE BOYS**, *Cybernetic Dreams of Pi* (Twin/Tone): Unlike the pretentious, artsy-fartsy album title, this Virginia band plays brisk pop/rock with a slightly demented lyrical bent. When the music is predominant, as in "You Got What It Takes," which features taut rock riffs for verses and popish melodic hooks in the choruses, they convey an agreeable spirit and charm. Especially likeable is their effervescent surf ditty, "When I Go To The Beach." At times, however, their quest for the oddball lyric gets heavy-handed and just plain corny. "Nagasaki Neuter" is a stale one-joke song. But any band that can dredge up a one-hit wonder like the Status Quo's "Pictures Of Matchstick Men," and revel in the song's inherent silliness, can't be all bad. Actually, they can be mostly good.

**AGENT ORANGE**, *When You Least Expect It* (Enigma): This is probably the cheapest-made record of the four listed (Wednesday Week is probably a close second), but the obviously raw production doesn't rob this band of its power by one iota. Once considered a punk band, Agent Orange has evolved into a strong rock outfit with mod and surf overtones. The slashing guitar riffs and especially the thunderous drumming are reminiscent of the early Who. "It's Up To You" is the disc's gem, with a strong melody propelled by emphatic playing and Mike Palm's high, early Daltry-like vocals. A second winner is their cover of the Airplane's "Somebody To Love," which sounds fresh and vibrant. Also included are two instrumentals with Ventures' surf guitar flavor. Admittedly, this doesn't have the sophisticated spit and polish of more lavish independent productions, but the spirit here is undeniable, and no amount of money can produce that.

**WEDNESDAY WEEK**, *Betsy's House* (Warfrat): This L.A.-based trio prove that you need not be very technically proficient to create effective music. The musicianship, the song arrangements, and the vocal quality are hardly overwhelming. Their pop/rock is simple: melodies rely on singular, strong, if obvious hooks. Yet it still works, because the young (ages 20-23) group isn't afraid to show their age. Their songs accurately and, more importantly, personally deal with the insecurity of their own inexperience. When singer Kristi Callan uses an excuse of "going to Betsy's house" so she can go out, you can hear the guilt in her voice. Whether it's worrying about going back with a crush who jilted her, or yawning through antiseptic suburban life, you believe everything they say. To be sure, Wednesday Week won't bedazzle you with their technical wizardry, but their simple and straightforward style will convey their message as well as anyone.

**THE NEATS** (*Ace Of Hearts*): Their op art cover illustrates this Boston quartet's sound: a hypnotic brand of psychedelic pop/rock. While the rhythm section provides a strong, stable beat, guitarists Eric Martin and Paul Caruso weave rhythmic patterns of chords and riffs so the music swells and flows dynamically. This can produce very moody pieces, such as the appropriately-titled "Ghosts." They don't hit you with strong melodic hooks right off the bat, which in the case of "Water" can turn the tune into an aimless drone. They prefer to have the melodies sneak up and envelope you, and when it works in songs like "A.B.D." and the R.E.M.-ish "Now You Know," the results can be quite satisfying. This is music that grows on you. If you've got the time, they'll catch your ear.

# SHORT CIRCUITS

This column is dedicated to the art of improvisation and ingenuity. The following vignettes illustrate how several of today's popular musicians and bands use and/or alter their instruments, or experiment in the studio, to fashion their own distinctive sounds.

They make some of the novel hit sounds of today. However, the hit sounds of tomorrow are being invented or discovered by you. Those who constantly "fool around" with their instrument and/or studio equipment, often come up with something new, be it a deeper drum sound, a strange

guitar reverb, or a novel way to craft a massive, imposing sound in a cheap studio on a limited budget.

**Rock It** encourages our readers to send in their own "tricks of the trade." If we consider it worthy, we'll publish your effort in an upcoming issue. Plus, the most innovative submission will be spotlighted as a "Brainstorm!" He or she will also win a **Rock It** tee-shirt and a **Certificate of Merit**.

Send all entrees to **Rock It** ... (Be sure to list your address, and phone number!)

by  
**JOHN SUTTON-SMITH**

Producers **Pat Foley** and **Chris Silagyi** are busy creating the unusual and unexpected. (Once, they recorded the drum tracks live over a Linn drum program and then, instead of dropping the Linn out completely, mixed the two together, thereby making for a more powerful backbeat.) The pair have three new projects in the works at **Eldorado Studio**. Completed is the Young Executives' self-styled, video-promoted single, then came the reggae/pop of Orange County's **Brand New World**, and most recently, the Afro/calypso-sounding reggae of chanteuse **Pet Cameron**.

On the **Pet** project, Foley revealed a couple of his and Silagyi's patented techniques for strengthening the studio sound. By messing with an assortment of tape speeds, they find sounds that sometimes are totally unidentifiable from their original single. Running an echo tape backwards into the snare drum makes for a spacey, rushing roar, while speeding up the tape while recording the snare gives it an exaggerated ring and a shorter, harder attack while diminishing the decay. Foley says that the tape speed affects not only the pitch but the timbre of an instrument, making it brighter and shorter and altering the note decay and, in this case, the



PHOTO BY ED COLVER

## GREAT WHITE

snare rattle. Another drum effect, used for the heavy metal band **Great White**, was attained by slowing down the tape while playing back drums through a Prophet 5 synthesizer, so that when it's played back, "it sounds like bombs dropping, totally rocking the atmosphere." They also played with running signals from the drum source through a harmonizer, then running the harmonized effect through echo, thus affecting the effects.

With **Pet Cameron**, they brought in many African musicians, including a drummer and a Trinidadian horn section, in a search for an authentic "King" Sunny Ade-type sound. Also on hand were Skankster bassist **Arlo Zoos** and veteran guitarist **John Goodsall**. Goodsall's guitar underwent recording at a slower tape speed, thus creating, when speeded up to normal, that high, jangling guitar sound found in many African recordings.

At **Sounder Studios**, a new 24-track built, owned, and run by **Mark Creamer**, guitarist/singer **Kyle Johnson** is recording his first solo project with help from the likes of **Hans Christian**, formerly bassist with **What Is This**. Johnson has primarily recorded over drum tracks that were pre-recorded at home on a **Drumulator** onto a **Porta studio**. He added bass and keyboards afterwards at **Sounder**. One thing about using a drum machine of any kind is that when you lay down, or program, your drum track, you can then record the basic tracks (or, in fact, the whole song) and then change your drum track afterwards, because only the sync track is on tape. The drum track remains in the machine.

At **Indigo Ranch Studios** in Malibu, the **Skanksters' Arlo Zoos** and **Mona Lisa Ventress** have been re-mixing tracks with co-owner/producer **Richard Kaplan**, who has worked with numerous top-name artists, experimenting with a "chorusing" effect on the lead vocals, but deciding in favor of the straight-ahead, unsweetened vocal.

Back in Malibu at **Indigo**, **Vanity** recording artists **Invisible Zoo** recorded their new material with **Jet Laser** engineering and house engineer **Bob Knox** as second. One thing they did while recording was create echoes as loud as the original sound by running the kick drum through a limiter, then "gating" it so that where a normal echo would decay, this allows for the echo to be as loud, or louder, than the original, and of any desired, or even indefinite, length.

CONTINUED

# BRAINSTORM!

The UNITS recently recorded their debut Epic E.P. "New Way to Move" in England's Rockfield Studio s with former Be Bop Deluxe leader Bill Nelson producing. Bill beefed up their Linn Drum tracks by sending them through an amp at loud volume in a big room. A real drum was then placed right next to the amp, and this was miked up close and at a distance. A combination of this and the direct sound was used to get a big, thick drum sound that still had a lot of clean punch to it.



UNITS

PHOTO BY RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS

When Oingo Boingo went into the studio to cut their third album for A&M, "Good For Your Soul," lead singer Danny Elfman wanted to get the complex job (the eight-piece band includes a three-piece horn section) done in a minimal of time. So after he set up drummer John Hernandez in the studio, the rest of the band performed in the control room. "One thing that always bothered us about working in the studio was being isolated and wearing headphones," Elfman notes. "It makes the feel less live; it became frustrating trying so hard to get the energy that

came so easy in concert. It became incredibly easy this way; everybody heard their individual parts within the context of the band."

Back to tape speeds: If you happen to hear Michael Jackson live this year (and it looks like you'll get the chance), listen closely. His vocals on such mega-hits as "Billy Jean" and "Beat It" will be in a slightly lower key. That's because even he used the tape speeding technique on his vocals during the recording of *Thriller* with Quincy Jones to sweeten his voice just a little bit more. No star is too big to pass up the advantages of

modern day technology and innovation.

Also at Eldorado, producer Richard "Digby" Smith has been working on recordings with two Seattle-based bands. Rebel laid down three of their pop-oriented sides, while the Studebakers, who lived in their bus in the studio's parking lot on Vine St. during the sessions, put down five rockabilly tracks. "Diga" used a very deep 12" snare for a very military sound, an authentic '50s style for which Eldorado is so good, having been home to the likes of Sam Cooke, Johnny Otis and other authentic '50s innovators.

Mad Dog Studios in Venice have been trying out some new ideas lately with a variety of different groups. Owner/producer Mark Avnet reports an exciting combination of synthesizers and cellos over a dance beat by new music group Dorian Gray, creating what he calls a "completely alien" sound. Burning Sensations percussionist Mike Tempo has added a manic touch to the urban dance rock of M.D.3. Those sessions included Dusty Wakeman from King Cotton and a four-piece horn section led by Stemsy Hunter.



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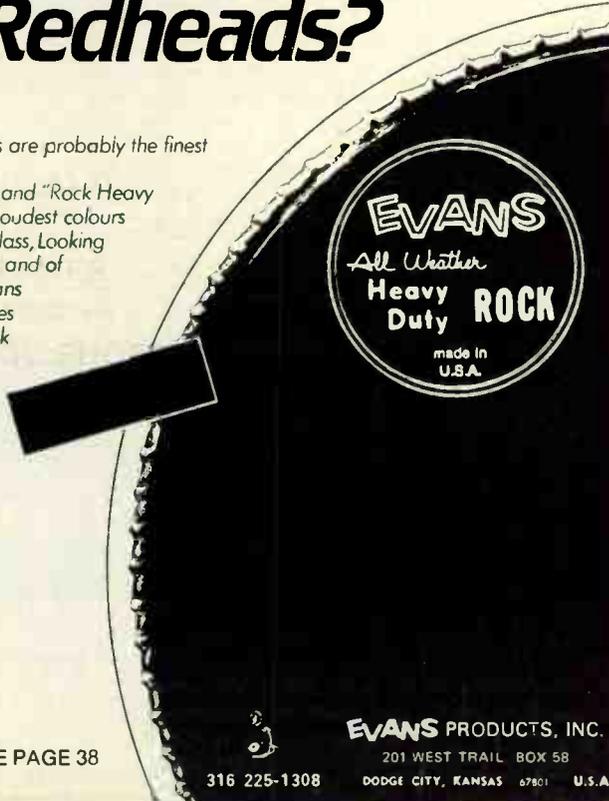


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to those who are ignorant of the specific travails of Scotland. "It's not just taking down the songs I see and writing them in black-and-white," he exclaimed. "It's trying to describe the whole range of emotions that run through each situation that illustrates it all. Although our languages and cultures may be different, I think people can connect with our ideas, and that there must be something in their lives that they can identify with."

He refrains from getting into specific political issues. "I don't know enough about it," he conceded. "I'd rather talk about people's situations. I have no answers to political problems, but I have a lot of questions."

Big Country's sound is often compared to the sleek guitar rock of U2, and not coincidentally, both were produced by Steve Lillywhite. When he approached them after a show where they opened for the Jam, Adamson claimed that they were unaware of his exploits with U2. They knew of his work with XTC and Siouxsie and the Banshees. "The funny thing about us being compared to U2 is that when I was with the Skids, I used to see the Edge (U2's guitarist) when he played with other bands. I don't see that much similarity in the music, although you could say our basic attitude to it is similar."

Lillywhite didn't help craft their unique guitar sound; Adamson claimed that he basically refined their live sound. "We were a live band long before we went into the studio," he stated. "The guitar sound was crafted over a couple of years of playing. I never took any lessons or stuff like that."

What did change was his vocal style; his strong sustained singing complimented the anthemic quality of the melodies. "I was trying to get a certain feeling you get not only from music, but from a lot of things. A certain rush, where everything seems so amazing. I try to reach for a sense of exhilaration and put it into our music. That's how my favorite songs made me feel."

The title, *The Crossing*, comes from an early single. However, Adamson sees a symbolic reference as well. "Far too many groups put this wall up between them and the audience," he said. "We try to show people that there's nothing particularly special about us just because we're on a stage and they have to be on the floor. For us a good gig is when both sides come together."

"The title tries to make that breakthrough," he continued. "Far too many groups see music solely as a mode of entertainment. It can be far more important than that. Certain songs have affected me and changed my mind a bit about

CONTINUED

ON PAGE 36

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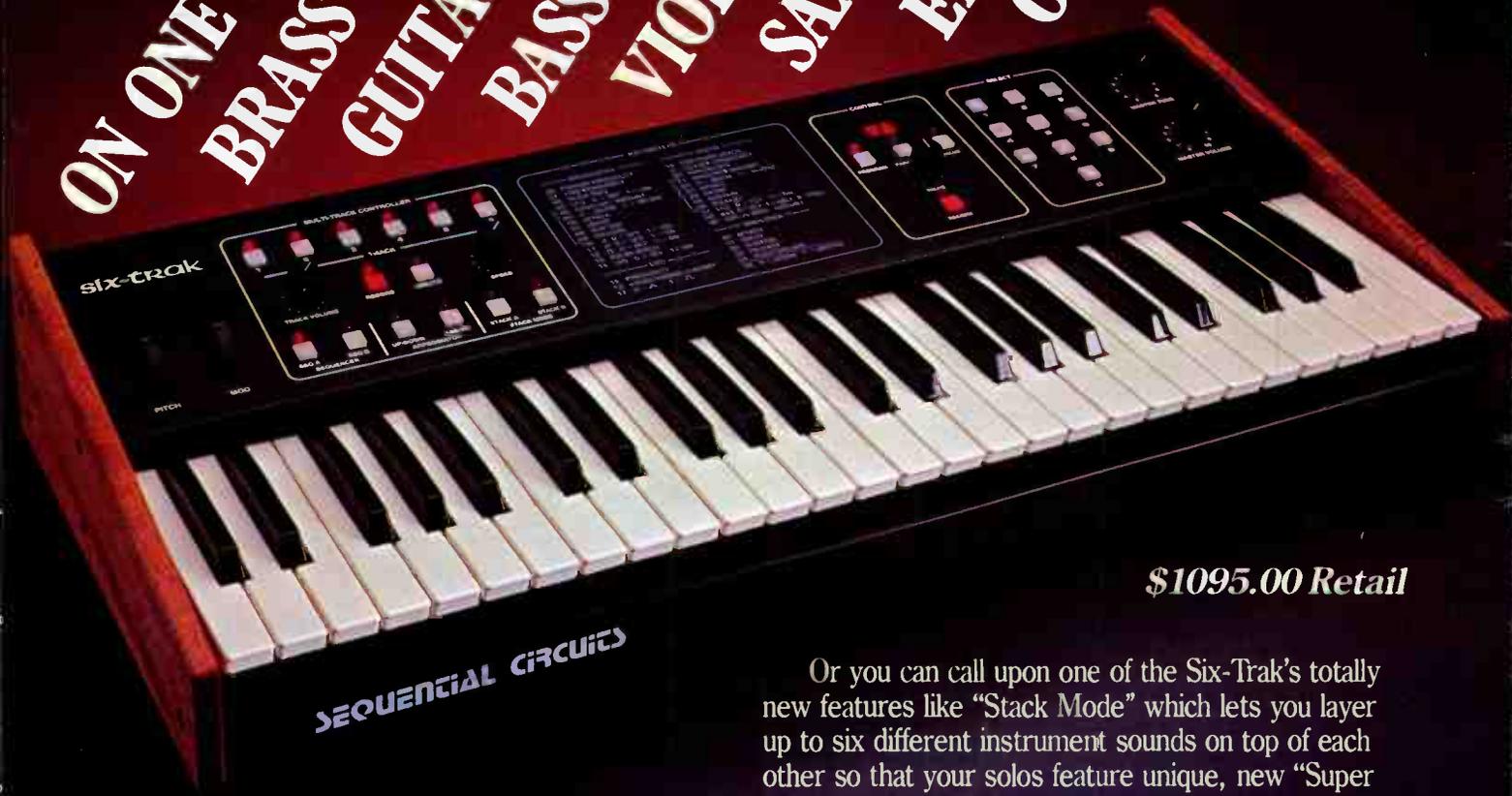
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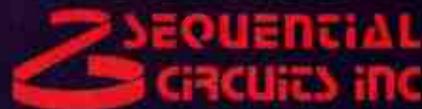
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# MUSIC BUSINESS THEORY #101



Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, a/k/a "Flo & Eddie," are certainly no strangers to the music business. They first achieved national acclaim in 1965 as singers for the Turtles, garnering several Top 10 singles. In 1970, they joined Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, appeared on three albums and starred in the movie, *200 Motels*. Two years later, they went out on their own as Flo & Eddie. They've also branched into different fields of the business. They produced records for other bands, they created children's records (the highly popular "Strawberry Shortcake" series), they hosted their own nationally syndicated radio show, and wrote their own column in a rock magazine.

But their reputation today is one of the best harmony duos around. Their strong, tuneful harmonies have appeared on albums by T. Rex, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Stephen Stills, Keith Moon, Alice Cooper, Blondie, Bruce Springsteen (on his only single hit, "Hungry Heart"), the Knack, the Psychedelic Furs, Sammy Hagar and most recently, Paul Kantner. They've spent 22 years in and out of studios, and in and out of record contracts. This column will give you the chance to tap their considerable pool of knowledge of the music business. In their debut column, they'll discuss...

## Getting Used To The Studio

**RP:** When an artist is deciding on which studio to choose, what does he look for — carpeted walls, marble floors?

**KAYLAN:** That's a great myth. You don't look for plush carpeting, a lot of fake brick walls, or wood. That doesn't do anything for the acoustics. Don't be im-

pressed by its hot tub, but it's not a bad idea to find out who has used the studio, and how well their work sounds and how well it did. A studio is a computer; it's only as good as the people who know how to use it. If you don't know, a 24-track is as worthless as a portable cassette machine.

**VOLMAN:** Especially in LA, there's a lot of competition, so you're not limited to using just one studio. 8-tracks go from \$8-15 an hour, 16-tracks run \$15-30 an hour, 24-tracks cost anywhere from \$35-75 an hour. After that, you're talking about the Record Plants of the world, and that's the major leagues.

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## BUILDING A HOME STUDIO FROM SCRATCH

By Drew Daniels

*Drew Daniels is the Chairman of the Audio Engineering Society's L.A. section and Sales Training Manager for Fender/Rogers/Rhodes division of CBS. He operates and maintains a production recording studio, develops workshops and seminars on professional audio and recording, and consults on studio and control room design.*

The first thing you should do after deciding on a home recording studio, but before you've spent your money, is decide what you *don't* need. You shouldn't buy expensive equipment for work that you'll end up doing in a big studio. Avoiding the temptation to try it at home will save you big money.

Remember that you can make high-quality tapes and even masters at home, provided you know what equipment is needed, and planning your productions (i.e.: tracking, overdubbing, and mixdown).

Decide upfront whether to open your home studio to outside business. If you do, you're going to need a lot more equipment. If not, you can save a bundle at the cost of learning some production techniques you wouldn't ordinarily ask outside business to bother with.

How quick do you need to work? If you need production speed, it gets expensive. Time-savers like autolocators and automated mixdown computers are very expensive compared to basic equipment. Unless you plan on recording all day every day, you don't really need them. Besides, they don't improve the sound of your tapes; they just add fingers to your hands. Learn to use your hands before trying to get too fancy, or you might find yourself out of control before you've really mastered basic recording. If you can take the time to be slow and careful, you can save big.

Start by listing only the equipment you will use every time you record. The basics could include a tape deck, mixer, microphone, piano, and gobos (portable sound baffles).

Here's a partial list of things that can make a studio expensive beyond its functional capability:

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Aesthetic Interior Design  | Exotic Outboard Gear |
| Charisma Equipment         | Client Conveniences  |
| Large Rented Studio Spaces | Unused Floor Space   |

Here's a partial list of things that can make a studio inexpensive beyond its technical excellence:

|                                      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Surplus or Scavenged Interior Design | Basic Outboard Gear |
| No Client Conveniences               | Basic Equipment     |
| Your Garage, Basement or Unused Room | Well-Used Spaces    |

### TECHNICAL COMPETENCE

The most important necessities are technical smarts and experience. If you don't have them, get them. If you can't get them, get somebody who has them. A truly competent engineer can make good recordings with marginal equipment and poor acoustics. An incompetent engineer is unlikely to do as well with a million dollar studio (anyone who doubts this should listen to some of the rather surprising recordings made at home by good engineers).

"Technically competent" engineers have gathered enough information and experience to become at least partially objective. Naturally, engineers have the human tendency to be opinionated, but those who exhibit a lack of objectivity and a preponderance of opinion are being defensive, and are acting out of technical ignorance and inexperience. A competent engineer is fearless. He's never afraid to try anything — whatever gets the job done regardless of whether it's "state of the art" or just "tricks of the trade."

ROCK IT PRESS • PAGE 32

### YOUR MAJOR EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Let's assume that you want to make demo tapes that are good enough to be made into record masters. Most people with home studios won't make records, but it's a perfectly acceptable aspiration.

Start by setting up a recording studio, which is a room where sound can be controlled and channeled for your intended use. At first, you need nothing more than a garage in a quiet neighborhood, away from railroad tracks, heavy street traffic, industrial plants and airports. If you're open to the public, you also need a reasonable parking area so musicians can load and unload easily. Don't do as one former studio owner in Atlanta did, by putting his studio in a third floor apartment with no elevator. It's nice to get an old warehouse or supermarket shell for a studio, but keep in mind that the more space you have, the more sound treatment materials you'll need to furnish it. An efficiently-used garage can accommodate most rock groups, even when strings and horns are called in for overdubbing, since the basic tracks have already been recorded.

I highly recommend you get a copy of Teac's "Multitrack Primer" for the valuable tips and information about "on-the-cheap" room treatment and acoustic "short cuts". It's available at the Guitar Center or directly from Teac for \$4.95.

Browse through carpet stores for scraps and surplus carpeting, and keep an eye on local office buildings that are re-carpeting. You may be able to pick up free padding or used carpet. Even narrow strips of carpet can be stapled or draped over the overhead cross beams in a garage to provide valuable sound absorption. Fiberglass insulation in rolls can be used between the vertical studs with the facing toward the outside walls; cover it with drapes or carpet or old sheets. Packing foam with deep "fingers" can be purchased from many large paper companies and surplus stores. You can get sheets of cheap, "shop grade" plywood, some hinges, and a few tubes of RTV to glue the foam to the plywood and build folding "gobos" for portable sound baffling. If you plan on recording drums or acoustic guitar, you'll find gobos valuable in controlling "room sound" around the microphones, and they can also be used to improve microphone pickup and rejection patterns.

Many methods of "adjusting" room acoustics are described in publications like the AES (Audio Engineering Society) and ASA (Acoustical Society of America) Journals available in most college libraries. For small rooms like garages, the acoustic space should be kept as "dead" as possible. If a hard reflecting surface is necessary for some recordings, just roll up the carpeting or carry in a sheet of masonite to lean against the wall. You will always end up with some reflection of sound in any room you build. The goal is to eliminate any reflections or sound buildup at particular frequencies that will produce strong "coloration" of sounds in the room.

The treatment and outfitting of your studio is always an expensive proposition, so don't expect to cut corners unless you know ahead of time that you can get the necessary materials at a price.

Wiring, cabling and mic stands are not cheap either. Learn to repair cables, and get yourself a good temperature-controlled soldering station and a small vise to hold connectors. Even if you're not a technician, you will need to learn to solder just to

save money. You'll need lots of adaptors. Remember the recording engineer's corollary to Murphy's Law: Radio Shack always closes 10 minutes *before* you discover you need one more adaptor!

All the odds and ends needed in a studio add up to quite a few dollars. The splicing tape and leader tape, duct tape and masking tape, tape head cleaner and head cleaning swabs, labels, track sheets, tape reels and boxes, grease pencils, pens and markers, music stands, lights, extension cords or new wall outlets and switches, equipment multi-outlet strips, equipment racks, tables or shelves, chairs and stools and other such necessary items can put a real pinch on your studio budget if you haven't allowed for them in planning.

### CONTROL ROOM HARDWARE

The more tape tracks you have to record on, the more flexible you will be in accommodating arrangements and changes in tracks such as additions and overdubs. The two main drawbacks to having more tape tracks is the cost and the difficulty in mixing down more tracks. If you're mixing more tracks, you need a larger mixer. More tracks require more wiring and cable and usually more outboard gear to patch into all those tracks.

A good 4-track deck is easily capable of recording 10 tracks of 2nd-generation sound (that is, sound that has only been transferred once from track to track), and with noise reduction and careful use of EQ, you may be able to double that. I have personally made 33-track tapes using my 8-track recorder with noise reduction that exhibit little more than a whisper of hiss and are crisp and punchy, with good fidelity to the original sounds from the mikes. Choosing the number of tracks is never easy, but it's always good to get as many tracks as you can afford, as long as the machine is basically of high quality.

A fairly stiff test of fidelity is to record a signal from a high-quality source (such as a laser digital compact disc player) on the two edge tracks of the machine you're interested in, and listen to the playback of the tape in a comparison A-B test with the original disc player output. You should hear as little change as possible.

Bargain machines, like those recycled from big studios, are fine if you are an electronic technician, but usually the expense of such bargains for things like new tape heads is very high.

In many cases, the biggest difference between semi-pro and pro tape decks is the engineer using them. I might be willing to bet my 80-8 against any deck in any 20/24-track studio anywhere to make better tapes!

In any case, maintenance is critical, and the more tracks you have, the more maintenance is involved. If you're going to operate your studio without a technician, be prepared to bite the bullet for at least an oscillator (not your synthesizer) an audio RMS-reading voltmeter and an oscilloscope, and plan on getting familiar with them just enough to set your azimuth and bias, and check your frequency response with a test tape as your heads wear. Calibration/alignment tapes are expensive — about \$80 for a half-inch tape and about \$240 for a 2-inch tape — and are essential for any reasonably good machine performance.

An audio system is only as good as the weakest link in the chain (the signal path). You should have a 2-track mastering deck that is *at least* the equal in performance of your multitrack deck. Don't assume that once you've put your tracks down on tape that you can just mixdown directly onto a cassette deck. You will want to put a test tone from your oscillator onto your master tape so that each cassette copy you make can be set to the same volume level, and if you make a record from your master tape, you *must* use open reel tape — either 1/4-inch 15 or 30 in/s or 1/2-inch 30 in/s tape. Typically, a master tape is the highest quality tape you're capable of obtaining from your equipment. No high-quality disc cutting operation will even own a cassette deck, let alone consider using one to cut a disc.

You'll need a monitor system to playback your tapes for critical listening and to judge your mixes from your multitrack to your master tape. Monitor systems can range in price from a few hun-

dred dollars to tens of thousands. I will expand on monitor systems in the future, but for now, these are the essentials: A monitor system is more than just an amplifier and a pair of speakers. Monitors must give you information about what you have on your tapes. The most important thing about monitor amplifiers is high fidelity and lack of distortion and coloration. To achieve low distortion at loud listening levels, the amplifier should also have plenty of power, especially for small monitor speakers or inefficient speakers. Monitor loudspeakers should be capable of revealing flaws or problems in recorded signals, and should accurately reflect differences in microphones, mike placement, and EQ use or changes. Monitor speakers should have wide frequency response; they should be flat and capable of handling any musical peaks or transients you may feed into them without choking or distorting the peaks. Monitor speakers are a type, not a title. A speaker is not a monitor type just because it says so on the grille. They are generally much heavier, more expensive and more robust than stereo speakers. P.A. and instrument speakers usually make bad monitor speakers.

Keep in mind that the room in which monitor speakers play is as much a part of the monitor system as the speakers themselves, so it becomes necessary to look at the speaker-room interaction — a key virtue of many real monitor speakers.

Your control room's shape, construction and furnishings can profoundly affect your recorded product, but don't be tempted to monitor strictly on headphones unless you're sure your listeners will listen only on headphones. You should also plan on getting a separate small amplifier and a pair of "mini-monitors" for the top of the console, or else set up a "producers' desk" somewhere in your home or studio with a "Zody's-quality" cassette player and speakers. Your final product should be mixed and EQ'd to sound good on the type of speakers you expect it to be played on, as well as your big expensive monitors. This usually takes listening on small speakers and big monitors and adjusting so it strikes a subjective balance and works well both ways.



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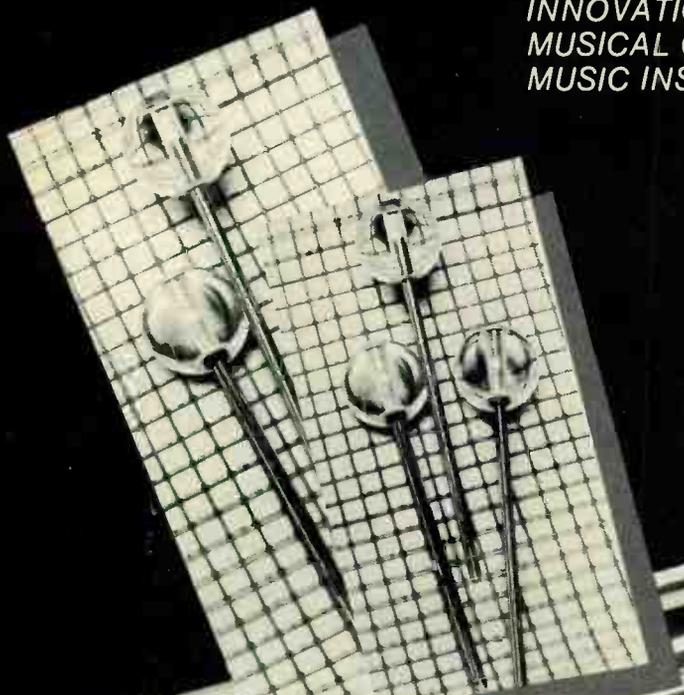
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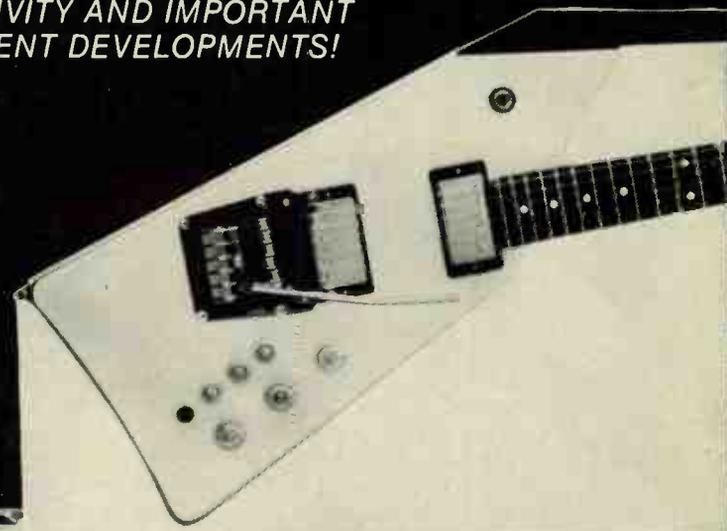
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## MICHAEL ANTHONY

a lot of our crowd's going to hang their mouths open when they hear us playing it, but it sounds great."

Keyboards aren't really brand new to Van Halen or to Michael Anthony, though. "I played a little bit of keyboard for two years in junior college. I majored in music, and you have to take piano and all your harmony and theory classes. So I started playing it because I had to play it. I was never into the instrument, but wish I had been. On our **Women and Children First** album, Ed came up with "And the Cradle Will Rock," which is done on a Wurliitzer blowing through a hundred Marshalls. Obviously he couldn't do it live, because he had to play guitar. So they all pointed their fingers at me and said 'Guess who's going to be playing keyboard?'"

Still, Anthony prefers the bass, which is when you see him playing his nightly showpiece solo spot. "There's still very little that we plan out, besides the length of a solo and where the chord changes are going. Edward flies off the handle every night, so I like to stick to a solid bass line, because I don't want to sound like another West, Bruce, and Laing — you go into a solo and everybody sounds like they're playing something different. Alex and I work really well together, so Edward can go off and do anything he wants."

As for his solo, "It's pretty much blocked out the same. But from city to city, different things get thrown in. I don't like to stick to a really planned-out thing every night, because I probably wouldn't get off on playing it as much. If I feel like it, I'll throw my bass down and jump on it. Bass players are all frustrated. They're always in the background, standing next to the drummer, not doing anything. I've always felt like jumping around."

The level in the Jack Daniel's bottle was creeping lower and lower, and it was time to wrap things up. Saving the best for last, I asked him about their well-known request for M&M's.

"I'm glad you didn't say anything about brown, because they had to clean up this office last time somebody asked me about brown. (It is in Van Halen's performance contract for them to be provided M&M's — but no brown ones.) They don't make the red ones anymore. Those used to be my favorite. If I closed my eyes and you gave me an M&M, I could always tell if it was a red one. So, if anybody finds any red M&Ms, please mail them to our office here in Hollywood."

You read it here, folks. Does anyone have a good name for a drink made with Jack Daniels and red M&Ms?

## ZZ TOP

No matter if they're in the studio or on stage, a free-wheeling, spontaneous attitude prevails. Gibbons noted that they even rehearse during soundchecks, which often results in different arrangements for certain songs in the set that night. "That happens quite a lot," he said. "We might feel like playing a different bridge, or changing the feel of a song that night, so we change it during the sound-check. That's why it's good for us to have songs that are skeletons — rough outlines that we can change whenever we feel like it."

When ZZ Top finished recording **Eliminator** in December of '82, they took four weeks off while the record was pressed. They hit the road in March of '83, and they haven't stopped yet. "It's only been a year," Gibbons exclaimed, "although it feels like 14."

Their most recent swing, from the Pacific Northwest to the Plains states, doesn't feature the live animals. "This is a more streamlined tour," he confided. "The only animals left are Frank, Dusty, and me."

What makes for a good ZZ Top show? "A satisfaction in terms of the way the music was played; if we felt that we played our music right," he said. "Of course, audience response helps. That makes it a lot more fun. But it's not that easy to put on a good show. There's a lot going on up there."

Although **Eliminator** has been nominated for a Grammy, it's highly unlikely that the band will be around to collect the trophy if they win. "Knowing the traditional ZZ Top booking agent, he'll have us on the road working that night," Gibbons said. "But a Grammy has always been an inspiration for us, to turn out a piece of work that gets that kind of honor."

One has to wonder about the pressure ZZ Top faces when they go back into the studio later this year to record the follow-up to a multi-platinum, Grammy-nominated album. "I'm sure there will be some pressure on us," he acknowledged. "But all we have to do is still get the spirit and that attitude. If people are enjoying it and they want more, well we'll give it to 'em! The secret to ZZ Top is that if you like what we like to do, then we'll have a great time. If we can get out and keep playing our music, that'll do it for us."

But are there any more challenges or goals left for ZZ Top to conquer? "Just one," Gibbons replied. "We wanna drive that car..."

## BIG COUNTRY

things. You can't do that if you just use music as entertainment or as a way of bearing your own financial rewards. That attitude is no stimulus for me at all."

While Big Country wants to do more than make their listeners dance, they refrain from handing down specific social statements. "With image-laden songs, misinterpretations happen all the time," Adamson noted. "But that's what I want people to do, to make their own interpretations. We never put ourselves in a set thematic function. We just write songs and treat them in a manner that we see fit; we'll let other people categorize them."

Since the band doesn't write new material while they're on the road, new material won't be created until they go back to Scotland, which despite all its oppressing problems, is still home to Adamson. "We're going to take a good time off from touring to stay at home and write songs," he said.

Creative inspiration for Stuart Adamson is obviously something that he can turn on or off like a faucet. "I just let the songs come along the same way they always have," he said. "I never try to force myself into writing something. If it doesn't come, it doesn't come. I much prefer working from inspiration rather than perspiration."

Even so, he claimed never to have been infected with "writer's block." "There's too many places to steal from," he joked. "But really, if you have a creative thing about you, you can always find ideas in different situations."

Different situations can often beget a different direction in their music, and Adamson is not afraid to change.

"You can't limit yourself to one set ideal all the time," he stated. "You have to keep pushing for newer things, and not simply be satisfied to embrace a sound just because it's popular."

Even though Big Country's sound has been accepted widely by both the public and the critics, don't expect Adamson to fall prey to the "instant success" syndrome. In place of a jet-setting touring schedule, Adamson is on the road with his wife and young child. "Life will only get more hectic if you let it become more hectic," he concluded. "As a musician, I'm much more interested in making a worthwhile contribution than to have the group become the biggest thing since sliced bread. I know what I want: to make a worthwhile contribution to music and to stay happy in Scotland."

It's apparent that Adamson, and Big Country, are well on their way to doing just that.

*RP: How big a studio do you recommend?*

VOLMAN: It depends on what the group is trying to do. If you're trying to impress a label with your music and with your ability to handle a studio and to make records at cost, in this day and age, go for a \$35-50 an hour 24-track. If you cut something on 24, no matter what you do down the road to change it, you'll still have the basics on 24.

KAYLAN: We're not talking about songwriter demos here. We mean bands that want to impress a label for a record deal.

VOLMAN: Even so, it's not adamantly necessary to go 24. If you go to a lower-track studio, you'll just have to do a lot of pre-production.

*RP: What do you mean by pre-production?*

VOLMAN: We've done it millions of times; it's becoming more conscious of the amount of time you spend in a studio. On an hourly rate, you can spend a lot of money if you're not totally prepared. There are producers who book rooms at 10 a.m. and don't show up till three in the afternoon, at \$150 an hour.

KAYLAN: The clock ticks and they don't care, because they've got the money...

VOLMAN: It's become a kind of standard for the superstar groups. We've never had that fortunate luxury; we pay for everything.

KAYLAN: So we show up on time, and we're ready to set-up a half-hour early.

VOLMAN: Talk to your engineer before you actually go the studio. Tell him exactly the sounds you're looking for, such as Abbey Road drums, or you want to lead guitar solo to sound like the one in "Beat It." Plus, rehearse your ass off. We spend two solid weeks of rehearsals before we enter the studio to cut an album. We map out where everyone's going to be on the basic tracks.

*RP: Many studios offer an in-house engineer. Would you use him, or bring in someone who's familiar with your sound?*

KAYLAN: You should use him because a lot of "friends" of the band don't know how to run elaborate equipment. But outside of that, it's good to have a third ear, a guy who knows what you sound like live. Because once you go in a studio, plug in, record, and play it back, you'll discover that it doesn't sound like what you're used to hearing. The studio sound has alienated some people; it sounds way too clean for them. Plus, when you're singing in headphones, you sing differently. It changes everything as far as live vocals are concerned. That live sound will never be there unless you've got someone who knows how to compensate for it and is really used to the studio environment.

VOLMAN: Even after 22 years of making records as a team, we always go in with a third ear. We need suggestions; we need to bounce our ideas off people. It motivates us. You also have to trust the people you're working with. You need some creative feedback and not some guy who just waits for you to tell him if the take is good or not.

*RP: Explain the phrase, "Fix it in the mix."*

KAYLAN: It's the standard studio answer for things. You're overdubbing in the studio, and the take is finished. The engineer and producer are in the control booth, talking back and forth. And you're wondering what they're talking about; was the take good or bad? They won't tell you. They know you're out there, but they won't even look your way. They just keep talking. That's the first thing you got to learn: Once you're out there, nobody tells you anything! Even if you're paying for it, they'll just talk among themselves. It must be some weird syndrome. But you're going to find yourself in the studio alone a whole lot, looking into the control booth, wondering, "What the fuck...?"

*RP: Let's say you've been hired to play on someone else's project. You're doing your part, and you know the song's a turkey. Do you speak up?*

KAYLAN: If you're working for a friend, it's within your own taste limits to comment on the quality of your friend's material. But strictly as a session player, it's not your right. We've sung on the worst turkeys of all-time. Maybe it's mercenary of me to take their money for songs I feel less than wonderful about, but I didn't think "Hungry Heart" was going to be a hit, so what did I know?

*RP: But would you suggest different ways to sing your parts?*

VOLMAN: Absolutely. We do that constantly, but it depends on how much I know of the artist and the producer, and how much freedom they're giving me. You can't take it beyond what the producer wants you to do.

*RP: Estimate the average cost to produce a demo worthy of sending to labels.*

KAYLAN: First off, never give any more than three songs. Label people won't bother to listen to anything more. Put your best song first, and so on.

VOLMAN: A three song demo should be done in three days, one song each eight-hour day. At a 24-track studio, it should cost around \$1,000. It wouldn't take that long at an eight-track studio, so costs would go down proportionately. Figure \$750 for a 16-track and \$350-500 for an 8-track.

*RP: A lot of A&R reps have said that it doesn't matter whether the demo's been cut on 8 or 24 tracks. If the song is good, they'll hear it.*

KAYLAN: Let me tell you the real truth: Most label people don't have any imagination. Many A&R guys used to sell shoes, and if they don't work out in a minute, they'll be selling shoes next week. Sure, you can give them an eight-track and tell them, "the sparkly strings will go here and here," but they won't hear the sparkly strings. So you take back the demo, and recut the same song with the sparkly strings, and bring it back to them, they'll go, "I don't know what you did, but it's brilliant! You guys are brilliant — sign here!" It takes a very skilled ear to hear the sparkly strings when they aren't there, and a lot of label people don't have that. Besides, more than a few A&R reps let their secretaries screen the demos for them.

*RP: Any other absolute truths of the studio?*

KAYLAN: Food tastes better in the studio. Don't ask why.

If you have a question for "Flo & Eddie's Music Business Theory 101," send your letter to Flo & Eddie, 1765 N. Highland, #145, Hollywood, CA 90078. In future issues, they will tackle publishing, royalties, touring, and band politics, so they welcome any question about this business of music.

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