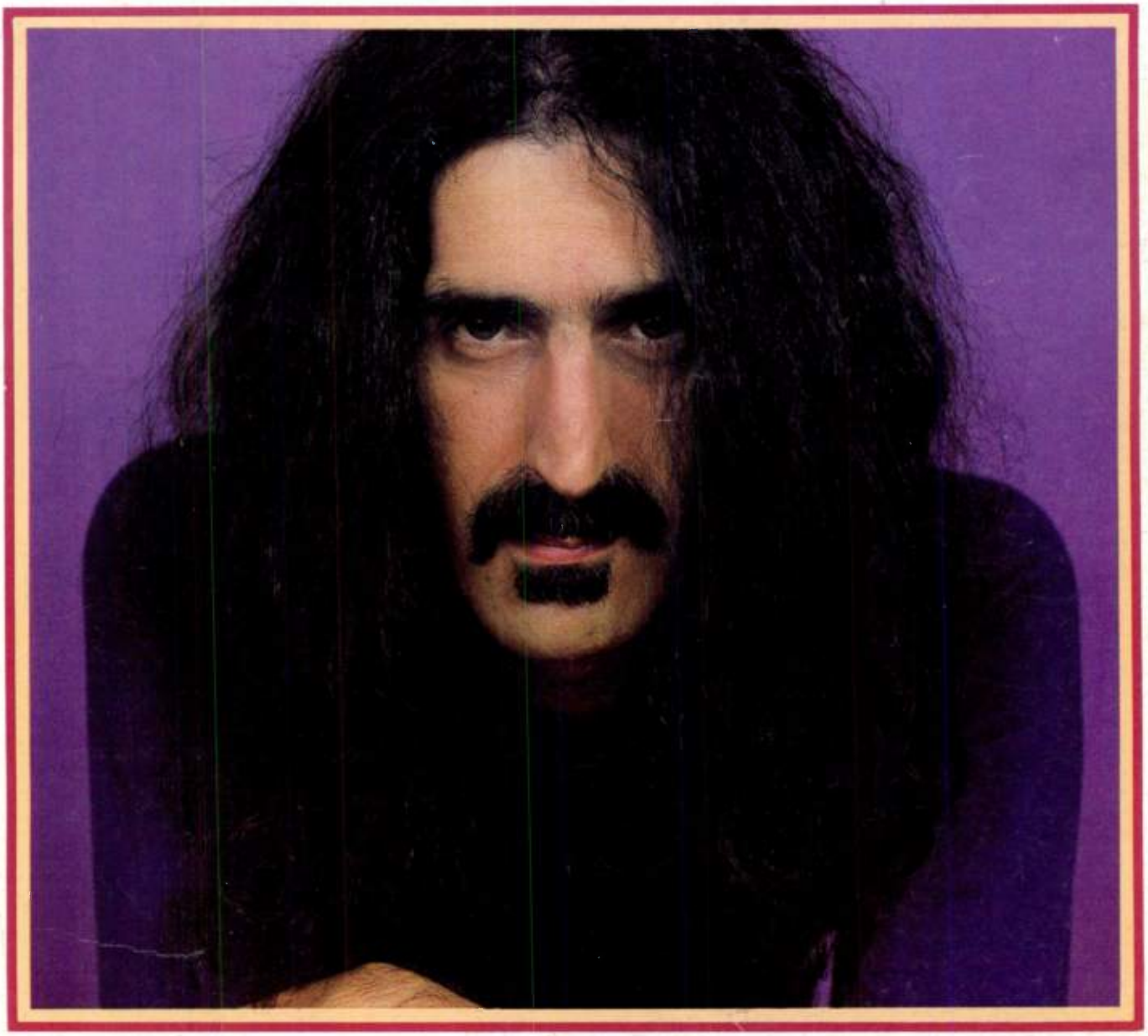
# MUSICIAN

ZAPPA!

PLAYER & LISTENER NO.19, AUGUST, 1979 $1.25

## Robert Fripp in the 80's
## Taylor, Parker, Stewart, Shy Falsettos, Hi-Fi
## Arthur Blythe and the Elders



## Interview: Frank Zappa

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MUSICIAN
PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 19, JULY—AUG. 15, 1979

**Robert Fripp** in the 70's pioneered the marriage of avant-garde electronics, classical thematic development and jazz-like improvisation to rock energy. Now both a producer and solo artist with a powerful new album, he here talks with Vic Garbarini about the direction of music in the 80's.

**Arthur Blythe** is the most refreshingly innovative saxophonist in years. Coming from a long line of tradition, he insists he's not so new or so different, it's just that he's got it all under one roof and manages to make every melodic turn and phrase a new-found delight to the listener. Chip Stern expounds.

**Frank Zappa**, after 13 years, can now be safely called a veteran of the rock scene with definite commercial potential. He is one of the most articulate, versatile, skilled and imaginative composers today in any genre. He is also very funny. Dan Forte and Frank talk about everything from gross-outs to writing for symphonies.

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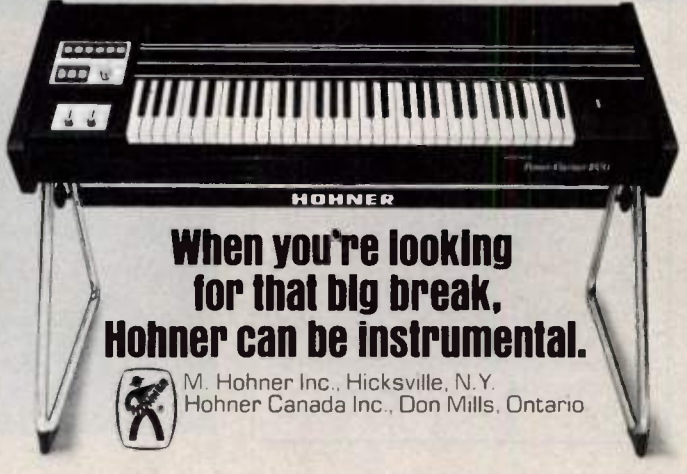


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## Letter from the Publishers

There sits a man with lots of hair at a large black slab of wood pressing small black and white blocks producing a strange variety of loud singing noises. Every few minutes he looks up from a particularly fervent set of smashes on the blocks and starts drawing little lines and dots on small scraps of paper.... As Frank Zappa so astutely points out, "now *that* is truly weird behavior." He's better known for a different kind of weirdness, a result of his notoriously scathing sense of humor, which delights in ridiculing our most precious social vanities in the blackest manner possible (he is awesome before a crowd of college girls). What distinguishes him from other mortals is not his sense of humor, however, but the skill, care, polish and imagination he puts into all those little black dots he scribbles all day. Even more impressive, he then manages to get it all played and recorded by a large, extremely talented, and meticulously rehearsed band under his employ that supports itself by almost constant touring here and abroad. One is reminded of another composer who ostensibly traded in the pop/swing idiom of several decades ago and managed to support the finest band in history for over 30 years on the strength of live performances but who, all the while, used it as an outlet for his varied and prolific composing skills. Mr. Ellington, of course. There may be more to the comparison than we think.

Another reminder to subscribers! We're still ironing the bugs out of our new computer files so if you have a problem of any sort with your subscription, please write us and don't forget to enclose your *incorrect* label along with the necessary corrections.

Next month: Features on making it, the record biz and who they're looking for and why, Bangs on free jazz vs. rock, maybe Mozart, and a host of as yet unmentionables.

# Letters

### ENOUGH EICHER

Pat Metheny is a great guitarist already; he's got chops, taste and lots of music in his head. But please, keep him away from Manfred Eicher at ECM or he'll have him using so many pastel hues he'll have to be framed and hung on the wall! Beauty is one thing, but enough is enough, Manfred!

George Elkay
Van Nuys, CA.

### COLUMN KUDOS

Incredible columns! I bought *Musician* thinking my jazz habit would be taken care of and you took care of my pop hang-up, my rock lust and the wet, wet tears of my swan-singing, heavy, heavy R&B heart. Thank you, thank you.

Jefferson Thomas
Chicago, Ill.

### PAT METHENY

Congratulations on a very interesting Pat Metheny article in your June issue. Media never tires of sticking music into a box or a bag with a nice "this is Jazz", "this is Rock" label tacked on the front. Of course, record companies feel they have to do it to sell the records in the right markets and radio doesn't want to confuse consumers. Your article dwelled on Metheny's music and not just his stereotyped label. I admired Metheny when he said that he wasn't so sure he was ready to call what he does jazz knowing that Coltrane's group existed. That is some thought for a guy his age, especially when he records on ECM and everyone in the business is telling him he's the up-and-coming jazz guitarist.

David Brown
NYC, NY

### PURE SENSE

Unlike other music magazines that measure a musician by commercial success, you have been able, so far, to apply a different measure; to present "musician's musicians". It is obvious that a commercial music magazine must feature commercial music to some extent, I dearly hope that your policy remains commercially viable.

As to your survey form [a reader questionnaire], I wanted to check "pure jazz" but I was afraid it would be interpreted as a rejection of rock, 3rd world and academic influences. (To some it could exclude any development after, and including, the emergence of the improvised solo.) Jazz fans can be such maniacal puritans! They claim to love a music centered around spontaneous invention, but please, let's hear those old favorites again. Why do we berate today's inventors just as the old favorites were berated in their time—all this when jazz history is hardly longer than human adulthood?

I hope than *Musician* will continue to promote an uncompartmentalized, living music reaching from deep roots to the sun.

Mike Dotson
Knoxville, Tenn.

### MR. NATIONAL TREASURE

I'm so glad Musician ran the short piece on James Brown. He is a national treasure and as your writer thankfully pointed out when his record company vice president stated that James Brown was "the original disco man", that JB is so much more than disco. He is one of those artists whose music put the entire planet on the good foot and his essence is so raw, so energized that to even mention disco in the same breath is silly.

Muriel Holton
Burbank, Cal.

### PRINTERS DEVILS PART II

Yipes! Some readers must have found it curious for violinist Leroy Jenkins to characterize Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto as "great black music." We hope Leroy didn't have a cardiac arrest [and the Russians?]. The sentence should have read: "Now maybe people hear what I'm doing as classical music but I consider it 'Great Black Music'." [The term originates from the AACM]. It seems a line was inadvertently dropped.

Chip Stern
New York, N.Y.

### MAX ROACH

Right on Mr. Max Roach when you say that it's the rhythm sections that have changed the styles of music from one period to another. Listen to singers and horns and lead instruments and it's basically still blues-oriented music. It's all been said and done before, it's the rhythmic thing that has changed the sound.

Sam Ernshaw
Great Barrington, Mass.

### JAZZ ORGAN

Thanks to Michael Rozek for the excellent, sensitive and unfortunately too true obituary on jazz organ. Maybe it'll come again and Jimmie Smith can jump back onto his bench, but I've a feeling that it's gone the way of that incredible hearse you showed, into the pile of "forgotten works".

Paul Nesmith
Atlanta, Ga.

"Vivid, surrealistic and boring"!!! That's the greatest description of avant-garde music I've ever heard, that's just like my life here on the Lower East Side.

Vic Dominio
New York, N.Y.

# RECORD NEWS

## SALES SLUMP

There is panic in the board rooms as the record industry, coming off a disappointing Christmas season, is now faced with an unbelievably slow spring and summer. Inflation, the energy shortage, and the lack of big name sellers have all contributed to keep buyers out of the stores. Of the three reasons cited, the lack of big name product may be the most significant. A look at the album chart this spring turns up names like Supertramp, Sister Sledge, Peaches & Herb, Rickie Lee Jones and Van Halen hanging around the top. While these acts may eventually prove to be bona fide superstars someday, right now they do not have the names to pull marginal record buyers into the stores. Without Stevie Wonder's and Fleetwood Mac's of the world pulling people into the stores the whole industry suffers. **CBS Records** is one of the hardest hit labels as rumours persist that label President Bruce Lundvall is about to be fired. If this comes to pass, jazz will lose one of its few true friends in the upper stratosphere of corporate America. Any man who has a picture of Clifford Brown in his office can't be all bad. And the irony of all this is that very few of CBS's problems are Lundvall's fault. Like other labels, CBS has been hurt by the lack of timely product from its big acts. And the label is so big, and structured so awkwardly that it reacts too slowly to changes on the street and the company was caught napping by disco. It is hard for something as street level as disco to work its way up the corporate tower. Even such non-hip corporations as Miller Brewing and Sears have reacted to disco quicker than CBS Records. Before firing Lundvall, the honchos at the Black Rock would be well advised to take a long look at the way their company is structured from the street up.

The energy crisis is also hurting another end of the music business as concert grosses are down these days. People are getting very careful with where they go with their expensive and hard to get fuel these days and luxury trips to concert halls are apparently being given a low priority. The energy crisis will also undoubtedly hurt disco business in some areas though the hot bed of the craze, big urban centers, will probably be unaffected since most big cities have good mass transit. Times are getting so tight that some of the major labels, CBS among them, are cancelling their annual conventions. These affairs are very expensive to pull off and many labels feelthat they are luxuries that can be avoided. This is not a bad idea since most of these get togethers serve only as an excuse for the labels' staffers to act like Animal House extras.

But all is not bad in the world of rock and roll as the American Federation of Musicians announced that its members session earnings are up 19% over last year. It is doubtful that the earnings for '79 will be as good so if you got any of this record industry largess you would be well advised to invest in some blue chip stocks.

**Elektra Records** has announced that it is dropping the word jazz from its Jazz Fusion label. The folks at Elektra say they will be putting more emphasis on disco instead of jazz. The label's well intentioned move into jazz was a disaster from the start as no one at Elektra seemed to have any idea what jazz was all about. The tragedy of this is that when other labels see one of the majors giving up on jazz they may begin to question their own commitment to the music. The failure of Elektra's Jazz/Fusion line is not a failure of jazz but a failure of a few incompetent people who got involved with something they knew nothing about.

## DISCO DIAL DROOPS

One bright spot for **AM radio** listeners who don't like to dance every second of their listening day is that all-disco format radio stations are showing a sharp decline in listenership according to the latest Arbitron ratings. This may break records in the meteoric rise and fall category and is causing radio programmers to reach for their Valiums. Just several months ago WKTU in New York shocked the radio world by grabbing the No. 1 spot with an incredibly high share of the N.Y. market literally overnight with their all-disco format, knocking off traditional Top 40 leader WABC. As a result of this shocker, disco stations sprang up in almost every urban market, achieving a similar overnight success that had more traditional programmers aghast. WABC was thrown into such a panic they ended up chasing, and catching, their own tail by switching to an all-disco format one week, saw disco ratings begin to fall and tried to scramble back to their old format the next, leaving listeners and ratings people completely confused as to what was going on. Stay tuned 'cause them doggies are startin' to stampede.

A hot topic at June's **Black Music Assn.** founders conference in Philadelphia is the problems r&b acts are having because of disco. While disco has made it possible for more black music to be heard than ever before, it is now almost impossible for non-disco black records to get heard. Most of the labels and major market radio stations are so disco conscious that r&b music is on the verge of extinction. And with most of the old jazz and r&b clubs now turning to disco, there is almost no place for more traditional black acts to perform in many markets.

On the supergroup front **Joni Mitchell** will be fronting her own **Mingus** tribute that will be playing the pieces she and Mingus collab orated on the last year of his life. The group will be made up of **Pat Metheny** on guitar, **Jaco Pastorius** on bass and **Don Alias** on drums. The tour begins in August and should cover most of the country.

There are plans for **V.S.O.P.** to get back together this summer for a tour of Japan and who knows what else. **Chick Corea** and **Herbie Hancock** will be doing more duo dates soon, live and possibly recorded.

Rumors persist that **Miles Davis**, **Gil Evans** and **Paul Buckmaster** (who used to arrange for Elton John) are

getting together and will be recording sometime in June. No one really knows anything except that Miles has been practicing and is enthusiastic about the project.

**Ornette Coleman** and **Charlie Haden** are putting the old band together with Dewey Redman and Ed Blackwell, and are calling it Old, New Dreams. This is good news as Charlie Haden's recent incantation of Old and New Dreams was a tribute to Ornette but sorely missed the masters presence. Plans also call for an album to be recorded in Europe for Manfred Eicher's ECM label.

A new album will be forthcoming from **Weather Report** in mid-summer. It will be a two-record set with three live sides and one studio side. ECM will be releasing a new **Keith Jarrett** record. Usually reliable sources at Warner Bros. told us it was to be three sides altogether...would you believe a ten-record three-sided set...how about three ten-sided....

New albums will also be coming from Eric Gale, Freddie Hubbard, Stan Getz, Chick Corea and Gary Burton, Larry Carleton, David Sanborn, Stanley Clarke, Billy Cobham and a raft of new ones, plus the last five years of the ECM catalogue.

### MUSIC TO EAT FLOWERS BY

Designed to explore the holistic properties of music, to tune the human instrument and allow the body to "exert its own structural integrity," and to "alter states of consciousness in delightful ways," is how **Steven Halpern** describes the jazz-inflected music on his own Halpern Sounds label. Halpern, an author, lecturer, and recognized pioneer in the field of sound health, plays keyboard, sax, flute, trumpet, and guitar and has released seven albums and four cassettes so far. His first release, *Spectrum Suite*, is based on experimentation with the theories developed by Pythagoras and Sir Isaac Newton that the seven tones of an octave correspond to the seven colors and the body's seven energy centers. The music is based more on tonalities than on harmonic resolutions and the rhythmic stimulus is basically eliminated, because, as Halpern puts it, "when you are anticipating the future, you are no longer in the present." *Spectrum Suite* has sold around 50,000 copies so far, even though its distribution is limited primarily to bookstores, health-food stores and mail order. Halpern's other projects include *Zodiac Suite*, *Starborn Suite*, *Eastern Peace*, and *Ancient Echoes* (comprising what Halpern calls the anti-frantic alternative series) and *Rain Ragas*, *Steven Halpern in Concert*, *Peruvian Whistling Vessels*, and *Steven Halpern Anthology: Volume 1* (comprising the trans-cultural series). For more information write Halpern Sounds, PO Box 720, Palo Alto, CA 94302.

### CHARLES MINGUS TRIBUTE

There are a number of ways the Tribute to Charles Mingus at the Village Gate on April 30 could have failed. It could have been maudlin, random, irrelevant or forgetful. It could have lacked danger and it could have failed to raise significant funds for the Mingus Foundation and scholarship fund. As it turned out, it was random enough to remind us of Mingus' absence, and enough of a real celebration to make the evening a tribute to the man and his music. The music took place in two rooms, upstairs and down, so it was impossible to catch it all. Downstairs, things began with a shambling introduction and good poem by Allen Ginsberg. Then Ted Curson, with a rhythm section of John Hicks, Walter Booker and Jimmy Cobb, peeked edgily around the corner at the prospects of the evening, and in the end was joined by altoist John Handy. If Handy's recent records have raised any doubts about him, the fluency and fire of his playing with Curson would go a long way towards dispelling them. Stan Getz followed with a fine set with his current band, honors going to Getz and his drummer Victor Jones. So far the evening had almost nothing to do with Mingus. Very little had been said about him, and we were reminded that virtually no bands keep Mingus compositions in their books.

Vocalist Johnny Hartman sang a lustrous set backed by Larry Willis, Booker and Connie Kay. The first triumph of the evening followed, Paul Jeffrey's enormous and excellent big band of Rutgers students, featuring Dizzy Gillespie in legendary form on "Be Bop." The titanic note had been sounded: this had something to do with Mingus, this had something of the stature of the man. The second show featured The Mingus Dynasty, the alumni band that will begin a world tour in June, featuring Ted Curson, John Handy, Bill Saxton, Jimmy Knepper, Don Pullen, Danny Richmond, and Charlie Haden in the bass chair. It would be hard to find a bassist less like Mingus than Haden, and his groundswell approach to the instrument reminded us how jabbing and aggressive Mingus' attack was. The opening "Boogie Stop Shuffle" lacked drive, though not because of Haden; lacked Mingus shouting chords to the piano player, though Knepper was wonderful; but the version of "Good Bye Pork Pie Hat" that followed was eerie enough to raise the hair on the back of your neck. I've never hear the head sound as beautiful, and Ted Curson's extraordinary trumpet solo raised the music to a pitch that no one could have expected. People were looking around the house; Mingus was there. The band then went bravely and expertly through the long and difficult "Sue's Changes." The Mingus Dynasty hasn't completely coalesced yet, but it will, and I expect its tour to be an important one, a once-only chance to hear some of the greatest music of our time before it takes one step further into the past.

Something major having been enacted by the Mingus Dynasty, the ceremony now became one of rebirth, with the very young Charnett Moffett duetting with Percy Heath on bass. Moffett sounded like Mingus and played Heath to a standstill. He was joined by his brothers Codaryl on drums and Charles Jr. on tenor, and while they played like champions a fistfight broke out. By now the evening had hit its stride and things happened as if foreordained. It ended at four in the morning, when Jeffrey's huge band regained the stage and kicked into "Better Get It In Your Soul." Jeffrey conducted superbly, cueing in the backup riffs at precisely the right time with precisely the right spirit. The Moffetts came up and joined in, and tenor hero Ricky Ford from his gig at the Tin Palace put the crest on the wave of celebration. The audience joined in and clapped two-three, the walls jumped up and down and the congregation was saved. Mingus would have approved.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

# Soul

## Shy Guy Falsettos

Using the voice of a woman, they are a complex and paradoxical breed with a message of their own.

By Mike Freedburg

The Bee Gees' insanely screechy vocals rubbed me the wrong way, but that was my mistake: it turns out that their success has saved male falsetto from the graveyard of forms that's already claimed other black music styles of the soul and R&B past. When you consider the serious uses to which falsetto is put in black church music, it is almost sacrilegious to thank the Bee Gees, but I think we must. How has this happened?

First of all, you have to accept the idea that disco times are female times; that to disco people the feminine mystique appears closer to ultimate freedom and fancy than male macho; that compared to the frictionless abandon of Gloria Gaynor, Donna Summer, Loleatta Holloway and others, the male voice sounds clumsy and funky. So what did the Bee Gees do? They concealed their clumsy and funky maleness inside a sequined sheath of falsetto that may have sounded like Monty Python's lumberjack in drag, but had a musical point to make: if the feminine was the right sound and sensibility for disco times, here were voices an octave or two higher and screechier than what genetic females could or *would* sing. And I think it has worked just that way. Audiences trained by the Bee Gees' musical spoofery were ready for Sylvester, whose falsetto is nearly as ludicrous, albeit far more authentic, and who comes on stage wearing a drag even Monty Python's lumberjack would be afraid to wear in public. You hear Sylvester sing, in falsetto, "You Make Me Feel Mighty Real" and perhaps you see him dressed this way, and you know you're supposed to smirk, 'this is real?' It was just like that hearing the Bee Gees sing "you can tell by the way I walk that I'm a woman's man". 'Oh yeah? From those voices I couldn't tell....'

Peabo Bryson is nothing like this. In his two recent albums *Reach For The Sky* and *Crossroads* (both on Capitol) you hear male falsetto used the way it was established by black sanctified church and then soul music. Though Johnny Pate's arrangements are so elegant that, except for "I'm So Into You" (on *Crossroads*), they call attention to the unspecific nature of Bryson's lyrics and his sometimes tortuous melisma, you can hear in Bryson's tone both the uncluttered shyness of Smokey

Peabo Bryson and Sylvester are two very different members of soul's elusive, enchantingly tragic falsettoists.

Robinson and Donny Hathaway's tenors, and the forced and desperate tenor sound of baritone Eddie Levert. He sounds like little boy blue. Looks that way too; with his fuzzy goatee and his peachy cheeks, he looks newly washed and baby young and is slender, all eyes and arms and other good things for some lady's hand and lips to caress. You look at Bryson on the back cover of *Crossroads* and you think how dangerous Teddy Pendergrass looks in comparison; then you recall Muddy Waters singing "I Can't Be Satisfied" wherein he threatens he'll pistol-whip his woman dead, and you wonder if Bryson is a man at all. In the Muddy and Teddy sense, he isn't. Nothing threatening about a man who sings like one of the Vienna Boys Choir and says that when he's "into you he doesn't know what to do". A man who sounds like this needs *help*, you think.

Which is exactly what he wants: female help. And so the female arm, the lips, perhaps the entire body, is proffered.

I suppose you could say the male falsetto is a ruse, a dirty trick to play on an unsuspecting female audience, but it has this advantage over macho candor: at least on the way to bed, the male falsettoist has reached for the sky, touched God, and sprinkled his divinity over love like a shower to raise some flowers. And that is precisely what male falsetto was written down to do in the sanctified churches where preachers used it to get closer to God than ground level normally allowed.

The sanctified preacher also had a feminine mystique to fight: the great women gospel singers. Like the Bee Gees, but with far more serious intent, he took on certain attributes of femaleness (there is a Donnie Elbert album with liner notes in which he specifically credited his gospel-singing mother's voice for where he got that ringing, super-high falsetto of his; and which you can hear almost identically on Leo Sayer's recent hits). This was not just to out-female the females: the preacher said to his congregation, 'my love for God is like a woman's love for her man.' And his falsetto demonstrated it.

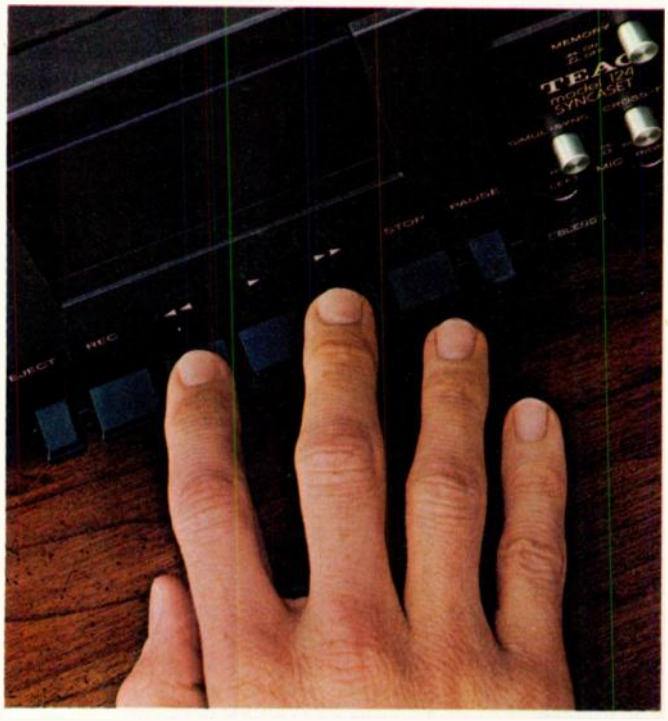
To prove my point: in Al Green's *Truth 'n Time*, an album as little understood as it was often written about, Green sang two expressly female songs: Dionne Warwick's "Say A Little Prayer" and Lulu's "To Sir With Love". Why? To give some credence to the rumors that his sexual preferences are, ah, different? Hardly. Green is both a master falsettoist and a working preacher at a suburban Memphis, Tennessee church whose congregation is ninety per cent female. So when he sang "every morning I wake up, before I put on my makeup, I say a little prayer..." he was simply illustrating for his congregation in their manner.

In soul music this equation was turned around in somewhat the same way as Green has done. The soul man submitted himself to his female fans, either getting on his knees and begging, as Bobby Bland did in "Turn On Your Love Light" or praying to them as Otis Redding did in "My Lover's Prayer". For this symbolic act of homage the falsetto voice was perfect. It was a feminine, submitting sound that conveyed shyness instead of muscles. If the soul falsettoist had Otis Redding's gifts as an actor, he could be lonely, innocent, tender, and forthcoming at the same time he was fearful.

Women who were treated thus by

*continued on page 68*

# EVERY MUSICIAN SHOULD PLAY THIS KEYBOARD.

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EBET ROBERTS

"To me it is like desperation to make music. It's like life and death."
—Graham Parker

Emotional catharsis is at the heart of most great rock 'n' roll. As in the urban blues tradition that forms its roots, rock attempts to exorcise depression, melancholy and neurosis. As our life-styles accelerate, so must our music keep pace in dealing with the modern traumas which afflict us. Now it is no longer just sexual frustration which obsesses our latter-day bluesmen—we've gone beyond "I can't get no satisfaction"—into relating, understanding, communicating. What was once a music celebrating the primal functions of the body now attempts to reconcile the head with the heart in a mature fusion.

The English have a history of remanticizing the American blues experience, from the Stones' bald-faced copping of Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson riffs to the Clash having Bo Diddley open for them on their recent tour. Graham Parker, the diminuitive, wiry, ex-petrol pumper from Surrey, England, and his expert band, the Rumour, manage to update this tradition and, in so doing, extend the boundaries of rock 'n' roll to include a whole new generation. One may argue that Parker is yet another step removed from the "Primary Source"—his major musical influences being the Rolling Stones, Motown and Stax/Volt rather than anything more genuine, but what's wrong with that? Preceding the white, working class punk movement by less than a year, Parker's blue-collar ire and wrath served as a refreshing reaction to the doldrums of most mid-seventies corporate rock.

Before punk rock, there was pub-rock, an attempt by a handful of English musicians to bring rock 'n' roll down to earth and out of the stadium-sized arenas which bloated the one-to-one experience beyond recognition. Graham Parker literally emerged from nowhere with a pile of songs under his arm and was subsequently matched up with the already existing Rumour by Dave Robinson, now head of Stiff Records. The Rumour was made up of five relatively grizzled veterans of the early-'70's pub circuit, graduates of bands like Brinsley Schwarz and Ducks Deluxe. The band—especially guitarists Brinsley Schwarz and Martin Belmont and keyboardist Bob Andrews—provided Parker with inspired ensemble backing, and their joyous camaraderie allowed them to get tighter still as time went on.

Parker and the Rumour's debut effort, *Howlin' Wind,* received wide-spread critical praise upon its release in early 1976. Many compared the group to Dylan fronting the Band, and, indeed, Parker's fury and bile had a lot to do with Dylan's 1974 *Before the Flood* tour with the Band. Overall, though, the album proved to be a mixed bag, combining light-hearted, good-timey rockers like "Back To Schooldays" and "Lady Doctor" with more intense, personal confessions like the title track and the defiant "Don't Ask Me Questions", Parker's Job-like challenge to God's omnipotence which has become a staple of his live show. A Stax/Volt-type brass section punctuated the solid thrust of the album, which quickly vanished from the shelves, sadly ignored by record buyers.

*Heat Treatment* followed on the heels of *Howlin' Wind,* with Parker upping the stakes, turning on the juice. "Pourin' It All Out" is Parker at his peak, with pure energy fueling emotional catharsis. The joint-loosening music frees the mind as it liberates the body and Parker turns himself inside out to wear his soul on his sleeve. "Fool's Gold" recognizes the transience of pursuing pleasure at any cost, and its celebratory edge is consistently undercut with an overriding sense of betrayal and doom.

Parker's third Mercury LP, *Stick To Me,* continued to mine this vein of emotional release. "I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down" is about stripping one's ego away, dropping pretenses and gettin' down. It is a white man's interpretation of the blues in that it is a fatal, self-conscious step removed, and don't think Parker is not aware of it. One one hand too self-aware to be natural, Parker attempts his return to the roots in the only way he knows how—with speed, energy, voice, love and compassion. He is successful with this method on "Thunder and Rain," where he's latched on to the perfect physical metaphor to describe his torment, but he flops miserably on the patronizing "Heat In Harlem," an embarrassingly naive idealization of the American black. Needless to say, neither *Howlin' Wind, Heat Treatment, Stick To Me* nor a subsequently released double-live LP did anything on the market and Parker's career had reached a standstill when he left Mercury for Arista early this year.

Parker celebrated his release from Mercury's incompetence with the scathing "Mercury Poisoning," his most vituperative, searing statement yet, filled with righteous, existential anger that mirrored the singer's frustrating predicament. "I'm the best-kept secret in the west," boasted Parker,

With the release of *Squeezing Out Sparks* on Arista and his current cross-country American jaunt, Parker has finally begun to consolidate his artistic and commercial gains. *Sparks* is the most consistent and mature Parker album ever; an attempt to deal, in straight-ahead, unembellished rock 'n' roll terms, with the increasing dislocation of modern life—the fact that words and feelings often have little to do with each other. "Discovering Japan," sums up the concerns of *SOS,* dealing with the difficulties of inter-personal communication and its effect on sexuality, fusing images in a non-stop roller-coaster ride of frozen-frame visions.

*"Her heart is nearly breaking*
*The earth is nearly quaking...*
*There's nothing to hold on to*
*When gravity betrays you*
*And every kiss enslaves you*
*Discovering Japan."*

*continued on page 67*

## Graham Parker's Liberation

After years of simmering, he's released his most mature and consistent album yet full of emotionally-laden rock'n'roll.

**Rock**

By Roy Trakin

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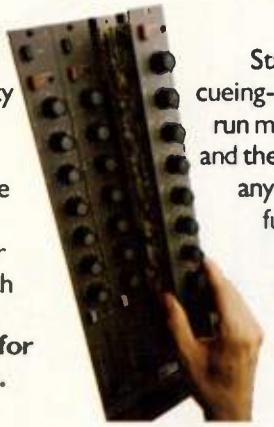

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Bobby Caldwell and Ray Parker Jr. and Raydio are new entries to the pop charts with a non-disco sound.

Disco's incredible rise to power in pop music often tends to overshadow its roots in rhythm and blues. Dancing is a long-standing and noble American tradition, and it's good to remember that before there was disco, folks just danced to whatever they liked. These days, though, it's the rare R&B single that makes it to the top of the soul charts without leaning totally on disco's standardized, Neanderthal rhythm scheme. And it's the even rarer non-disco single that breaks through to the pop charts, of what Billboard Magazine calls the "Hot 100". Recently, two fairly new artists have done just that: Ray Parker, Jr., with his band Raydio, and Bobby Caldwell. Expanding on basic funk and soul ballad idioms rooted in classic rhythm and blues, these singer-songwriter-musicians have developed hook-laden melodic styles that never lose the funk-swing union that's the core of all great dance music. Their stylistic predecessors are Earth, Wind and Fire, Stevie Wonder, and Sly Stone—early 70's funk—but their goal now is to reach a broad cross-cultural audience with a direct pop approach, and in the process they're making AM radio a better place to be.

Last year "Jack and Jill" was the hit debut single for Raydio. The song, based loosely on the chord changes from Sly Stone's "Stand", firmly established the group's stance: a fusion of bedrock soul styles played in the context of a tightly-knit band sound. Leader Ray Parker is a session guitarist, originally from Detroit, who got his recording start at Detroit's Holland-Dozier-Holland Studios and the Invictus/Hot Wax label, playing on such tunes as Freda Payne's "Band of Gold" and "Give Me Just a Little More Time" by the Chairmen of the Board. While still in his teens, he played on Stevie Wonder's *Talking Book* and *Innervisions* albums, then moved to L.A. to do studio work. He played guitar for a wide range of musicians and producers, including Candi Staton, Herbie Hancock, Barry White and Seals and Crofts. When the Raydio single and album took off last year, Parker concentrated his energies on the band.

His background in Detroit R&B comes across in every aspect of Parker's playing, writing and production. Like fellow Detroit guitarists Earl Klugh, he knows the gospel-based Motown truths for creating great mass-appeal pop-soul: a) less is more, and b) beauty exists in the simple and familiar. Parker's guitar lines and fills are pretty without being saccharine, and in a song like "More Than One Way To Love a Woman" from *Rock On,* he can create a chordal texture that not only holds the song together, but sticks in this listener's ears like glue. Raydio is not so much a showcase for Parker's solo chops—which are mainfold—as it is an effort to develop a fresh new hybrid of sounds with the potential to actually influence the public ear. The band's influences are always close to the surface, but what Raydio does with these is the key to its sound. "When You're In Need of Love" is very much in the Funkadelic bass-drums mold, but adds an understated elegance to this style. "Honey I'm a Star" is a contemporary melding of middle-period Sly with traditional Motown harmonies, featuring a subdominant minor chord change that has graced such great songs as the Spinners' "Could It Be I'm Falling in Love." The sum of these parts and influences in Raydio is a very original and deceptively spare groove, and the first single off *Rock On,* "You Can't Change That," signals this band's depth. The song's verse proclaims with funky panache that "You may change a dollar bill, but let me tell you one thing/You won't change the way I feel," sung over an artfully chunky rhythm track. The chorus ultimately fades out on the repeated chorus, "You're the only one I love, and you can't change that." This is the kind of groove song that harkens back in spirit to the glory days of Motown and Philadelphia soul. It comes on the car radio when you're driving and literally graces the airwaves with genuine good feelings, and that's about the highest aspiration any pop tune can have.

Bobby Caldwell's recent success, coming on as a virtual unknown, can be traced to another dwindling commodity in today's pop market: he is a songwriter determined to seriously explore the possibilities of the modern soul ballad. The single "What You Won't Do For Love" became a top 10 hit this year. It's a gently chugging minor-keyed ballad, in a rhythmic vein similar to EWF's "That's The Way of The World." Caldwell has a pleasing, emotional tenor. He's obviously been influenced by Stevie Wonder's voice, and yet never strains to imitate anyone. This is especially gratifying, since Caldwell is white and shows an equal stylistic affection for Frank Sinatra's phrasing. The song is a laid-back account of the singer's obsession with his lover. The track fades on the line, "In my world, only you make me do for love, what I would not do," as a haunting wash of Fender Rhodes and strings gives way to punctuating, staccato horn chart. The lyrics are unabashedly romantic, to be sure, but coupled with the tune's understated polish, they're the kind of words which seem to apply to anyone's life at one time or another.

And after listening to Caldwell's entire album, I'd say his obvious trump card is a musical hipness that lays to waste Barry Manilow's cluttered tracks. Caldwell's background includes growing up in the Miami area, where as a teenager he played in groups with Jaco Pastorius, Weather Report's able bassist. Caldwell first learned to arrange music working on horror film scores (*I Was A Teenage Ghoul*) and television scores (*The New Mickey Mouse Club*).

*continued on page 67*

## New Roots

Two bright exceptions to the new AM rule that funk and soul tunes need a disco beat.

By Cris Cioe

# Pop

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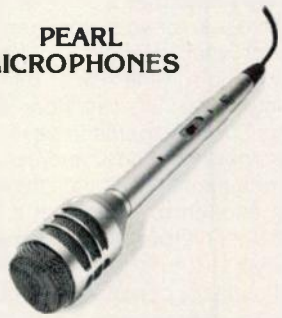

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John Stewart's songs have always been wonderful, strange and purely his own, but can a man that talented be ignored so long without something crumbling?

When John Stewart joined the Kingston Trio, replacing Dave Guard in the early '60's, they were a bunch of best selling lame ducks who sang with the earnest heartiness of Austrian ski instructors. Stewart's deep craggy voice brought a sense of dignity and genuine authenticity to the group; in retrospect it seems as if he almost tried to turn it into an early version of The Band, assimilating native American ballads and folk hymns into a private, rich mine of Americana. It was a noble if unlikely dream, especially since the Kingston Trio was more or less folk music's answer to the Dave Clark Five (never mind who came first; history is circular, and answers almost always precede their own questions). Stewart obviously didn't fit in with Nick Reynolds and Bob Shane....which meant that they often had to either fit around him or leave him alone. When they didn't, there was trouble; their singing behind him is reminiscent of the Crickets behind Buddy Holly: there's Holly, this strange and wild kid with his wonderful phrasing, fighting his way through his lyrics with reckless abandon and all the world hanging in the balance, and there are the Crickets, repeating words and phrases behind him with all the enthusiasm of sleepwalkers confronting a toaster.

The Trio disappeared in the late '60's, at a time when no one even noticed their disappearance, and Stewart, after a quiet false start, began making albums that were fairly bursting with enthusiasm and intelligence. The songs were sharply drawn stories, American stories, drawn with more than a slight nod to James Agee, Sherwood Anderson and Ring Lardner, sketched with much of the same tunefulness and irony as Randy Newman's early songs, though without Newman's deflating sarcasm. Listen:

*Sycamores grow in the long planted rows*
*Out there to break the April wind.*
*Still the dust it always blows*
*In our eyes and in our clothes*
*And it's in our very souls*
*Like this song about me and Jim.*
*from* Oldest Living Son © *1970*

*I never had a job*
*Where the boss wouldn't steal*
*The bass drum from his own brass band.*
*Don't you think I know*
*That we're both growing old*
*I can tell by the veins in your hands.*
*from* Cheyenne © *1972*

The songs were wonderful, strange, and purely his own, but the records sold badly when they sold at all, and Stewart kept changing record labels...from Capitol to Warner Bros. to RCA and finally to RSO, his current label. But along the way something died; you can't ignore a man that talented that long without something crumbling.

One of the dangers of working within a purely popular medium (ie, rock 'n' roll, movies, tv) is that you HAVE to be popular. A poet, a novelist or a sculptor can blossom in obscurity, the vision behind the work being large enough and strong enough to sustain the artist through years of inattention. But songs are, by their nature, more transient, more ephemeral; they capture a particular moment in time, a certain slant of light, and if no one is there to see it, it's gone forever.

*When it first comes*
*It's all bugles and drums*
*And then when it goes*
*It just goes.*
*from* Red Hair © *1978*

A songwriter desperately needs to find an audience while he's still growing, not only to give him energy and focus but to get his older songs out from under his feet. By now, Leonard Cohen may have forgotten that he ever wrote "Suzanne"; it's passed through so many hands that it's no longer his. He and the song may pass each other in the hall now and then and nod politely to each other, but it has a life of its own, independent of its author's. But unknown and unheard songs can't take care of themselves, they pull at your pant-legs crying for attention, demanding to be re-sung or rewritten until you either baby them, forget about them, or find an audience (the best baby-sitter of all).

An audience that grows along with you is the best in the world (ask the Beatles). Without that audience, there's nothing to grow toward, there's perpetual doubt and loss of intuition; and if you manage to garner a cult following (who will love you for your weakness as much as for your strength, confusing you totally), you run the risk of refining yourself into a corner, like poor Tom Waits. John Stewart seems to be in one of those corners right now, and despite my better judgment, I can't help thinking he's wiley enough to slip out of it and back onto the highways he seems to know so well.

Stewart's last consistently good record of new material was *Cannons In The Rain,* released by RCA in 1973. Since then he's recorded an interesting live set (*The Phoenix Concerts,* RCA); *Wingless Angels* (RCA), an album so uninspired and so hollow that it looks like it was clearly designed to get him out of his contract; *Fire In The Wind*, his first album for RSO (*Wingless Angels* obviously worked—RCA dropped him like a hot potato), was a definite improvement; and now *Bombs Away Dream Babies*, an energetic, cleanly-produced, eminently likeable bit of fluff.

The album rolls along smoothly, and Stewart's singing is good, but what's missing are the songs.The innate power and dignity of his voice fairly beg for songs that he can get his teeth into, and most of these are unfinished, undeveloped, unbaked. Gone is the particularity of the images; in his earlier songs, a few quick lines or strokes of his pencil left you no doubt as to who he was talking about: you could see the knuckles on their hands and the sweat

*continued on page 67*

## A Songwriter's Trials

The danger of working in a purely popular medium like songwriting is that you HAVE to be popular.

By Brian Cullman

# Edges

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# Buying on Specs

The pain of buying can be eased if you understand the specs. This month pre-amps and power amps are de-mystified.

By Terry Shea

It's unfortunate many music lovers, eager to enjoy their passion at home, find putting together a hi fi system a frustrating experience.

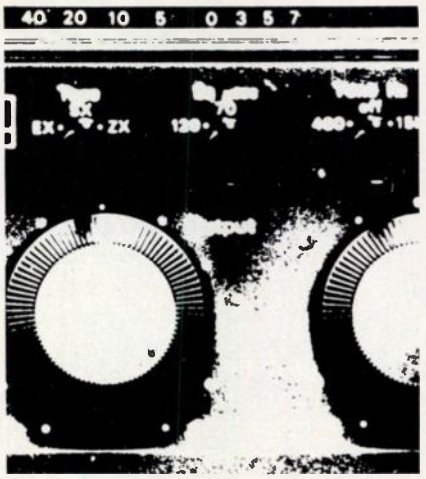
A very fine hi fi system can be purchased at a reasonable price by someone who possesses not one bit of technical knowledge. All it takes is a visit to a reputable hi fi specialist. The problem is finding one. Too often the salesman is concerned with showing off his technical vocabulary, quoting a price and sending the customer on his way.

Much of the fear people have about buying hi fi can also be blamed on manufacturers' advertising which has so long focused on technical specifications. Such simple-minded ads convince consumers that if they haven't mastered the jargon, they can't dare attempt to buy the stuff. That simply is not the case. However, it is always best to face reality and there's no denying that the pain of buying hi fi can be eased if armed with an understanding of the basic specifications upon entering a hi fi shop.

My only fear is that such an explanation may serve to further reinforce the impression that a good component can be detected simply by reading the manufacturer's spec sheet. It can't. There will always be trade-offs and two units with identical specs certainly will not sound the same. Still, understanding the basic specs helps, if only to serve as a starting point from which to criticize them later.

The handiest way to present audio specifications is to cover each component, highlighting the most important specs for each. Some specs, frequency response or signal-to-noise ratio for example, are defined the same regardless of the components under consideration. But often what could be considered good frequency response for one component is only fair for another. I'll try to make that all clear.

The receiver, the heart of most low and mid-priced systems, is really a combination of three components — a preamplifier, power amplifier and tuner. Sophisticated systems often consist of all three components as separate units or the preamplifier and power amp can be combined into a single component called an integrated amplifier. Whatever the physical form, the basic specifications for each remain the same.




The preamplifier consists of two parts — first there is a circuit which amplifies the very small signals generated by the cartridge; the second is the control section which takes the signal from the program source and allows the user to tailor it to his taste. This section includes the volume control, tone controls, etc.

When reading the specification sheet for a preamplifier or the preamp section of a receiver, one spec encountered is phono input sensitivity. This is not an indication of quality, but merely helps you choose a cartridge that will work properly with the preamp (or receiver). It tells you how much signal must be fed into the phono inputs on the preamplifier to extract full power output from the amplifier being used, whether separate, integrated or part of a receiver. Given in millivolts, it usually ranges from one to five. If, for example, phono input sensitivity is given as three millivolts, a phono cartridge that delivers only 1.5 shouldn't be considered because it would short-change you in terms of power derived from the amplifier.

Of course, you can go too far the other way. Maximum phono input voltage, or phono overload voltage, is also stated in millivolts and it describes the greatest signal level the preamp phono inputs can accept without creating distortion. To tell just how high that figure should be, you need to check the nominal phono input sensitivity, another spec usually given. In a good preamp or preamp section, phono overload should be rated at least 10 to 15 times the nominal phono input sensitivity. The higher, the better.

Signal-to-noise ratio is another basic specification that is both important and easy to understand. It describes the amount of hum or noise present.

What the signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio tells you is the difference, in decibels (dB), between the signal and noise or hum. The figure is referred to a specific input level. So, a -62 dB S/N ratio referred to a 1.5 millivolt input sensitivity means that the hum and noise would be 62 dB lower than the sound produced by a 1.5 millivolt input signal from the cartridge. It's important to note that different manufacturers will reference the S/N ratio to different input sensitivities. That makes it tough to compare products. But assuming two units are rated at the same reference level, the higher the S/N ratio, the better. A figure of 60 dB or better is common and quite good.

Nobody promised specs would be clear cut, as just seen, and to blur things a bit more, you are likely to find some specification sheets listing S/N ratio that has been "weighted", sometimes designated as using an IHF-A Weighting network. This is a way of compensating for the fact that our ears are less sensitive to low frequency sounds than mid and high frequency sounds. That means low frequency hum won't bother us as much as mid or high frequency hum, so we can tolerate a "worse" S/N ratio at lower frequencies. A weighted figure takes into account the subjective effect of noise, giving less weight to those frequencies which are less bothersome and emphasizing those to which we are more sensitive. The result is a somewhat higher figure. The problem is that there is no way to compare such figures with unweighted specs, making product comparisons difficult.

In power amplifier specifications we come to what is probably the most often heard, and over-emphasized, specification — power output. Expressed in watts, this is often considered the most important item to consider when purchasing an amp or receiver. That's hardly the case. Fortunately, the power race among receiver manufacturers, responsible in large part for brainwashing the public into believing it needs high powered gear, has eased somewhat. Naturally, there are cases where a substantial amount of power would be needed — when connecting

several pairs of loudspeakers, for instance — but I really don't think anybody needs a receiver rated at 250 watts per channel.

Power output is specified as continuous watts per channel (or RMS power), over a certain bandwidth (range of frequencies), with a stated amount of distortion, and at a stated impedance given in ohms (determined by the loudspeakers used). This method is mandated by the Federal Trade Commission. It would be rare, given you are considering brand name, high fidelity components, that power output would be stated any other way. But should you encounter terms such as "music power", "peak power" or "instantaneous peak power", tell the salesman to show you something from a reputable manufacturer.

Following FTC rules, then, a sample power rating for an amplifier or receiver might be given as 35 watts per channel, minimum RMS at 8 ohms, both channels driven from 20-20,000 Hz. with no more than 0.02% THD (total harmonic distortion). What it means is that the amplifier delivers 35 watts per channel, with both channels operating into an 8 ohm load (the rating of the loudspeakers used when rating the amp). Also that the amp continues to deliver 35 watts per channel from a low of 20Hz up to 20,000 Hz and that total harmonic distortion never exceeds 0.02% at any power output level up to and including the maximum output stated (35 watts).

If you've been shopping for a receiver or amplifier recently or merely reading the advertisements, you've seen quite a bit of boasting about low total harmonic distortion (THD) figures. Much of it is simply marketing hoopla. Nobody can hear 0.009% THD, nor 0.01% or even 0.1%. The point is, there are very few units on the market with unacceptable levels of THD. There are even some companies now claiming that blindly pursuing ever lower levels of THD lead to new kinds of distortion which have a greater effect on just how a unit sounds. They have a point. But first let's look at what harmonic distortion is.

When a musical instrument produces a sound, it produces overtones. This is what enables us to differentiate one instrument from another. A hi fi component reproduces, however, not only those overtones or harmonics produced by the instrument or singer, but also some not in the original signal. For example, imagine an amplifier reproducing an 800Hz tone (fairly low). In reproducing that tone, the amp might also reproduce a smaller amount of a 1600Hz signal, the second harmonic of 800Hz. In reproducing both, the resulting output would contain a large amount of harmonic distortion. we can tolerate a certain amount of such distortion, after all it is related to the music being reproduced. But too much degrades the signal. A specific figure for THD, like 0.02%, means that is the amount of distortion present in the total sound heard. So you see, 0.02 is small figure.

Another form of distortion often encountered on spec sheets is intermodulation, or IM, distortion. This, too, is given as a percentage of total sound at the amplifier's rated output (unless otherwise stated). It's a common problem when reproducing complicated sounds, like music, which span a wide frequency range. What happens is that sometimes amounts of other frequencies not present in the music are also reproduced, caused by the sum of or difference between the frequencies being reproduced. For example, an amplifier may be reproducing both an 80Hz tone and a 5000Hz tone. The amp may also reproduce small amounts of information at 4940Hz and 5080Hz. These tones are unrelated to the fundamental desired tones. They don't belong there and should they represent too much of the total sound, you have distortion. So, just as with THD, the lower amount present, the better. Generally, any high quality amp or receiver will have less than 0.5% IM distortion.

Of course, even if we agree that a few of us can hear all these low levels of distortion touted by manufacturers, there's no doubt some amplifiers and receivers sound better than others. So there must be other forms of distortion taking place. One recently discovered type is called transient intermodulation distortion (TIM). Since its discovery it's been hailed by some as the audio equivalent of King Arthur's discovery of the Holy Grail. Others belittle its importance. As always, the truth lies somewhere between the two extremes, but it does seem that low TIM helps amplifiers sound more "musical".

The problem is no general agreement has been reached in the audio industry for quantifying this type of distortion. Some manufacturers publish it as a per cent of total sound. But a more commonly seen means is to quote a figure for slew rate, expressed in volts per microsecond. But before explaining that, let's look at just what is meant by TIM.

Most amplifiers (and receivers) use what is called negative feedback to reduce traditional forms of distortion. What this circuit does is feed some of the output signal out of phase back to the input stage. Basically, whatever distortion that's been generated in the amplifier stages is also fed back out of phase with the input signal. This "negative" distortion sent back is added to the positive distortion created in the amplifier and the two cancel each other out. Thus a certain degree of distortion is eliminated.

The problem comes in realizing that when feeding a complicated very fast musical pulse through an amplifier, the fed back pulse, meant to cancel out distortion may arrive at the input too late. The input signal pulse will have already come and gone. The problem is all the worse because with the vast amount of feedback usually used now missing, which not only cancelled distortion but also reduced somewhat the amplification of the signal, the input signal is much larger and it can overload the amplifier, creating distortion. This distortion is transient intermodulation distortion.

There are two ways to remedy the problem. One is to reduce the amount of negative feedback used in the amplifier in the first place. So even if the fed back signal arrived too late, the undiminished signal would not be so great as to drive the amplifier to as much distortion. Better transistors have recently been developed to help solve that problem so not as much negative feedback is required to bring down the levels of THD and IM distortion. Besides that, however, if transistors could be developed that were "faster", the offending time delay could be reduced and also distortion. Technology marches on and such transistors are now in use. Manufacturers using them are those touting low levels of TIM and high slew rates.

Slew rate expresses how many volts of change in signal level the circuit can handle in one microsecond. Given in volts per microsecond, generally the higher the number, the better. It often ranges from about 80 volts per microsecond to as high as 200. Rise time is another indication of TIM. This is the number of microseconds it takes for the edge of square wave, of known frequency, to reach 90 per cent of its peak amplitude when passed through a given circuit. The smaller the number, the better.

One last item to note in amplifier specifications is frequency response, something you'll encounter with practically every hi fi component. Musical information ranges from low frequencies (bass) to high frequencies (treble). You obviously want to reproduce as wide a range as possible so as not to miss any of the information. The generally accepted range for hi fi is from 20Hz to 20,000Hz. The wider the better. Note, however, that it isn't enough that frequency response extend from 20Hz to 20,000Hz. We certainly don't want to purchase an amplifier that produces all these frequencies only to find that the mid frequencies will be reproduced at a much lower level than the others. Therefore, an idea of the uniformity of response over the specified range is needed. Thus, you'll find frequency response given, for example, as 20Hz to 20,000Hz +1 dB. This means that no frequency within that range will be boosted or lessened by more than 1 dB.

Next month I'll be covering things to look for in FM tuners.

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# FACES

## Eddie Jefferson

In the early morning hours of May 9, 1979, Eddie Jefferson was coming out of Baker's Keyboard Lounge in Detroit with his young compatriot of several years, altoist Richie Cole. A Lincoln Continental pulled up to the curb and a man got out and shot him four times in the chest at close range with a shotgun. The killer, later identified as a local tapdancer who was an ex-partner of Jefferson, was said to have had as his motive jealousy at Jefferson's re-bourgeoning success. Thus ended the life of the jazz singer who pioneered the setting of classic solos in original lyrics, which he infused with such humor, pathos, and gusto that they became original classics all over again.

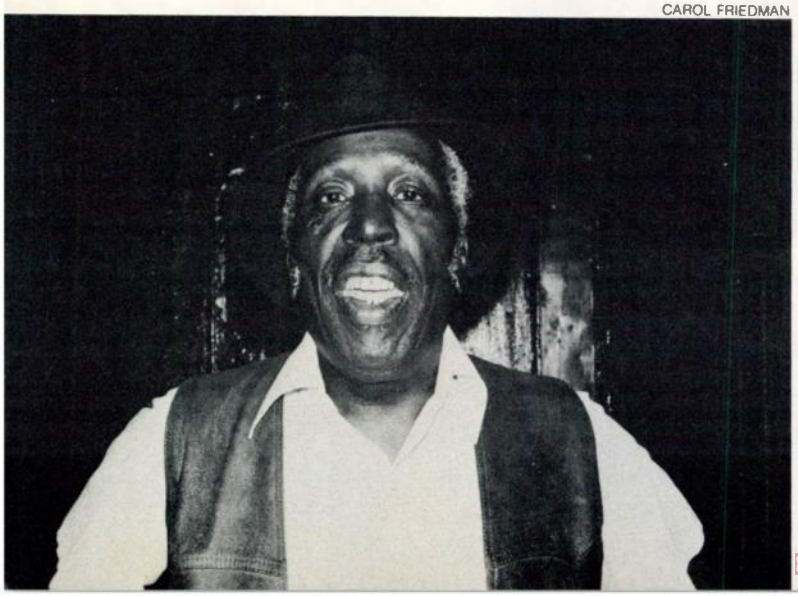
"Things Are Getting Better", the title of his first Muse album (1975), keys onto the upbeat turn of Jefferson's recent career. (His two other Muse titles, "Still on the Planet" and "The Live-liest" now seem sadly ironic.) He had been touring and recording at quite a clip over the last five years, (two on Prestige and two on Inner City are still available) often in the company of Cole. His last gig of note was at Carnegie Hall in March, sharing the bill with Sarah Vaughn, for whom he'd opened as a hoofer in her 1950 show.

Born in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania on August 3, 1918, Jefferson was raised in a show business family; before his teens he could play several instruments, and had begun his double career of singing and dancing. It was in the forties that Jefferson began putting lyrics to famous bebop solos of Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and others, thus pioneering the art of jazz vocalise and paving the way for followers like King Pleasure and Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. In the fifties and again in the late sixties Jefferson worked with saxophonist James Moody, whose version of "I'm In The Mood for Love" he vocalized, only to have King Pleasure make it a hit.

Jefferson's vocal style was a jubilant, extroverted one, full of little bluesy squeals and squawks, and mouthfuls of mashed potato; even when he was miming a Parker solo nearly note for note, the effect was that of pure Jefferson: fat tone, sassy delivery, and rich humor. Posthumous recognition of Jefferson's joyous contributions to vocal literature and style will doubtless prove thorough and revelatory, but to those who knew him as a warm and empathetic human being, perhaps no better eulogy can be found than his own paean for Charlie Parker, another late-acclaimed genius felled in his prime:

> Life was so unkind—
> 'Cause now shoulda
> been his time."
> — Fred Bouchard

CAROL FRIEDMAN



## Keith Jarrett

'Twas an odd Vanguard first set (and night) for Keith Jarrett. Why had he brought his music and group (Jan Garbarek, Jon Christensen, Palle Panielsson) back to clubs? The Rolling Thunder Rationale, said his label: to once again, directly, play for people. Strange, still. Once, who'd've bet this music would ever have "good old days"? Well, now they're here: to the point where Jarrett, looking gnome-like and rumpled, can emerge onstage with the aroma of source—or at least Woody Allen—all about him, and people get to go gulp.

But, whoops. This night, Christensen was the focal point. Nudged periodically by a wild, flailing Jarrett on timbales, (apparently enjoying the role of calculating leader, ala Miles) his intricate/steady pulse hammered overwhelmingly throughout, like Elvin Jones behind Oregon. Thus, in a near-ninety minute set, there was very little pastel lyricism—the commodity that's made Jarrett a popular musician (and my delight). Instead, Garbarek, no less a romantic, functioned as a "free" player. To me, he sounded aimless. And Jarrett, moaning and knee-bending more than his minimal, conservative solos seemed to warrant, only hit a few gorgeously Evanesque changes. In fact, he laid out a lot. In fact but for a puckish gospel section (e.g. the other Jarrett gestalt I cherish) near set's end, I would have been real disappointed. Hmm. The final effect? I wonder what Keith had in mind, this night, switching from pianist to band leader.

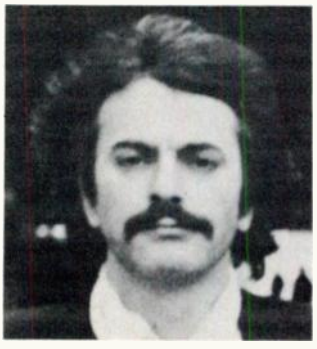
DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Maybe, as I've always had lots of company in feeling, the quartet just isn't the scene of his best work. But, when you make a triumphant return, it's your party.
— Michael Rozek

## Enrico Rava

Enrico Rava made a rare New York (and U.S.) appearance the other evening, and conclusively clarified his art. Yes, in one hour at the Public Theatre, he resolved an ambiguity that could dog any trumpeter who sounds Harmon mute-Milesish one minute, and wild and crazy the next. Enrico Rava's secret? He knows the real meaning of freedom. Which is to have the perfect latitude to sound Harmon mute-Milesish one minute, and wild and crazy the next, and be perfectly straight-faced (or not) about the whole thing. And, this sensibility gets more pungent when spread over a Rava band (here, bassist Aldo Romano and drummer Bruce Ditmas): a group of musicians joyously in control, but also grimly navigating. So, when Rava's trio moved from walkin' swing to sheer energy to a jagged step-by-step, " 'Round Midnight", they played

each element just as it "should" be played, and yet, as it "shouldn't": e.g. when Romano hit his bass strings resoundingly close to the mike, you sensed it wasn't just pure, barren texture he was after—no, more like spectacle to boot. The same thing with Ditmas, wry behind gleaming, metallic shades: was he playing a drum roll, or just randomly dropping his sticks? And when Rava



picked up his mute and used it for less than 30 seconds, what was the deal? The tension in that question is the fine line of Rava's art, and it's what separates him from anybody aimless in the avant-garde. Because, in short, it seems that Enrico Rava has very good reasons for not having any reasons at all. — Michael Rozek

## The Roches

These women have heart. They are Maggie, Terre and Suzzy Roche; three sisters offering wry, neo-bohemian visions of modern American life through women's (or sisters') eyes. In so doing they've created one of the most endearing pop statements of 1979. ("The Roches" on Warner Bros.), a singular music that both transfigures and transcends the folk idiom.

An album that receives critical genuflections such as the Roches have garnered might naturally prick your suspicions, but I think I'm safe in saying even people who hate folk music, singing and/or women will be charmed by their approach and genuinely moved by their music. At their New York showcase at the Bottom Line, some people found them to border on camp and, indeed, they are a bizarre crew. If they ever cast a female alien for Mork and Mindy it will have to be Suzzy Roche; dressed in the manner of a chic shopping bag lady, she mugs and gestures incessantly like a mad marionette. Terre Roche is the earth angel cum bouncer, her petite choirgirl looks belie a piercing sense of humor. Big sister Maggie, the group's chief composer, remains more aloof from the stage antics, content to display her remarkable baritone and deadpan the often hilarious lyrics.

Musically, the Roches' main appeal is their vocal unity. None of them have great voices, good voices perhaps, but they achieve a harmonious, almost conversational unison that is truly remarkable causing their harmonies to tremble and shimmer tangibly in the air, a trait that must have something to do with genetics as it's a rare quality found most often in siblings. Robert Fripp's "audio verite" production on their album manages to capture quality perfectly—whatever he didn't do sure sounds great. There are lots of little touches that amplify the vocal nuances without cluttering up the fragile quality of the music such as the calliope effects on the female rights of passage song "Pretty and High" and the way he makes Terre's voice come out of a tunnel when she sings "I work at the circus/and I sleep with the clowns." On "Hammond Song," the album masterpiece, a synthesizer shades the organ-like vocals and Fripp's succinct guitar fills add perfectly to the emotional swell. It's theme, and that of "Runs in the Family", concerns sisters' instincts for freedom, the family tradition of craziness ("we went so far out there/everybody got scared"), the bittersweet reproachfulness between generations ("why don't you face the fact/you old upstart/we fall apart"), and the need to hold on to family ("tell me I'm o.k."). These are songs by and for real women, with a deep insight and humor that cuts across gender. The Roches are naive, nostalgic, childlike and wise. And very good at it. — Chip Stern

## Sun Ra

Sun Ra and his Inter-Galactic Myth-Science Arkestra are nothing if not dramatic. The band precedes him on stage playing a wiry, driving sound highlighted by oboe, saxophone and congoes. The scene is dimly lit, three women dancers writhe and swoop across the stage as dry ice hovers around the performers feet. Sun Ra himself eventually rises onto the stage draped in a shimmering, flowing robe. He acknowledges the audience, then camps his large form at the keyboard, immediately becoming the center of the show.

The man can play. He's been playing good jazz for a long time and though his "outerspace communicator" routine is more recent, it's been going on a lot longer than the Funkadelic/Bootsy camp would imagine. There can be as many as 20 performers on stage including reeds, brass, percussion, dancers and vocalists all dressed in exotic costumes ranging from space helmets to burnooses. Sun Ra sits majestically at his keyboard, sometimes tilting it forward so the audience can see his hands, other times becoming entranced, closing his eyes and rocking his head, a

STUART COHEN

huge jewel on his forehead rolling hypnotically back and forth across his brow.

The music is a combination of straight-ahead hard jazz and the intergalactic material perhaps best described by Sun Ra as "pictures of infinity...the music of the galaxies. It concerns intergalactic thought and intergalactic travel, so it is really outside the realms of the future on the turning points of the impossible." You'll have to find out more about the sound of all this in person as this sort of music can become difficult to describe. The performance dissolves rather than ends. Last seen the group was marching through the rows of the crowd chanting something about the coming of the 21st century. I think Sun Ra is probably well beyond the 21st by this time. — Stuart Cohen

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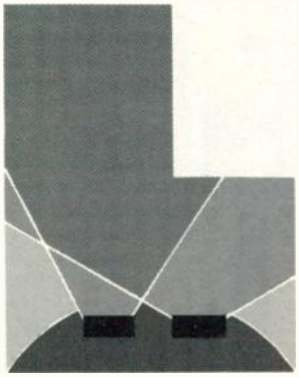

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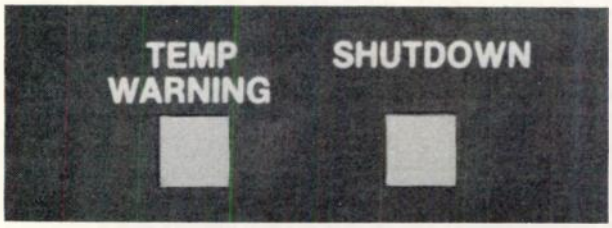


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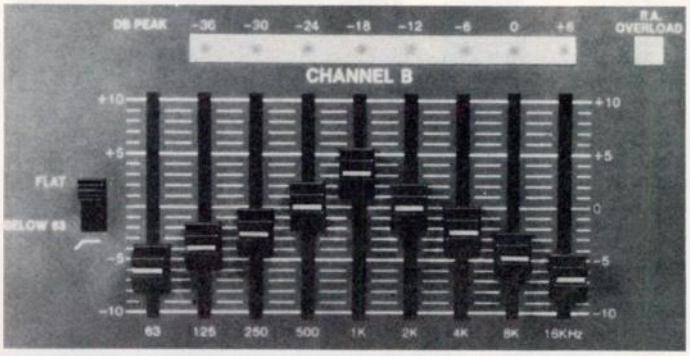


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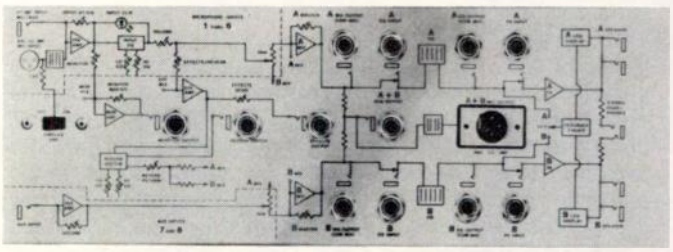

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BOBBY ROBERTS

By Vic Garbarini

## As leader of King Crimson, Fripp set standards for art-rock in the 70's by incorporating classical, jazz and avant-garde electronics into rock. Now both a producer and artist, he is creating strange and compelling music for the 80's.

As co-founder and lead guitarist of King Crimson, the first of the English "progressive rock" groups, Robert Fripp helped to extend the parameters of popular music in the early seventies by opening rock to classical, jazz, and avant-garde electronic influences. The result was called "art rock", and it became the creative cutting edge of rock for half a decade, with Crimson alumni like Greg Lake, John Wetton, and Bill Bruford becoming key figures in such commercially successful ventures as Yes, Genesis, Emerson Lake and Palmer, and U.K. Feeling that King Crimson and art rock had exhausted their creative potential, he finally disbanded the group in 1974. Fripp then began a 3 year period of unofficial retirement, one year of which was spent with philosopher/mystic J.G. Bennett's school at Sherborne to work with Brian Eno on David Bowie's *Heroes* album. He has since become somewhat of a hero himself to the burgeoning New York New Wave scene. He's produced albums for Peter Gabriel and the Roches and appeared both on record and in concert with Walter Stedding and Blondie.

His recently released solo album, entitled *Exposure* (Polydor PD-1-6201), may well set standards and define priorities for rock in the 80s the way his *Court of the Crimson King* did for the 70s ten years ago. *Exposure* is a stunning montage of sounds and impressions that runs the gamut from punkish three-chord romps through complex polytonal heavy-metaloid fusion exercises to electronic passages of otherworldly beauty. His audio-verite production style acts as a kind of aural open-heart surgery, stripping away all that's superficial or unnecessary to expose the essential core of each piece. The ballads as sung by Peter Gabriel, Daryl Hall, and Terre Roche are particularly impressive, though the latter two also deliver unexpectedly effective performances on the punkish "You Burn Me Up I'm a Cigarette" and the brutally raw title cut respectively. Actually, if there's any one thing that's predictable about Robert Fripp, it's that he'll consistently do the unexpected, whether its performing a disco tune at New Wave Mecca CBGB's, or using genteel folk singers as vehicles for his heavy metal primal rave-ups. His uncompromising pursuit of true creativity enables him to follow his artistic impulses through whatever musical vehicle seems to be appropriate.

**MUSICIAN:** In a recent interview Charlie Watts expressed the view that rock is an inherently limited medium because it's so tied to a backbeat. Would you agree or disagree with that

# ROBERT FRIPP

statement, and how do you view rock in terms of its potential as a vehicle for creative expression?

**FRIPP:** With rock music there's a very great capacity for direct expression of essence through the music, with very little filtering between the original creative impetus and its realization. If one plays a guitar for three months that's often sufficient to express, to a degree, one's enthusiasm as a player for the instrument very directly, though the normal rock and roll vocabulary is not as developed or sophisticated as that of Charles Mingus' work, for example.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you see your earlier work with art-rock as an attempt to extend that vocabulary?

**FRIPP:** The deliberate articulation by me in 1969 that it was possible for rock to appeal to the head as well as the foot caused something of an outbreak of passion at that time, and was considered heretical. Rock and roll should not, maintained some of its more traditional advocates, be anything more than a visceral, impassioned experience. *Exposure* is my most recent attempt to "tweak" with rock and roll, working with the possibility of extending its vocabulary and its capacity for handling a wider range of experiences. Take "Breathless" on *Exposure*, for instance. The main theme is in 7/4, the middle section is in 33 plus 3/8 with the guitar in 9/8 over the top of it, but it's still identifiably rock and roll. So as regards Charlie Watt's statement, I would suggest that the vocabulary used in "Breathless" is not typical for rock, the feel is very definitely "Heavy Metal". The drummer, Narada Michael Walden is a jazz drummer, nevertheless the kind of immediacy one gets from rock and roll is certainly there. Though it sounds very simple, as a piece of writing it's actually very complex. If one were to score it for string quartet it wouldn't sound inappropriate at all.

**MUSICIAN:** I understand that *Exposure* is the first album of a trilogy. Will the other two be similar in format?

**FRIPP:** No, the second album, *Frippertronics* involves experimenting with the vocabulary and the possibility of expression within Muzak. It's already been recorded for release in September. *Discotronics,* the album I'm writing at the moment, represents my experimentation within the disco format.

**MUSICIAN:** What exactly is *Discotronics*?

**FRIPP:** *Discotronics* is defined as that musical experience at the interstices of Disco and Frippertronics. Technically Disco solves a lot of my rhythmic problems, and Frippertronics solves a lot of my problems of orchestration and scoring. So when the two come together hopefully I'll have no work to do whatsoever!

**MUSICIAN:** You're about the last musician most people would connect with Disco, yet you seem to have none of the negative emotional attitude towards it that typifies many jazz and rock musicians.

**FRIPP:** Disco is the response of musicians to dealing with rock's frequent inability to swing. It's the technical rhythmic solution to that problem. I think disco is now an accepted musical form. At the moment it's big business, which means its subtleties are being narrowed, as always happens in America, but it's still a valid form. It came up despite the business, not because of it.

**MUSICIAN:** Along the same lines, your heavy involvement with both avant garde electronic music and the New Wave/Punk scene would seem to indicate that you perceive some common creative element present in both.

**FRIPP:** It has to do with the quality of energy involved. The quality of energy that powered King Crimson in 1969 is the same that powered the punk explosion of 1975, though the form of expression it took was completely different. I think probably the same quality of energy powered the bop revolution, or Cliff Richards in England — great bursts of negative energy, colossal expressions of frustration and rage. Once it erupted one becomes increasingly concerned with refining and polishing the form rather more than the spirit of the expression. So within the New Wave at the moment you have the dilemma of "How can we become professionals?"

**MUSICIAN:** Does this indicate a degeneration of the original impulse?

**FRIPP:** It generally does. As soon as one becomes more concerned with polishing and refining, the energy changes. At the same time there's the paradox that as a professional one goes on all the time refining one's craft, but not at the expense of the direct expression of whatever music may be. Jimi Hendrix, for example, was very definitely bursting with whatever music is and his desire to get it out, but he never managed to solve his dilemma of how to handle the energy, which in my opinion is why it killed him. The analogy I use of the creative musician is that he's the radio receiver, not the broadcasting station. His personal discipline is to improve the quality of the components, the transistors, the speakers, the alloys in the receiver itself, but never to concern himself

overmuch with putting out the program. The program is there, all he has to do is receive it as far as possible.

**MUSICIAN:** This problem of how to handle that energy is not, of course, limited to rock musicians. Van Gogh comes readily to mind as do many jazz musicians. What's your own inner method of working with this?

**FRIPP:** My personal disciplines revolve around the so called Fourth Way traditions, generally associated with Gurdjieff. My own personal transmission was through J.G. Bennett in England. Bennett was an extraordinary man who spent over half a century working with Sufi, Buddhist, Hindu, and other traditions as well as Gurdjieff. One eminent Sufi in Istanbul said that Bennett understood more about the secrets of inner liberation than any European since Meister Eckhart, which is an interesting statement. In June of 1974 I had an experience which led me to abandon King Crimson as an inappropriate way to continue my education, and I began to seek an education in a different sphere. This is when I began to prepare to attend Bennett's International Academy for Continuous Education at Sherborne House in England. There we learned different exercises and disciplines related to working with and understanding different qualities of energies. That's a thumbnail guide. There's also an American branch of the Institute that I've been associated with called the Claymont School, which is in Charles Town, West Virginia, just outside Washington D.C.

**MUSICIAN:** Where is rock music headed in the 80s, in your opinion?

**FRIPP:** The music of the 80s is the music of collaboration. This has to do with the change in the size of the unit of organization, from the dinosaur to the mammal, the small intelligent mobile unit. It's easy to see examples of this in all the New Wave bands in New York. There's a very mobile network of musicians that change around all the time, a very alive sense of movement that I find quite refreshing. Increasingly in the 1980s as the large and successful bands collapse under the weight of their own superstructures, the small bands will work together and thrive, constantly changing personnel.

**MUSICIAN:** How are you putting these ideas into practice in your own life?

**FRIPP:** I'm about to start a solo world tour, playing mostly to people in record company offices in places like Montreal and doing concerts in record shops. The motto for the tour is "Human Contact".

**MUSICIAN:** Your collaborations with Brian Eno have produced some of your most interesting music. In your opinion, why has this particular partnership been so fruitful?

**FRIPP:** Mainly because we approach each other without preconceptions. Eno is one of the very few musicians I've worked with who actually listens to what he's doing. He's my favorite synthesizer player because instead of using his fingers he uses his ears.

**MUSICIAN:** You've spent the past two years living in New York, presumably because of the quality of energy you found here. What are your impressions of New York and the U.S. as a place for musicians to work?

**FRIPP:** Yes, there is much more of that energy in New York than many other places. You can feel it as soon as you enter a recording studio. I've very much enjoyed living in New York, it's been a remarkable education, but one thing I've become aware of here is a filtering out, a censoring of a wide range of colors from day to day living which has intruded on my personal work. A fact from Global Reach is that 96% of the entertainment of 84% of America's population is provided by three corporations. So unless one has access to maybe a dozen men in America, and passes their particular tests of cultural norms, one has no chance of succeeding in America beyond a certain point. That doesn't matter provided there remains sufficient room for existing in a smaller way, but in America these possibilities are rapidly evaporating. You've had a contraction of radio. Free form is now virtually lost, except for college radio.

**MUSICIAN:** This, of course, is a problem jazz musicians have had to face for years. I recently spoke with a former member of Charles Mingus' band who was agonizing over whether to sign with one of the top three record companies. They were offering an excellent advance, but insisted that he make a fusion-funk type of album that he had little taste for. I suspect that you've been subject to similar pressures in your own career.

**FRIPP:** Having seen this and sympathizing with that kind of choice I feel that you can never really make that kind of compromise and live. A few people can pull it off because they want to, Miles Davis with *Bitches Brew*, for instance, but that was his choice. Same with my own disco album. That was something that I wanted to do, my own choice. But you can't accept that kind of make-the-record-our-way thing because it's just destructive to a part of oneself that is very easily destroyed, very easily rubbed out. My personal compromise would be in another area. I make the record I want to, and then spend far longer than I would like to going around and promoting it.

**MUSICIAN:** In many ways you fit the image of a jazz artist better than a rock star. Do you see a kinship between your work and jazz?

**FRIPP:** Yes, directness. Jazz can be very direct, I think in its real nature it is. Actually I'm very happy to be called a rock musician because that label means to certain businessmen that I am a viable product. Since rock music is for me the most mobile of the musical forms one can, under the general banner of rock music, play in fact any kind of music whatsoever.

**MUSICIAN:** Have avant gardists like Steve Reich or Phillip Glass had an influence on your work? I'm thinking particularly of your work with Eno.

**FRIPP:** No, I hadn't heard either of their work prior to having worked with Eno, in fact I had none of that background at that time. My work with Eno just happened on the spur of the moment without any preparation or preconception. In terms of Steve Reich, whose work I do enjoy, it takes me to a point at which something really interesting could happen, but doesn't quite make that jump. Because it is preconceived and orchestrated. What I should personally like to do is to add the random factor, the factor of hazard, to what he's doing, to walk on stage unexpectedly during one of his performances and having become familiar with the tonal center, improvise over the top of it. That's how I would approach Steve Reich.

**MUSICIAN:** Are you saying that because it was preconceived it is creatively limited in some way? Jumping back a few hundred years to Mozart or the Beethoven Late Quartets, I think you'd agree that these people were channels for a high level of creative energy.

**FRIPP:** Yes. If you have Beethoven as an improviser, I think you get a far better sense of his direct creative thrust, than through Beethoven transcribed through two hundred years of interpretation and analysis and a sixty piece orchestra with an intelligent conductor. It's not a direct experience.

**MUSICIAN:** Getting back to the moment where Beethoven was actually sitting there creating this, was that limited because it was preconceived or put into a certain crystalized structure?

**FRIPP:** The Great Masters can take it from the air as it passes and put it on paper, and there are very few of them. Beethoven was certainly one. For Beethoven it was a direct experience, for me it often isn't. My personal reaction listening to the String Quartets is not the sense of passion that was obviously present at the moment when it came through. Rather I feel a sense of how remarkably intelligent it is, but I don't get that direct touch that I'm sure Beethoven had, which I've had from the rock band Television. The Bartok String Quartets I love, they were a major influence, and early Stravinsky, really hot stuff, but it keeps getting further and further away from the original moment of conception.

**MUSICIAN:** So the aim is to make contact with this higher creative source through whatever form one happens to be working with.

**FRIPP:** That's right. I think there are two ends of the scale here. One might have a very direct, very innate and natural sense of what music is, like Hendrix, or be like me, a guitar player who began music tone deaf and with no sense of rhythm, completely out of touch with it. For Hendrix the problem was how to refine his particular capacity for expressing what he knew. For me it's how to get in touch with something that I know is there but also I'm out of touch with. By working with disciplines I managed eventually to "twig" something. It's something like Zen and the Art of Archery. You hone something inside yourself by the friction of that particular discipline. The aim in Zen Archery is not to stick an arrow in the bull's eye in the obvious sense, but to stick a different kind of arrow in a different kind of bull's eye.

**MUSICIAN:** And you feel that for yourself rock is the most effective instrument for this kind of work?

**FRIPP:** For me rock is an immediate expression of something very direct. Rock and roll is therapy on the street, it's available to everyone. Rock and roll is street poetry. It can also be more sophisticated, but it needn't be.

**MUSICIAN:** So you feel no need to go through the process of classical training?

**FRIPP:** I have my own particular disciplines. My musical work for the moment has to do with exploring the synthetic scales and modes, to extend my access to vocabulary. If you take a major scale and use the modes, take harmonic minor, melodic minor scales, use modes on all of those, blues scales and so on, and then go to the synthetic scale formations, most of which come from European folk music, and use the modes on them, you find that instead of working with the three of four scales normally used in rock and roll you now have access to something like 150-160 scales. The possibilities for extending vocabulary are then quite immense. Since it takes three or four years to be able to work within any one scale fluently and utterly, there's more than enough work for a lifetime.

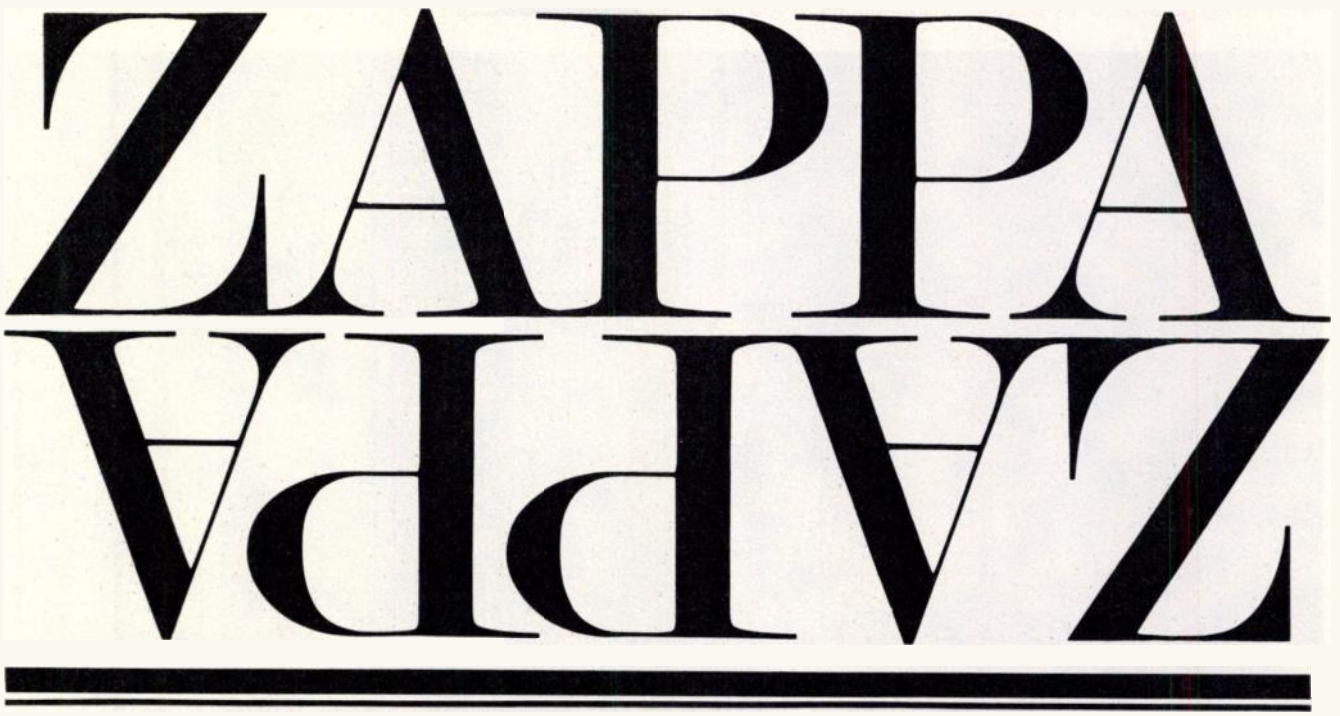
**MUSICIAN:** Finally, can you extend rock's vocabulary and still retain its visceral magic?

**FRIPP:** Well, listen to *Exposure* and you tell me.

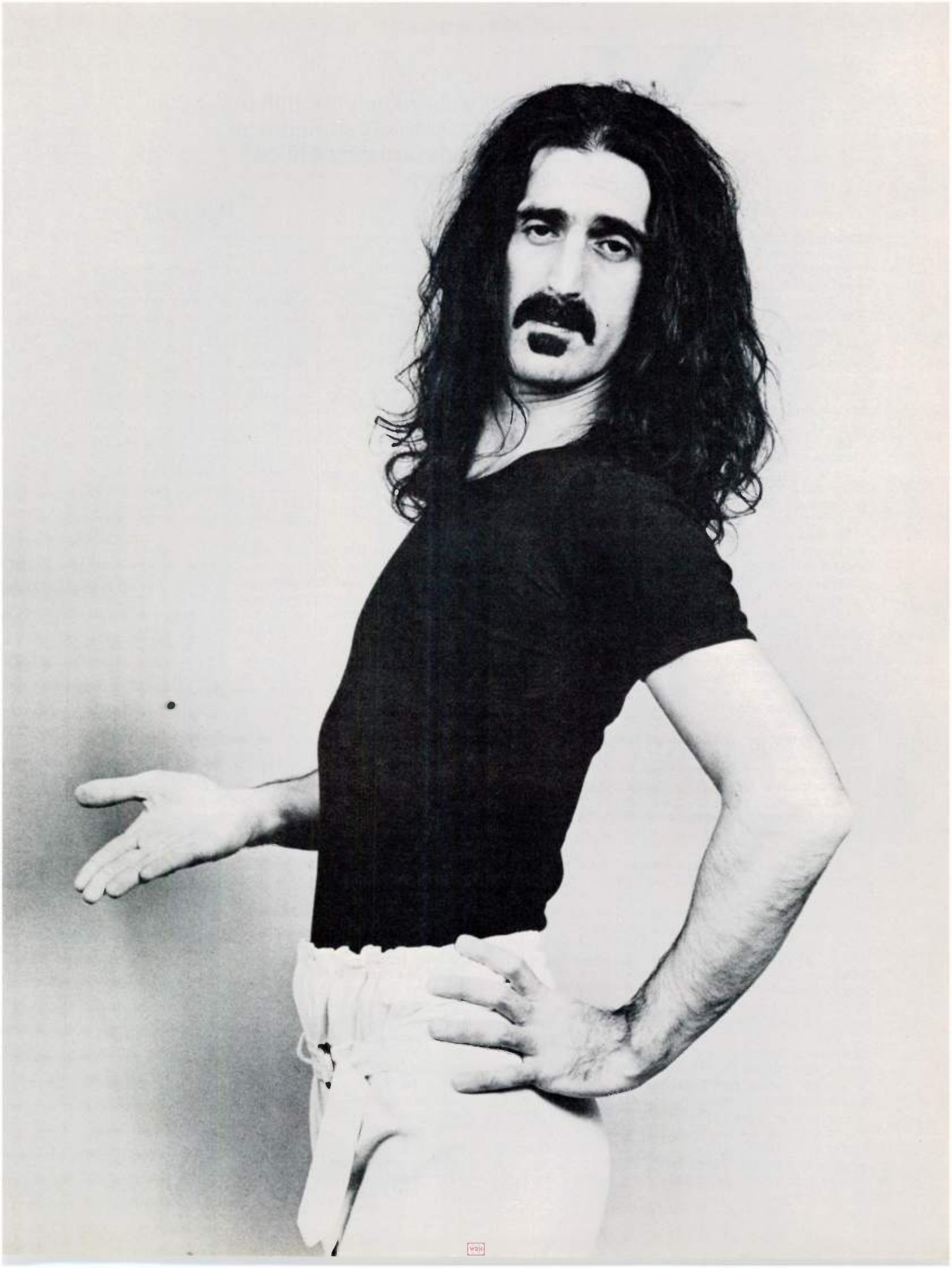
"I'm happy to be called a rock musician because that label means to certain businessmen that I am a viable product. One can, under the general banner of rock music, play any kind of music whatsoever."

EBET ROBERTS

**Look, I was just a creepy guy from San Diego playing weird music thought to have no commercial potential. Here it is thirteen years and a few dozen albums later, I've got a hot little disco**




**number sizzling on the charts, a couple of lawsuits sizzling in the courts, I live in Hollywood, my music is still bizarre and I look exactly the same. So who's weird?**



# You can't write a chord ugly enough to say what you want to say sometimes, so you have to rely on a giraffe filled with whipped cream."

## By Dan Forte

When Frank Zappa's Mothers Of Invention released *Freak Out* in 1967, the reaction of most consumers was something like, "This must be some sort of joke — but I don't get it." At a time when rock music was taking itself more and more seriously and college professors were quoting Bob Dylan and the Beatles, Zappa seemed to mock everything that was sacred — including his own music. In the liner notes to that debut album, he said of "Hungry Freaks, Daddy," "This song has no message," and admitted that "Wowie Zowie" was "designed to suck the 12-year-old listener into our camp." While other groups were advocating peace and love, the Mothers would insult their audiences onstage. And they were anything but beautiful.

Few critics could have predicted then that Zappa's sensory-overload attack would become such an influential force in the musical factions which came to be known as fusion and progressive rock. Fewer still could have conceived of Zappa sustaining one of the longest, most prolific careers in the field of rock.

Thirteen years and a couple dozen albums later, Zappa is still largely misunderstood by critics as well as record buyers, and his public image is as distorted now as it was then. Tell someone you're on your way to interview Frank Zappa, and you're liable to hear: "Good luck, man; he made mincemeat out of the last guy who tried to interview him," or "See if you can score me some acid," or "Be sure and ask him about the time he ate the shit."

That last statement is in reference to one of the most widespread and long-lived rumors in rock and roll history, regarding a "gross-out" contest allegedly held onstage between Zappa and the Fugs (some accounts say Captain Beefheart), in which Frank walked away victorious after defecating onstage and then eating it. That so many fans are willing to believe such nonsense says much about the way Zappa is perceived by most people.

As for the reference to drugs, Zappa has come out in print and in song vehemently opposed to their use (he says he's smoked marihuana on maybe a couple of occasions), yet the popular consensus is, "Anyone that weird *must* be on something."

As for his tolerance of journalists, he will openly state that he doesn't much enjoy conducting interviews — partly because he's got more important things to do with his time, and partly because most of the rock press has not been extremely kind to him or his music. In *Rolling Stone*'s massive *Illustrated History Of Rock & Roll*, Zappa rated one perfunctory paragraph in the chapter of "Art Rock," while entire chapters were devoted to such derivative acts as Rod Stewart and Creedence Clearwater Revival.

But Zappa is an interviewer's dream subject — articulate, witty, intelligent, willing to address any subject, and probably capable of turning out a better article than most of the professional journalists who write about him. After returning from Europe, where he produced an album by Indian violinist L. Shankar, Zappa took a break from his composing regimen to conduct this interview at his home in the Hollywood Hills.

Following an obligatory handshake, Zappa flops down on the couch in his purple and green living room and awaits the first question. No small talk, no niceties — strictly business, apparently of the kind that he feels is a bothersome obligation. Things start slowly, with monosyllabic answers, as Zappa drums his fingers nervously — like Johnny Carson during an especially slow-moving *Tonight Show*.

It isn't until the conversation turns toward rhythm and blues that Zappa brightens up, and then his speech is animated, with italics and capital letters, exclamation points, and gestures of hand and eye. R&B was Zappa's first love, and he still views it as more than mere nostalgia. Although he was born in Baltimore, Maryland on December 21, 1940, he grew up in San Diego, and went to high school there and in Lancaster, in California's Mojave Desert. As he wrote in the liner notes to *Freak Out*, "When I was eleven years old, I was 5'7" with hairy legs, pimples, and a mustache . . . for some strange reason they'd never let me be the captain of the softball team." Zappa turned to rhythm and blues, amassing a sizable record collection and playing drums in local garage bands. Although most people perceived the Mothers' 1968 ode to the 50s, *Cruising With Ruben & The Jets*, as a parody of that era and musical style, it was actually a labor of love for Zappa, who had written a tune for the Penguins some years earlier, "Memories Of El Monte."

The Mothers first set up headquarters in Los Angeles, during the mid-60s, when the city was in the midst of what Zappa calls "folk-rock saturation." He recounts, "If you didn't sound like the Byrds and have a Beatle haircut, you were fucked." To use a phrase that has followed Zappa throughout his career, the Mothers of Invention had "no commercial potential." One record company executive, entering a club while the Mothers were performing "Who Are The Brain Police?," characterized them as a "rhythm and blues protest band," which was not inaccurate at that stage.

The Mothers moved operations to New York City and answered Haight-Ashbury, *Sgt. Pepper's*, and the whole flower power hippy movement with the 1968 release *We're Only In It For The Money*, which included "Flower Punk" (a take-off on "Hey Joe") and "Who Needs The Peace Corps?": "I'm hippy and I'm trippy, I'm a gypsy on my own; I'll stay a week and get the crabs, and take a bus back home. I'm really just a phony, but forgive me 'cause I'm stoned."

Before moving back to California in 1969 ("because it's expedient to the business"), the Mothers played a now-famous stint at New York's Garrick Theater, lasting several months, in which they became notorious for their onstage "atrocities," such as conducting marriages onstage, having people from the audience get up and make speeches, and their collection of props — including a stuffed giraffe rigged up to ejaculate whipped cream into the front three or four rows.

What has remained most consistent with Zappa over the years, and what has puzzled many listeners from *Freak Out* onward, is Zappa's acerbic sense of humor — something that is lacking in so much of today's music. Throughout his recorded catalog — and the personnel changes which have seen now-established musicians like George Duke, Jean-Luc Ponty, Ian Underwood, Sugercane Harris, Aynsley Dunbar, Flo & Eddie, and others come and go as Zappa's music has evolved — the one constant has been Zappa's biting social commentary.

This no-holds-barred sense of humor was never more present than on his latest release, *Sheik Yerbouti*. Included in the album are: the story of a sexual spastic named "Bobby Brown"; a song we can all identify with called "Broken Hearts

"I've always been in favor of dissonance. I like food with a lot of cayenne in it and I like music with a lot of dissonance in it."

Are For Assholes"; and Zappa's single from that album, "Dancin' Fool," an irresistably hot disco number about a guy who *can't* dance. Also included is Zappa's answer to Peter Frampton's "I'm In You," entitled "I Have Been In You." A radio spot (which may or may not reach the airwaves) was taped for the LP, featuring Frampton himself talking over said song. "Hi, Frank," the English teen idol begins, rather nervously. "This is Peter here. I'd just like to correct you on the words. It's 'I'm in you, you *are* in me.' Umm, there's not too much that I can say about this . . . uh, I've never really liked your music, and I don't really like this. But, if you'd had me on rhythm guitar, it would've been a hit."

Another song from the LP, "Jewish Princess," brought an edict from the Anti-Defamation League. The song includes lines such as, "I want a horny little Jewish Princess, with a garlic aroma that could level Tacoma." For some reason, the ADL took offense.

As if to show that he's not singling out any one ethnic or religious group, Frank recently went into the studio to cut his upcoming "summer single," "Catholic Girls," which is about young women of that persuasion engaging in oral sex.

*Sheik Yerbouti* is the debut release of the artist's own label, Zappa Records, which came into being after Zappa "played out his contract," so to speak, with DiscReet, a division of Warner Bros. Because Zappa claims he has not been paid for the four albums he delivered to fulfill his end of the Warners contract, he is now in the midst of a multi-million dollar lawsuit against Warner Bros. and former manager Herb Cohen.

In the meantime, DiscReet has released the double-live package *Zappa In New York*, *Studio Tan*, *Sleep Dirt*, and *Orchestral Favorites* in rapid succession. It is indeed unfortunate that the music is caught in the middle of this legal tug o' war, because each album lives up to Zappa's usual high artistic standards. Unfortunately, though, Zappa's usual care as to liner notes and personnel listings are nowhere to be found, and the albums look as though they were rushed onto the shelves as soon as possible. Whereas a year and a half lapse without a new album followed 1976's *Zoot Alures*, the market is now flooded with Zappa LPs.

Frank Zappa has been acclaimed as genius for his versatility and consistently fine art under many different guises — composer, bandleader, producer, accomplished guitarist, "low singer" extraordinaire — and now record company executive can be added to the list.

Composer is the title Zappa feels most comfortable with, and his all-encompassing attitude toward composition perhaps explains in part his huge output. "If you take this ashtray," he demonstrates, "and go like this and purposely organize the material in that ashtray, you've created a composition. And it did make some noise while I was moving it around, so that's what you heard, and of course it has an aroma — it's kind of multi-dimensional. But some force of will was applied to the object to organize it according to my personal preference. Whether it's a great composition or not remains to be argued by the great thinkers of our time. But some people would look at that and say it's merely an ashtray. But by applying your ingenuity to the thing, you can cause transcendent events to occur. When I purposely set out to organize material, that's a composition — whether I'm packing my suitcase, or shuffling the stuff in an ashtray — as long as I think 'composition' while I'm doing it."

The following is an original composition by Dan Forte and Frank Zappa.

**MUSICIAN:** Could you explain your lawsuit with Warner Bros.?

**ZAPPA:** I delivered four completed albums to them almost two years ago, to fulfill my contract. I owed them four albums, so I walked in one day and said, "Here's the tapes." And they were supposed to pay me, but they never did. And I'm the one who paid to make the tapes — all the costs of the musicians, the studio time, the parts copying, the rentals of the equipment, and all the other costs of making an album. I put that all out of my bank account to produce those tapes, and they have no publishing licenses, and they haven't paid any royalties. They left me holding the bag for quite a few bucks.

**MUSICIAN:** Weren't you also involved in a lawsuit with M-G-M?

**ZAPPA:** Yes. The one with Verve [part of M-G-M] is settled, and part of the settlement is that the masters were being returned to Bizarre. But Bizarre was a partnership between Herb Cohen and myself, and because there's a lawsuit between us, we can't do anything with those masters until all the other lawsuits are straightened out. But sometime down the road all that stuff will be reissued.

**MUSICIAN:** What do you suggest your fans do concerning the recent Warners Bros. releases? Buy them, bootleg them, tape them, or what?

**ZAPPA:** Well, that's a very difficult question to answer, because no matter what I say, it's going to have some bearing on the legal outcome of the case. If I insist that they bootleg these things, Warner Bros. will come after me with another suit. And if I tell them to go and buy the records, then I'm sticking money in Warner Bros.'s pocket, which they in turn use to finance lawyers to fight me. How about, just let your conscious be your guide?

**MUSICIAN:** Speaking of lawsuits, I understand that the Anti-Defamation League is not thrilled about "Jewish Princess."

**ZAPPA:** Well, first of all, that may be true that they are not thrilled. But, second of all, who gives a fuck? Because, in the first place, the song is true. The references to the behaviour patterns of the Jewish Princess-type people, I believe, are accurate. To the best of my research abilities, the things that I put into that song to describe the necessary ingredients for the existence of a Jewish Princess are accurate. Also, the song is favorable towards Jewish Princesses; I say, "I *want* a nasty little Jewish Princess." I don't say that Jewish Princesses suck; I say I *want* one in the song. Now, what do you say about a *league* that gets together to suppress the truth?

**MUSICIAN:** Is that supposed to be your defense case if this comes to court?

**ZAPPA:** What are they going to take me to court for? That's preposterous! Sure, take me to court.

**MUSICIAN:** People have been taken to court for a lot less. You don't see the Frito Bandito anymore, do you?

**ZAPPA:** I *have* been of the opinion that the true intellectual community of the United States was populated mostly by Jewish-type people. I mean, it looked that way. Until suddenly I hear that the Anti-Defamation League is offended by a song about a Jewish Princess. Now, intelligent people are supposed to be logical. To me, it doesn't seem logical that somebody who's Jewish should dislike the song. For instance,

if Philip Roth or whatever his name was — the guy who wrote *Portnoy's Complaint* — writes a book that indicates to the average person who is not Jewish who reads this book that Jewish guys beat their meat and have all these weird fantasies, does the ADL go after Roth? No, because Roth is Jewish! Now, my offer to them is, would they like the song better if I converted to Judaism?

**MUSICIAN:** A lot of the recent reviews about you have stated that *Cruising With Ruben & The Jets* was your satire on the 50s, *We're Only In It For The Money* was your view of the 60s, and now *Sheik Yerbouti* is your answer to the 70s. Is that how you conceived that album when you put it together?

**ZAPPA:** No. Do you believe what you read in the papers?

**MUSICIAN:** Was there a particular concept in mind when you were doing *Sheik Yerbouti*?

**ZAPPA:** There's always a concept in mind when I do an album, but this one just happened to have a bunch of things in it that were more popular and more accessible than some of the other things that have come out. Obviously, there are some texts in there that are ideas people agree with. Because you don't really go around changing people's minds; you only say things, and if they already agree with you then they agree and like it, and if they don't agree with you then they say what you do is shit. Apparently I said some things that a lot of people agreed with.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you consider yourself a musical satirist?

**ZAPPA:** No, because the way I look at it is, that music's a direct extension of my personality. And I can't help it if I have a sense of humor. You know, I don't go to work and say, "I will now make a satire of this." I start writing and that's what comes out. I'm not specifically a satire person. I'm a composer with a sense of humor.

**MUSICIAN:** But when Peter Frampton has a hit song called "I'm In You," and then you come out with "I Have Been In You," isn't that a take-off on Frampton?

**ZAPPA:** Well, it's conceptual. If I was doing a satire, in the traditional sense, I would probably have to stick a little bit closer to the format of his original song, and take it apart piece by piece. If there is satire involved in "I Have Been In You," it's on a little bit different level.

**MUSICIAN:** Was *Cruising With Ruben & The Jets* a parody of the 50s then, or was that a serious attempt to play in that style?

**ZAPPA:** I'll tell you, there's a very scientific reason for the existence of *Ruben & The Jets*. The closest relationship between that album as an artistic event and another event from a different field that you can compare it to would be the point in Stravinsky's career in which he decided he was going to write neo-classical music. He started doing stuff like *Pulcinella* — writing music in his day and age, but using forms that were thoroughly out of style and frowned upon by the academic establishment. You have to remember that the American people don't have much going for them in the way of taste. I mean, taste is something that's inflicted on the American public by other outside forces. So if somebody tells you that something is cool, well, you'll think it's cool and you'll go out and buy it. To make an album like *Cruising With Ruben & The Jets* at that time in history, in '68, was *very* unfashionable. And everybody went, "Oh, I can't own that; it's not cool. It's not acid rock, it's not fuzztone, it's not psychedelic. Who needs this?" I didn't do it just to be arbitrary — I like that kind of music, and I wanted to have some examples of that style in my total catalog output.

**MUSICIAN:** Is it difficult to find musicians who can play in that style convincingly?

**ZAPPA:** Yes, it's very difficult to find vocalists who understand that technique anymore. The sort of stuff Roy and Ray [Estrada and Collins] were doing — that's a lost art. That kind of falsetto stuff — there may be a few people left in the world who know how to do that. None of the younger singers know how to do that.

**MUSICIAN:** You sang the bass parts, right? That's a bit of a lost art in itself.

**ZAPPA:** Yeah, you have to understand what it means to make those sounds come out of your throat. They're not just low notes.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you play in bands a la Ruben & The Jets when you were in high school?

**ZAPPA:** Yeah, the first band I was in, I was a drummer in a band called the Ramblers, in San Diego. When I moved to Lancaster I put my own band together, called the Blackouts, and I was still playing drums. The biggest gig we ever had was at the Shrine Exposition Hall for an NAACP benefit; we were the warm-up act to Earl Bostic. The people weren't dancing to Earl Bostic for some reason, so he hung it up, and we went back out there and played. Everybody was jumping all over the place.

**MUSICIAN:** How were you viewed by your fellow students in high school?

**ZAPPA:** They probably thought I was pretty weird.

**MUSICIAN:** For what reason?

**ZAPPA:** Oh, I would refuse to sing the school song; I would refuse to salute the flag; I would wear weird things to school; I would get in trouble *all* the time, and get thrown out of school. I did a few things that were pretty notorious. I don't know whether I should stick them in the interview [laughs].

**MUSICIAN:** When you weren't getting into trouble, were you a good student?

**ZAPPA:** I did pretty good. I got thrown out of school so many times I lost a lot of units, and when it came time to graduate I was 20 or so units out of the picture. They figured that rather than keep me around for another year, they'd better get rid of me [laughs]. I mean, high school didn't represent much of an intellectual challenge.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you already feel like music was the most important thing?

**ZAPPA:** Yeah, pretty much. I used to be in the marching band in high school; I played snare drum. They threw me out

> "You have to remember that the American people don't have much going for them in the way of taste. Taste is something that's inflicted on the American public."

CAROL FRIEDMAN

because they caught me smoking under the bleachers with my maroon uniform on.

**MUSICIAN:** Were you brought up in a very ethnic environment?

**ZAPPA:** I'm a Mediterranean mongrel. I'm Italian, Greek, Arab, and French. When I was a kid, my parents used to talk Italian to each other, but I never learned it. When I was a *little* kid that was the 40s, and Italians weren't popular. Italians weren't cute, they weren't funny, there weren't fashionable, they weren't modern. They were fuckin' dogshits, especially on the East Coast. I mean, if there was an Italian — "Hey, let's go get the Italian!" A few years before that it was "Let's go get the Irish," then the Irish started chasing the Italians, then the Italians started chasing the Pollocks. You know, it's the evolutionary chain working its way down the sewer. I was in there right at the tail end of Italian abuse, so it wasn't too cool to be an Italian. No, it wasn t a real ethnic household.

**MUSICIAN:** Why did you switch from drums to guitar at age 18?

**ZAPPA:** The only part I used to really enjoy off the blues records was the guitar solos, because in those days the main instrument was the saxophone. Every time you turned around there was some schmuck blowing a saxophone. And in order to have the correct approach to the saxophone, you were limited to a very few notes in a pretty common style, and that got old real fast. But guitar solos were another story. To me, it seems incomprehensible that a person could listen to "Three Hours Past Midnight" by Johnny Guitar Watson and not be moved to get violent. I mean, that's really saying something. Same with the guitar solo on "Story Of My Life" by Guitar Slim. I mean, that stuff used to make me violent. I'd just want to get an icepick and go out and work over the neighborhood! I *loved* that. To me, that was the real world.

**MUSICIAN:** You've always been a huge fan of blues and R&B, but I don't find a whole lot of evidence of that type of music in your own music.

**ZAPPA:** Well, if you like something that doesn't mean you have to imitate it.

**MUSICIAN:** But it sounds as though you were really absorbed by it.

**ZAPPA:** Yeah, I understand it; I know how it works. But that's like people in the 50s who liked Chuck Berry and devoted their lives to learning how to play Chuck Berry's guitar solos. I couldn't play any of Guitar Slim's guitar solos or Johnny Guitar Watson's guitar solos or Clarence Gatemouth Brown's — but I liked them all. And I think I was influenced by them because of comprehending their melodic approach to what to do with those notes in that situation.

**MUSICIAN:** Ever hear "Okie Dokie Stomp" by Clarence Gatemouth Brown?

**ZAPPA:** Sure. As a matter of fact, where I went to school in San Diego, there were a lot of bands during the 50s, and true status was knowing how to play "Okie Dokie Stomp." In fact, the record didn't exist; the record was an oldie but goodie then, and it was very obscure. Not very many people had ever heard the original "Okie Dokie Stomp," but the guitar solo from that record was passed in the oral tradition from guy to guy. I can play the first part of it.

**MUSICIAN:** There are certain guitar solos — like "Hideaway" by Freddie King, or Billy Butler's solo on "Honky Tonk" — that are always played note for note.

**ZAPPA:** That's right. It's like you have respect for that thing as a musical event, the same way you wouldn't want to mess around with a well-tempered clavichord.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you appreciate bands that play old R&B tunes just like on the records, preserving the original version as if it were a museum piece?

**ZAPPA:** Yeah. The same way I can appreciate a recorder consort trying to recreate the music of the Middle Ages, or dance music of the Renaissance. It's something that should be done. If you like the music as an artistic statement, keep it alive. I saw a group in Ann Arbor, Michigan — I can't remember their name. They were dedicated to recreating the sound of the olden days. It was an upright bass, a drum set, a guitar, and a harmonica. They were playing all songs that nobody in the club had ever heard of, and I had all the records. I was going *crazy*! The drums were *so shitty* — I mean, real shitty old drums.

**Q: Would you say that a fair amount of what's called avant-garde is pure shit?**

**A: But see, that's the idea . . . It's pure shit.**

CAROL FRIEDMAN

**MUSICIAN:** In the essay you wrote for *Guitar Player Magazine*, you said that even though Elmore James always played the same famous lick, you got the feeling that he meant it.

**ZAPPA:** Well, he did. Here's what that stuff is like: It transcends music and gets into realms of language. The English language has a few idiosyncracies in the way catch phrases work. Like, "Well, excuuuuse me!" You know, Elmore James' lick could be his version of "Well, excuuuuse me!" then maybe a million guitar players want to go *reedledee-deedelee-deedelee-deedelee-deedelee-deedee* [laughs]. It transcends the music and gets into another realm — just the same way that "Well, excuuuuse me" doesn't mean excuse me, it means a whole other bunch of stuff that's not very specific but it's hovering in the atmosphere whenever you say it. See, there's a whole folklore gap for stuff that happened back then that's been corrupted by television and magazines and newspapers. The way they talk about the 50s, they tend to adhere to the white side, and capitalize on the sort of snide viewpoint of what they describe as inferior doo-wop music. And that's not what happened at all. I mean, I think that was probably the Renaissance of rhythm and blues back then. And whenever you hear about it, you're always hearing about it from extremely biased white people who are trying to keep their show or article commercial by laying very heavily on the Elvis Presley-type syndrome and all the most obvious large-selling hits of the time. But the best of that music still remains unknown. Boozoo Chavis! "Paper In My Shoe" by Boozoo Chavis. Have you heard that? That record is *classic*. It's got the world's most out of tune guitar on it! This guitar player is playing one chord: *pedeetitee-pedeetitee-pedeetitee* . . . . He's just *out*! And it's mixed right up front: *pedeetitee-pedeetitee*. You know that old-time, all-the-treble-taken-off-of-it kind of rhythm guitar sound? Oh, man, what a song. It's on one of those collected *Rural Blues* albums on Imperial.

**MUSICIAN:** On a lot of those records it's not even distracting or jarring if everything's out of tune.

**ZAPPA:** Ah, but if it's *that* out of tune, it transcends! The things that are really good in life are the things that *transcend*. It's not even a guitar anymore; it's a sound. You have to listen to it to go, "What the fuck is *that*?" And when you realize that it's a

rhythm guitar player who's making that *statement* . . . . It goes beyond good taste and gets into realms of religion. See, that shows you the quarter-tone roots of that kind of music. Not only did John Lee Hooker invent *sprechstimne*, but Boozoo Chavis invented quarter-tone rock. Know what sprechstimne is? Shoenberg wrote this famous piece with a chamber ensemble and a female soprano singing settings of these famous abstract poems. But instead of singing them, she sings, and in some parts, speaks on pitch. And the German word for this is sprechstimne, and it was revolutionary. The notation for it shows the note head on the line, with the accidental, and on the stem there's an 'x', which means you half-speak, half-sing. This was the rage of the early 20th century, but, I mean, listen to a John Lee Hooker record. People aren't aware of the great strides made in the world of modern music by these people of Negro persuasion in the early part of our century. That R&B was the best. All that white stuff is . . . well, what can I say? Those white people, they mean well.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you see many live rock and roll shows when you were in high school in Southern California?

**ZAPPA:** I saw Big Jay McNeely, and I saw the Gaylarks. Remember them? "Tell Me Darling" on the Music City label. And I also saw Smokey Hogg, who had a hit single in San Diego called "Penitentiary Blues." There was just a vibe down there that was really conducive to rhythm and blues. There were a lot of Mexicans down there, and they always liked it. Man, they took it seriously in San Diego. There was some *serious* slow dancing — some serious Angora sweaters.

**MUSICIAN:** Was there a circle of people also into R&B whom you could hang around with in San Diego?

**ZAPPA:** Well, I didn't spend all of my school days in San Diego, but at the time I was down there, there was a real definite division between the people who liked rhythm and blues and the people who liked jazz. And anybody that liked Elvis Presley and that white person's music, well, you didn't even talk to them. You had the R&B guys, then you had the ones who went for Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All Stars. The R&B guys used to find the ones who liked jazz and beat them up in the parking lot — I mean, it was that vivid a lifestyle difference between the jazz guys and the ones who liked the real music. The people who liked jazz would always go around putting you down — "Aw, you like 'Okie Dokie Stomp'? Why how dare you!"

**MUSICIAN:** So you sided with the R&B crowd?

**ZAPPA:** Yeah. Well, to me, there wasn't that much emotional depth in listening to something like "Martians Go Home" by Shorty Rogers — that kind of stuff. It was just bleak; it didn't have any *balls* to it! And, of course, it didn't have any words either.

**MUSICIAN:** Were you ever exposed to some of the jazz that preceded that, like bebop?

**ZAPPA:** I didn't hear any bebop until I moved away from San Diego, and moved to Lancaster, and I came across a Charlie Parker album. I didn't like it — because it sounded very tuneless, and it also didn't feel like it had any balls to it. But I did get an Oscar Pettiford album that I thought was good, and I had some Charlie Mingus albums that I really liked.

**MUSICIAN:** Mingus had balls.

**ZAPPA:** Definitely had balls. And the Oscar Pettiford record had some weird notes on it, you know, that sounded a little bit more avant-ey.

**MUSICIAN:** *Uncle Meat* was when a lot of critics decided to recognize you for your "jazz influenced rock." Did you see that album as a change in direction?

**ZAPPA:** There's no accounting for taste, you know. Like I said, do you believe what you read in the papers? Somebody told you that album was great? Big deal. That doesn't mean that it's great. If somebody told you it was shitty, it wouldn't mean that it was shitty. It is what it is, and the way in which people perceive it is generally a reflection of the temperament of the times. I think *Ruben & The Jets* is a really good album, but at the time that it came out everybody thought, "You can't. It's corny."

**MUSICIAN:** Why do you think they had such a different opinion about *Uncle Meat*?

**ZAPPA:** Because maybe based on what was going on at that time, they thought that that was more acceptable — that was serious and *Ruben & The Jets* was shit. When, in fact, it's *all* serious, and it's all *not* serious.

**MUSICIAN:** Was *Uncle Meat* influenced by jazz at all?

**ZAPPA:** I don't think there are jazz influences in *Uncle Meat*. If there's any influence in *Uncle Meat* it's from Conlon Mancarrow. He's a composer who lives in Mexico, but was born in Kentucky. He writes music for player-piano that is humanly impossible to perform. He writes all these bizarre canons and weird structures — punches them out on player-piano rolls. The stuff is fantastic; there are a few albums of it. If you've never heard it, you've got to hear it — it'll kill you. Some of it sounds like ragtime that's totally bionic.

**MUSICIAN:** "America Drinks And Goes Home" [*Absolutely Free*] has a real jazz standard flavor. Did you write it to pay tribute to that style of music, or was it a parody of that genre?

**ZAPPA:** It's a very scientific parody of that genre. It's so subtle that you almost wouldn't see it as a parody. It's not a bad tune. The whole essence of that kind of music is that moron II-V-I syndrome, where everything modulates around the earth going II-V-I. It's an exercise in II-V-I stupidity.

**MUSICIAN:** You don't write many things in II-V-I.

**ZAPPA:** I've always been against dominant chords resolving to tonic chords. That, to me, is just the bottom line of white person music.

**MUSICIAN:** Isn't that ever present in black person's music?

**ZAPPA:** Mmm . . . not always the same way — your old stock V-I. You get a lot of IV-Is in black music, and you get a lot of II-Vs, and other stuff. But that goddam *V-I*, and those goddamn jazz guys with *II*-V-I, and *modulating* the fucking thing around the Circle of Fifths. Why they have their *nerve!*

**MUSICIAN:** In your use of different chord structures, you come up with some really complex things. Is that a result of an overt attempt to do something more original, or is that just what you hear in your head?

**ZAPPA:** Since I don't like the sound of II-V-I, theoretically I must also *like* the sound of something else. And there are of course progressions that I like a lot, and I use them all the time. I go for what I like, rather than just a conscious attempt to wage a war against II-V-I. I just don't like II-V-I, unless you want to use it as a joke.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you ever go through any study of jazz?

**ZAPPA:** No.

**MUSICIAN:** Theory?

**ZAPPA:** I had some theory. When I was in high school, I was one of these incorrigible people, and to shut me up they figured, "Well, maybe he just likes music." So, since the high school I was going to didn't offer any theory classes, they would send me over to the junior college for an hour a day to take this theory class there. And it was taught by a jazz trumpeter named Mr. Russell, and we were working out of the Walter Piston harmony book. I did my little exercises in there for one semester, then I had maybe one semester at a junior college after that. But that's the extent of my formal training. The rest of it's all from the library.

**MUSICIAN:** A lot of people, when they get into theory, gravitate towards jazz because it's a music where they can see the theory in practice.

**ZAPPA:** Well, it depends on your approach to jazz. I mean, guys who go in there with a theoretical approach and say, "I will now apply these incredible extension to II-V-I" — people who approach it that way — aren't the ones that you usually remember as being the great jazz musicians. I think the jazz that succeeds — and for my taste there's not much of it — is not based on the guy's erudition; it's based on balls. Balls operating in that kind of a format.

**MUSICIAN:** Is there any sort of submovement of jazz that you like more than others. Are you more into, say, Ornette Coleman than Duke Ellington?

**ZAPPA:** Well, I like Charlie Mingus, and I like Thelonius Monk,

Eric Dolphy — I used to really like Harold Land, but I haven't heard anything from him in a long time. But that's about it.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you go to those sources when you started working with larger groups, voicing horn sections, etc.?

**ZAPPA:** No. My voicing of horn sections was a result of personal experimentation rather than following traditional formats.

**MUSICIAN:** Is that where you came up with different dissonances?

**ZAPPA:** Well, I've always been in favor of dissonance. I like food with a lot of cayenne pepper on it, and I like music with a lot of dissonance in it. *And I can't stand that fucking V-I!!* In fact, the stuff that I'm working with now is seven-part harmony — with no notes doubled. And most of the orchestra stuff is based on that. In other words, if you take any kind of a diatonic scale, it contains seven notes, and there are ways of spacing those seven notes so that at all times you're playing the entire scale. But you can make it sound like chords instead of blurs. Want to hear an example? I'll play you a beautiful seven-note chord [*goes to the piano*]. If you take a C major scale, it sounds like this. You have a certain number of mathematical possibilities of how you space those things out to get a chord. This chord is made up of all the notes in that scale: [*plays chord*]. That's spread out over an octave and a fifth. See, it's spelled E-F-A-C-D-G-B.

**MUSICIAN:** That doesn't sound that 'off' to me.

**ZAPPA:** That's the trick. It's how you take a whole scale and play it and make it sound like something you want to hear. Anybody can go: [*smashes dissonant chords randomly up and down the keyboard*]. The other thing I worked out is chords built in fifths. You build chords in fifths plus one third, and that will also give you seven notes. Here's an example of that: [*plays scale*]. That's C-E-B-F#-G-D-A. That's a third on the bottom, and all the other intervals are fifths except one half-step. It's a third, then a triad in fifths, then another triad in fifths up a half-step.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you have many modern classical influences?

**ZAPPA:** The main ones would be Varese, Stravinsky, and Webern — probably in that order.

**MUSICIAN:** Some of your recorded work sounds like it would be impossible to reproduce live, but you manage to all the time. How much does the band rehearse?

**ZAPPA:** Well, the rehearsal schedule usually runs the summer months, for roughly two months, six days a week, six to ten hours a day. Then you do a tour. Then you get a few weeks off, and you get, like, a brush-up rehearsal for another month — six days a week, ten hours a day — then you go out and do a European tour. So that's a lot of rehearsing, and that rehearsing will represent not only the time and sweat, but it'll represent a lot of money. Because we rehearse with all of our equipment and full crew, and we have to rent a motion picture sound stage in order to set it up. The dollars involved in preparing a band to play that stuff and go out on the road are incredible. I have a huge cash commitment just to pay salaries and rentals on the hall and stuff like that before we can go out.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you always carry your own sound system on the road?

**ZAPPA:** Right, because I've never seen a promoter yet who would take as much care about providing sound and lights for a group as I would.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you think about music in terms of its social purpose?

**ZAPPA:** I think about the way in which other people use it. I think it's reprehensible to take your music and put it in the service of a political party or some sort of cause. Because ultimately, music is worth more than any cause or any party. You know, to me, music is the ultimate *swave-ness*. Music is the best; it's just the best. It's where the action is.

**MUSICIAN:** But don't you think there's an inherent social function surrounding, say, blues that's vastly different from the social function surrounding —

**ZAPPA:** I don't believe that a person like Elmore James picks up his bottleneck and goes *reedledee-deedelee-deedelee-deedelee-deedee* in order to stimulate somebody's capacity to promote social change. I don't think that's the motivation. And I think the idea that blues is this music of struggle and all that stuff is pure shit that white people figured out in order to make it okay to listen to it. Because if there's one thing that all these white academic nerds have in common it's that they just can't appreciate balls, you know! I think that a lot of that stuff is just that the guy just wants to play *that* and wants to make that noise. That's his message; he's condensed his whole aesthetic into *reedledee-deedelee-deedee*. That's where he's at, and he's not too concerned about whether or not somebody in a college someplace is going to perceive it as being a viable force for social change.

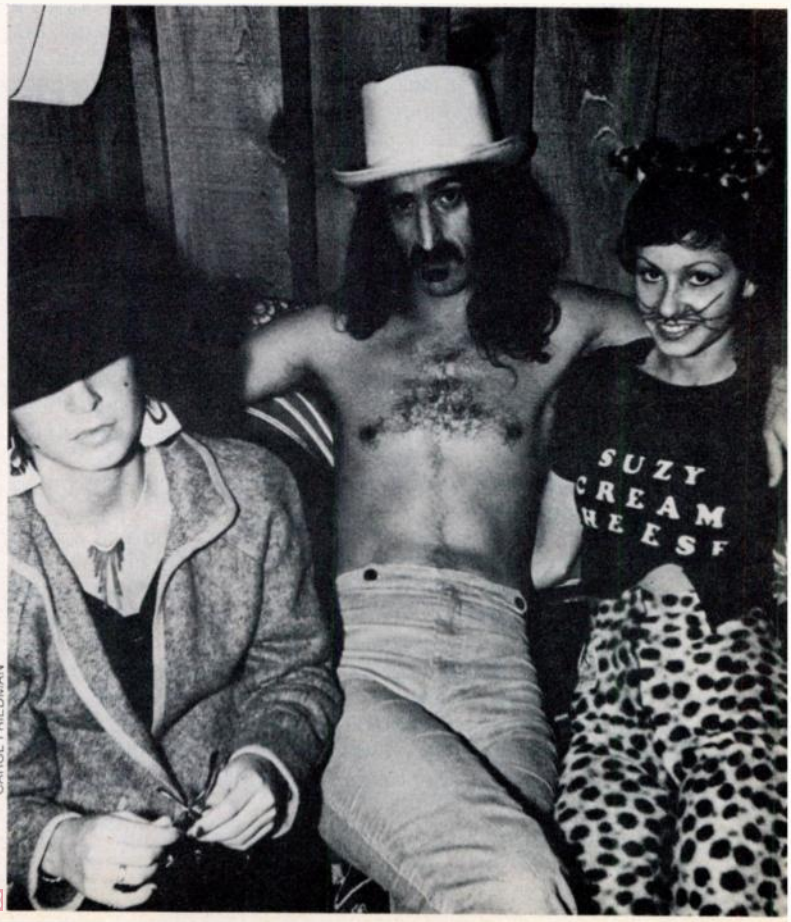
**MUSICIAN:** But wouldn't you say that there's a very different social function in what Elmore James is doing intuitively — as unconscious as it may be — and the very self-conscious function that avant-garde players in lofts in New York apply to their music?

**ZAPPA:** Well, first of all, whenever you play ugly music, it always helps to have an elaborate philosophical system surrounding it to rationalize its ugliness. This has been my experience with much of the avant-garde. I mean, let's face it, a lot of it sounds like shit. But, if you've got this elaborate philosophical system to go along with it to rationalize it and explain it, then it can still sound like shit but it means something else. You know what I mean [*laughs*]? These white people, they have a way with this stuff.

**MUSICIAN:** But 90% of the players of the avant-garde scene are black and their audience is 90% white.

**ZAPPA:** You have to understand something: White people are not denoted by the color of their skin. See, I'm not talking about pigmentation; I'm talking about the white person attitude.

The song is favorable towards Jewish Princesses; I say 'I want a nasty little Jewish Princess.




CAROL FRIEDMAN

There's a lot of people with black skin that have got this white person attitude, and I'm tellin' ya, that's one of the reasons why there's no good rhythm and blues anymore! They've got this white person thing going for them; it's terrible. Don't they know how to have a good time?

**MUSICIAN:** Would you say that a fair amount of what's called avant-garde is pure shit?

**ZAPPA:** But see, that's the idea — it's *pure* shit [*laughs*].

**MUSICIAN:** But there's other stuff that's been called shit — because people didn't understand it — and later when people understood it, the guys were called geniuses. Frank Zappa is a good example.

**ZAPPA:** Look, the thing about people saying whether something is shit or it's wonderful is irrelevant to the thing being discussed. Because whatever you think is wonderful I may think is shit, and vice versa. And neither one of our opinions matters, because of the thing that's being discussed — it exists because of whatever it is, you know. We are not really called upon to make these pronouncements on its value.

**MUSICIAN:** But wouldn't you say that there's got to be some music —

**ZAPPA:** That's total shit? No! Absolutely not. Because there's always somebody that likes it even if it's just the guy himself who's playing it — and he's entitled to love it, and it's entitled to be as good as he thinks it is. And whatever we say about it doesn't make any difference, because we don't know what went into the manufacture of it. A garage band that plays a one-chord song, and plays the fuck out of it, because they're straining to fulfill 100% of their understanding of the E major chord on the guitar, has achieved something spectacular if the day before they couldn't even make an E major chord on the guitar. But today they're whanging it out, and it's really coming out good. You know, that is musical achievement. And you might say it's shit, but to them it's the greatest thing that ever happened, and they're entitled to have their opinion be correct. I think the opinion of the person who's making it is the one that should prevail — not the opinion of the listener. Because you might have had a bad day today; you might not be in the mood for the E major chord. You want to hear F today, or C7 to F?

**MUSICIAN:** Have you ever been to any of the New Wave clubs, like CBGB's in New York?

**ZAPPA:** Yeah, I think it's a nice scene — in New York it's a nice scene, because it fits there; it's part of that city grit. But when they bring the stuff to California, you know what it is? It's a guy who wants to look punk, waiting for the record contract. You know, let's go punk — let's get a contract. They're all auditioning for certification as the punkest new thing. But I saw groups in New York that couldn't get a record contract in a million fuckin' years, and they looked like they didn't even care. You talk about nihilism! I mean, I saw some mongoloid behaviour there. It was great! You know, just "Let's get up there and be mongoloids." What the fuck?

**MUSICIAN:** What's your method for composing?

**ZAPPA:** It depends on what I'm composing. I carry music paper in my briefcase, and when I'm on the road I write sketches—boxes of them. Then I come back, play them, tweeze them, correct them, chop them up, reassemble them, and scribble it all out with a ballpoint pen. Then I give it to a copyist, and it comes back beautiful and neat.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you ever write sketches that are purely experimental?

**ZAPPA:** Yeah. Suppose you get a theory, and you want to build a section in a composition that has a certain number of mathematical fixed points — it's not mathematical; it's just formulaic, right? It's serial. But not 12-tone. For instance, you say, "This section will contain all chords that are made of five notes; each chord must contain these intervals — a third, half-step, and a fourth, and a major seventh." Then you set about randomly constructing — first you write a line, then you harmonize the line with five-note chords that adhere to that formula. Then you work it out with voice leading. It's just like a cross-word puzzle — it occupies your time in an airport. You get done doing that, you come back to the piano, and you start playing the chords, and you modify it to suit your ear.

**MUSICIAN:** When does the rhythm and time signature come in?

**ZAPPA:** That could come into it at any time. It could be just a series of notes, like a row, or it could be a rhythmic pattern that you like and eventually you want to attach pitches to the rhythm pattern. That was the process for "The Black Page #1" [*Zappa In New York*]; it started off with a drum solo, and then I wrote a melody line. It can go any number of ways.

**MUSICIAN:** Are you very disciplined when it comes to writing music?

**ZAPPA:** What's your idea of a disciplined music writer?

**MUSICIAN:** When you have a project to work on, do you get up and actually spend a number of hours uninterrupted and turn something out?

**ZAPPA:** Absolutely. If I'm left to my own devices and I'm only writing music, I'll go 12 and 14 hours a day, sitting in a chair, and the only thing I get up for is to go to the toilet or get a cup of coffee. I *love* that — but I never get a chance to do it. First of all, if you spend your life doing that, what are you going to do for a living? If you're a composer in America, everything is stacked against you. There's no outlet for that kind of work. If you want to write enormous orchestra pieces, who's going to pay for it? Who's paying for the musicians? Who pays the copyists? I mean, so far on this project, [*a planned Vienna Symphony concert which has since been cancelled*] I have spent $44,000 on copying. That's what I've spent—just to get this far with the project, so I had scores in my hand to show those people in Vienna. Now I have more copying bills to get the parts for the orchestra. The copying has been going on for over two years.

**MUSICIAN:** With all the costs you've mentioned, it's amazing that you're even breaking even, but you seem to be in a pretty secure position.

**ZAPPA:** It depends on what kind of style you want to live in. As you can see, I don't live in a mansion; I live in a house that's made out of stucco, and it's a total fucking mess. And I'm not interested in flash. We have enough money to get tons of coffee every week, all the cigarettes we want, we can buy tacos, and — hey, we're doing okay [*laughs*]. It's not Tobacco Road over here, but the net from the work that I do doesn't go into anything but music. Most of the money that comes back from the tours is either reinvested in equipment or it's reinvested in the salaries of the people who are providing services to make the project happen, or it's reinvested in services of people who are needed to make the project continue — all your office expenses are amortized out of that. And the musicians are on a yearly salary, whether they're working or not.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you see the guitar as just a vehicle for composition?

**ZAPPA:** The guitar is a perfect vehicle for composition, as long as the accompaniment doesn't get in the way. I'm not interested in being the fastest guitar player in the world, or the cutest or the best dancer — or even the most sincere.

**MUSICIAN:** What about establishing a distinctive guitar style?

**ZAPPA:** I'm not concerned with that. I'm concerned with playing melodies as they come into my head — versus the harmonic climate, versus the rhythm section. It's an act of composition, not an act of guitar showmanship. It's just like writing, except that there's no copyist, there's no orchestra — you just make it up and you go.

**MUSICIAN:** When you came out with *Freak Out*, the thing that seemed to jar everybody was that it had a sense of humor.

**ZAPPA:** Well, you'll find that the reason that that's always going to stick out is because there's a lack of humor everyplace else. Look, I'm an honest person, and I try to keep a certain type of integrity in the work that I do. I try to make my work consistent with who and what I am, okay? And if I have a sense of humor, I'm not going to *subdue* it in order to make

myself more acceptable to the mainstream that wants to take life seriously. To me, that would be like putting myself in prison or something. I write it and that's the way it comes out.

**MUSICIAN:** But does the oddball sense of humor sometimes overshadow the musicality itself?

**ZAPPA:** Only to people who are just staggered by senses of humor. But, look . . . it doesn't matter. I do it and it's done. Whether somebody laughs at it, or whether they listen to it, it doesn't matter.

**MUSICIAN:** Did you ever reach a point where you wanted to consciously tone down the humor and craziness in order to be more accepted as a legitimate composer?

**ZAPPA:** First of all, there's nothing *il*legitimate about having a sense of humor. See, you got that fucking attitude hanging over your head — that things that are funny aren't real and aren't good, and things that are totally serious are wonderful. This is what I hate.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you think about factors such as markets and audiences when you put records out?

**ZAPPA:** Well, I have a mental picture of what kind of person listens to my records. And when I'm working on something, I say, "This'll crack 'em up." You have to have some kind of image before you for a target.

**MUSICIAN:** How would you describe your type of fan?

**ZAPPA:** Well, it's hard to verbalize it, but the stuff that I do is originally written to amuse me. And, like I said before, if somebody already agrees with you, then they'll agree with you. So I presume that the person that really gets off on that stuff has similar tastes to me.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you think you have a nucleus of an audience that has followed you around since *Freak Out*?

**ZAPPA:** No. See, that's a popular presumption. They figure that once you start in the music business whoever likes you at the beginning is going to be your love slave for the rest of your career. And it don't work that way. I mean, I've been doing this for about 15 years, and most of the people who were the original consumers for the *Freak Out* album don't even go out to concerts anymore. They're all working their day jobs and worrying about the important things of life, you know. And our audience seems to get younger every year — we pick up more and more young people.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you think the image that the media has of you is very accurate?

**ZAPPA:** No, but it's irrelevant.

**MUSICIAN:** But there is an image.

**ZAPPA:** Oh yeah, there's definitely an image. It's very confused and contradictory, because of the stuff that's been written about me in the papers. But I think that if anybody was ever to manifest an exact replica of the kind of person I really am and stick it in the newspapers, I don't think people would bother with it. Because what's exciting about a guy who gets up in the morning and sits at the piano and writes little ballpoint pen notes on a piece of paper, and then goes to bed? You know what I do when you leave here? I go back to the piano until it's time to go to bed. There's nothing exciting about that. It's better to have people thinking that I'm out being totally crazy — because that's exciting.

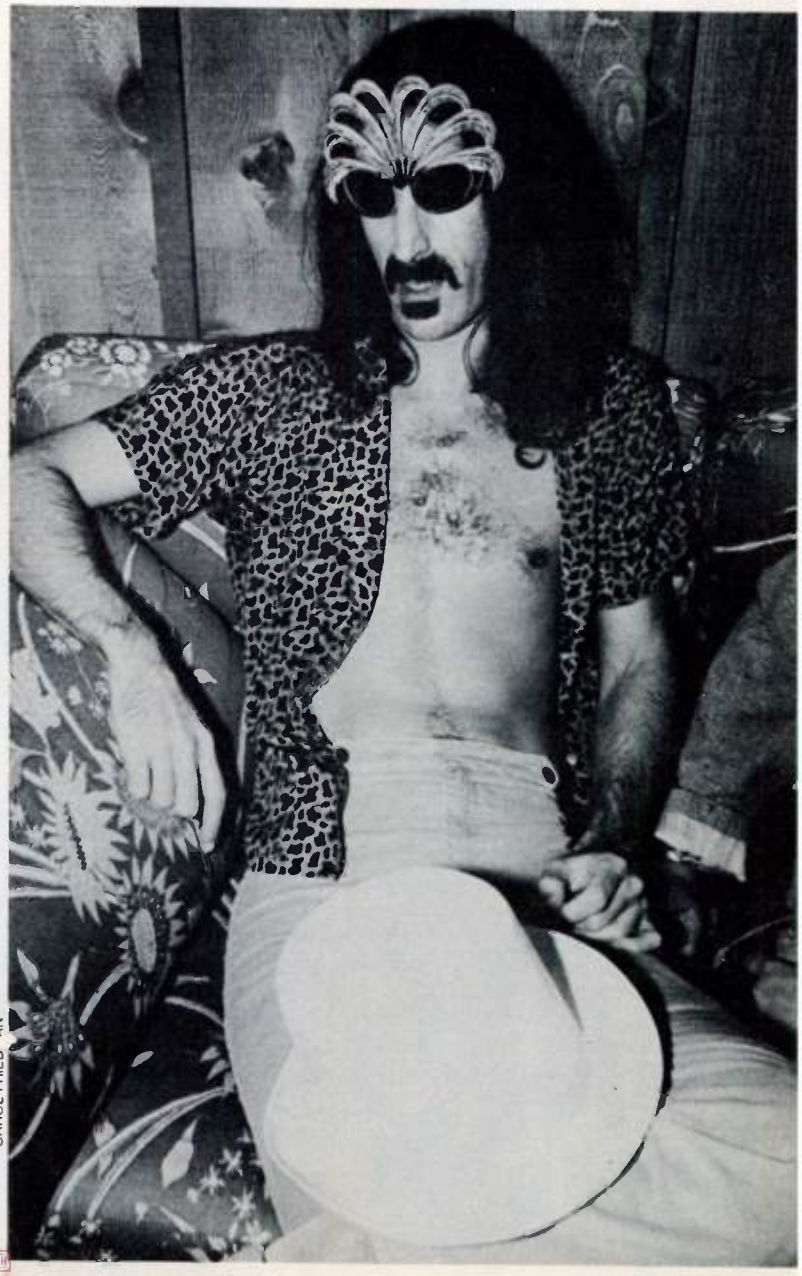
**MUSICIAN:** I'd have to say that you seem a lot more normal than most musicians, but then again what type of normal person names his children Moon Unit, Dweezil, and Ahmet Emuukha Rodin?

**ZAPPA:** If that were the only criterion by which to judge a person weird, then I am qualified. *But*, in the rest of the context of contemporary America, a person who gets up in the morning and spends his day sitting at the piano writing ballpoint pen notes on little pieces of paper is weird. He may be boring — but it's weird, you know. It's that kind of weird. A lot people in the United States think that somebody who wears mascara and plays with a boa constrictor is weird. And I don't think that's weird; I think that's right up Warner Bros.'s alley. It just depends on what your idea of weird is. You know what I think is weird? People who will really *buy* cases of Perrier water and really run around in a blue sweat suit. That's weird!

**MUSICIAN:** Speaking of weird, one of the great rock and roll myths of all-time involves a gross-out contest which allegedly took place onstage between you and Captain Beefheart. Could you please clarify that once and for all?

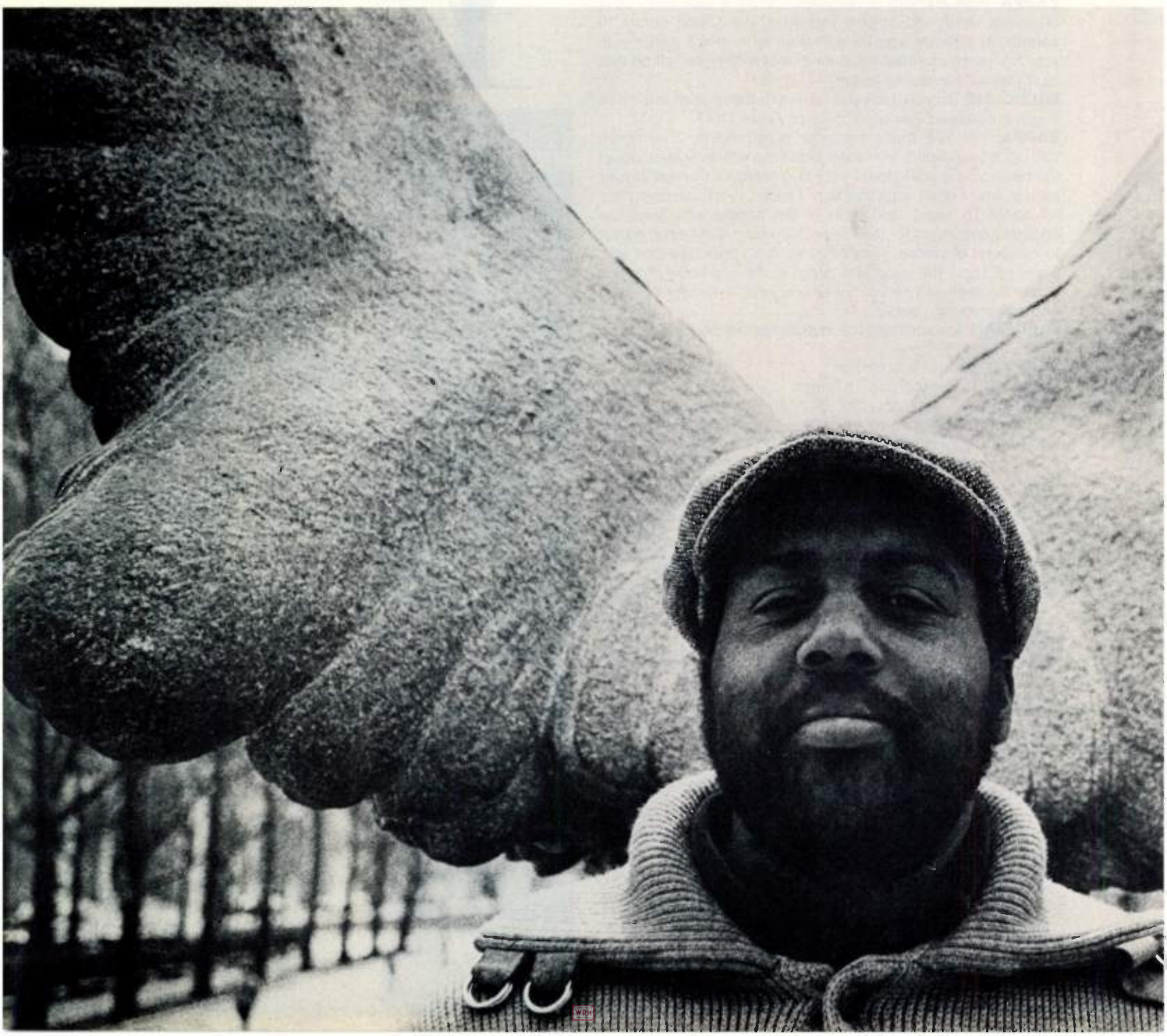
**ZAPPA:** Yeah, I've heard that myth in many different guises. It's supposed to be me versus the Fugs, me versus somebody in the audience — but always I end up eating shit on the stage. You know, the first time I heard this rumor, I was in a club in England called the Speakeasy, which used to be a music business hangout in the 60s. I'm sitting there and this guy from the Flock — remember the Flock? — comes over to me and goes, "Hey, Frank. Man, it's really great to meet ya. Hey, I heard about the gross-out contest and that's really fantastic the way you ate that shit!" I said, "Man, I never ate any shit onstage!!" And he goes, "You didn't? Aww." And then he walked away — fuckin' broken-hearted, you know. I mean, people want to believe this. I'll tell you, the closest I ever came to eating shit was at a Holiday Inn buffet in Fayetville, North Carolina.

**You know, to me, music is the ultimate swave-ness. Music is the best, it's just the best. It's where the action is.**



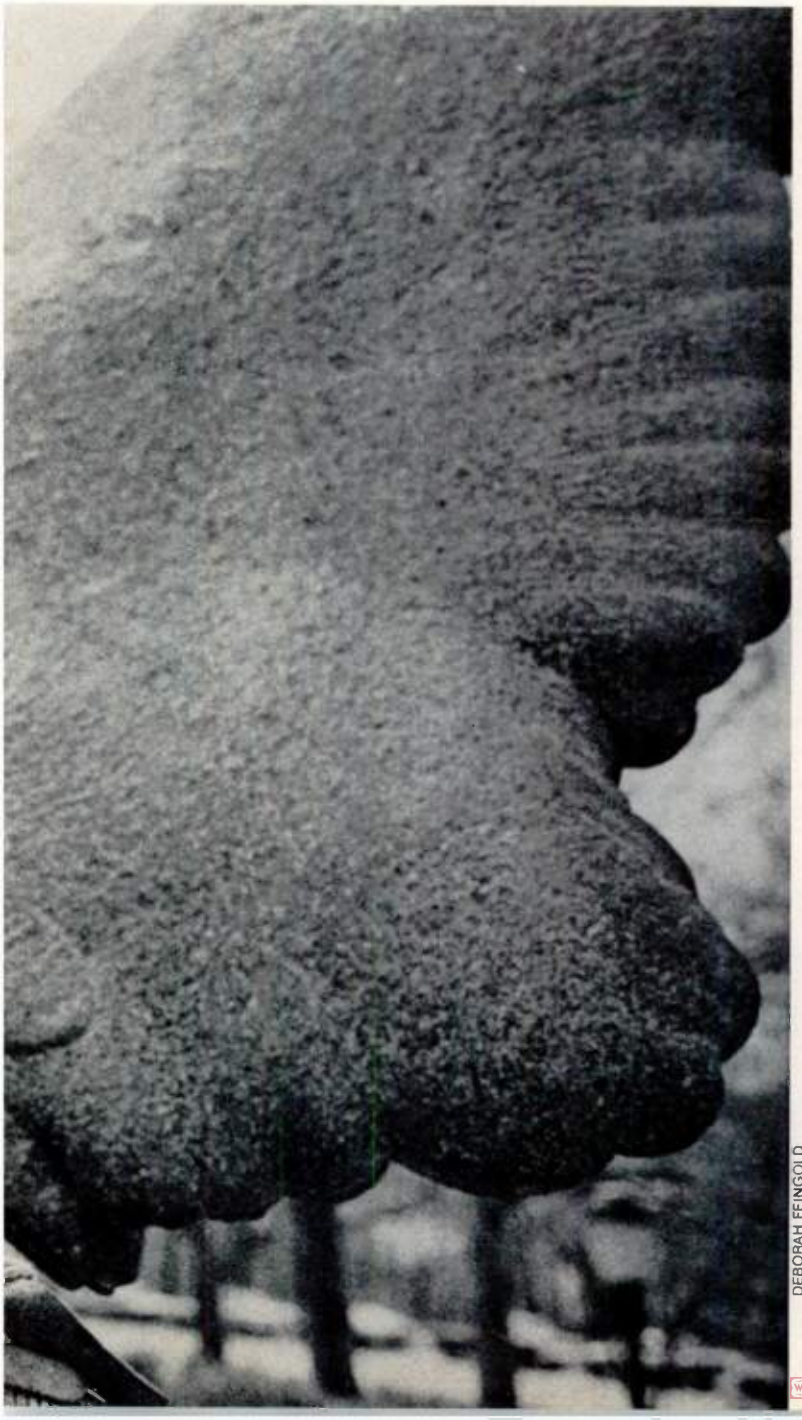
CAROL FRIEDMAN

# ARTHUR BLYTHE



**The finest saxophone improviser in many years, Blythe is a melodically assured storyteller blowing lithe, globular, infectiously joyous spheres of sound from his alto, delighting with the unexpected twists and turns of his melodic and compositional variations.**

## By Chip Stern



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Historical significance notwithstanding, Arthur Blythe is, above all else, a very good saxophone player. You may take issue if you like, but I don't think there are a lot of *very good* saxophone players; some good technicians to be sure, but few with deeply personal voices who are instantly recognizible by the vigor of their sound and style.

Arthur Blythe is a well developed combination of strong, gracious down-home, cosmopolitan, soulful and playful—qualities which metaphorically come out in his playing. Blythe doesn't need a microphone for his alto saxophone to be heard; you could stoke a forge with his diaphragm; the energy comes from the chest, not just the embouchure, so Blythe's sound has weight, presence, and a wealth of curvacious timbral intonations. As an improviser Blythe is swinging and spiritually buoyant, a melodically assured storyteller with a penchant for thematic variations—every note bursting at the seams with emotional commitment. Even when the mood is somber Blythe's inventions are ultimately exultant, the bittersweet ascending quality we associate with the blues. Lithe, globular spheres of sound burst from the bell of his horn in much the same manner as a great juggler; he orders his ideas in compositions that favor infectious vamps, angular intervallic phrasing, and surging, yet still playful counterpoint. As critic Gary Giddins has observed, Blythe associates consonance with lightness, sympathy and fantasy, and dissonance with a 'darker reality, a deeper, more spiritual inner being.' Whereas an Ornette Coleman will construct solos that are like a single endless melody, Blythe's solos are a collage of episodic contrasts that use consonance to establish a groove, and dissonance to create harmonic suspensions and rhythmic upheavals. Blythe's music can function equally well as listening music or dance music because Blythe is a modernist with a deep and abiding respect for tradition.

"Yeah, I'm conscious of that," Blythe reflected in his Harlem apartment. The early afternoon light seeped through the dense tropical plants before his window; a statue of a giraffe sat next to Blythe's regal wicker chair set amidst a collection of maps and artifacts of ancient African cultures scattered about the room. Blythe is able to sum up the totality of American musical expression because he has a sense of history. "One of my analogies is that if you're making cornbread from scratch, and you don't put cornmeal in, it no longer remains cornbread. All of the music I play comes out of my heritage. I try and acknowledge the whole culture: rock and roll, jazz, blues—the common denominator that is in it all. If you approach it from that point of view, it's all cool. So I want to retain some of the traditional elements that made the music what it is, and was, and try and implement some personal

thoughts about it. I still want to work with elements that the elders laid out for us at the inception of the music, the American inception, that is."

Given Blythe's mastery of the black music heritage, and his stature among New York players, it saddens me to see a certain vein of music critics, writing like Eisenhower Republicans, taking a reactionary stance towards his music, trying to dissect and disclaim it before it has even had a chance to flower. To complicate matters, Columbia Records put out an ad for Blythe's *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* which proclaimed him to be "perhaps the most innovative musician ever to put an alto sax to his lips." Ouch! "Yeah, I had to call them up and ask them to tone down that shit a little. I mean, I know it's their business to hype the product and sell records, but the person who wrote that got carried away, and was probably not in tune with the history of jazz." Arthur smiled, and an impish tone of put-on came over his voice: "Stuff like that demeans my standing in the community."

So despite my own deep love for Arthur Blythe's music, it seems necessary to put his work in perspective. Blythe is a spirited, orderly, melodic improviser with a command of the entire saxophone language, but he is not breaking new melodic ground like a Roscoe Mitchell; and though Blythe can swing with the best of them, he is not opening up uncharted rhythmic terrain like Charlie Parker did. In America living, breathing musical styles are too quickly relegated to the status of last year's fashions. The fact that at any given moment Blythe can suggest nearly all of the great horn styles indicates that his importance is as an enclyopedist—a keeper of the flames. Gary Giddins put it best when writing: "His is not revolutionary music by any means, and he is not a new Bird or a new anything else. But his voice is real and vital and distinctive, and it transmits the passion of black music with spirit and gracefulness in a language suitable to the times. Black Arthur means not having to search for your roots anymore because they are there at your fingertips."

The most striking thing about the way Arthur Blythe transfigures the roots of black music is how different he sounds in every setting, even within his own groups. "It's not like I said, 'well I got something and it's cool,' because what you've got can always be polished up and evolved. And you know, you can get in tune with many different types of people. It's not like there's only one type of person you can get in tune with. So what I play reflects on what is being played behind me, and who I'm playing with—the music that is being made together. The music being made reflects the format I'm playing in, and the format reflects on how I play. That's the main thing."

Blythe's work with Lester Bowie's groups (on Horo and Black Saint) has already been discussed in the pages of *Musician,* as well as his work with Hilton Ruiz, Fred Hopkins, and Steve McCall (the collective group known as "In The Tradition"); but a brief look at his three albums as a leader—*The Grip, Bush Baby,* and *Lexon Avenue Breakdown*—should illustrate the range of formats Arthur Blythe's music encompasses. The single unifying element on all the records is the expressive tuba work of Bob Stewart, a stalwart improviser who can provide rumbling supportive depth or engage Blythe in fluttering dialogs that bring to mind the dance of the hippos in Disney's *Fantasia.* On *The Grip* Stewart gives the ensemble a puffing New Orleans parade feel, while *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* has him augmenting Cecil McBee's springy bass ostinatos—giving Blythe an even fatter bottom—and acting as a bovine solo voice.

*The Grip*'s instrumentation (alto, cello, trumpet, tuba, drums, and congas) yields a great deal of polyphonic motion, sometimes diffusely (the title song); sometimes elegaicly; and with bellydancing directness ("Lower Nile"). "As of Yet" is a splendid arrangement that manages to combine freedom, form, and funk in one package; particularly rewarding is the way Blythe sets up a chugging vamp figure, peels off a counter-melody behind the beat, then launches into a series of torrid variations. Blythe's introduction to "Sunrise Service"—an incantory duet with cellist Abdul Wadud—employs some extraordinary trilling, sounding just like a flute; and on the unaccompanied "My Son Ra" his torch is in full flame—emoting like an operatic diva.

On *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* the flow is more linear, though James "Blood" Ulmer's mysterio guitar chording and Jack DeJohnette's splashy drumming often suggest concentric circles of sound (like Bobby Hutcherson and Tony Williams on Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch*). This is a stretch-out session, and there are colossal improvisations by Blythe, flute innovator James Newton, and Stewart on the menacing title tune (especially the quivering overtones Blythe uses to conclude his statement); but the solos are too garrulous and this resulted in some painful editing (chief victim—guitarist Ulmer); which is why the otherwise pleasing 7/4 tune "Slidin' Through" is less successful as a long jam. On the other hand, "Down San Diego Way" is a high stepping Mexican hat dance—fine airplay material—and "Odessa" is a sultry African ballad that recalls Duke Ellington's "Fleurette African"; it's the moving tune on the album, with excellent solos by Blythe and Ulmer.

My personal listening preference is *Bush Baby* (despite a bush pressing) because it emphasizes the contrapuntal intricacy of Blythe and Stewart; Blythe unwinds a dizzying succession of variations; Stewart makes fascinating use of multiphonics to achieve a chordal effect much like a church organ; and Ahkmed Abdullah's sinewy congas give the trio a lean, dry texture. Blythe's compositional emphasis is on bouncy, infectious vamps, treated either as serious ass-shakers ("For Fats"—originally recorded on Horace Tapscott's *The Giant is Awakened*) or free floating conversations (Blythe's ode to his lovely wife "Mamie Lee").

"I believe in variety in presentation," Blythe said commenting on his albums. "I always try and give people a lot of different aspects of my personality. Like with the trio, because there isn't a lot of chordal motion going on, I'm more responsible for suggesting things with my melody. With the larger groups there'd be less responsibility, but suggestions can still be volunteered as freely; the responsibility maybe isn't there *all* the time like with a small group.

"With the trio, suggestions of chords could also be given by the tuba; it could be chords or groupings of tones, scalar sounds, or just sounds—whatever they might be. There would be interplay between all three of us, because Abdullah's congas are tuned to a certain pitch, and the *tone* of the drums would sort of initiate a tonal and rhythmic direction. Sometimes the drums will be the strongest pulse, or I might be the strongest pulse, or the tuba; everyone is trying to be flexible, intuitively, so they can go wherever the strongest pulse is—the strongest indication, that is.

"And sometimes it's about going contrary, too. That makes an effect—and that's discretionary. I guess all of it is discretionary, like when to apply consonance and dissonance depending on what sort of picture you want to paint sound-wise and rhythm-wise. It depends on the individual; it can be like 360 degrees. You have each one of those degrees being used as a degree of intuitiveness. For *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* I wanted to do something different, more of a....maybe a swing kind of thing. Swing and other kinds of motion. I mean, I think *The Grip* swings; the tuba makes it swing in a kind of way that the upright bass can't. The string bass, to me, *elongates* the motion of the music. The tuba gives the music a shorter, more syncopated motion—I have to fill up space in a more syncopated manner. The bass tone rings, so it gives you a longer line to lay your sound on. The bass will go booooiiinng, and you go bodelly-be-bo-baaaahhh. The tuba is more like bop-bop-bop, and you have to go bodelly-be-bop-sku-da-de-da-duh-dah—you have to fill more space. There's no good or bad to either one. They're just part of all the historical approaches you can draw from to make a sincere musical statement."

Arthur Blythe was born in Los Angeles in 1940. His family moved down to San Diego when Arthur was four. "In 1949 I started getting into a school band kind of thing, and I played in different types of school programs until I was 14. When I first started playing I wasn't in tune with the more mature kinds of music. I was in little blues and rock and roll bands playing Little Richard, Fats Domino and stuff like that. I remember the first gig I got to play was for some girl's beach party—we got paid 13¢ apiece. The bebop thing was going strong when I was coming up, but I didn't get a chance to *hear* Charlie Parker until after he died. But you know, when I was a kid I used to listen to Earl Bostic and Tad Smith. It was music of the 1940's, sort of a swing music, but not R&B—it was blues. In my mind R&B didn't come into existence until around 1953-'54. Earl and Tad would play swing, ballads, and a lot of blues. People should check them out—they had enormous, beautiful sounds. They are part of the saxophone elders. They contributed ways of doing things technically, emotionally, and sound-wise—they added words to the general vocabulary.

"You know, at one point I was thinking that blues and jazz were two separate musics, and I didn't realize the total involvement. This was before rock and roll; blues, jazz, and gospel—it's all one music. The ethicness of that music is all one, and it can branch out into all directions. When I was in California I used to think white musicians played jazz and black musicians played blues, because the jazz I heard was Connie Condoli and Bob Cooper and I didn't like 'jazz.' Now it wasn't that I didn't like jazz, it's just that I didn't like the ethnic character that the white musicians had put on the music. That's how I was thinking until I got older; these are like pre-teen thoughts. The first cat I heard *really* playing the so-called jazz music was Thelonious Monk. Then I heard Trane and Cannonball in the group Miles had, which left a strong impression on me. But at 17 I met two sax players named Curt Bradford and Daniel Jackson. They were the ones who laid some heavy light on me.

"Curt used to play with the Jimmy Lunceford band, and he had a big old ferocious sound—sweet and beautiful. He reminded me of Johnny Hodges and Cannonball—that same kind of bigness and roundness about the sound. Curt gave me some harmony and theory, and some music talk and history from his point of view. Curt also gave me some psychological procedures on how to make a sound; what you should be thinking about when you make a sound. Like you don't think about making a sound in the neck of the horn, you think about making a sound in the bell of your horn—putting your sound *down* there. And Daniel helped me to get certain things together. Like he played bebop real good, and that was *the* pursuance at that time. Just hanging out with Daniel was a good influence on me.

"I went to Los Angeles when I was 19, but it took me a couple of years before I began playing with anybody; it took me a few years to get the terrain together and all that. L.A. is a strange place, and I guess I must have been young and inexperienced because I used to think that L.A. musicians were so much better than me. The Big City, man! Oooooooooooooooooohhhhh, L.A.! Man, I figured everybody was, like *the baddest. GROWL*...you think you fast, huh?...*DRAW!*...we'll see how fast you are...*GROWL!* (laughter). So I was intimidated there for a while."

Sitting in with a trio at a club called Marty's, Arthur got the nod of approval from older players. "That was my first time seeing other aspects of dealing with professionals, especially drummer Tony Beasley. It helped me think about phrasing. Like I would initiate a thought, and in the middle of the thought I might take off in another direction—go off downstream because it wasn't just about going upstream—and Tony would complete the phrase. Even if we veered apart, intuitively we were together. Tony would keep it going and this let me see the significance of completing a thought—the idea of continuity. You have that 360 degree spectrum of directions it can go, and *if it ain't right, you make it right.*"

Blythe began to move around the Los Angeles jazz scene which soon led to a long affiliation with pianist-composer Horace Tapscott, a vital figure on the genteel west coast. Arthur Blythe was already the possessor of a mature style when he made his recorded debut on Tapscott's *The Giant Is Awakened* (Flying Dutchman FDS-107, if you can find it). On a composition like "Big Nigger" Blythe's high hard notes had the diamond-hard attack of a trumpet, and his alto sound has the tenor magnitude of John Coltrane.

"Well, in '69 Trane's thing was very prevalent,very strong, and I was one of Trane's biggest admirers; I first heard Trane

**One of my analogies is that if you're making cornbread and you don't put cornmeal in it, it no longer remains cornbread. I want to work with the elements that the elders laid out for us at the inception of the music.**

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

as a teenager—it could have been some of that because his sound did inspire me. But you know, some of the things I hadn't heard John Coltrane play I ended up playing. I think what it's about is a musical thought one gets in tune with; and if you get in tune with the currents, it reveals itself to you.

"The music I played with Horace Tapscott was coming from the point of view of just asserting oneself as far as being proud about what one does and who one is; it was about assertion of one's self and pride, because that's always been a thing for black people since we came to America—just trying to get respect. I wasn't concerned with coming to New York as a place to further my career; my affiliation with Horace Tapscott was concerned with the preservation of black music; helping to make the community more aware of what was going on culturally on a broader base, instead of rock and roll and gospel only. It was about the preservation, and the furtherment, and the understanding of this thought community-wise.

"And that 's why I laid out there so long, because that's where I felt my strength was needed. I was trying to deal with some idealism, you dig. When I moved to New York in 1974 I felt that I had to broaden my base so I could be more involved in the music I love and reach more people." When Blythe arrived in New York he had to take a job as a security man at a porno theater. "I know that's heavy, but I had to deal and it paid $150 a week, which helped get my home situation together. In the meantime I played with people like Julius Hemphill, Ted Daniels, Charles Tyler, and Leon Thomas. Then about ten months after I got here I landed a gig with Chico Hamilton so I was able to cut the day job loose.

"I stayed with Chico for about three years, which was a great experience because he's a real professional; Chico understands the realities of organization and presentation—presenting his thing like a show—which is cool, because this is show biz we're involved in. At the same time I was also performing with Gil Evans' Orchestra, which was a great experience, because Gil has a very extensive book and he writes things to suit the identities of the individual players. I had a chance to record with Gil recently in a small group for Horo."

Horo is a small Italian label that, along with Black Saint Records of Milan, is recording some of the most adventuresome music by American jazzmen. Once again Americans stand on the sidelines, getting shut out on all the hip music by the Europeans and the Japanese. "Dig it," said Blythe, "and they don't even know it. The businessman is looking at 'well, the return isn't heavy enough.' It's all money, and in a matter of time it's going to be very profitable—it's already profitable in the long run. So the Italians, the Germans, the Swiss and the Amsterdamese are slowly trying to contain the market, which is a drag.

"It doesn't set up a situation where musicians can make a product that is used by people in the U.S.A. We have to go over there and do it, because they don't set up a situation here for musicians to play the music here. I mean there's music happening here, but let me tell you something I've noticed in Europe. Europeans will go for black people playing their music just as raw and real as possible; but when we play over here the music has to be put into a particular context or else it doesn't manifest. Which is a shame, because it tends to obscure the real contributions of so many beautiful musicians with so much to offer."

"You know Arthur," I commented, "when you were talking about reference points you draw from you used the term elders, and I really like that. In intimates an ongoing tribe."

"Yeah," said Arthur, "It's about that. It's not about me or anyone in particular. As far as this movement—*movements*—are concerned, there is an ongoingness. All men on this planet—black and white, brown and beige—belong to some tribe. The tribe definitely represents a thought; and what makes a tribe and tradition happen like that is hearing and acknowledging the elders and what was laid out before—*to build from, to build towards.* You know what I mean?"

# STUNNING NEWS FROM THE FRONTLINE OF JAZZ.

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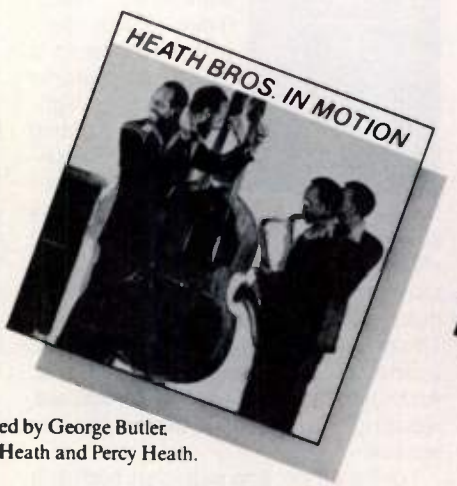


Produced by George Butler,
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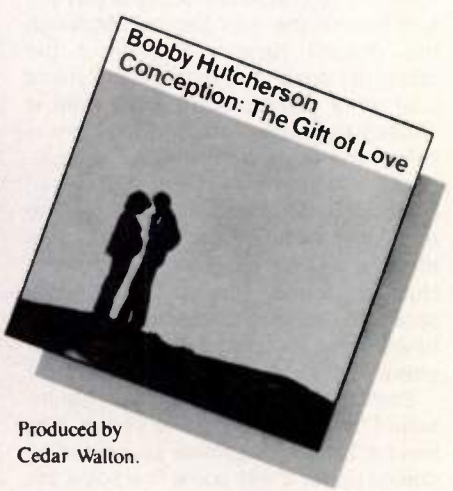


Produced by
Cedar Walton.

## MUSIC BY AND FOR UNCOMPROMISING INDIVIDUALS FROM COLUMBIA RECORDS AND TAPES.

# RECORDS

**McCoy Tyner** — *Together*, Milestone 9087.
*McCoy Tyner, piano; Freddie Hubbard, trumpet, flugelhorn; Hubert Laws, flutes; Benny Maupin, tenor sax, bass clarinet; Bobby Hutcherson, vibes, marimba; Stanley Clarke, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Bill Summers, percussion.*

Over the years, I've had occasional discussions with friends concerning Tyner's alleged lack of development, but I've always dismissed the idea after hearing him in live performance. Unfortunately, it seems that Tyner on records is running into problems. He sounds cramped and limited by his own style. At times his playing is at a standstill. For example, side one opens with an original piece entitled "Nubia." Solos by Bobby Hutcherson, Freddie Hubbard and Stanley Clarke offer more than enough support and substance, but Tyner's solo is predictable, opening with a right hand line he's used all too often before. Of couse Tyner is a stylist, and the territory he covers is clearly his own domain, but what happens when style overwhelms improvisation and the listener can practically hear the player's solo before the solo begins? Although this doesn't happen throughout the album, it happens often enough. Tyner's only other composition on the date is "Ballad for Aisha." His playing here is lyrical and warm, and Hubbard's flugelhorn solo proves again that when Hubbard is hot, he's tough to stop. The rest of the album is comprised of material written by Laws, DeJohnette, Hutcherson and Hubbard. Tyner usually sticks to his own material, but these tunes make for a more creative atmosphere.

Stanley Clarke makes a solid contribution to the date. His tone seems a bit thin for Tyner's ensemble sound, but he makes up for it with some fine solos. He listens well, and the overall aggressiveness of his playing perfectly suits this music. It's good to hear him sound so healthy. Although in general the recording is well balanced, Hutcherson is way down in the mix. During ensemble sections you can barely hear him, and his solos just cut through, but if you listen closely you will hear some of the best playing on the album. His phrasing and note selection are impeccable.

On the whole, I find this album successful and a worthwhile investment, but I can't help wondering if Tyner's cheating himself by recording too much and not taking enough time to develop his ideas. This man doesn't have to prove anything — he is one of the premier talents in music today, a giant. In the past five years he's worked with voices, strings, released a double album with two different rhythm sections, and most recently performed with the Milestone Jazzstars. If on occasion he seems to be at a loss for what to do, don't be fooled. There is plenty of music in this man, even when he's not in peak form. If you're skeptical, hear him live. And if you see someone putting the issue of his "lack of development" between two pieces of bread, just pass the mustard please. — *Peter Giron*

**Ricky Ford** — *Manhattan Plaza*, Muse MR 5188.
*Ricky Ford, tenor saxophone; Oliver Beener, trumpet; Jaki Byard, piano; David Friesen, bass; Dannie Richmond, drums.*

*Manhattan Plaza*, Ricky Ford's second recording as a leader, is a powerful statement, highlighting the young saxophonist's considerable, but still blossoming talents. While his previous album primarily featured ensembles of either six or nine musicians, the saxophonist's present effort utilizes duet, quartet, and quintet settings. These smaller groupings lend the music a different but no less effective sound. Arrangements are not as formalized, resulting in a freer, more soloistic session.

Ford is an exciting musician, both as a composer and performer. Although his compositions are stimulating vehicles for improvisation, it is his authoritative instrumental abilities that most often capture the listener's attention. Ford's strong, committed work displays an uncommon maturity and sensitivity for someone only in his mid twenties. On "On the Plaza," for example, he doesn't allow Byard's jagged, ever-changing accompaniment to throw him. Instead, Ford develops his own ideas over, through, and around the pianist's maze of sound. He also demonstrates a personal rhythmic conception, with unexpected accents that add tension and surprise to his already strong style.

Ford works well with Beener, a relatively unfamiliar but creative musician. The trumpeter displays a precise, long-lined lyrical approach that effectively complements the leader's less metrically governed style.

In addition to Ford's individual efforts, much of the album's success is due to Byard. The pianist's mastery of many jazz styles and idioms provides him with a rich sound palette which he brilliantly employs. At times Byard becomes a one-man orchestra. His abstract, yet logical solo on "Olean" is positively riveting. He is joined in the forceful rhythm section by Friesen and Richmond, who also contribute to the music's vibrancy. The pianist and drummer work especially well with one another, which is largely due to their extended time together in Charles Mingus' Jazz Workshops. Their almost telepathic rapport produces many subtleties in their individual and collective backing of the horns. — *Clifford Jay Safane*

**Living Chicago Blues, Volumes 1-3** — Alligator AL 7701, 7702, 7703.
*Volume 1: Jimmy Johnson Blues Band; Eddie Shaw and the Wolf Gang; Left Hand Frank and His Blues Band. Volume 2: Carey Bell's Blues Harp Band; Magic Slim and the Teardrops, Johnny "Big Moose" Walker. Volume 3: Lonnie Brooks Blues Band, Pinetop Perkins, The Sons of the Blues.*

Over the past decade, Alligator Records has been much more than a blues archive label. The Chicago company has supported all manner of working blues artists, and owner Bruce Iglauer has served as booking agent,

record producer and promotion man for musicians as wide-ranging as Hound Dog Taylor and Otis Rush. Last fall Alligator reintroduced Texas guitarist Albert Collins with the year's strongest new blues album, *Ice Pickin,* and put the vastly underrated Collins back on the road and in the record bins. Now comes *Living Chicago Blues,* a 3-record set that stands as the definitive cross-section of the blues scene today.

There are no big-time stars on this set, like B.B. King or James Cotton, yet it honestly covers every phase of blues life, from Southern boogie piano style to modern organ-guitar funk combos. On Volume 1, saxophone player and vocalist Eddie Shaw turns in a humorous, acerbic clutch of tunes. Shaw's work with Magic Sam in the late 60s still stands high on my list of great musical memories, and since then he's been a Chicago club-owner and bandleader, taking over the late Howlin' Wolf's backup group. His solo work here, especially on "Stoop Down, Baby," puts him in a class with Eddie Vinson and A.C. Reed as one of the true masters of wailing, gritty blues saxophone. Left Hand Frank, immediately following Shaw on Vol. 1, makes his recording debut here, although he's been playing around Chicago for years. His style on guitar is very down-home and gritty, as befits his years as a sideman with Jimmy Rogers and Big Walter Horton. Also on this album, Jimmy Johnson (brother of soul singer Syl) goes for a funky, quite contemporary updating of the blues. His version of "Serves Me Right to Suffer," complete with a hiply syncopated rhythm guitar and his own jazzy solo, clearly demonstrates how far the music has come. And yet, both Left Hand Frank and Jimmy Johnson work the same clubs in Chicago's thriving music scene.

Representing the established and fairly well-known contemporary artist is Carey Bell, the brilliant vocalist-harp player. Bell has long been known as one of the greatest living blues harmonica players, after stints with Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. His style combines the basic Sonny Boy Williamson "crying" approach with a delicate, jazz-inflected sensitivity in his phrasing. But the revelation on Vol. 2 is that Carey Bell is a sophisticated, emotionally potent singer too, sometimes evoking the dusky, after-hours intimacy of the late, great Charles Brown.

Volume 3 has the most depth and panoramic sweep of the set, as it spans several generations of blues players and styles. Pinetop Perkins, the legendary Mississippi Delta pianist, represents the grand old tradition. Perkins replaced Otis Spann in Muddy Waters' group and his rolling piano style is firmly rooted in the classic patterns of Roosevelt Sykes, Leroy Carr, and Little Brother Montgomery. Pinetop's vocals are full-throated and booming, particu-

larly on "Have You Ever Loved a Woman," and at times his delivery recalls Big Joe Turner's wide-open Kansas City style. Lonnie Brooks is a Louisiana-born singer and guitarist whose music is a soul-blues fusion. The emphasis is on deep funk grooves with plenty of Hammond organ to fill up the cracks. Brooks' four cuts on Vol. 3 show off the kind of urban R&B that's still going strong in cities like Chicago.

The final group on the album is the Sons of the Blues, led by guitarist Lurrie Bell (Carey's 19-year-old son) and Freddie Dixon (Willie's son) on bass. Billy Branch, the gifted harp player-vocalist with the S.O.B. Band, has been actively promoting and encouraging the blues cause with his contributions to workshops and blues classes at public schools in Chicago; the S.O.B. Band points to a healthy future for the blues in more ways than one. Their three-song set on the album sounds as lived-in and true as the music of their elders. On "Prisoner of the Blues," Branch's delivery and feeling on harmonica is both biting and sad, and the song has a hard-edged irony that makes it memorable.

*Living Chicago Blues* features clear and fittingly spare production throughout. Iglauer and co-producer Richard McLeese have wisely put the spotlight on the live-wire, 1979 energy of these musicians, and there's an immediacy and snap to the sound. The liner notes are extensive and well written. What we've got here is an unbeatably fresh re-introduction to the blues today, still one of the fountainheads of all popular American music. — *Crispin McCormick Cioe*

**Milton Nascimento** — *Journey to Dawn*, A&M SP-4719.

**Gilberto Gil** — *Nightingale*, Elektra 6E-167.

Nascimento and Gil stand recognized as two of the hottest properties south of the Equator. A & M began cashing in on Nascimento's huge Third World market a few years back, *Milton* doing quite well stateside with its blood-pounding rhythms and unearthly keening. (Wayne Shorter sat in, as Milton did on Wayne's Columbia *Native Dancer;* they share lyric restraint like brothers.) Gil has taken much longer to hit the States, and if Elektra side does not shed chartdust, it won't be for not trying.

Whereas *Milton* was full of zest and brilliance of Brazil, *Journey* suffers from assimilation pangs, production bloat, and heedless grasping for wider audiences. Simplistic folksy arrangements clean up Milton's weird harmonies ("Unencounter"), mechanistic Ringo Starr vamps ("Idolatrada," "Maria, Maria"). Not convincing. Neither is Milton's somewhat prosaic and uncomfortable singing in English (without texts on the budget cover.) The title song — bilingual, lush-stringed, powerful — is a happy exception. They have even clipped the wings from Milton's wordless flights of fancy — "Alouca" is harsh and halting — and he sounds unusually sad.

Gil prances and flames, more like a strutting parrot than the title nightingale. Sergio Mendes, Gil's producer, has caught flak at home for bastardizing Brazil's native music, yet he claims he's found the right formula for Americans. It's hard to deny. The title track is a clever cohabitation of a traditional *baiao* two-beat with a unison line like "Maxwell's Silver Hammer." Another — equally danceable — is "Sarara", with its racial message: mulat s shouldn't bother trying to pass for white. "Maracatu Atomico" reworks a 1974 song first done with extreme simplicity but here updated with a disco shuffle. What the hell, it's good clean fun, and you can still understand every work and hear Gil's nifty rhythm acoustic guitar.

Gil is a much better prospect for popularization that Nascimento for several reasons. English weighs Milton down; for Gil it's featherlight. Gil changes plumage as quickly as a fan dancer: he played rock in England, where he was tight with Steve Winwood and idolized Chuck Berry. Nascimento gravitates toward jazz in his composition and vocal improvisation; his "Vera Cruz" and "Bridges" have caught on as

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*The Little Big Horn*

crossover blowing tunes. Live, Gil thrives as a high-powered urbane showman; he sweats, smiles, plays gay, churns up audiences like Al Jarreau. Milton is still the shy, moody country boy from Minas Gerais — poetic, lacking confidence, reclusive. As proselytizers for Braziliana, better let Gil preach on the road and leave Nascimento a cloistered studio sybil. — *Fred Bouchard*

**The Roches** — *The Roches*, Warner Brothers BSK 3298.

*Suzzy, Maggie and Terre Roche, vocals, guitars, synthesizer; Robert Fripp, electric guitar, Fripperies, production; Tony Levin, bass; Jim Maelen, percussion; Larry Fast, synthesizer programmer.*


In 1944, John Wolgamot published a book entitled *In Sara Mencken, Christ and Beetoven There Were Men and Women*, an odd, long list of the great and the near-great ("In its very truly great manners of Ludwig Van Beetoven very heroically the very cruelly ancestral death of Sara Powell Haardt had very ironically come amongst his very real grand men and women to Rafael Sabatini, George Ade, Margaret Storm Jameson, Ford Madox Hueffer, Jean-Jacques Bernard, Louis Bromfield, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzche, and Helen Brown Norden very titanically.") H.L. Mencken immediately wrote him a note: "Wolgamot, are you crazy?" "No," the good man replied, "I simply like to write that way."

So it is with the Roches. They chose a quirky, sometimes precious, sometimes startlingly poignant way of writing and singing when other more accessible avenues were obviously available, and together with producer-wizard Robert Fripp they have made a brave and luminous record, one so stark and (deceptively) simple that it often sounds like voices wafting up from the street. All the tricks and electronic gimcrackery of the modern recording studio have been employed in hiding not the tricks but the studio itself, and the deception is brilliant. Artificiality, after all, allows the artist to approach shameful truths.

Like Anne & Kate McGarrigle, they share a penchant for modal folk musics, the side streets of Tin Pan Alley, conversational phrasings, and harmonies that are ragged but emotionally right. There the resemblance ends. The McGarrigles' songs are about fragility and vulnerability: "Some say the heart is just like a wheel./When you bend it you can't mend it." The Roches can probably fix the wheel, change the tire, and replace the carburetor while staying in pitch; underneath the body of the songs there is a sense of strength, resilience, and emotional toughness . . . which can occasionally and annoyingly turn to smugness: "Something about the danger zone/wouldn't leave the bunch of us alone." Even (or especially) in a song as good as "Runs in the Family" that sounds self-serving and off-putting: "What a bunch of zany kids we are!"

In an album this sparse, this direct, the bones of the songs are painfully visible, and the strengths as well as the flaws come marching right up to shake hands. Here the Roches gamble on persistence; if they can just keep shaking your hand long enough, you're bound to be won over . . . and you are. In the best songs "The Hammond Song," "Quitting Time," "Runs in the Family," the technique is unnecessary, but in the lesser songs it is simple perseverance (continuation, putting one verse in front of another) that makes the songs likeable. After all, how can you accuse a skeleton (whatever its artistic pretensions) of being overdressed? — *Brian Cullman*

**The World Saxophone Quartet** — *Steppin' with the World Saxophone Quartet*, Black Saint 0027.

*Hamiet Bluiett, baritone sax, flute; Julius Hemphill, alto & soprano sax; Oliver Lake, alto & soprano sax; David Murray, tenor sax, bass clarinet.*

The first thing to be said for the World Saxophone Quartet is that it is not merely a smart device to help four great but underemployed saxophonists pay the rent. It is a real band, with a body of work uniquely its own, and its own way of making music. It also has remarkable rhythmic vitality for a band without a rhythm section, with strong collective roots in midwestern (Kansas City and St. Louis) swing, jump bands, rhythm & blues and bop as well as the new music of the last two decades. For most of this record, the WSQ is a strolling, yawping saxophone choir, a totally contemporary kind of blues band. Bluiett and Murray alternately hold down the bottom, when there is a bottom to hold down, and there are exchanges, duets, unison riffs, solos and collective improvisation on top.

The band is a collective, but *Steppin'* sounds an awful lot like a Julius Hemphill album, mostly because he has written four of the six tunes on it but also because, of all contemporary musicians, his vision of a new kind of blues music is the most gripping and inclusive. His irrepressible title piece, with Murray picking out the bottom on bass clarinet and the melody easing in from above, has been playing almost continuously in my head for the past couple of weeks. "Dream Scheme" (Hemphill being strange again) loses me, but "Hearts" sounds like a modern classic and "R&B" is a spirited bop head that cries out for a full-sized big band to record it.

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(Yes, while we're on the subject, when will someone give this singular composer a chance to record with a large ensemble?)

Murray's one piece on the date is a strong R&B tune more immediately impressive than Hemphill's charts, which can take some time to get through to you. Murray himself continues to develop into a major saxophonist. His work on this album is excellent, and I expect his playing on a forthcoming ECM date with Jack DeJohnette and Arthur Blythe to be as much of a revelation as it was in concert. Lake benefits greatly from being in this blues-drenched, melodic band. His own writing has taken a stifling, overcomplicated turn recently, but here he allows himself to cut loose without worrying so much, and his extraordinary, perhaps unequalled command of the saxophone's resources is something to behold. Bluiett's baritone sounds great in the ensemble, all the power in the world, and I suspect that the album owes much of its success to his deep feeling for the blues. — *Rafi Zabor*

**Lester Young** — *The Lester Young Story Volume 4*, Columbia JG 34843.

This Columbia compilation is the fourth in a series of indispensible Lester Young records from the 1930s. Side one is the corn: some airplay pop tunes by the Basie band, and an organist named Glenn Hardman (though Jo Jones and Prez work up a good sweat on "Who"). Sides three and four feature the Basie band that used to have people dancing; listening to the steady four the Basie band conjurs on "Tickle Toe" and the Ellingtonish "Let's Make Hey While The Moon Shines" makes me sentimental for the days when people were more into dancing than primping and prancing; it also reminds me what vocalists with personality sound like — the mournful yet exultant bluesosity of Jimmy Rushing on "I Left My Baby" and the piquant flotation of Billie Holiday on "The Man I Love." Prez is brimming with blithe humor and melodic boldness, and on "I Never Knew" the section writing is equally futuristic; listen to the rising fanfare between brass and reeds, which provides an angular frame for Prez. But side two is what keeps me coming back the most. Four takes of the viperish "Dickie's Dream" and two of the jitterbugging "Lester Leaps In" feature Count Basie's Kansas City Seven (Buck Clayton, Dickie Wells, Walter Page, Freddie Green, Jo Jones, Basie and Prez). All soloists are superb, Basie gets a chance to use more orchestral piano colors, and Prez is simply the state of the art in graceful intensity. This is timeless music. — *Chip Stern*

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# JAZZ BRIEFS

**Jimmy Forrest** — *Night Train*, Delmark DL-435. *Night Train* is an excellent artifact of that venerable and neglected art form , the bar blues. Forrest's brawny tone is given an inebriated ambience by generous use of studio echo. There is a wonderful "Blue Groove" in which the tenorist's descending trills summon up images of Milt Buckner's locked hand swells on the mighty Hammond; some swing and latin grooves; and, of course, the Jimmy Forrest signature number "Night Train." I have a soft spot in my heart for Forrest's Hawkins-ish reading of "There Will Never Be Another You." The sidemen are serviceable and anonymous as Forrest dominates most of the solo space, which is as it should be. *Night Train* is the perfect companion for late night nods. — *c.s.*

**Charles Mingus** — *Nostalgia in Times Square*, Columbia JG 35717. Not a reissue nor, with the exception of four pieces out of fifteen, newly released material, but a number of compositions from the two Mingus albums now available as *Better Get It In Your Soul* with editorial deletions restored. Most deleted soloist, and now most restored, was John Handy, whose work, though still overshadowed by the towering contribution of Booker Ervin, is excellent. Some even less defensible cuts were part of the head of "New Now Know How" and Ervin's first two choruses on "Boogie Stop Shuffle," which threw the piece out of formal whack because the background riff was deleted too. Of the four new pieces, only the vocal version of "Strollin'" is of great interest. Now we're left with two two-record sets, neither of which is definitive. The music? It's still some of the greatest small group music in the whole of jazz, entirely in a class by itself. And if you're bewildered by all this, so am I. — *r.z.*

**David Friesen/John Stowell** — *Through the Listening Glass*, Inner City 1061. A fine, pastoral instance of the kind of improvised American music developed by Paul Winter and Oregon. Fans of the genre should look this album up if they haven't already. Friesen, who wrote virtually all the material on the date, is a fluent bassist who doubles here on percussion and shakuhachi. Guitarist Stowell doubles percussion too. Saxophonist Gary Campbell is the only other instrumentalist. The tunes are short, various, and well-played. I find it engaging. Fans will find it superb. — *r.z.*

**Jackie McLean** — *Monuments*, RCA AFL-1-3230. McLean's funk record is not awful, though I do have some future-shock when the standard-issue chorus starts singing about "Doctor Jackyll — he ain't got no funk." Otherwise there are a couple of good charts, most notably "The Molimo" and the title tune, and McLean acquits himself well as a soloist throughout. There are two main points to be made about the record: it is not a personal affair, like Ornette Coleman's *Prime Time*, but a date written and arranged for McLean by Mitch Farber; and McLean is one of the handful of jazz musicians artistically invulnerable enough to do anything and come out whole. In the meantime it's an okay but not exceptional funk record and *New Wine in Old Bottles* came out last month and it's great. — *r.z.*

**Thelonious Monk** — *Always Know*, Columbia JG 35720. Thelonious Monk's music will always dance. There is much to learn from his writing and playing. But mostly, I never forget how music dances when I listen to Monk at work. Columbia's recent addition of Thelonious Monk to the "Contemporary Masters Series" is a pleasure. Culled from various live and studio sessions between 1962 and 1968, it would be stretching things to say that *Always Know* represents Monk at his finest. It doesn't. But it does represent Monk, which in itself is enough. The two big band numbers, arranged by Hall Overton, are marvelous. "Light Blue" is particularly stunning and besides, you get to hear how Phil Woods used to solo. Frankie Dunlop is bouncier than ever and as usual, Charlie Rouse sounds like he started playing Monk tunes the day he was born. But mostly it's Monk — more contemporary than ever. — *p.i.*

**John Coltrane** — *On A Misty Night*, Prestige P-24084. I've been listening to John Coltrane's *Live In Seattle* a lot lately. If anything, I put the record on just to be battered around the room by sheer musical force. Anyway, listening to Coltrane play be-bop is kind of neat — especially in the company of Messrs. Mobley, Sims, and Cohn. *On A Misty Night* is a reissue of the *Tenor Conclave* album and Tadd Dameron's *Mating Call*; all neatly packaged under Coltrane's name. Regardless of who led the original dates it's a relief to hear Coltrane without being battered around my living room. *Tenor Conclave* has a casual air to it. Very formula. *Mating Call* is special because of a gorgeous *On A Misty Night* and Philly Joe Jones. Good 1956 Coltrane, but I'd still rather put on *Live In Seattle*. — *p.i.*

**James Newton** — *From Inside, flute solos*, Bvhaast 019. You've got to listen to James Newton. I've always admired musicians who devote their playing to a single instrument. And with the flute, Newton has found his voice. Although he possesses an awesome technique he doesn't fall back on it. To me, it sounds as though each time Newton picks up his flute there is a sense of rediscovery and challenge happening. There is something very fresh and alive about this record. Except for Sam Rivers, I haven't heard the flute played with such control since Eric Dolphy. A fine solo performance. Watch out. — *p.i.*

**Conlon Nancarrow** — *Complete Studies for Player Piano*, 1750 Arch Records S-1768. Conlon Nancarrow produces impossibly virtuosic keyboard music on a specially modified player piano. The results are more interesting than the majority of multiple-keyboard sophists currently permeating the record bins. An American native who underwent political harassment in the U.S.A. as a result of his participation in the Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, Nancarrow now lives in Mexico City. His music is mathematically intricate yet incredibly bluesy and swinging — like Jelly Roll Morton on LSD. The unique timbres he elicits from his player piano are equally remarkable. (Available through New Music Distribution Service; 500 Broadway; New York, NY 10012) — *c.s.*

**Leroy Jenkins** — *Space Minds, New Worlds, Survival of America*, Tomato, TOM 80001. You could listen to this album for a long time — and you should. This is the most interesting record to

pass through my hands in quite a while. I've been wary of Jenkins; at times thinking that he over-composed and underplayed. This album has turned my opinions around. Side one, the title cut, is an extended sort of event in which Jenkins takes the listener in and out of the twilight zone. The support from Andrew Cyrille, Anthony Davis, George Lewis, and Richard Teitelbaum is impeccable. Jenkins relies heavily on blend, weave, and dance through the improvisations and the dynamics, rather that the solos, serve as a focus for the listener. This stuff really swings. The ensemble is an exciting one and I'm hoping that Jenkins will be able to use the same group on future recordings. — *p.i.*

**Art Tatum** — *The Tatum Group Masterpieces/Tatum-Hampton-Rich Vol. 2,* Pablo 2310 775. Nobody has played like Art Tatum in the past nor will anybody play like him in the future. Not even Lionel Hampton. You can't help but crack a smile when Tatum closes a line with a rapid-fire flurry and Hamp tries to pull the same number of notes out of the air. By the second bar of Hampton's solo on Rodgers' and Hart's "This Can't Be Love," you can almost envision him saying "To hell with it." Instead, he rides out the changes in his own respectable fashion. This album has more to it than mass quantities of sixteenth notes — there is some marvelous playing. Tatum is indeed a master and I find his comping behind Hampton more interesting than the solo work. Lionel Hampton is Lionel Hampton. Buddy Rich keeps time. — *p.i.*

**Johnny Griffin** — *Return of the Griffin,* Galaxy GXY-5117. As we've seen, when expatriates return to the homeland they sometimes get lost in the subsequent homeland hype and production. Johnny Griffin seems to have sidestepped the worst of it, because *Return of the Griffin* is a most pleasurable documentation of an expatriate's return. This is tight and assured hard-bop at its best. Griffin has been living in Europe for the past fifteen years and I'm glad his touch hasn't softened. Side one is a scorcher which takes off with an up-tempo "Autumn Leaves," settles down a bit for a very beautiful Griffin composition, "When We Were One," and wakes right up with "A Monk's Dream." I think Griffin's best playing to date is on the Riverside albums recorded with Monk at the Five Spot. His homage to Monk here comes closest to reaching those moments than anything I've heard. A welcome return — and I can't wait for more. — *p.i.*

**Duke Ellington** — *Unknown Session,* Columbia JC 35342. My parents weren't exactly avid record collectors, but as I recall, *Ellington Indigos* has a special place between the Tony Bennett and the Ella Fitzgerald. I think a lot of neighbors had the same album in the same place in their collections. Anyway, the material

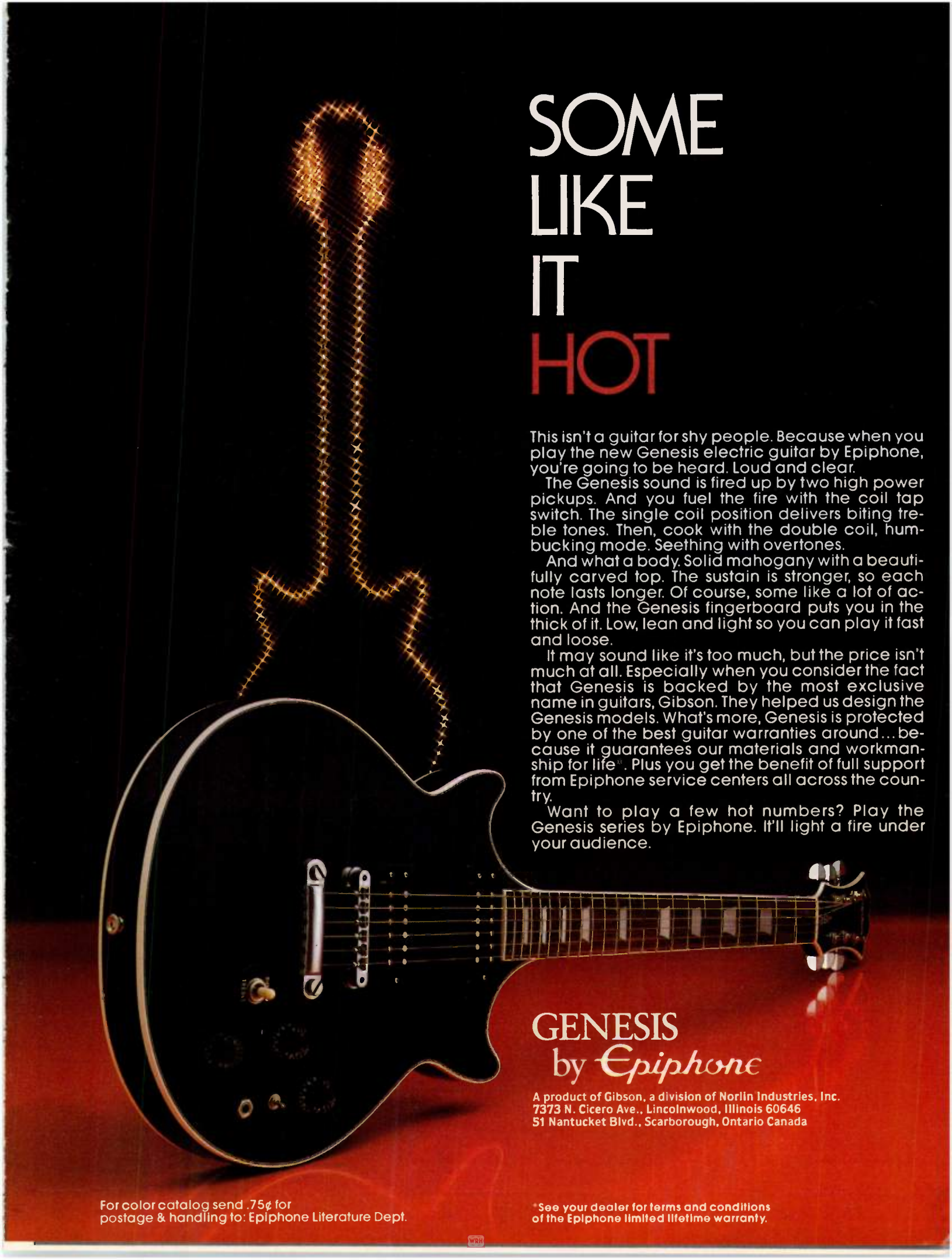
on *Unknown Session* was apparently intended as "mood music" and was aimed for the same audience that bought *Ellington Indigos* but was never released. I've heard a lot more Ellington since my parents first played him for me, and I've heard a lot better than *Unknown Session*. But damn, it's the Duke — and good Duke at that. "Mood Indigo" is a chestnut, and there is some superb Johnny Hodges on side two. I can't bear to think that anyone interested in jazz wouldn't have any Ellington in their collection — but if you don't, *Unknown Session* just might be the place to start. — *p.i.*

**Grover Washington** — *Paradise*, Elektra 6E-182. The tunes lack depth, but the overall performance might be the finest on any of Washington's recent albums. The new label seems to agree with him, and the addition of John Blake's wailing violin spurs Washington on into some heated playing. The rhythm section is solid, sensitive and responsive to the soloist, unlike a lot of other funkin' rhythm sections in the business. This band can probably cook up a storm live, and if they stay together for awhile, we can expect some positive work from them in the future. — *p.g.*

**Jean-Luc Ponty** — *Live*, Atlantic SD 19229. Ponty's is a true fusion band, playing a large-scale, heroic music that is neither jazz nor rock but a genuine synthesis of both. It sounds very impressive at first, but then the lack of contrast and variation invariably make it pall. There is also a fatal tastelessness undoing all the instrumental expertise, but I'm disappointed rather than vengeful. Ponty always seems to be just missing his chance. I'm not what you'd call a big fusion fan, but Ponty's got something that I'd like to see come through some day. In the meantime he's got success to keep him warm. He could do worse. — *r.z.*

**Clifford Brown-Max Roach** — *Live At The Bee Hive*, Columbia JG 35965. Great playing. Barely passable sound. Well, so what if the audience at the Bee Hive is practically soloing over Clifford Brown and if Max Roach's ride cymbal sounds as though it were an inch away from the tape recorder. This is a special recording and the playing is brilliant. Combinations like Clifford Brown, Max Roach, and Sonny Rollins are rare — and I don't know who to thank for leaving the tape recorder on. The session is a wide open free-blowing affair and the album glows with spontaneity. The solos are supercharged and inspired to say the least. A valuable document. — *p.i.*

**Annette Peacock** — *X-Dreams*, Tomato 7025. Peeled-skin art rock with dollops of incest. Side one is about how glamorous and unsatisfying sex is, side two about the rough time romance has surviving the unyielding insult of reality. The background is droogy, stoned



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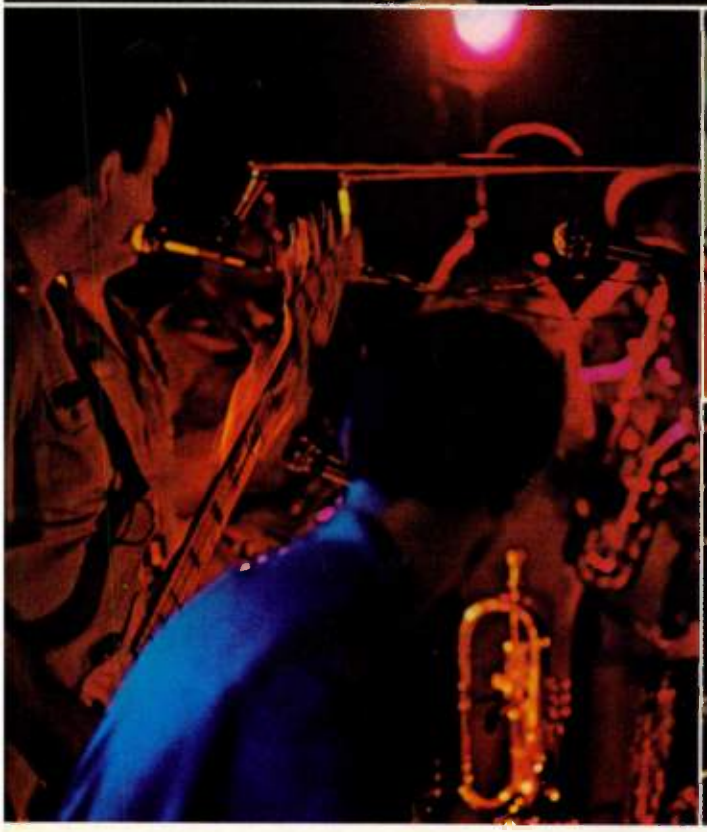

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another one, Alberta Hunter knows all about it and has gotten there before you. Could have done without the horns on the great "You Reap Just What You Sow," but there are great tenor epithets elsewhere from Budd Johnson, so I won't complain. — *r.z.*

**Phineas Newborn Jr.** — *Harlem Blues,* Contemporary S7634. A pianist's delight. *Harlem Blues* is a stunning keyboard display with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Elvin Jones providing sympathetic accompaniment. The two-hand unison runs, prodigious technique, and Newborn's other musical trademarks are all present in abundance. While not providing any new stylistic insights, the album does contain some of the pianist's most impassioned work on record. On the title track, he plays with a fervor and sense of commitment that showcases his superb, but often misunderstood artistry. — *c.j.s.*

**Clifford Jordan** — *Inner Fire,* Muse 5128. Another bandleader who has become excellent by learning Mingus' lessons well. This album is superb on a number of counts: the originals by Jordan and trumpeter Dizzy Reece, the horn-rich, churchy charts, the wise use of vocals alongside the horns on two compositions, the general *esprit de corps* and the fine solo work throughout by Jordan, Reece (who has become a man to reckon with on trumpet), Muhal Richard Abrams in the mainstream, and reedman Pat Patrick. Jimmy Ponder, Richard Davis, Howard Johnson and Louis Hayes round out the ensemble and the vocals are taken, one each, by Donna Jewell Jordan and Joe Lee Wilson. This was one of the best straight-ahead jazz records of 1978, and I for one expect to be listening to it for sometime to come — *r.z.*

**Vangelis** — *Beaubourg,* RCA AFL1-3020. Red alert, this may be Vangelis Papathanassiou's best domestic release so far. The entire album is comprised of the 40-minute "Beaubourg," an almost inhospitable sound corridor through inner space. Steel cold, austerely experimental, and fickle as the mind itself, *Beaubourg* is best suited for those unintimidated by Cage, Varese, or Glass.

**Steve Reich** — *Music For 18 Musicians,* ECM-1-1129. This is one of the heaviest multi-keyboard records around, an hour-long composition that vacillates, drones, and flutters into space. Amazingly, there's not an electric instrument in sight, just four pianos, three marimba, two xylophones, metallophone, four women's voices, violin, cello, and two clarinets. Eighteen musicians, count 'em. You'd swear it was Michael Oldfield or Jean Michel Jarre modulating on the other end, but it's not. A tremendous piece of music that electronic devotees will *have* to hear for themselves.

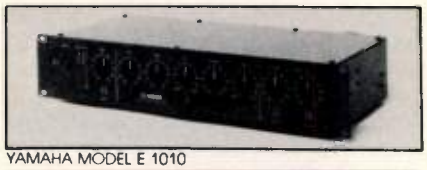
**Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers** — *In My Prime, Vol. 1,* Timeless Muse 301. In the old days one used to talk automatically about Blakey's power. Now, although he is undiminished, one wants even more to speak of his joy. Blakey's current band, here augmented by Curtis Fuller and Ray Mantilla, is not the equal of the great Messengers of the late fifties and early sixties, but the writing and playing are good, and Blakey's triumphant spirit informs all. A great tradition continues. — *r.z.*

**Coleman Hawkins** — *The Real Thing,* Prestige 24083. Three dates from 1958-60 twoferized, Hawkins with rhythm, the ballads predictably stunning and some of the faster items approaching their level. J.R. Taylor is correct in pointing out that Hawkins enjoyed an Indian summer during these years. These sides bear Taylor out neatly, although they do not have the power of *2, 3, 4* and Hawkins' great work on *Sonny Meets Hawk.* The standout here is the 1958 ballad, "Until the Real Thing Comes Along," much in the manner of "Body and Soul." The second disc finds Hawkins with his tone softened and all the ballads in a row: a bit too much of a good thing, but good all the same. — *r.z.*

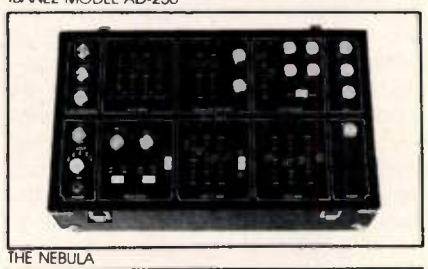
**Dewey Redman** — *Musics,* Galaxy GXY 5118. This album couldn't be called easy listening, but it certainly is easy to listen to. Dewey Redman? *Musics* comes about as close to being a commercial album as you get without being commercial at all. Redman's cover of Gilbert O'Sullivan's "Alone Again (Naturally)" is a bit silly, but the two originals which lead off the album are very, very pretty. I prefer side two, which opens with a musette piece by Redman, "Unknown Tongue." The next cut is Redman on harp and drummer Eddie Moore on saw which results in a sort of astral travelling, science fiction affair. The closing cut, "Daystar Nightlight," is beautiful, and it's the kind of piece I'd expected from Redman. This is really a tasty album; side one is nice, but I can't stop listening to side two. — *p.i.*

TOOLS OF THE TRADE BY CHUCK HUGHES

# NEW SIGNAL PROCESSORS


YAMAHA MODEL E 1010


IBANEZ MODEL AD-230


THE NEBULA


ELECTRO-HARMONIX MICRO SYNTHESIZER

As the seventies have progressed, musicians have been offered more and more sophisticated developments in signal processing devices. Guitar and keyboards have had more freedom of effect and tonal possibilities than ever before; below are four interesting devices designed to aid the electronically-minded musician in finding his sound.

Rather than present a six-of-a-kind comparison this month, I thought I'd focus on four signal processors in the "worth running down to your music store to see" category. Two have been available for less than a year, and a third, the Nebula, has just come out.

The Nebula is called a synthesizor by its inventors because it contains no signal-producing oscillators. The philosophy of the Nebula design is to preserve the basic sound of the incoming signal (vocals, bass, guitar, horns, and drums are all possible), and at the same time provide a lot of tonal possibilities in a box no larger than an Echoplex. The pitch-to-voltage control found on guitar synthesizers is not used, so no adjustment in playing technique is required.

The front panel on the Nebula is well laid out by function. The audio mixer section controls a noise gate, compressor, fuzz, octave divider, and doubler. Next, a three-band parametric equalizer is included, with a frequency cut-off filter. The filter/phasor section allows you to control the speed and bandwidth of the phasing or filtering with a pedal, L.F.O., or A.D.S.R. envelope. There are two A.D.S.R.'s (attack, decay, sustain, release) provided; one for the filter/phasor and one for the amplifier. An optional pedal can control the parametric equalizer, filter/phasor, and L.F.O. To insure compatibility, both preamp and output volumes are adjustable.

In addition to being much neater than a pile of little boxes on the floor, the Nebula offers more variability between functions and much more precise user-control. The Nebula is manufactured by B.C.D. Technology, Inc., 285 K Sobrante Way, Sunnyvale, Calif. 94086. It retails at $1395.00. Visitors to the Atlanta NAMM Convention may see the Nebula at Suite 647, Atlanta American Hotel.

The Micro-Synthesizer by Electro-Harmonix is much simpler than the Nebula, but still offers a good number of sound capabilities for its retail price of $299.00. It uses 10 slider-type controls Four basic voices are provided; guitar, octave above, sub-octave, and distortion. There are also controls for input volume, envelope, filter sweep, resonance, and trigger. The Micro-Synthesizer is designed primarily for guitar. It, like the Nebula, is not a true synthesizer because it has no oscillators.

There are two questionable features to the Micro-Synthesizer. One is the large slider-pots which protrude enough from the case to get stepped on accidentally and broken. The other feature is the sheet metal construction of the case. It seems that a cast housing would be more appropriate for a supposed $300 worth of electronics on the floor. Musicians will judge interior quality by exterior quality, and unfortunately, this has been one of Electro-Harmonix's problems, although it has also been a contributing factor in the relatively low price of their effects.

The E-1010 Analog Delay by Yamaha features the same recessed controls found on the other rack-mount products in Yamaha's line. The effects produced by the Analog Delay are flanging, vibrato, tunnelling, comb filtering, automatic harmony generation, and a few other time-based effects. I have heard this unit side-by-side with a popular digital delay selling for hundred of dollars more. The Yamaha's sound is much cleaner and the sound of the effects themselves is somewhat crisper. Yamaha understands well the importance of how a product feels when you operate it, and I have seen people try this out for the sheer pleasure of operating its smooth controls. To a large extent analog delays are eating up the tape echo units. Many people felt that there was still a question of signal quality, but that time has passed. Retailing at $750.00, the Yamaha E-1010 sounds better than any delay in its price range. This one's definitely worth hearing!

Ibanez now has available a total of four different analog delays. The AD 150, AD 220, AD 230, and AD 3000 offer anything from a slapback to elaborate effects in the AD 3000.

If you thought Ibanez was an inexpensive brand, maybe you haven't checked their line since they stopped importing copy guitars. The AD 230 is most similar to the Yamaha E 1010, and it retails at the same $750.00 tag. In this price range the Yamaha sounds a little better, but if your budget is higher or lower, one of the other models may suit you.

Time-based effects are easy to use and will enhance almost any style of playing. They will add a fullness to your sound which can become almost addicting. Don't forget to turn these things off occasionally!

**Parker** *cont. from page 14*
The dual nature of passion, its dark side as well as its creative side, is perfectly conveyed.

> *"When after all the urges*
> *Some kind of truth emerges*
> *We felt the deadly surges*
> *Discovering Japan."*

The brass section is gone now; *SOS* is a guitar-heavy album which careens along elliptically, spitting out one truth after another. The long road travelled by rock 'n' roll from its inception is marvelously summarized as Parker rails to the heavens,

> *"And lovers turn to posers*
> *Show up in film exposure*
> *Just like in travel brochures*
> *Discovering Japan."*

The hurt of betrayal, of love lost, is somewhat assuaged by the fact that it can be turned into song, creating the cathartic uplift.

"Passion is no ordinary word," Parker sings, and what he ultimately means is that emotional power and honesty cannot be captured in a mere articulation. Graham Parker manages to look inside himself and come in contact with the origin of his passion, turning it into an external form which can be shared.

"You can't be too strong," mourns Parker, compassionately recounting the sad tale of an abortion as a snuffed life; a missed opportunity; a spark squeezed out. Graham Parker is in touch with the spark at the center of his soul—the very same spark which inspired the first caveman to howl at the heavens to relieve his suffering. It is a primal shout, filled with the frustration and repression of civilization's discontents. Graham Parker's passion for rock 'n' roll is no rumour—in its attempt to discover a physical correlative for spiritual ecstacy, it touches on the truth of self knowledge.

**Pop** *cont. from page 17*
and he also toured as lead guitarist for Little Richard. These divergent early influences now give him the scope and savvy to get the right sounds and feelings in the studio, his choice of musicians adds greatly to his arrangements. Drummer Ed Green has played for Steely Dan and Barry White, and he knows how to swing through disco rhythms, rather than mechanically punch out a pulse. "Chocolate" Perry is the premier Miami studio bass player, and has logged many hours with Stephen Stills, the Bee Gees, and countless funky Miami R&B acts. Again, Perry never pushes the beats, and yet his bass lines are like spacious, dependable cushions. Caldwell's music often nods pleasingly toward disco production, but he's first striving to put across great songs. Little touches here and there on the album enhance the song's power, like Benny Latimore's soulful keyboard voicings and a prettily boppish alto sax solo by Mike Lewis on "Love Won't Wait."

Caldwell's career so far bodes well for the future of good pop songwriting. "What You Won't Do For Love" made the charts through its sheer force as a song. Record promotion today usually dictates that if a song doesn't take off on radio in the first two weeks, a company considers it a "stiff" and stops promoting it to radio stations. Florida-based TK Records deserves credit first for recognizing and releasing this single, and then for allowing it to gradually pick up radio airplay, as disc jockeys and listeners adjusted to its subtle force.

Right now, Bobby Caldwell and Ray Parker represent the funkiest, most vigorous alternatives to disco shlock and "mellow" crock within the middle-of-the-road pop spectrum. In the 80's, the intersection between music that's truly beautiful for both listening and dancing will become more and more crucial both to musicians and the public. Let's face it, one only can dance for so long, but the desire to be moved lasts forever, which is why good pop should work on both levels. These two musicians are already headed that way.

**Stewart** *cont. from page 20*
on the back of their necks. The characters that people his newer songs are not only faceless, they barely seem to have elbows or knees.

Throughout the album, Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks add their singing and playing, just as James Taylor and Carole King helped out back on *Willard*, and they give more than a hint of a Fleetwood Mac backdrop for Stewart to work against. It's good to see Buckingham & Nicks offering their names and their talent to someone of John Stewart's caliber, and they sound fine wailing away behind him, but ultimately it doesn't solve his problem: sorry, Mick, it's the singer AND the song.

The interesting, (if sad) thing about the record is that the best songs ("Gold,", "Heart of the Dream") are overtly about the music industry and his obvious need to be recognized by it, to succeed within it.

> *There's people out there*
> *Turning music into gold.*
> Gold © *1979*

Two weeks after its release, *Bombs Away Dream Babies* is starting to sell, even hovering around the charts, so in the best Rumplestiltskin tradition he may get his wish. And with an audience and a strong record company behind him, he may start to really write again and go Rumplestiltskin one better; maybe next time he'll weave music, not straw, into gold.

**Falsettos** *cont. from page 12*
men who might otherwise have been giving them a nightly whupping found they couldn't resist when come on to in a feminine way. How much does this here man know about how I feel? Does he know *everything*? That's what went through their minds as the three Delfonics sang the shy and coy "Somebody Loves You", as they heard Eddie Kendricks weave his silk and chiffon tenor through countless ballads that praised and sighed, as they watched Al Green chew the words to "I'm Still In Love With You" or cool white linen songs like "Call Me". Women said, if these men can do without any of the usual male attributes, if they know so much about the feminine and seem to love it so, how can I doubt they love this feminine person that I am even more? What greater flattery than imitation?

Of course, it was all an act: to be feminine without being fey, to undo a lady's resistance softly yet keep the sex appeal coming. Unfortunately, it is as an actor that Bryson doesn't match up. He has all the other gifts—a silky and slick voice without a trace of country accents, the good sense to use Chicago arranger Johnny Pate's big band formalities, a voice that shakes and shudders and knows how to stand still. Today Bryson works almost exclusively with slow ballads even though 1975's "Do It With Feeling" (Band Records) proved his capabilities as a disco liberation singer—leader, slow ballads are tentative by their nature, lacking the demonstative orders of upbeat music, they require a specially forceful effort from the singer. But Bryson writes all his own material, and that is, I'm afraid, part of the problem—he is so intent on discussing every intricacy of mood and message that you can't recall the main theme. He forgets why he's there; forgets his baby clean looks and that he's supposed to be innocent rather than wise. At times Bryson tries to compensate for his lyrics' busyness by singing in an exaggerated quiver even if the words he sings don't necessarily call for one. The success of "I'm So Into You" should help Bryson—he has only to recreate its alternately folding and opening string swells for Bryson to be the main shy guy of the 1980's.

Sylvester doesn't have that problem because he's conquered his shyness by exploding in front of the whole world. In *Stars* (Fantasy Records) he does more than wear his inside on his outside. There are four songs, all of them packed with confession and message, one point per song and driven home by Sylvester's joyous yet quizzical falsetto and by the most ingenious disco riffs: Synthesizer and bass in open, almost wet, chords that bounce and shimmer against tiptoe drum and percussion. The concept of *Stars* reminds me of old Al Green funk, though the music is electronicized and speeded up. The brassy trebles ring and ping off brown and low bass buzz, and in between and over them all Sylvester thinks about things in that "shall I or shan't I" attitude Green used to use. Sylvester's frenzied cries flesh out Ben E. King's classic "I Who Have Nothing" (Chris Rae and Mike Bailey's arrangement is brilliant: choruses of voices surround, but do not violate, the loneliness of Sylvester's lament), his soprano has funk in "Body Strong" (a repeat of the riffs of "You Make Me Feel Mighty Real") , his weary sexual needs are stated with resignation and pleading in "I Need Somebody To Love Tonight". In *Stars* Sylvester demonstrates himself for all the people who haven't yet dared to demonstrate. (He finds the sound Little Richard looked for in his pathetic, androgynous "comeback", and it's worthwhile comparing the careers of these two sons of sancitified church) Sylvester's ability to act greatly establishes the record. He takes the feminine mystique as seriously as sanctified preachers took God, and tells us all to get down on the floor and dance and shout and maybe feel the feminine spirit of freedom inside us. There we can be what we want to be, wear what we want to wear, and sing falsetto all night long. Maybe touch the sky, maybe touch our own souls. And certainly, no need to feel shy any more.

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# GUIDE TONES IN IMPROVISATION

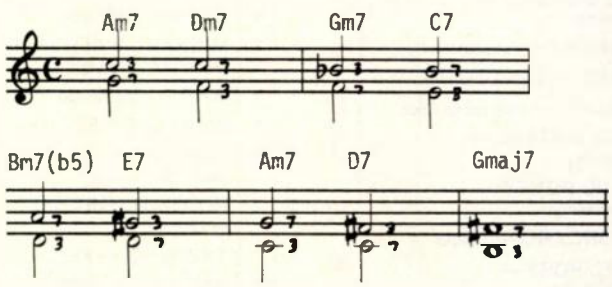
This installment is a continuation of the *guide tone principle*. You will remember that guide tones are the 3rd and 7th of a chord, and that the most logical motion within a progression is when the 3rd of a chord moves to the 7th of the next; the 7th of one chord moves to the 3rd of the next. And when two chords are a step apart, 3rd goes to 3rd and 7th goes to 7th.

I showed you last time that this guide tone motion produces smooth, step-wise (usually) lines that are used behind an instrumental or vocal melody. You've certainly heard them in arrangements, and you've probably used them yourself, maybe without knowing it.

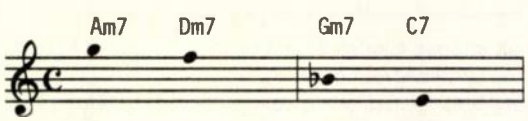
Guide tones are very helpful in improvisation, particularly when 1) the song has an illogical (hard to hear) progression, and 2) when improvising on a song you aren't familiar with. In both situations controlling harmonic motion with GT's will really help you get through your solo.

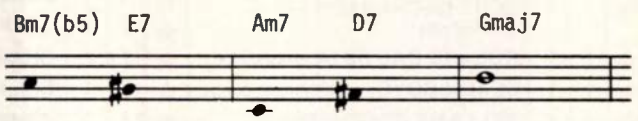
In improvisation we use GT's as *target notes* which are connected together by use of chord scales, arpeggios, etc. Heading for a *target note* gives you a direction and insures that improvised notes will fit into the harmonic progression, rather than aimlessly plodding along and possibly making absolutely no sense.

While in background uses GT's should move step-wise according to the rule (3rd to 7th, 7th to 3rd), improvisation allows you to juggle the GT's however you want, depending on the direction you want to go. Here is a progression fragment with both GT lines written according to the rule:

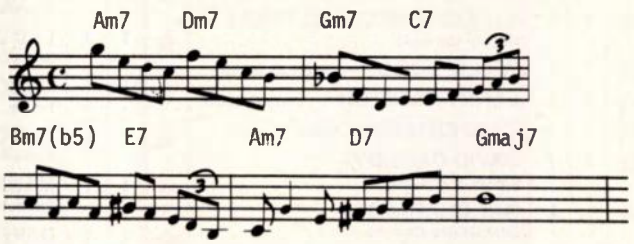



In improvisation, just choose one guide tone per chord (the target notes) and place it anywhere in the staff. This is a random thing—in actual performance your ear must decide whether you want to move to higher pitches or lower pitches:

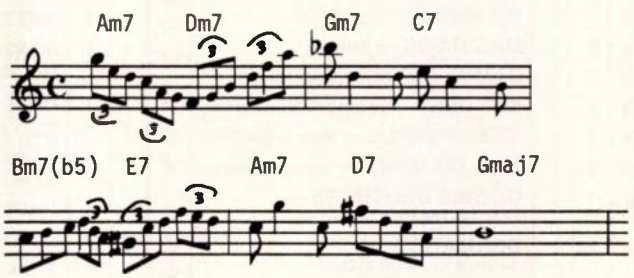



Now just fill in the spaces between target notes with notes of the appropriate scale. I'm using only diatonic scales in these examples, though in actual practice any notes that fit the tonality are obviously available:




Here is another example using the same target notes but placed in different octaves:




Remember that the point to using GT's as target notes is to let the listener (and yourself) hear the progression moving. Why can't you use roots and 5ths? You can — but remember that roots and 5ths don't provide the harmonic motion that the 3rds and 7ths do....they just sort of sit there. Altered 5ths (b5 and +5 work very well as target notes, just be careful that you don't hear them as the 3rd or 7th of some other chord and move away from the key. Check through notated solos of jazz greats and you'll find quite a few instances of GT target notes, particularly on up-tempo tunes.

All of this might seem like a lot to worry about in the middle of a solo, but if you've ever suffered through 32 bars because you either didn't know or couldn't hear the changes (and who of us hasn't) you might find putting in some time practicing with GT target notes very worthwhile.

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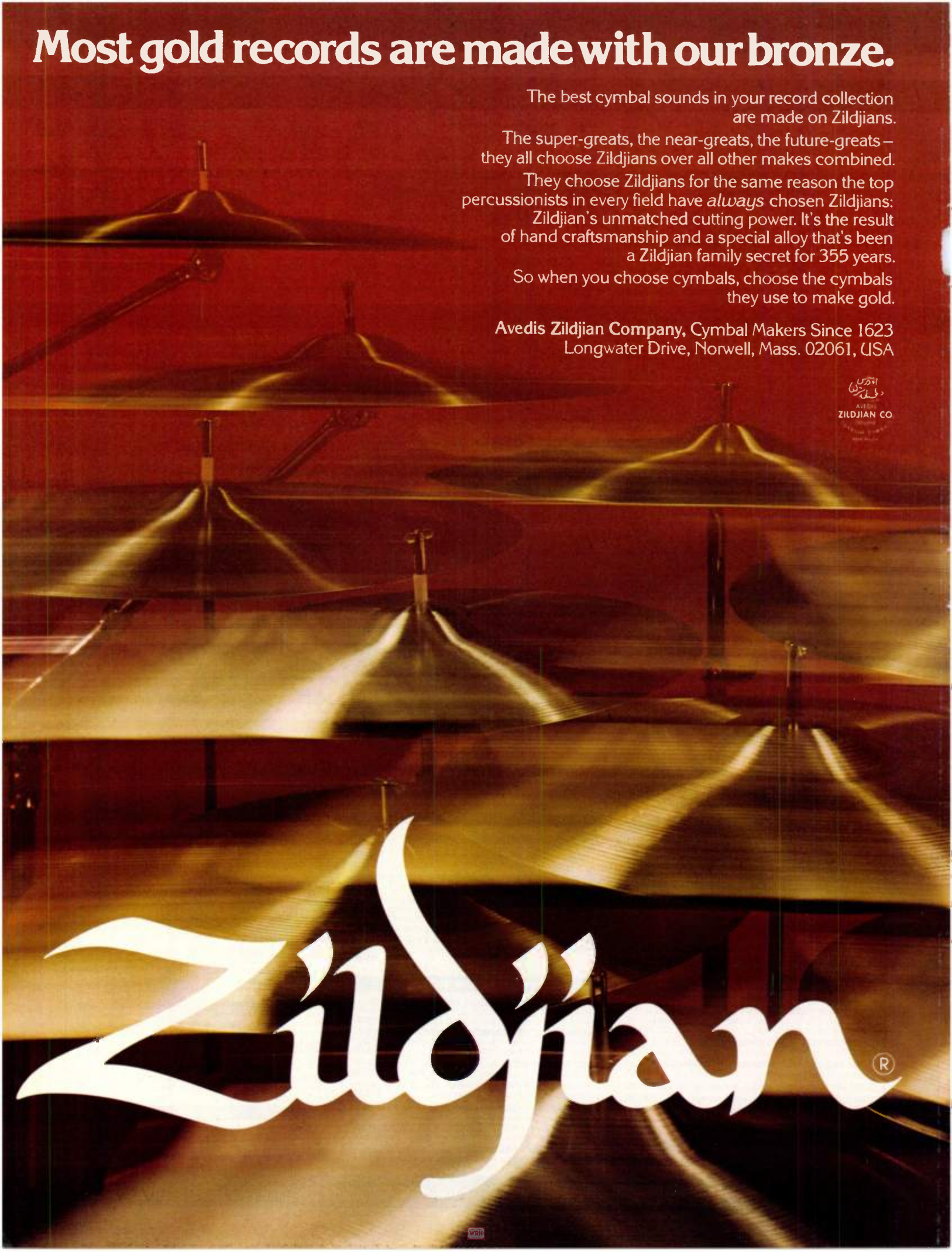
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# STUDIO

**DRUMS/RALPH HUMPHREY**

**INSIDE THE "BE-BOP TANGO"**

The rather obscure title to this article signifies that I am about to discuss my experiences, mainly musical, while with Frank Zappa and the "Mothers of Invention." I had the good fortune to be in the band during the period of '73-'74 with people like Jean Luc Ponty, George Duke, Ruth and Ian Underwood, the Fowler bros., Chester Thompson, Don Preston, and others. The musical events that took place night after night, live and on stage, were: exciting fast, loud, long, technically more difficult than anything I had ever done previously, physically exhausting, funny, not so funny, spontaneous, innovative, nostalgic, completely satisfying and fulfilling, somewhat embarrassing, and for the most part absurd. I wouldn't give up the experience for a tank of gas.

One very important thing I learned had to do with endurance, or being able to physically survive a musically continuous two and a half hour concert. I remember playing those first few gigs and realizing that my power output was somewhat inadequate and that forcing my body to muscle it home, so to speak, and come up to a new decibel level, did nothing but tire me more quickly. The secret, as I discovered after many hours of hotel room-style practicing (i.e. playing on mattresses and pillows) was complete relaxation in a controlled way. That is, having the ability to strike a drum or cymbal using every available muscle, without tightness or stiffness. All the joints in the limbs respond like a well oiled machine, which thereby reduces the fatigue factor and increases the power output. In the case of the hands, it is allowing the shoulder, elbow, forearm, wrist and fingers to work together, timing each stroke so that it becomes almost effortless. With the feet, it seems that the important thing is to achieve a balance, find the center of gravity in your position at the set in order that the legs and feet can work together and independent of each other, freely, unencumbered.

In the case of the "Mothers", one very important skill that was required was to read music, very difficult and involved music, not to mention the technique required to play what was written. Another important skill required of everyone in the band involved being able to follow directions carefullly and quickly, including memorization of complete musical events, while at the same time always being alert for any sudden and unexpected changes of musical course, the cue provided by Frank, of course.

The real challenge was to make it all sound the way it was meant to sound, together, with everyone responding the same way at the same time. And this should always be one's goal.

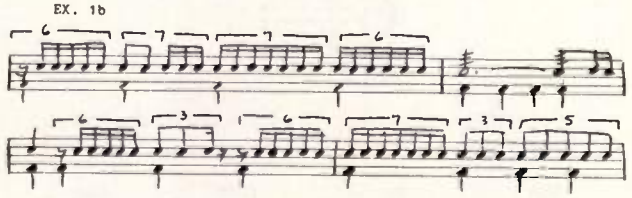
The following examples are samples of Frank Zappa's writing approach. I'm indicating only the rhythmic scheme, rather than the melodic or harmonic scheme, for obvious reasons. The samples are excerpts from a segment called the "Bebop Tango", from the album "Zappa/Mothers — Roxy and Elsewhere", DiscReet Records #2DS 2202:

EX. 1a ♩ = 108

Frank is a fond user of odd rhythmic groupings strung together horizontally over conventional-type meters. The skill of the performer determines whether or not the performance sounds fluid or jerky. The idea is to play each rhythmic unit as evenly as possible according to the prevailing pulse, wherein each note and/or space between the notes has equal length. In the case of Ex. 1a, the first beat is a quintuplet with the first note missing. One must put in the space of one beat a rhythmic group that does not correspond to a typical duple feel (i.e. two 8th notes or four 16th notes). The third beat of Ex. 1a is a septuplet, subdivided 2+2+3 (each 8th note being the equivalent of two 16th notes). One must play the septuplet faster than the quintuplet since the pulse has remained the same.

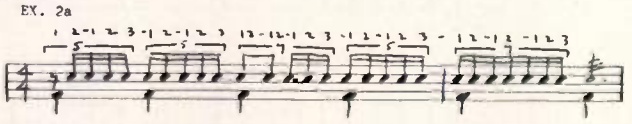
Some odd rhythmic units will hint at a subdivision of 2's and 3's, whereas others will not. I feel that the best method of approach is to attach a subdivision to the rhythmic group. In this way one can better keep track of the number of notes one has to play:

EX. 1b

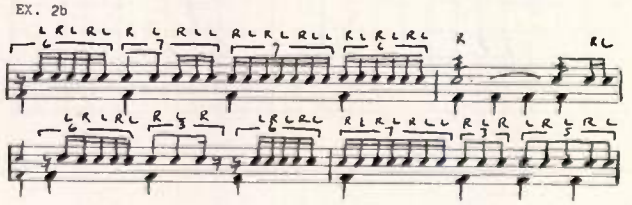


For further practice I offer the following exercises. The goal is to move from each rhythmic unit to the next while maintaining a steady pulse. If you have it, use a metronome. Be sure to use the suggestions that have been provided.

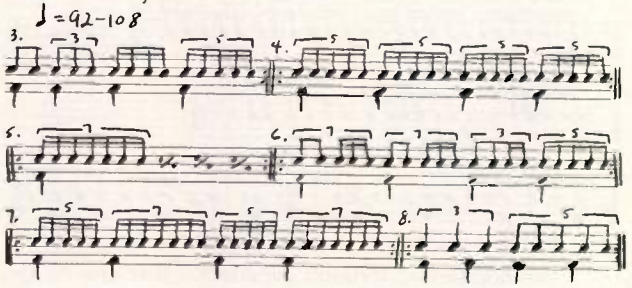
EX. 2a



EX. 2b



A second method is to decide on a sticking combination that will aid you:



*continued on page 74*

# STUDIO

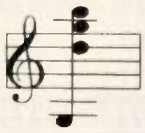
## GUITAR/CHUCK HUGHES

## PLAYING WITH TWO LEFT HANDS

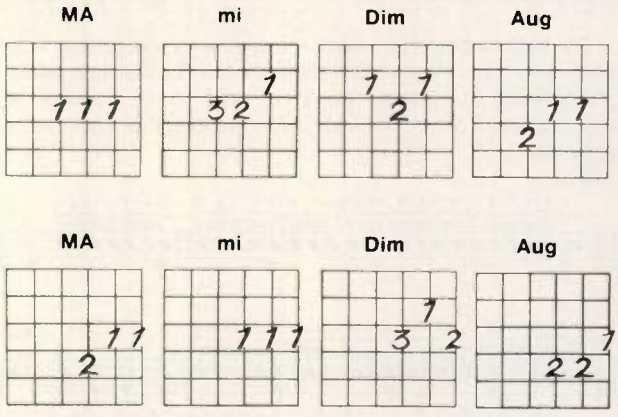
This month's topic is once again something not touched upon in standard guitar methods. It concerns the use of both hands on the guitar neck, fretting notes. One of the main advantages of this technique is that chords can be played which contain a much wider voicing of notes than in conventional left-handed chord fingerings. This technique works best on an electric guitar, although an acoustic will suffice.

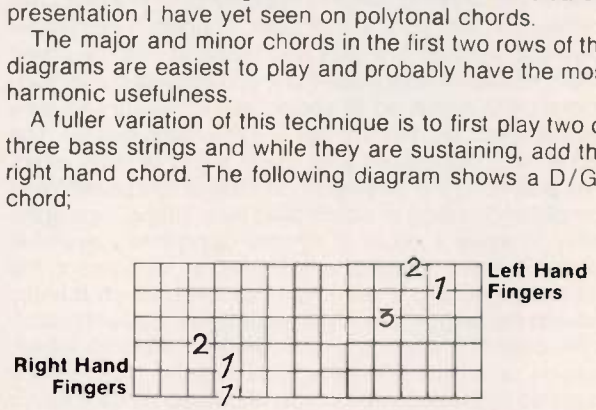
With your left hand, quickly tap a finger down on the 3rd fret, 6th string of the guitar. Your low G note should ring. Try this a few times until you are getting a good clear sound.

Next, take your right hand and slap your first finger down on the 12th fret of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings. Your right hand should now be playing a D, G, and B. The entire combination of your right and left hands would produce the following notes;



There are several shapes that are useful for this right hand technique. They are:




The numbers refer to the right hand fingerings of the frets. The twelve diagrams present three each of the basic major, minor, and diminished and augmented triads.

The next question is how to use them. That in itself could fill many pages, and it does in Jerry Coker's classic *Improvising Jazz*. There is a chapter entitled "Chord Superimposition" along with a chart which is the clearest presentation I have yet seen on polytonal chords.

The major and minor chords in the first two rows of the diagrams are easiest to play and probably have the most harmonic usefulness.

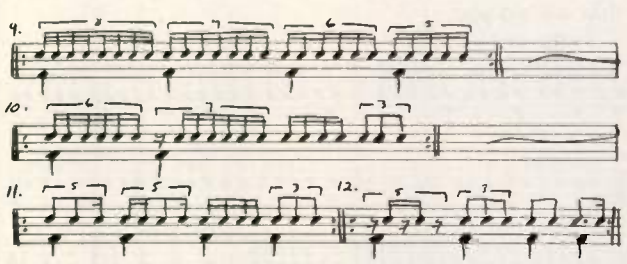
A fuller variation of this technique is to first play two or three bass strings and while they are sustaining, add the right hand chord. The following diagram shows a D/G7 chord;




The logical conclusion of this playing technique has been developed into a whole new instrument called the Chapman Electric Stick. If you haven't heard the Stick yet, tapes are available for $3 from Stick Enterprises, 8320 Yucca Trail, Los Angeles, Calif., 90046.

Remember that your technique will improve as you practice tapping with the right and left hand, and after a while you can play with an even but firm slap from chord to chord. This technique is also valuable for solo line playing, and that topic will be discussed next month.

**DRUMS** *continued from page 73*



I've discovered through experience that one never knows what will be demanded of oneself in a given musical setting until one is actually present at the scene. Then, it's time to come up to the level of the gig, assuming that it's one to come up to. One cannot always be prepared for the unknown until it becomes known. However, the more mentally prepared one is, the better one will perform in a new musical setting. Try to have the confidence in yourself that you will perform satisfactorily, and let the musical situation dictate what will be the best method of approach. Arrive at each new experience with an open mind, without any preconceived notions of the music or the people with whom you will be playing.

If you get through these unscathed, then you're ready to write some of your own, perhaps more challenging, examples. Good luck!

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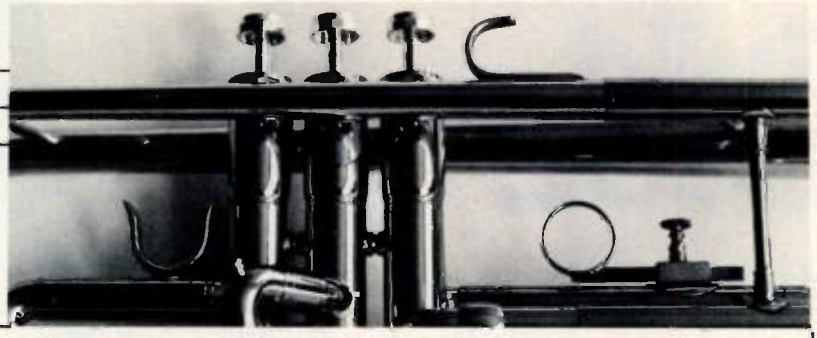
# STUDIO

**TRUMPET/TED CURSON**

**A FAST WARM-UP**



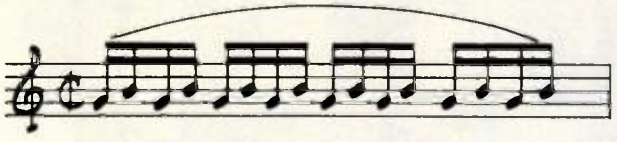
Recently I received a letter from a trumpet player who is also a law student. His problem? Very little time to practice. But, understandably, this young man would also like to play like a demon when he plays! When I received this letter I started thinking about an abbreviated exercise program. I don't necessarily believe that less time spent on warm-ups will hurt anyone. In the years I've been playing I've been around some great trumpet artists. I've heard them warm up, and I've heard them play. To hear them warm up — it'll scare you to death. Then when they start to play, their actual performance isn't as great as it could be because they've *over* warmed up. Also, when I'm traveling my schedule is often so tight I just barely have enough time to get to the stage and start to perform. For this situation, I've had to devise my "mini warm-up" which I think might be a help to fellows like Ron.

On the way to the gig, sitting in my taxi, I warm up on my mouthpiece. (It doesn't matter what you play; the point is to get your lips vibrating. DON'T press on the embouchure.)

**Exercise #1**

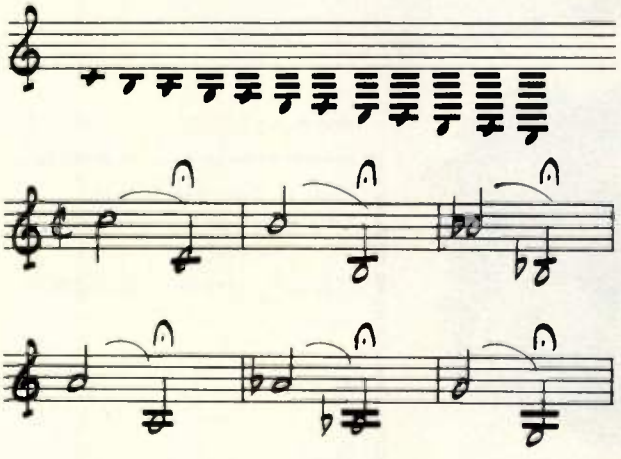
Before I go on stage, I do a little lip flexibility exercise on G and B in thirds, using the first and third valves.

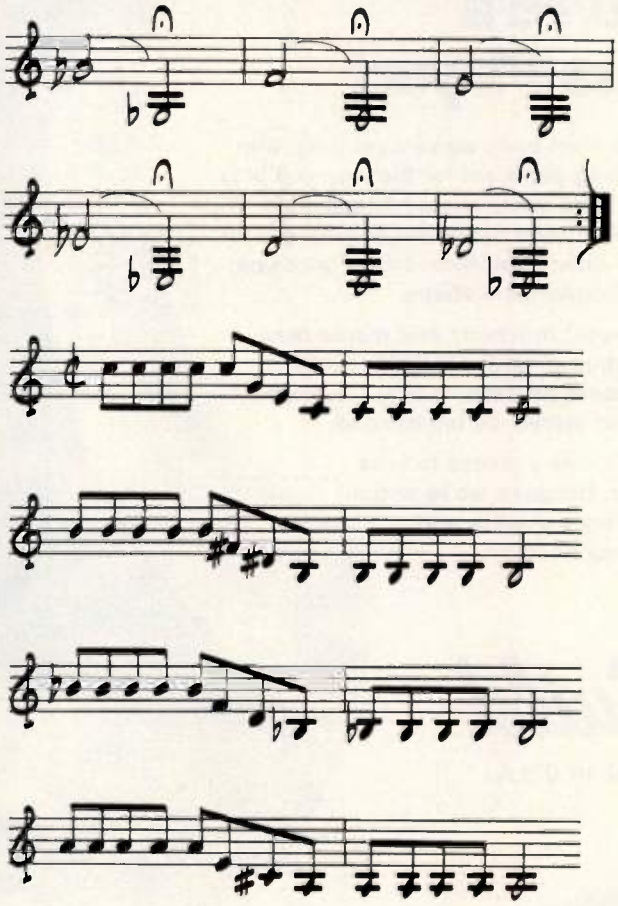
**Exercise #2**



After a few minutes of this, I play such pedal tones exercises as these.

**Exercise #3**





I follow this up with a G scale, and I'm ready to play — and you, practicing in your living room, are ready to proceed.

It seems to me that you would do well to spend ten minutes on each of these: scales, chords, and ballads. Practicing ballads is a pleasant way of practicing long tones. You can concentrate on your sound and still build your chops. When you get to a whole note, try a crescendo or decrescendo, whichever suits your taste. Check that you have an even vibrato. Always think of playing with a "singing sound." For example, play long phrases, perhaps four or eight bars, without breaking.

In reality, nothing really takes the place of long-tones practice, but long tones practiced correctly take a lot of time and can even become boring, especially if someone else is around to get irritated with you.

Finally, be careful. Remember: no pressing on the embouchure, don't play with a tight neck, rest frequently, don't breathe from the chest, and *try* not to puff out your cheeks. (I know Dizzy and a lot of guys do it; this is just my personal advice to you.) Anybody else got a special problem?

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# STUDIO

SAXOPHONE/DAVE LIEBMAN

CHROMATIC LINES/PEDAL POINT

**Chromatic Lines — Atonal**

This is a rather broad area to be under the title of atonal. This is due to the subjective nature of the term and its recent history in jazz. My limited definition of atonal chromaticism means lines that have no specific or planned reference to a key(s). If there is any tonality, it is a random evaluation of the stringing together of whatever intervals may be present.

This type of line doesn't really use superimposition as a guiding technique. There is no point of reference to superimpose over; the recognized form becomes the improvisation itself. Nothing ever existed before; it can only be analyzed afterwards. This style of playing takes years of experience to master, though on the surface it may seem so easy because of the lack of rules. One consideration is that pitches per se are not as important as previously; it's the overall affect of the line that matters.

**Methodology**

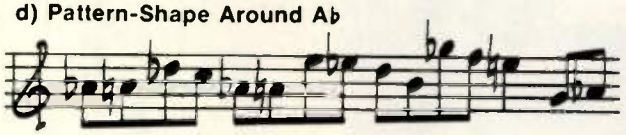
These types of lines as well as their possible interpretations are endless. I've limited myself to intervallic or pattern-type criteria. In this type of line, phrasing is even more crucial to the sound than in the earlier types. I have not considered phrasing and rhythmic feel in detail, besides some opening remarks in the second article of this series. In general, it should be noted that every series of notes has as wide a variety of interpretations as there are people who would play them. However, there are better or worse ways of achieving the intended goal of a musical statement. As subjective as it is, these elements of phrasing and rhythmic feel are based on experience, a good ear and intuition. Also, atonal lines are usually played against non-pulse rhythmic backgrounds, so the interpretations become even more personal and less standardized.

**a) 3rds & 5ths**

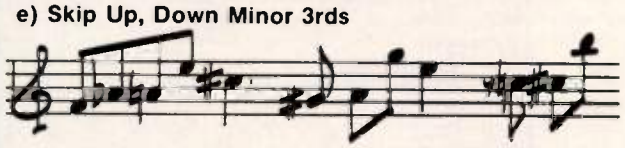
**b) 2nds & 7ths**

**c) Assorted Intervals**

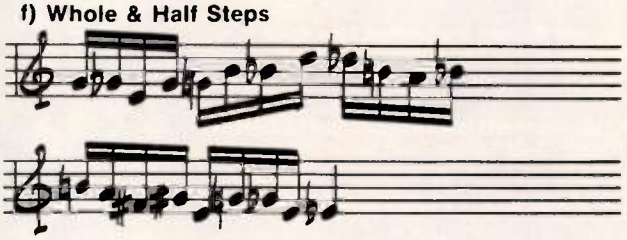
**d) Pattern-Shape Around A♭**



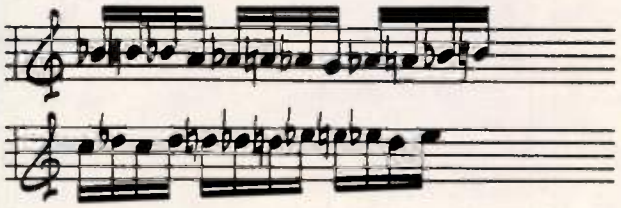
**e) Skip Up, Down Minor 3rds**



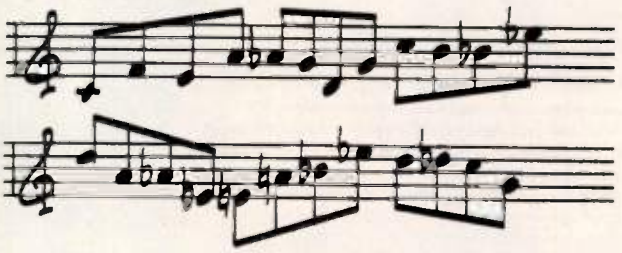
**f) Whole & Half Steps**



**g) Half Steps**



**h) 4ths & Minor 2nds**



Examples of these type of lines abound in the free music literature of the 60's and 70's. Musicians like the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Anthony Braxton, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp and others are highly evolved in this music. For them, it's probably like hearing changes to play the lines they do.

My next and last article in this series will have no text. It will be a group of examples derived from my horns, with analysis where possible. What I have tried to do in this series is give a student some sort of place to begin thinking in chromatic ways. As with all else in music, it becomes a matter of practice, analysis and eventually habit in order to achieve spontaneity in forming chromatic lines.

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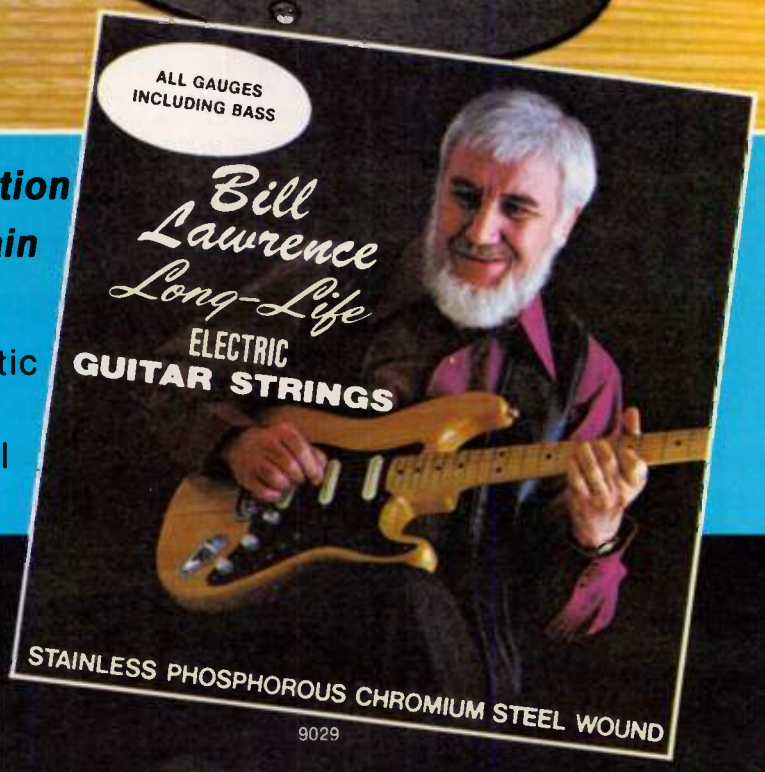


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(See last issue, *Whatever happened to Jazz Organ?)*
**Music Technology Inc.** has brought forth the T-1 and T-2 portable organs by Crumar Keyboards with that old B-3 sound plus a variable synthesizer bass section, pitch bend, LED's and draw bars. Shown here is the T-2 with double manual 61 note keyboards and weighing under 100 pounds. Both models come with carrying cases and both have a good fat sound when you need it most. MTI, 105 Fifth Ave., Garden City Park, N.Y. 11040

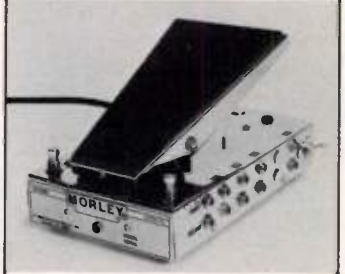
**A. Zildjian** has made available their "Earth Cymbals" in 20, 21 and 22-inch sizes. These heavy weight rides have a smooth surface without tonal grooves and are distinctively colored by their organic metal properties. The Earth Cymbals have an enlarged cup that produces an extremely clear bell sound, while the ride area provides a very positive "ping" definition. A. Zildjian, Box 198, Accord, Ma. 02018

**Audio-Technica** U.S. has introduced recently an entire line of vocal and instrument mics called the Artists Series designed for road-tough use. Shown here is the ATM 41 Vocal microphone from a line of six mics, all using a triple layer windscreen formed by a heavy outer wire mesh, a fine inner mesh and a fine brass screen. All are soldered, rather than glued. The line features both moving-coil dynamic and fixed-charged condensers and the instrument models are available with optional shock mounts. Audio Technica U.S., 33 Shiawassee Ave., Fairlawn, Ohio 44313.

Four synthesizers in one, the **Arp Quadra** offers the keyboardist a computer-programmable with microprocessor technology and state-of-the-art touch switching for exceptional speed. The instrument is a programmable bass synthesizer for the lower two octaves of a five octave keyboard, a string voicing synthesizer, a polyphonic synthesizer that can process brass, piano and synthesizer sounds through its phase shifter, sample/hold and other circuits and two-note, lead line variable synthesizer with pressure sensitive keyboard control over three octaves. A computer programmer is at the heart of the instrument allowing the musician to pre-set the Quadra while also allowing him to go variable. ARP Instruments, 45 Hartwell Ave., Lexington, Ma. 02173

**M. Hohner** offers their Stringer XL, the smallest four octave string synthesizer on the market today. It incorporates the full complement of string voicings including violin, viola, cello and ensemble. It has a triple modulation system and variable decay as well as volume slide controls, hardwood cabinet and solid state circuitry. This is one of a whole line of Hohner portable gigging keyboards designed with constant use and road conditions in mind. For more information on the Stringer XL and all other Hohner keyboards write Jack Kavoukian, Hohner, Andrews Rd., Hicksville, N.Y. 11802.

**Morley** displays their Select-Effect pedal (18th in the line, by the way) that permits a musician to control five separate effects from one control center under his foot. The pedal has input and output connections for the five separate effect generators, plus a sixth in and output for instrument and amp. A foot treadle does the selection with the pedal used as a standard Morley volume or it can bypass volume altogether and just play through or switch the effects. Failure of any effects won't affect the others through this unit, plus effects can be ganged up in two's and three's and still be run through one input. Morley, 6855 Vineland Ave., N. Hollywood, Cal. 91605.

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# Cecil Taylor at the Public

The Cecil Taylor weekend at the Public Theatre at the end of April was billed as one night of Taylor solo and one with the Unit, and although we ended up with two nights of the Unit, Taylor was the center of attention throughout. Taylor's sidemen, even one so experienced and excellent as altoist Jimmy Lyons, have a problem; by the time they've played the first half of one phrase, Taylor has already handed them back a chapter on the subject, complete with half a dozen footnotes. It is not simply a matter of virtuosity. He is able to read the implications of what they can play faster than they can play it; it is an operation of mind. He perceives the changing order of the moment more quickly than other mortals. His music moves like the mathematics of fire. He always makes sense. Phrase is tied to phrase, long sentences emerge and link themselves to others. Melodic material is developed, recirculated. Themes evolve new limbs and expand. One long piece was based almost entirely on the implications of a rising three-note phrase. Even when Taylor's phenomenal rhythmic drive took over, thematic continuity was maintained. You still have to enter his music by way of its rhythms, which are not steady like the heartbeat or breath, but changeable, like emotional processes, associations of thought, leaps of insight. Furious, powerful stuff. In softer passages, as on a tune reminiscent of "Lonely Woman" that ended the weekend, Taylor's touch on the piano is varied and sensitive. There are minute variations of beat, sustenuto, volume; everything is made to speak.

The Unit was merely excellent. Lyons was characteristically invaluable; violinist Ramsey Ameen was a textural asset; drummer Ken Tyler worked well in the Andrew Cyrille role; and bassist Alan Silva, a longtime associate of Taylor's in the sixties, was most welcome back. His fast duets with Taylor were highlights of both evenings, though he did less arco work than anyone expected. I hope he will be back with Taylor for awhile. Like Lyons, he is an integral part of Taylor's group sound. Thulani Davis recited her own poetry to the music with increasing success throughout the weekend. By late Saturday night there was a great depth of empathy between her and the band, as Taylor made flying references to gospel, R&B and the blues, and did some hoarse, wordless vocalizing of his own. All in all, another revelatory weekend from a genius of modern music. Everyone's given up trying to explain it. Cecil Taylor just keeps going on. — Rafi Zabor

*he didn't give up/he was taken*

he didn't give up/he was taken
he was possessed
he was only of the night
his back flew him up & down
up & down/ he was gone
and only of the night
darkness & the powers of music had taken him
he did not know/ a thing
god just kept leaping out his fingers
& his back bent
threw him back & forth
his mouth was all a singin
the night had taken all but sound
up & down/ he was thrown
out his belly/ pushed out his back
he belonged to the night
with only a faint sensation of blessing
a heat enclosing his head
like giant hands pressing
even the rain took him
gleaming in the slant
sound still leapt
a shaft of rain he stormed
he flooded & leapt upon his demons
sound punished/ sound confessed
sound made a balance
of the slipping/ swishing rain
he bent & stood up against
the rain had taken everyone
there was only night black
black gleaming rain
& the gutter & the ecstasy of his screaming
his teeth chewed the air
& spit it out night black
a man a man
a man a man
a man
a man
a man



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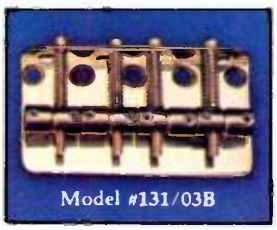
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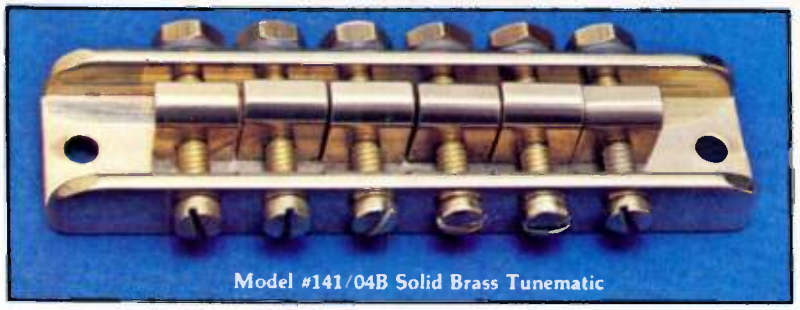
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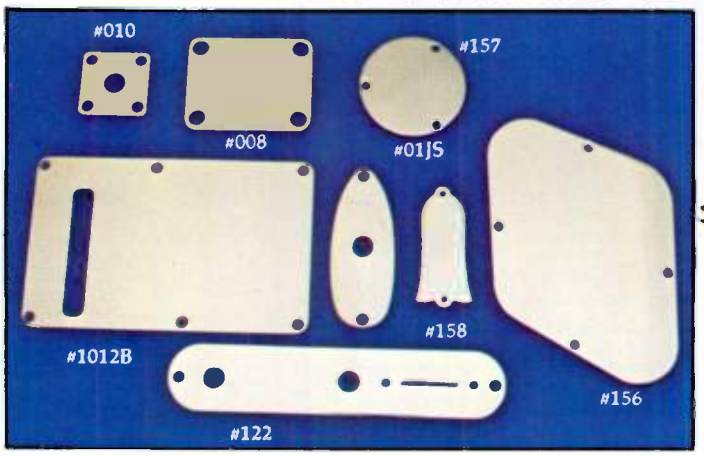



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