MUSICAL

ER & LISTENER

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THE CLASH

ROBERT FRIPP
INTERVIEWS

JOE STRUMMER

MICK JONES

PHOEBE SNOW
JOHN MARTYN
R. S. JACKSON
L. TRISTANO
INDEPENDENTS
NEW GUITARS
RECORDING

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DAVID LINDLEY

El Rayo-X

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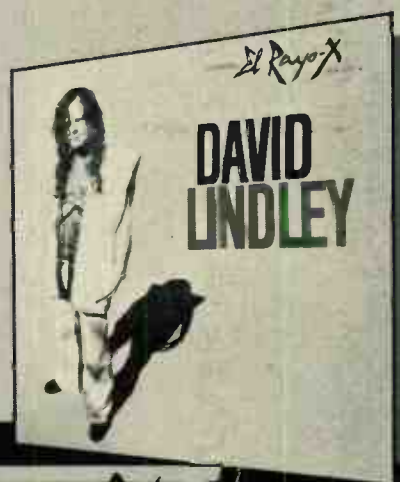

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El Rayo-X

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Subject: Total Percussion for Recording, Performing and Composing

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We Want You to Understand the Future

MUSICIAN
PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 33, JUNE, 1981

Lindsey Buckingham has lately emerged as the moving creative force behind Fleetwood Mac both on "Tusk" and on their recent tour. Here he talks with Dan Forte about Big Mac's musical growth and directions as well as his own.

The Clash is without question the strongest, most creative group to come out of the punk revolution. In two in-depth interviews Clint Roswell, Vic Garbarini, Robert Fripp, Joe Strummer and Mick Jones talk about the Clash myth and reality, social directions and musical desires.

Ronald Shannon Jackson is the future of jazz drumming right now. He tells his own story, from the heartland of Texas through playing with Ayler, Ornette and Cecil to his monastic retreat learning to express the rhythms between the beats.

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Touch the sound.

Carmine Appice
Rod Stewart

Wringing wet, you're pummeling your kit like a human cyclotron. You're into this intense, high-energy, extended rolling thing with multiple crescendos. And maybe 20,000 applauding, screaming people are into how you're putting out the pulse. Right then, the heavy crash accents are so thick you can reach out and touch each shockwave.

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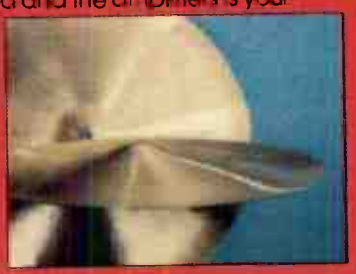

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LETTERS

Letter From the Editors

It's strange how a thematic unity will develop in an issue without any specific forethought. This month the increasing difficulties in making a living while performing live music crops up again and again as a prime frustration for even the most seemingly prosperous musicians. R. Shannon Jackson's mystical autobiography continually alludes to press parties, Bar-mitzvahs, and his first duo playing redneck music as an easier and more profitable way of supporting himself than concerts and albums. Robert Fripp yearns to play to audiences of 250 people and begs for "one guy driving me around and two green boxes." Joe Strummer tells us in the same article that his goal is to break even on a tour, a task which he feels nearly as likely as capturing the Holy Grail. Phoebe Snow says flat out, "touring messed me up more than anything." John Martyn gives up working with his wife Beverly because he can do a single and she requires an unwieldy back-up band. One of the most spontaneous and purely personal musical experiences of the rockabilly era is an afternoon jam session with four giants who didn't know the tape machine was running. The scrappy pavement-pounding course of the independent record label project as the last recourse to self-expression is found to be no cakewalk. Lennie Tristano's recourse of retreat into academia pulls him so far out of the mainstream that his vital contribution to jazz is misplaced by historians and critics.

Clearly the economics of the business of "playing out" are more polarized than they have ever been. While the search for a "music of the heart" is a power-link among all the artists profiled this month, their economic support system is virtually unrelated to that aspiration, whether it's Strummer and the Clash playing a bad concert to fans who can't tell, Phoebe being told her niche by her record company, or Jackson saying that Elizabeth Taylor's press agent pays better than the *avant garde*. Sure, this is the oldest story, exploitation of musical innocents, but when it becomes as big a story as the music, when the economics define the art, we've got trouble. No radical suggestions here, just a deep sadness that things never seem to change.

COODER KUDOS

I'm new to your magazine, and I'm truly impressed by the caliber of your interviews, jazz coverage, and *no-nonsense* album reviews. Especially eye opening was Chris Doering's insight into the nature of Ry Cooder's music and good music in general: "it recognizes silence as an equal, as the condition necessary for listening to the sounds of your heart." Superb!
Joe Bovenzi
Boston, MA

STEELY GUTTER

The interview with Steely Dan showed me that 1) Steely Dan has gone down the gutter; 2) they learned English in the gutter; 3) their album is sad. I'm a DJ at one of the top stations here... I refuse to play these losers... I think I'll listen to Dylan...
Unsigned
El Paso, TX

YES, MR. FABRIANI

My most heartfelt thanks for David Breskin's wonderful interview with Steely Dan in your March issue. It's always enlightening to hear what Mssrs. Becker and Fagen have to say, musically and interview-wise.

In the interest of accuracy, however, I must point out some minor errors. One of Becker's remarks alluded to Tristan Fabriani, a Dan nom de plume from the liner notes from their first album. Also, the correct name of the Ian Dury song that Fagen mentions is "There Ain't Half Been Some Clever Bastards." Also, perjorative contains one "r." I wish you had an interview with them in every issue!
Nancy Sluiter
St. Charles, IL

TWEAK ON

Reading each issue of Musician is like walking through a house with a lot of rooms. The variety is extraordinary. Meanwhile, you have David Breskin lurking in the attic making the best interviews I've read anywhere recently. So what if he tweaks a few noses here and there. There's a lot more noses around the music industry that need tweaking. So sic 'em, Dave.
Cameron Clark
Portland, Maine

C&W B'AR

Whatever happened to Rafi Zabor? I'm out here, living in a trailer with Iris, playing my ass off in C&W bars, cuz jazz won't pay the bills. So where's the rest of the story?
The Bear
Tuscon, Ariz.

DANGER OF DOOBIE-IZE-ATION

Don't let your magazine turn into "just another R&R Magazine" to boost your sales to a young rock audience. After reading your Becker/Fagen interview, would big business and bucks mean happiness? (Their thoughts on Michael McDonald of late.) What true artistic musician would thrive on playing it the same way, the same time, to the same crowd of rowdy kids, every night? No wonder McDonald wants out of a touring band. May "Corny" keep the jazz roots in the Doobies that McDonald started. You see, quality, not bucks and quantity, still stands.
Dave Pruitt
Petersburg, IL

A DREAM DEFERRED

To Don Van Vliet:

Don't tell me I'll never git to see ya, the man with the magic eyes who sees things I don't, to help me through this jungle of people tryin' to control me, they can't but they sure make life unlifelike. Do I have to live in their limitation until I can buy my own?
J. Porter
Sedro Woolley, WA

ROCK ON

I really liked the article on black rock 'n' roll in the Byrne issue. It was very informative, and many people needed to know the contributions black people have made, particularly during the beginning phases of rock 'n' roll. Also, the Eno article was excellent, as well as Robert Fripp's article on bootlegging. Please do an interview with Pete Townshend.
Kip Duvall
Columbia, MD

POET OF THE MONTH

They say that silence
is a key to thinking
Yet music can be called upon
to think also.
For music is the key to all comforts,
a journey to the unknown.
The atmosphere of the world
constantly changing
it keeps me rearranging.
For I am a key to pop music
and a passage to the galaxy
for those who wish to be free.
Come along with me
for the best is yet to be.
Stay wise and bold
forget the old
swing with the new tradition
read Musician.
Champion L. Harris
Mt. Holly, NJ

ERRATUM

Last month we mistakenly credited the magnificent color photograph of Talking Heads on stage (pg. 40-41). The correct photographer is Waring Abbott. Our apologies also to Deborah Feingold who wasn't credited for the Brian Eno color photo on page 49.

The Prophet-10

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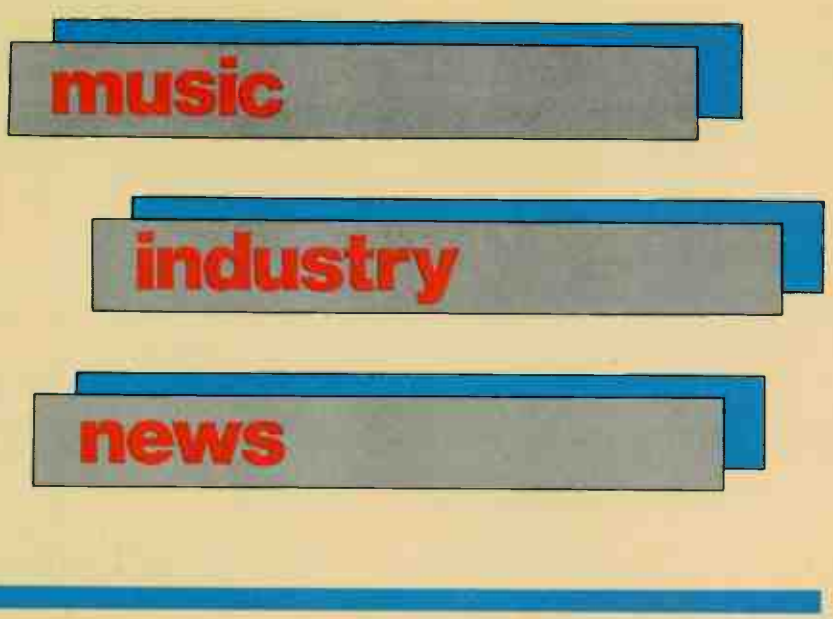


He's So Rich

George Harrison is only to pay $587,000 for "unconsciously" ripping off "He's So Fine" in writing "My Sweet Lord." The reason this fine was relatively light (according to Judge Richard Owen it could have been a million dollars higher) was Allen Klein. The notorious record biz wheeler dealer bought publishing rights to "He's So Fine" in 1978, while at the same time involved in the bitter lengthy battle with Harrison and the other Beatles, over his firing in the early 70s. In effect Klein took over the suit against Harrison and his presence was, as you might imagine, a stumbling block to an out of court settlement. Judge Owen wisely took Klein's presence into consideration and awarded, what was under the circumstances, the smallest settlement possible.

Bootleggers Clone French Singer

As the FBI raises the intensity of its campaign against bootleggers and video pirates in the United States, an international gathering in Geneva with representatives of 40 governments painted a massive and disturbing portrait of the cultural black market. Far from low key individual efforts, the perpetrators of record piracy appear to have close links to organized crime, particularly in the U.S., Europe, and S.E. Asia. It is estimated that 10% of the world market is now bootlegged, some $1.5 billion worth, but in some nations the figure is over 80%!

Scores of examples were given. In the U.S. video cassettes of "Star Wars," "Apocalypse Now," and "Close Encounters" were on the market before the films were released. One French singer had not only his records, but his entire act pirated: when he appeared in Latin America for a show, his identity was questioned. It seems a man using his songs, his beard and beret, and even his name had already toured the region.

Inflation Fight Fizzles

CBS and Polygram, two industry biggies, have announced increases in their list prices for single record LPs. In addition, all CBS double albums will be $11.98, up from $9.98, and its $4.98 records will go to $5.98. Not to be outdone, Capitol raised prices on its once-$3.98 line to $5.98. RCA wasted no time either, going to $8.98. While the price of petrochemicals may be considered one reasonable explanation, it is hard not to raise an eyebrow. One hopes that Joe Strummer and Mick Jones of the Clash, as well as Tom Petty (with managers Tony Dimitriades and Elliot Roberts), all of whom held the line of resisting price increases of their new albums, might execute a bloodless *coup d'etat* at Epic and MCA respectively, but we are not holding our breath.

Last Ditch Soapbox

As the possibility looms that the Reagan budget proposals will cut $43 million from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and $84 million from the National Endowment for the Humanities, we can only reproduce the comments of actress Jean Stapleton, former dingbat, before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior:

"I'm aware, as we all are, of the scores of citizens pouring in here, crying out against the cuts — the hungry, the poor. Are arts as important in the face of all these basic needs? Yes. Man is a spiritual being. He must be spirtually fulfilled. I join you in fighting inflation. But I ask you to let down a safety net for arts, music, dance — the very identity of our nation."

Chart Action

A rap record was the nation's number one record. Yes. But it wasn't Kurtis Blow or Grandmaster Flash or the Sugarhill Gang. It was Blondie. What does that say about American music?

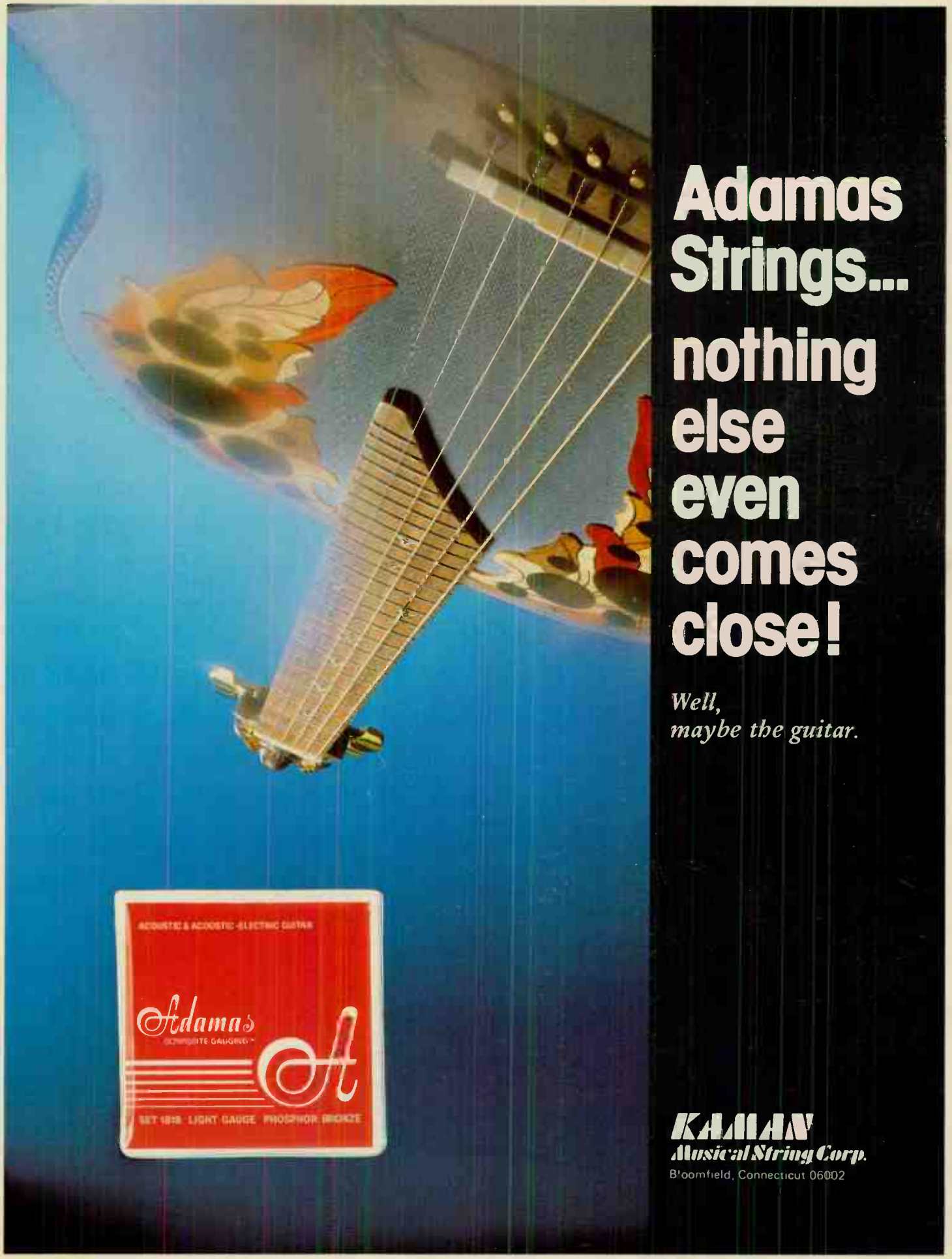
Other big selling singles came from British disco-rocker Sheena Easton, Grover Washington, and Juice Newton with a totally uncreative re-working of "Angel of the Morning" and Steve Winwood's brilliant "While You See A Chance" from an equally brilliant album (as high as number 4). Also two vets, Eric Clapton, with "I Can't Stand It," and Smokey Robinson, with "Being With You," make you wonder if the 60s ever really ended.

On the album chart suburban rock dominates with Styx and REO Speedwagon at the top and Pat Benatar still selling, while MOR angels Neil Diamond and Kenny Rogers continue to "mellow out" America. Despite its title the Rolling Stones' *Sucking In the Seventies* is prospering, but then so is Rush's *Moving Pictures* and the much-hyped Canadian band, Loverboy. What is interesting is that the Eno-Byrne collaboration, *Bush of Ghosts*, has made it to the middle of the pop album chart, suggesting that this fascinating work is finding a substantial audience.

On the black music side, two Los Angeles based production companies, Solar with the Whispers and Shalamar, and Total Experience with the Gap band and Yarbrough & Peoples, have controlled the top album and singles positions for most of 1981. But established acts like the Isley Brothers, Smokey, and Marvin Gaye with his adventurous *In Our Lifetime* appear ready to break through.

While the bulk of the country music chart is composed of good music by the Merle Haggards, Waylon Jennings, and Alabamas of country music, it does seem that Kenny Rogers and Ann Murray are almost immovable objects in the country western charts.

GRP's smoothly produced, pop-jazz has moved Tom Browne and David Grusin to the top positions on the trade jazz charts. While most of it is not jazz in the traditional sense, GRP's music rarely seems as boring as the CBS-Bob James school of pop-jazz. But as background music it is hard to beat Grover Washington's *Winelight*, a great album for late night romantics.



THE MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET

A 1956 recorded meeting of rockabilly giants comes to light in which Jerry Lee, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Elvis (spontaneously) celebrate their gospel roots.

By Dave Marsh

We usually think of Elvis Presley simply stepping into Sun Studios in Memphis, in answer to Sam Phillips' call, and walking out a few days later, "That's All Right Mama" under his arms. Nothing could be further from the truth: Presley, Phillips, Scotty Moore and Bill Black woodshedded for months before any music was issued.

Even more strangely, as far as we know, there was no live test of the new music they were developing — no public performances at all, until "That's All Right" itself went on the radio. This is remarkable in its audacity, but it lends a clue to part of what made rock so revolutionary. Jazz, country and western, Broadway and Tin Pan Alley pop, gospel, classical music and the blues were all conceived as live experiences, performance music. Recording those genres meant — and to a great extent, still means — attempting to recapture the ambience of a church, whorehouse, juke joint, Appalachian front porch or theatre. In rock, on the other hand, the emphasis of live performance is to recapture the ambience of the records. This makes sense: one way to view the rise of rock is to see it as a response to the expanded creative capacities of Fifties recording studios, especially the discovery of magnetic tape which offered much more luxury in experimenting and throwing away failed attempts than any of the previous technologies.

Sam Phillips wasn't the only producer who benefited from this process: Leiber and Stoller in Los Angeles did even more with it, Norman Petty and Buddy Holly in Clovis, New Mexico nearly as much. Which doesn't make rock a mere technician's idiom; it just demonstrates that rock was created not only from a merger of R&B and C&W but also from a merger of the spirit of such music with a new creative device.

For me, the most important implication of rock as a music fundamentally born of and in the recording studio is what it suggests about the place of self-consciousness in this music. Early rock is crude for a variety of reasons, and one of the most important is that it was experimental in the most basic sense. Yet, however primitive it may sound, even the earliest and most elemental rock is tremendously self-aware. The historical implication is that what we have always supposed to be true about Sixties rock isn't quite the case. The Beatles and the British Invasion didn't make rock more conscious of its own power; they simply articulated more clearly an awareness that was present from the beginning.

From left to right: Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.

Most critics, fans and performers have always known this was true — that, to use the phrase Bruce Springsteen used a couple issues back, "the idea is to *sound* spontaneous, not be spontaneous." Yet there's also a certain stigma attached to the concept of intelligent rock: Pete Townshend has founded a good deal of his career on feeling guilty about being smart.

The more compelling musical question, I think, is what rock musicians might sound like when they're *really* playing spontaneously. Which helps explain the mystique of The Million Dollar Quartet, that fabled jam session at Sun which featured Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins, along with Elvis Presley Himself.

The tape was made one afternoon in late 1956. Presley was back home in Memphis for a holiday visit, between filming his first movie, *Love Me Tender*, and answering the call of his draft board. Perkins had already known the greatest height of his career, with "Blue Suede Shoes" in February, and the greatest tragedy: the car crash that kept him off national television and killed his brother. Lewis was still six months away from the epochal "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On." It was such an epiphanous time that until very recently it was hard to believe that the Quartet tape really existed, or amounted to much more than a quick session for local newspaper photographers.

Shelby Singleton, who now owns the Sun archives, had tried to issue the Quartet tape several times, but RCA stopped him — by this time, Presley's recordings were their property. But it didn't help Singleton's credibility that, in 1978, he issued instead an album called *Duets* (Sun 1011), which featured Lewis and a transparently dubbed-in Presley impersonator. Since Singleton is also the proprietor of Orion, a masked vocalist with an eerie (or creepy) resemblance to Presley, all bets on the actual existence of the real Quartet were off.

However, about a year ago, the Million Dollar Quartet tape (or a substantial portion of it) was released, on Sun — in Sweden. This international distance did not prevent RCA from quickly squelching it, before very many copies reached

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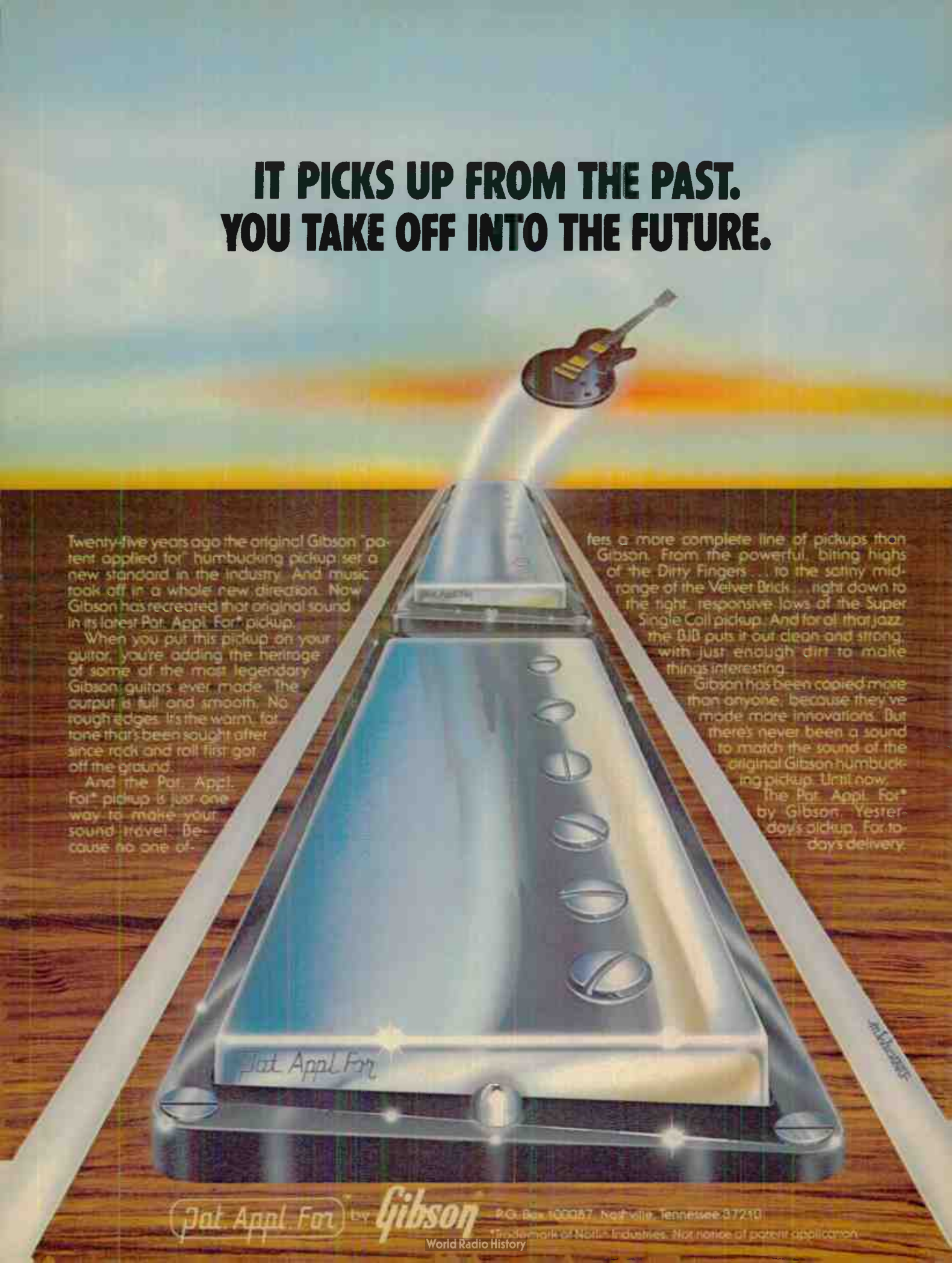

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the market. Nevertheless, Peter Guralnick turned up with an extensive essay, complete with Sam Phillips interview, about the Quartet music in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*, around the same time. So one knew that the Quartet did exist, and according to Guralnick, as authoritative a Presley critic as we have, it was pretty amazing. Yet there was little hope of hearing it, since RCA preferred issuing albums like the current abomination, *Guitar Man*, which features Presley's real voice with new band tracks dubbed in posthumously. (Did I say something about *Singleton's* credibility?)

Still the trade in *Million Dollar Quartet* albums remains pretty furtive. I know about three people who own the album, and that is among a wide assortment of acquaintances who would buy a tape of Presley's last breath, if someone had had the audacity and vision to tape it. My own opportunity to hear the Quartet came overnight, and then so quickly that I taped the album, but never had the chance to write down the song titles.

Not that I really needed to. The Million Dollar Quartet wasn't a rock and roll group. They sang (well, Perkins, Lewis and Presley sang) gospel songs of the most ancient and familiar variety: "Peace in the Valley," "Farther Along," "Down by the Riverside," "I Shall Not Be Moved." One after another, from memory, one man starts to sing, and after a pause of a couple bars, the others click in and join him, effortlessly.

The session is surely spontaneous: Clement says he just slipped on a tape while the boys were harmonizing, and you can believe him. Every song begins as a false start, there is some tart (but never vulgar) banter between numbers, a woman (who knows, it could be Marion Keisker herself) asks if "this Rover Boy Trio" would sing "Farther Along." They oblige, in good spirits.

The music itself also suggests that the Rover Boys were captured unawares. These voices mesh perfectly, Lewis' Louisiana drawl, Perkins' Tennessee moan, Presley the choir boy Mississippian. Inevitably, native talent asserts itself: No matter who begins to sing a song, Presley is the leader, his voice soaring, unchallenged, to the forefront each time, the entire affair just naturally orienting itself around him. And that's the ultimate evidence of spontaneity, for even though Jerry Lee Lewis was still half a year away from his first hit, who can believe that this utterly unbounded ego would *ever* have allowed itself to take a back seat in any public forum?

That much established, it must be said that this highly unself-conscious music, for all its charm and historic fascination, is not great. Very good, always, and sometimes deeply moving — though mostly because we know the sad conclusion of all the careers.

continued on page 108

PHOEBE SNOW FINDS ROCK 'N' ROLL

Phoebe discards the confinements of her "jazz singer" label and returns from a three-year sabbatical with an album of chunky, muscular music.

By Jon Pareles

What a handful: calcium, chelated zinc, vitamin A + B, thyroid, glycadon B-complexes, L-phenylalanine, vitamin C with A and B, thymus extract, vitamin B-12, niacin, and vitamin C with bioflavinoid. Phoebe Snow shows me each one, explains what it is, says "I wouldn't be taking them if I didn't know what they were." She gives the assorted pills and capsules a last look. Then, with a swig of Diet Pepsi, she downs the bunch in one gulp.

She used to do the same thing with singing styles. On her 1974 debut album, *Phoebe Snow*, it was obvious that she'd swallowed every vocal idiom of the preceding three decades. One moment she'd be breathy and hesitant, as in the astonishingly popular "Poetry Man;" the next, she was hollering to match the Persuasions. Snow was an undeniable virtuoso, with more power and finesse than most rock singers could ever hope for.

But after her first album, her career trailed off. She extricated herself from her contract with Shelter Records, belted a duet with Paul Simon on "Gone at Last," then made a series of increasingly ballad-heavy albums for Columbia, full of neo-standards like Stephen Bishop's "Never Letting Go." Many of the songs were overly precious, full of extended harmonic meandering and virtuoso vocal doodles. Snow's last Columbia LP, *Against the Grain*, made half-hearted attempts to rock, but didn't convince anyone, and Snow stopped recording for three years. *Rock Away* marks her reemergence (on Mirage) with a turnaround: it's an unabashed, simple, high-powered rock album of uptempo AOR fare, Rod Stewart, Allen Toussaint, with none of the over-"tasteful" trappings of her Columbia LPs. What happened?

"Well, anyone who's seen me perform knows that when I'd get onstage, I'd start off with the bluesy torchy stuff. But there'd always be this crescendo at the end where I'd be shouting and doing gospel and testifying. I could take any number, even a slow ballad, and by the time it was over I'd turn into a screaming yelling rocker. After I'd make a mostly ballad album, I always felt frustrated: 'Aw shoot, what happened? Where were my rock tunes?' I thought, 'This is inside me, why don't I let it out?'"

That's an easy explanation, and it's true as far as it goes. It doesn't explain, however, why Snow barely got around to rock on her first five albums, why she waited so long to do what she wanted. Snow is a forthright woman, and she's honest about her personal and professional shifts, but her story might almost be a music-biz parable about how an eclectic, and a "chick singer" to boot, manages to survive in an industry that thinks in stereotypes. Having a great vocal instrument wasn't enough — like any virtuoso, Snow had to find the right setting for it. And being able to handle all sort of styles didn't give her a clue about which one would work. Snow says she was "wrongly categorized" as a "jazz singer, which was a misconception." She went along with it, she says, because "I was a very unhappy little girl. I was letting people make all my musical decisions for me, and that's what got me fouled up. Now, I'm more decisive."

The way Snow tells it, she was "passive" for most of her career. A boyfriend convinced her to try for the big time: "He'd push me onstage, and I'd think, 'I'll be famous and he'll love me more.' That was my first real love, and all he saw in me was a great voice. So I fulfilled his fantasy and maybe a little of my own."

To become famous, of course, meant she had to be discovered. In the late 60s and early 70s, to a college dropout who'd grown up in Teaneck, New Jersey, that meant hanging out on the Greenwich Village folk circuit. The night Bruce Springsteen auditioned for John Hammond at the Gaslight, Snow was also on the bill. "I was all caught up in my little jazz-blues trip," she recalls, "and I wanted John Hammond to discover me — he'd discovered Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Dylan, you know. I'd been supposed to follow Bruce, but the set order had been changed and they stuck me somewhere in the back. John Hammond stayed for one more act and left. So I followed him out of the club, strumming and singing, 'Ohhhhhh...' Forget it.

"I thought that was it, that was my shot, and I went in the ladies' room and cried for 20 minutes. Then I stood out on the street corner sulking — I was a great sulker in those days — and Springsteen

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"Don't worry," said Bruce, "You'll be discovered, too."

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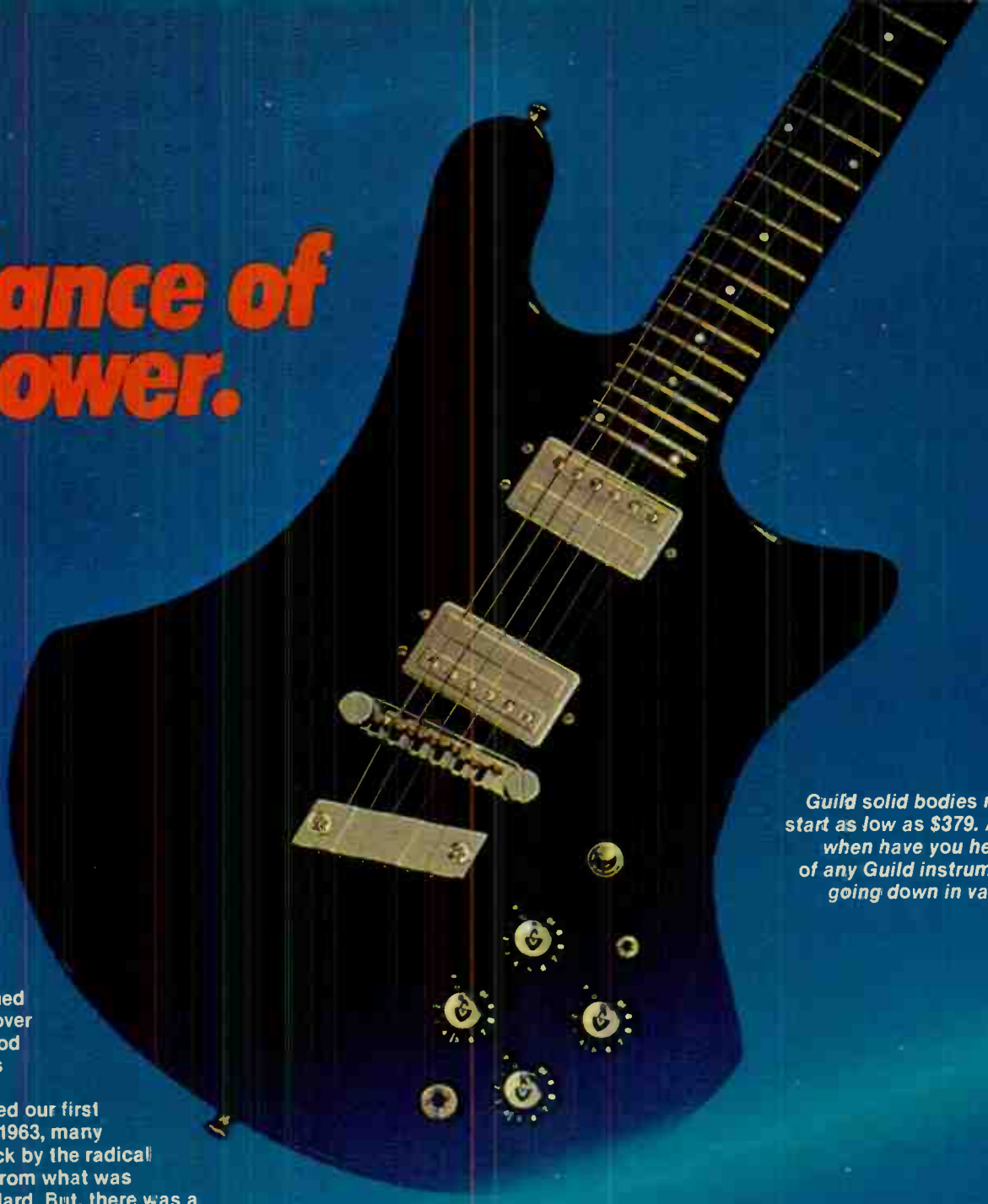

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came out, and I went, 'Oh, Mr. Springsteen, could I talk to you?' He goes, 'Sure, what's up?' and I went [tearfully] 'How did you get John Hammond to discover you?' He says, 'Don't worry, you'll be discovered too.'"

Not too long afterward, at a Bitter End show, she was. Her debut LP, released when she was 22 years old, was a grab-bag — folk, blues, gospel, pop — that went gold thanks to the out-of-the-blue success of "Poetry Man." As the album was climbing the charts, Snow's daughter, Valerie Rose, was born with Down's Syndrome, an incurable brain injury. The combined responsibilities of popularity and motherhood pressured her career into a tailspin.

"My situation at home destroyed me," she says. "I lost the ability to put my foot down; I was very wishy-washy. I was so blown out with what was happening that I'd bring my problems to the studio, and of course I'd bring them on tour. Touring messed me up more than anything. It's the only thing I regret, those separations from my kid, when I desperately needed to be with her and she even more desperately needed to be with me. Every time I leave I don't know what's going to be there when I get back, and that's crazy, that's hell. In the worst periods of her life I toured, and I'm not even going to discuss what I found when I got home. I was real depressed — and that's an understatement."

Snow also had doubts about her music. "That voice — I thought it was contrived, terribly contrived, a very obvious amalgamation of a million things I'd heard. That slow vibrato, that's Neil Young or Joni Mitchell or Evie Sands; the voice cracking, that's Maria Muldaur; those scales I'd sing in a word, that's probably Morgana King. Maybe I was just trying to show some gratitude for all my influences by blatantly copying all their best licks. That's what I always thought, and I couldn't believe nobody ever suggested it. But every critique I read in the beginning said, 'It's unique! I've never heard this before!' But you *have* heard this before! How come I know it and you don't?"

Eclecticism tends to fizzle in the pop market; ask Ry Cooder or NRBQ, who were at least lucky enough to start their careers in the 60s. The marketing wisdom of the 70s decreed one style per star, and since "Poetry Man" had done so well, Snow got typecast as a balladeer. "People were afraid to step outside what happened the first time, and said, 'Let's stay in that format.' I got slotted as this 'jazz singer' after I started to do something that sounded like jazz, and then I got terribly overcommercialized in the production. All of it was a result of something I was putting out — I was terribly self-conscious. I should have known lightning never strikes twice in the exact same place.

"When I listen to the first five albums and all those exaggerated vocal techniques, that's me trying to overcompensate for feeling so insecure. I thought, 'I'd better do everything I can think of, just pull everything out of my bag of tricks! Unfortunately, what I became was a terrific mimic with no originality. I'm not gonna say, 'Hey, I hate jazz and I hate what I did.' I love jazz, though I don't mean to interpret it. I just got swept up in this one direction and it never changed."

During her three-year sabbatical, Snow rethought her career. She hooked up with Billy Joel's saxophonist-arranger, Richie Cannata, and started to choose songs for her eventual next album. "The best yardstick I have for picking a song is if I put it on the turntable and it gives me chills up the spine. Then I play it for somebody else and they go 'Brrrrr.' I've been weeding out songs from over a thousand choices.

"Nobody could agree on what format this album was gonna be," she continues. "We knew it wasn't going to be anything like jazz or commercial pop ballads; finally, we decided on rock, because it's everywhere, it's been around for as long as I have, I'd grown up with it, although I'd had a real tempestuous affair with jazz before and during the time I made the first album. I think that rock and roll leaves a wider field for interpretation."

Maybe so, but it doesn't allow the sort of filigree Snow specialized in on her Columbia albums. *Rock Away*, produced by Cannata and Greg Ladanyi (Warren Zevon, Jackson Browne), is an album of chunky, muscular rock, with songs like Rod Stewart's "Gasoline Alley," Don Covay's "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," and Bob Dylan's hip gospel torcher, "I Believe in You" (Snow heard it late one night on a rock-and-religion station and decided to do a strictly secular version). "The album has a lot of major chords, it's very happy, very positive — it's easy to deal with, it doesn't leave you with a lot of questions. Plus for me it's very liberating, it's a celebration. And the singing is much less insecure, happier, with hardly any gymnastics."

Snow hasn't solved the categorization problem; *Rock Away* concentrates on uptempo numbers the way her earlier LPs emphasized classy pop. And she's been listening to Springsteen, Billy Joel, Elvis Costello, and Bob Seger, although not, she says, to steal licks. *Rock Away* is a confident, decisive album, paradoxically more "commercial" than Snow's last four LPs because it works, yet it's by no means the limit of what she can do. That can wait. As Snow points out, "It's hard to come back, but my whole thing up to now has been tired, and I'm not tired now. I'm scared — I'm a divorced working mom with a daughter to support — but this is definitely what I want to do. I'm a happy woman." M

JOHN MARTYN'S GRACE AND DANGER

John Martyn's odyssey through the British folk and blues scene into an honest and inventive personal music climaxes with a fresh and self assured new album.

By Brian Cullman

ANDREW PUTLER/RETNA

A dreamer confronts the daylight world.

Years ago, when John Martyn was recording an album in Woodstock, Bob Dylan reportedly stopped by a club there to see him perform. Dylan was in sneakers and overalls and wore glasses and a small beard, and when they struck up a conversation between sets, Martyn had no idea who his admirer was until Dylan mentioned how much he'd enjoyed Martyn's strange rendition of his song, "Don't Think Twice. It's Alright." At which point, in awe and confusion and unbridled exuberance, Martyn hugged Dylan, picked him up and began shaking him in the air, shouting, "Bob Dylan! Bob Dylan!"

While some regard this form of behavior as natural to someone with John Martyn's natural Scottish enthusiasm and high spirits, there are others in the music business who consider such behavior to be POOR FORM, and who might justifiably feel that such lack of decorum might not be conducive to establishing one's self as a credible and marketable act. After all, the primary reason that Paul Simon was chosen to host this year's Grammy awards is that during his long and prosperous career within the music industry he has never once picked someone up and waved them about in the air.

Born in Glasgow, John Martyn moved to London in the mid-sixties and quickly established a reputation as a solid folk and blues performer, playing in a full chorded jazz style that Davey Graham and Bert Jansch and Martin Carthy were then popularizing (and that Bruce Cockburn and the aforementioned Paul Simon have both adopted). The scene in London was both insular and expansive; despite the success of the Beatles and Stones, playing music had not developed into THE MUSIC BUSINESS. Everyone who was playing knew everyone else who was playing, and they wound up playing with each other, trading songs, trading records, part of an active community. At least, in the haze of memory, it seems that way.

Everyone listened to everything, adapted it, worked within it. When you walked past the houses in Hampstead, you could almost hear people listening. The Incredible String Band was trying to put together a world music: a blend of Eastern rhythms, blues chords, odd meters and Celtic harmonies; Fairport Convention was electrifying traditional British music and finding traditional sources in American rock and roll; Pentangle was improvising jazz styles out of some of the same traditions, weaving formal and polite tapestries like a British version of the Modern Jazz Quartet; Ian Whiteman was forming the Habibiya, a group dedicated to the pursuit of Islamic trance music.

John Martyn grew out of this scene, adapting his guitar style to encompass the playing of Mississippi Fred McDowell, Hamza El Din, Brazilian players like Chico Buarque and Milton Nascimento, Django Reinhardt, Robbie Robertson, and the unknown and often un-named players playing scratch guitar on old reggae and ska records.

In 1970, when I lived in London, John Martyn's house on Hampstead Heath seemed to be the center of the world. Richard Thompson would be over, tuning the oud that hung on the wall by the window; Nick Drake sat huddled in the corner smoking; Andy The Greek, proprietor of the club Cousins (and the man for whom Martyn wrote "May You Never") followed his stomach from room to room, looking for chocolates; Mike Heron, of the Incredible String Band, came by and wrote "Cousin Caterpillar" in the living room; Art Garfunkel, a longtime friend of John's wife, Beverly, called with regards and news. What I was doing there is still somewhat of a mystery.

Friends who have travelled in the mid-East report that Saudi Arabians who own Cadillacs love to photograph Americans standing next to one of their cars. "Here is my American car ... and here is an American," they say, passing the photo around. It gives them endless pleasure. In 1970, there was still such a reverence for American music — for blues and jazz and Bob Dylan and Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker and Martin and Fender guitars and Kansas City and New Orleans and Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly (everyone still sang with an American accent) — that an American who actually knew and liked your music was a very valuable possession indeed. The photographs were passed around: "Here is my music ... and here is an American standing next to it!" That at least seems a reasonable explanation as to why, as a kid in London, I was treated with undue kindness and courtesy.

John had already recorded two solo albums (he was, in fact, the first artist signed to Chris Blackwell's Island label), but the first albums I heard, and the first records of his released in America, were *Stormbringer* and *Road To Ruin*, both recorded with his wife Beverly. Both albums were dominated by John's full-chorded guitar and Paul Harris' delicate piano, and both hearkened back to the first albums of The Band in the way they treated rock and roll as a logical extension of folk musics, and in the way

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they used acoustic instruments backed by a muscular, almost R&B-based rhythm section.

John had begun to electrify his guitar, putting a pick-up on his old Yamaha and plugging it into a fuzz box, a wah wah pedal, and a tape delay, creating a wash over which he could play small (repeated) stinging leads while immersed in his own rhythm, his own percussion formed by the tapping of his left hand on the neck. It sounded like a miniature version of the Mahavishnu Orchestra with Robbie Robertson on lead.

In the process, he began experimenting with his voice, singing more conversationally and yet paying less and less attention to the words, transforming what had been a slight but pleasant tenor into a smokey and much deeper instrument, slurring and winding his way around phrases, searching for an emotional depth behind and beyond his lyrics.

By their very nature, these experiments excluded Beverly, and after the two joint albums, John and Beverly pursued their music separately; John still had an active following as a solo performer at clubs and universities and could make a good income; playing with Beverly necessitated a backing band, which was costly and unwieldy.

Bless The Weather and *Solid Air*, released within a year of each other, started to establish John as more than a guitarist singer-songwriter; he was becoming a stylist, using the guitar for punctuation, building from rhythms in some of the same ways Van Morrison and Tim Buckley and his friend Nick Drake had, singing from the belly of the song, from deep inside. He was also beginning to be recognized as a writer; America perpetrated a miserable cover of "Head And Heart" (which nonetheless paid the rent) and Eric Clapton recorded a mawkish version of "May You Never" (which paid several rents). But it was the song "Solid Air," written for Nick Drake, that started to define the sound that still graces Martyn's records: a sinuous, lightly slapped guitar line; Danny Thompson's sliding acoustic bass skirting both the guitar and vocal, answering both; light, icy electric piano; understated percussion, sitting just behind the beat; and John's vocals: slightly off-handed and casual, as if he had to finish a drink or a cigarette before the song could really begin, growing increasingly dark and smokey, until the words whisper and glide into each other, into pure sound, pure emotion.

You've been getting too deep
You've been living on solid air
You've been missing your sleep
You've been moving through solid air.
— John Martyn ©1973 UFO Music

"I'd like to do an album of music rather than an album of songs." —John Martyn 1970

Released in 1973, *Inside Out* was that album, a floating, open-ended song cycle that took all of Martyn's experiments one step further than they'd ever gone: his singing was slurred to the point where most lyrics were all but unintelligible. The songs seemed to have emerged out of solid air there at the sessions, and the guitar playing, for all the odd rhythms and sleights-of-hand, was the most open and vulnerable it had ever been.

I couldn't understand the album when it came out; I missed the "songs," missed the folkish elements of *Solid Air* and told him so. But he clearly loved the record, and he was right; going back to it, there is a freshness, a sense of something very new being invented, being formed there in the studio.

Sunday's Child was a less experimental, more "song-oriented" album, graced with gorgeous ballads: a wonderful bluesy love song, "One Day Without You" (which Ian Matthews promptly covered), and a spare, haunting version of "Spencer The Rover," a traditional ballad.

This was 1975. With eight records behind him, Martyn's career was at a virtual standstill. Successful in Europe, he was still virtually unknown in America, where Island's promotion of him was erratic, and where his touring was misguided, at best. One night he would be playing Madison Square Garden, opening solo for Yes and bringing a house of 30,000 people to its feet; the next night he'd be off in some squalid folk club, playing to 30 or 40 students or stalwarts who would earnestly request James Taylor songs. It was enough to drive a

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THE NEW INDEPENDENTS

A pot pourri of personal insights into the galaxy of artist-centered independent labels, including a sample (sampler?) of the latest bumper crop.

By Van Gosse

"They say true talent will always emerge in time/When lightning hits small wonder/It's fast rough factory trade."
—from "Hitsville U.K." by the Clash

What does this mean? Well, "Factory," "Small Wonder," "Fast," and "Rough Trade" are three of the most prominent English independent record labels, leaders of a non-profit corporate movement that is, in a small way, revolutionizing the mechanisms of merchandising pop culture to popcultists in that grim country of boiled beef and Margaret Thatcher. Over here, the "indies" are still extra-structural, but their influence is growing, and can only be for the good.

First, what is an "independent"? It is most clearly identified by what it is not, namely, a major label. In other words, it does not have access to what Karl Marx called "the means of distribution," i.e....a reasonably extensive organization that can guarantee to get your product into all the shopping malls, stereo stores, etc. In the pre-Beatle days, the lines of demarcation were much less clear. Many of today's majors, Capitol and Mercury for instance, started out as hustle and bustle semi-independents who had trouble meeting demand when they got a real monster on the radio-radio. It was inevitable that all facets of production and distribution would be rationalized and concentrated, and companies either merged and expanded or were driven out of business. Now CBS and Warners are superpowers, with lesser entities scrambling to stay alive in between. Most of the crap-shooting opportunities for strange, "uncommercial" talents to thrive, blossom, leech and procreate have dried up. Under these conditions rock 'n' roll must and did get top heavy and ossified, the so-called "boring old fart" syndrome indeed.

This is an oft-told tale. We know where it ends — the bloom is already off the New (Wave) Rose — but the tremendous surge of Independents in the U.K., and their guerrilla proliferation in the U.S., continue unabated, and may have a lot more long term significance for the health of pop music than whether or not Joey Ramone gets his teeth capped and guests on Sha Na Na.

Patti Smith, whatever may have happened to her since, was the first to self-

Rejected? Go it alone.

record, produce, print and press: a 45 on Mer Records in 1974, "Piss Factory" and "Hey Joe," no drums and true garbage/garage sound, but the 1000 or 1500 copies of this odd objet de vinyl went fast, and started something that is not done yet: the idea that the pop star's life can be something other than a gilded feudal subjection.

Since then, three basic varieties of Independents have developed: the American, the British, and the non-profit (which is a country all its own). The American strain is akin to the idea of the vanity press, i.e. spend your own money and make your own record, the commercial success of which usually depends entirely on the group's live status or lack of it. Notable moments in this genre include Television's "Little Johnny Jewel Pts. I & II" (1975); Richard Hell's anthemic "Blank Generation" (sales of 5000 in 1976), Devo's "Satisfaction" and "Jocko Homo" (cut on an eight-track in Akron in '77, the former at 18,000 sold may still be the recordholder); and the B-52s' original "Rock Lobster" (10,000 in 1978). These famous instances all went a long way towards securing a major deal for the artistes involved, and even today most up-and-comers conceive of the independent record as a purely intermediate stage, something to sell at gigs, leave with club DJs, and send to A&R men (most of the ones I know admit they're more likely to throw a stray 7-inch on the turntable than bother to sift through a mountain of tapes).

The British style in independent discs has been more polyglot, principally because England is smaller and more densely populated than the U.S., and so the problems of distribution are much less formidable. Britain's youth are also much more self-conscious, self-defining, impoverished and combative, which inclines them to be less blandly conservative and AM-pablum-fed than suburban teens Stateside. Since 1975 there has been an extraordinary proliferation of mini-majors, major-minis, micro-minis, and peculiar personal sub-operations in the recordbiz there. They have reaped many fruits: Stiff with Ian Dury; Beggar's Banquet with Gary Numan; the Specials on their own label, Two Tone, which signs bands and then leases the records to Chrysalis. One could go on, but the main point is that the big firms, to compete, must search out and sign up the same kind of wild and woolly, raw, experimental bands that the indies have cleaned up with. Very healthy for the state of the art, at least for a while.

So far I've only mentioned alternate routes into the traditional marketplace: that arena of buy/sell/buy where music, good or bad, is at heart a *pure commodity*, essentially identical to feminine napkins or nasal spray. The Third Way, that removes the profit motive and substitutes cooperativism, was pioneered by Rough Trade, originally only a record store in one of the funkier parts of London. Casually, cautiously, a couple of years ago they began to search out bands from the outer limits, like Northern Ireland's hortatory storm-of-battle punks, Stiff Little Fingers, who shocked conventional pop opinion when their militantly anti-British LP, *Alternative Ulster*, went Top Ten, giving RT a big boost.

Uniquely, Rough Trade makes official, handshake deals for one record at a time, usually only singles, and thus pass up all guarantees of benefiting in the long term if any of their groups becomes popular. Bands do not get big cushiony advances, wined and dined, go into debt, dicker and bicker. The priority was/is always on unconditional artistic freedom and survival, not fast bucks and faddism. RT also distributes, and quite effectively, the products of dozens of even smaller labels. One of these was

LA BELLA'S MUSICIAN of NOTE

DAVE PEGG

Born: November 2, 1947 in Birmingham, England.

Home: Residing in Cropredy (near Banbury! near Oxford! England.)

Profession: Musician. Currently playing bass guitar, mandolin, and doing vocals with *Jethro Tull.*

Earliest Musical Experience: Drummer in boy scout band - age 11. Took up guitar - age 16 and bass guitar -age 18. Self taught.

Major Influences: 60's R&B Music, Tamla Motown and a wide range of bass players from Paul McCartney to Jaco Pastorious.

Latest Musical Accomplishments: World tour with "Jethro Tull", including 35 American and 30 European dates. Current *"Jethro Tull"* album *A.*

Keynotes: Was a bassist in the English Folk-Rock band "Fairport Convention" from 1970-1979. Have played on over 50 English albums as a session musician.

On Today's Music: I think that the quality and standard of some of our younger *musos* is staggering. However, I get upset about the lack of places to perform—which I'm afraid is a desperate situation in England. I hope things will improve. Over the past few years, it has been nice to see the bass guitar come out of its supporting role in the rhythm section, to a more featured instrument.

On Strings: I use *La Bella* "Deep Talkin' Bass", light gauge *roundwounds* on my fretted bass, and light gauge *quarter rounds* on my fretless.

Photo by Nancy Fischer

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Manchester's Factory Records, who yielded Joy Division, probably the most important British band of 1980, and major hitmakers with a #1 album, *Closer*, and an epic, tragic seven-inch, "Love Will Tear Us Apart," that placed first in most U.K. Readers Polls for last year.

That's the state of independent discs in England today, and it's not at all rotten; in fact, one could even say they've got quite a future. On our side of the water, the picture is less clear. These days practically the first thing most "Nu-Wave" bands do, before they've even found a basement and fired their first ten drummers, is press up 1000 copies of a rehearsal cassette. Naturally, said platters are almost invariably obnoxious crap. At least the works of Styx etc., are in tune. There are also a number of mini-majors, like the International Record Syndicate, brainchild of the notorious and brilliant Ian Copeland (his brother Stewart drums for The Police, whom Ian also manages). I.R.S. is affiliated with A&M, which is itself distributed by R.C.A. When one of their records hits 15,000 in sales it becomes an A&M record, and receives promotion, distribution, all the usual goodies.

Perhaps the most important development for anyone trying to make an end run around the corporate structures so as to bring pop to the populace was the growth of dance-rock clubs with independent and progressive DJs, starting in New York in late '78 with the Mudd Club and Hurrah and spreading like a rash ever since. Crucial to this *and* to the viability of "indies" was when ex-RCA college promo person, Mark Josephson, and ex-Mudd DJ Danny Jeaps, formed Rockpool Promotions Ltd. in mid-1979 based on the idea of local disco record pools, that collect promo discs and get them to the DJs. These two distribute (servicing, it's called) records from any and every source, Clive Davis or your kid brother's power trio, to a select spread of 75 clubs and 50 college stations across the length and breadth of the nation, providing some kind of feasible substitute for the great shibboleth of recordbiz reactionaries: "Airplay." And it works. I know, because I'm one of their lowly subscribers who toils over a hot turntable.

Which brings us to the personal side of this fact-filled piece. Believe it or not, I own and preside over a recording conglomerate. Of course, things have been a little slow since our last release in May of 1978, but never mind that. Here's the story: when my particular honest, hard-working, God-fearing little outfit decided to chuck it all in February of that year, after playing Tuesdays at Max's Kansas City and eating Chili Burger surprise for a year, we decided to go out with a bang. How better than with a legacy that would remind the world of its loss? Thus was formed China Company Records, named after the landlord's store on the

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A REQUIEM FOR LENNIE TRISTANO

Shrouded behind his personal isolation, his academic preciseness and a reverse racism, Lennie Tristano's vital voice and his important contribution to jazz are finally being heard.

By Bob Blumenthal

Lennie Tristano died in 1978, yet in a sense he had already been long gone. Back in 1951, when the notion of a "cool" alternative to bebop was beginning to gain public acceptance and Tristano was acknowledged as the movement's standard-bearer, the pianist opened a teaching studio and bowed out of the club-and-recording rat race. Over the following quarter-century, only two albums' worth of music appeared, *Lennie Tristano* (from 1955) and *The New Tristano* (1961), as technically imposing as they were hard to come by. There was also the odd public performance, at the old Half Note in Manhattan or on brief European tours, though even the concerts stopped by 1968. Tristano preferred to stay at home in Hollis, Long Island with his piano, his intensely devoted students, and his largely unheard music.

Isolation has a way of ossifying received wisdom, and the image Tristano generated as a 1950 cult figure remained for the next 30 years, draped over the music like a curtain which must be parted in order to gain a total view. Certainly the reverence with which Tristano's students received his every pronouncement didn't help, for he was viewed as an iron-willed Svengali rather than a beneficent guru. Al Haig called him a witch doctor, and at one time Tristano's relationship to then-disciples Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh seemed as even-handed as the current arrangement of John and Bo Derek. Even without the entourage he would have seemed out of place, a blind white theoretician in the fast lane of unschooled black innovators. And then there was the sound of his bands. Gerry Mulligan once cited Tristano as the individual responsible for the real birth of the cool: "It's hard to say unemotional, because it's not exactly that, but there was a coolness about his whole approach in terms of the dynamic level."

So the story has gone — Tristano stands for the academic, unemotional, white alternative to bebop. This despite the fact that, like many boppers, Tristano confined his performances to variations on the chord changes of pop tunes, and despite his repeated acknowledgement of Lester Young, Charlie Parker, and Bud Powell as major inspirations. I'm not sure the music bears the stereotype out, however; and now that Atlantic has repackaged its Tristano albums into the two-record set *Requiem*, and the pianist's estate has released *Lennie Tristano Quintet Live at Birdland 1949* (available from Jazz Records, Box 23071, Hollis, N.Y. 11423), it might be the perfect time to reconsider Tristano's place among the modernists.

HERMAN LEONARD

The real birth of the cool.

From all indications, Tristano spent his entire life in love with the piano, though his musical interests intensified when he lost his sight at age nine. Two years later he was working gigs in his native Chicago, and up through his early twenties he took all kinds of jobs (Dixieland, Latin, novelty), on clarinet and alto sax as well as piano. He sprinted through entire courses in a matter of weeks at the American Conservatory of Music, and began taking on students at age 23. People who heard him in Chicago during World War II swear he could duplicate Art Tatum performances note for note.

His first recordings, four 1945 solos heard on the *Live at Birdland* album, convey the powerful keyboard command of Tatum and Earl Hines, plus the thick, brooding harmonies, oddly broken arpeggios, blunt sound and insistent technique that marked his initial New York recordings from the following two years. (A 1947 trio session, with sideman/student Billy Bauer on guitar, is included in Savoy's anthology *The Modern Jazz Piano Album*.) Tristano's music already revealed certain priorities — long melodic lines, harmonic extensions two or three steps removed from the root chord, conversational interplay between the solo instruments — yet rhythmically it lacked that mix of confrontational snap and flowing grace heard in the era's leading black innovators.

Then, in 1947, Tristano heard Bud Powell, and as he told a WKCR interviewer in 1976, "that changed everything. Bud made me understand more how to get it into the piano, how to play what you really hear and feel." Powell had speed, sophistication, boundless energy, incredibly precise articulation ("Bud gives every note his complete attention," is the way Tristano put it), everything Tristano required to reinforce his own strengths, then take them a step further.

Yet at first Tristano could only apply Powell's example on his own preestablished terms. Bach was among Tristano's first musical heroes, and the seemingly self-generating sweep of a Bach invention remained his melodic ideal. To the extent that the linear spontaneity of Powell and a few select others (primarily Parker and Fats Navarro among the boppers) could be applied to the goal of creating spontaneous melody, Tristano was eager to embrace their music. The more visceral aspects of bebop, its highly inflected tonal character and volcanic rhythmic underpinning, were only shallow distractions; in Tristano's mind, "easy" pleasures that detracted from the purer melodic goal. Thus he encouraged saxophonists Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh to play with thin, vibratoless tones, while drummers were instructed to forsake polyrhythmic commentary in favor of unobtrusive time.

Tristano's major band recordings,

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Give the gift of music.

quintets and sextets with Konitz, Marsh, and Bauer, were made in 1949 and are now available on two anthologies, *First Recordings 1949/50* (Prestige) and *Crosscurrents* (Capitol). The music is technically precise, dynamically muted, and for all its harmonic sophistication compulsively linear. The wave-like phrases, often heard in counterpoint between piano and saxes, seem to float, their rhythmic interest sustained by odd shapes rather than overt syncopation. While the band's work has a strong intellectual appeal, emotionally it sounds cold; the landmark collective improvisations "Intuition" and "Digression" (on *Crosscurrents*) are particularly devoid of the visceral impact we have come to expect from free music.

Tristano pursued the quest for sustained spontaneous melody with even greater determination once he gave up performing to concentrate on teaching. From various accounts he was the most demanding of professors. Students would learn scale and chord patterns by repeating them over and over, in all keys; they would be instructed to sing along with Charlie Parker solos, or to simply play rhythms on a table with their fingers for long stretches. The goal was to internalize the spectrum of keyboard techniques, to reach a point through drill and study where all of these resources could be called forth automatically. "It's not intellectualized," Tristano explained to Ira Gitler, "it's felt."

As *Requiem* makes clear, the upshot of this methodology was a more comprehensive incorporation of Bud Powell than the 1949 band records indicate. There is tremendous drive and steely attack in "Line Up" and "East 32nd," two trio performances from 1955, plus a solo blues in memory of Charlie Parker that dispels the notion of Tristano as unfeeling. Yet detractors could still dismiss him as mechanical, since much of the 1955 material involved studio multitracking (an unheard of practice at the time). The trio performances were actually piano solos laid down over prerecorded rhythm tracks, with their speeds altered to achieve the rhythmic continuum Tristano despaired of finding in live bassists and drummers. "Turkish Mambo," a precursor to Bill Evans' *Conversations with Myself*, was three overdubbed piano parts, each in a different meter. For all the obvious passion in these performances, the technological touches only underlined Tristano's image as a cold musician.

By 1961 and *The New Tristano*, all of the melodic and rhythmic complexity could be accomplished without studio aids. Tristano now kept his own flawless time with an endlessly varied bass line in the left hand, while flowing ideas, angular motifs, and counter-rhythmic jabs were provided by the right hand. There was more variety in the piano sound, with shadings running a gamut from brittle to bright, and a touch that gave weight and shape to every note. The solos (all of which are derived from the likes of "My Melancholy Baby," "Indiana," and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To") burn with an intense brilliance that brings Powell immediately to mind, especially the phenomenal "C Minor Complex" and "Bud" (the latter, we are now told, is Tristano's son).

The triumph of *The New Tristano* made but a slight impression, however, for, as Gerry Mulligan put it, Tristano still refused to come out in the big world. The frustrating dependencies of sightlessness surely had something to do with his self-imposed isolation (in his definitive Tristano chapter in *Jazz Masters of the Forties*, Ira Gitler tells how the pianist was preparing his own breakfast at the start of their interview, as if to establish his self-sufficiency up front). Public apathy and reverse racism may have also played their part. It can't even be said with certainty that Tristano was able to sustain the magnificent two-handed balance of his 1961 work; on four poorly recorded tracks from the mid-Sixties, released in 1977 on *Descent into the Maelstrom* (Inner City), the invigorating pulse is gone and the thick chords of his early trio dates has returned. Perhaps if Lennie Tristano were still alive he would have finally emerged from isolation, so we could hear him for what he is, not just a dispensable theoretical tangent to bebop but one of the most vital voices in the Parker and Powell tradition. The essential performances on *Requiem* suggest how much we missed. M

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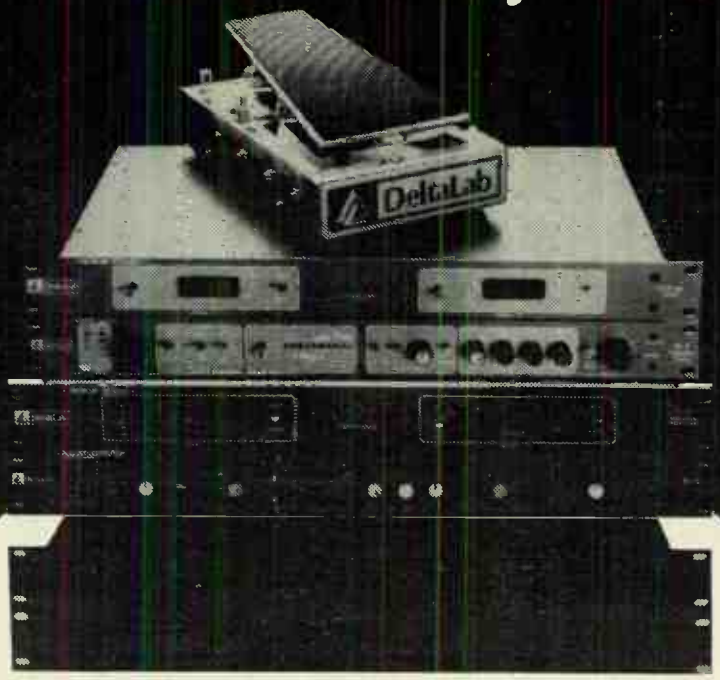

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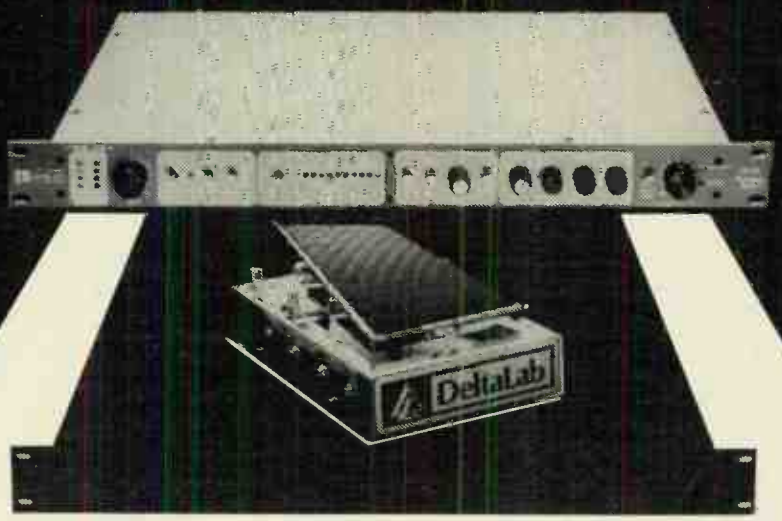

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FACES

LAURA LEVINE

JOAN JETT

JOAN JETT

Tonight, the smoky Rock Lounge is filled with sassy fifteen-year-old teeny-boppers in leather jackets, jeans and black Converse sneakers, looking tough, chewing gum and hanging out stage-right. It's Tomboy's Lib, postpunk division, and who would have thought Joan Jett capable of promulgating such a refreshing new style of female self-identification? With a guitar slung low, practically at her knees, a sneering but unspoiled pout topped off with a sweat-soaked lion's mane shag, the erstwhile Runaway swaggers her way through a brace of affirmative R'n'R as the Joan Jett clones in the audience mime her every move. Lots of invisible-guitar-players in the crowd, too...

After escaping the clutches of El Lay svengali Kim Fowley and his desire for complete control, Jett has broken away on her own in impressive fashion. She produced the notorious L.A. punk band the Germs' first (and only) album, *G.I.*, for Slash Records, distilling the late Darby Crash's gutteral cries into a powerfully condensed wall-of-noise, searing in its uncompromising ugliness. But the most pleasant surprise was Ms. Jett's own self-titled solo debut, on which bubblegum producers *par excellence* Kenny Laguna and Ritchie Cordell have combined to give her a sound that effortlessly traverses the three decades between the innocent '50s and the jaded 80s. On stage, Jett's muscular back-up band provides the backbone for her own little-girl-lost vulnerability crossed with a proud post-liberation celebration of sexual independence. The band's hard-edged heavy metal machismo is undercut by its female leader's combination of innocent bravado and hard-earned experience. Rather than burning out, Joan Jett seems to be acquiring a wisdom far beyond her years.

The choice of material, mostly from the album, allows for instant audience recognition, as Joan effortlessly updates the sentiments of a classic party song like "Wooly Bully" or a raucous, squealing version of the Isley Brothers' "Shout." She revs up the glam-rock Gary Glitter songs, "Touch Me" and "Doin' Allright With The Boys," to new wave speed, not pausing to allow the audience the chance to bask in their ironic context.

There is a sweet edge to Joan Jett that tempers her female version of heavy metal preening, tracing a direct line back to the girl groups of the '50s. When Joan croons the old Leslie Gore song, "You Don't Own Me," she drags the theme of female freedom-of-choice implied by the original fully into the modern world providing young women with a strong, yet not unfeminine, role model with which to identify. The music may sound like standard rock, but it is filled with the kind of yearning melodies and emotional openness that softens the unpleasantly misogynistic edge of most hard-core punk. When Joan Jett asks you to touch her, it is with a playfulness that is not just lascivious, but charming, also. And the little girls understand...

Joan Jett is really the first female guitar heroine — in that guise, she is already influencing fashion and style among her young following, a code that is, for once, not being dictated by male fantasies of female sexuality, but, rather, being created by the women themselves. Joan Jett proves that there is indeed life after the Runaways. — *Roy Trakin*

ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE

ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE

Bubbling forth from the seemingly bottomless well of AACM talent come yet three more gentlemen from Chicago, and, like those who have made the journey to New York before them, they have clearly paid their dues in the Windy City beforehand. You can hear that pervasive AACM influence in their equal respect for tradition and innovation; the substantial use of non-Western musics and unusual instrumentations; and a propensity for dressing weird. But what makes this ensemble distinct from the majority of AACM alumni is the accessibility of the kind of musical fare they served up at The Kitchen — perhaps the most intelligently programmed concert series in the entire city.

Marching through the audience chanting, "let your inner light shine," they immediately established a strong balance between entertaining playfulness and powerful music — the showmanship doesn't come across on their recent Moers Music release. Then, revealing the underbelly of their Chicago heritage, they switched gears, jumping from Kahil El'Zabar's conga solo and vocal forays into the hard-hitting Art Ensemble of Chicago tenor harmonies of reedmen Edward Wilkerson and "Light" Henry Huff.

The night progressed with Zabar providing the majority of the non-Western connection with his arsenal of gongs, cymbals, hand drums and sanza (thumb piano), as well as being the showman of the band: anyone who can get a Kitchen audience to chant "peace on earth" has got to have some kind of charisma. Wilkerson and Huff kept the music "heavy" and their fairly impressive woodwind chops complemented each other exceptionally well. Huff's approach to tenor and soprano sax reflected a solid confluence of current avant-garde stylings but leaned heavily on a Coltrane sharp-edged sound. He also had the ability to go into the sax's altissimo register and "out." For me, though, Wilkerson possessed the most original, thus most interesting, conception of the three. On tenor his sound was huge, dark and rich, and his sense of rhythmic displacement was particularly gripping (sort of a cross between a hot R&B tenor and an avant-garde Ben Webster, if you can imagine that). With alto in hand, he mirrored some of the more abstract considerations of the Chicago school. But through all of his playing ran a strong thread of compositional continuity — you can hear he's studied composition extensively.

The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble may not be the next Art Ensemble or Air of the 80s — the music's not that heavy — but next time you're trying to wean a friend from his or her hard-bop milk or cure their fusion malady, give this band a try, it might just do the job — painlessly. — *Cliff Tinder*

KAMPUCHEA

Concerts for the People of Kampuchea, like *Concert for Bangladesh* and *No Nukes* before it, is the audio-visual record of a star-studded charity concert put on by rock musicians on behalf of a worthy cause. With proceeds from the four shows, the two-record album and a videotape that is currently being shopped as a TV special with an eye toward, eventually, the home video cassette market as well, the project stands to net a hefty sum of money for the UNICEF and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) relief effort in famine-ravished Kampuchea (formerly, Cambodia). As such, it's difficult to do anything but applaud the efforts of the all-British cast assembled by Paul

McCartney at London's Hammersmith Odeon during Christmas week 1979.

Musically, the film and its soundtrack album fare quite well, as these extravaganzas go. With a line-up that includes the Clash, Elvis Costello, Ian Dury, McCartney and Wings, the Pretenders, Queen, Rockpile, the Specials, the Who and McCartney's bloated all-star Rockestra, this really amounts to a pretty fair live sampler of the state of popular British rock at the turn of the decade. With ace producer Chris Thomas (McCartney, the Pretenders, Pete Townshend) and a handful of top-flight engineers handling the sound, these tracks afford as good a live mix of these groups as one could possibly want, and the visuals are impressive and varied enough to sustain audience interest throughout.

The real value of something like this comes when it offers up the unexpected, something you might never be able to see or hear in another setting. When Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant guests with Rockpile on a version of Elvis Presley's "Little Sister," it gives us a chance to hear Plant sing in a gruff, Presleyesque voice he's never displayed publicly before. It makes us wonder why he hasn't. And we're pleasantly surprised when on one of Rockestra's three tracks, Little Richard's "Lucille," the assembled multitude manages to build up a peasoup-thick wall-of-sound behind one of those

BENEFIT FOR KAMPUCHEA

McCartney vocals that make you forget what a drip he too often turns out to be. This performance justifies a concept that seemed to have little going for it past its obvious value as a star-gazers paradise.

These are merely the best moments of a long film and two generally solid records; still, you wonder why the Who were allotted all of side one of the album and all that film time while people like Costello, Queen, and the Clash were limited to one track apiece. Did we really need a fourth live recording of "See Me, Feel Me?" All in all, though, *Concerts for the People of Kampuchea* is a fine live document of a lot of good bands that assembled in order to lend a hand to a starving people. While you listen to the Clash — certainly *they* should have been allotted more time — sing in "Armigideon Time," the album's most timely track, "a lot of people won't get no supper tonight..." it's good to know that if you buy *Concerts for the People of Kampuchea*, you might just be helping some of them to a meal. — *Dave Schulps*

RZEWSKI

Frederic Rzewski would be just one more pianist on the specialists-only contemporary classical music circuit if he weren't willing and able to improvise. When a piece calls for it, he can extemporize variations, though he's no jazzman; on his records, he draws from folktunes and the Romantics and Impressionists, not bebop, and he seems unwilling to hit any groove for more than a few bars. Still, a good part of Rzewski's repertoire, especially his own compositions, calls for the performer to choose tempos, durations, forms, sometimes even what notes to play — judgments that are generally made in advance by classical composers. On the first of his two nights at The Kitchen, Rzewski's program didn't include any of his own music, but it did have pieces shaped almost entirely by the performer and pieces which — like Rzewski's own "No Place To Go But Around" and "The People United Will Never Be Defeated" — were based on an interaction between folk material and contemporary techniques.

The freest pieces turned out to be the least convincing. Each half of the concert opened with one of John Cage's *Etudes Australes*, which were composed by turning star maps into stemless notes on staves, leaving rhythm and dynamics and phrasing — everything except pitch and a general sense of time — to the player. Rzewski had obviously given each note careful consideration, and the two Etudes came out differently: in No 1, he'd interrupt every hint of sweetness or song with a banged note, while he let No. 2's pitches blend and float. Of course, he could have done the opposite, the point of the pieces seems to be that expressiveness is purely arbitrary, a depressing thought.

The more orthodox, written-out pieces worked better. In ascending order, they included Yuji Takahashi's *Kwanju, May 1980*, a hodgepodge of Japanese folk melodies and half-hearted Europeanisms; Nicolaus A. Huber's "Durabukka," a perceptual experiment in the sympathetic tones produced by drumming on middle C-sharp; Walter Zimmermann's *Erd-Tone*, a sort of rondo in four-square traditional German rhythms, with its pitches skewed by a piano whose strings were damped with clumps of clay so it sounded like an African slit drum. Best of all were Christian Wolff's *Hay Una Mujer Desparecida* (After Holly Near), which exploded a Holly Near song and toyed with every phrase, sometimes even single notes, in minimal repetitions, fugatos, polytonal renarmonizations, obsessive trills, declamatory unisons, cascades of Romantic arpeggios, or whatever else had come to Wolff's mind: and, even better. Karel Goeyvaerts' *Litanie I*, a succession of overlapping repetitive sequences, each growing and shrinking according to standard minimalist practice, that worked as mechanized slapstick: the sequences dividing and subdividing each others' rhythms and registers, and regularly butting into each other thanks to the rhythmic vitality of their well-placed pauses. Rzewski played the Wolff with non-arbitrary expressiveness and the Goeyvaerts with punch and swagger, enough to make me wish he'd included his new. largely improvised "Squares" in both of his New York concerts. — *Jon Pareles*

BOB SHAMIS

FREDERIC RZEWSKI

RICK NELSON

A couple of decades have passed since comely little Ricky Nelson launched his singing career on his parents' TV show to impress a girlfriend swooning over Elvis P. But after the hits stopped coming, Nelson did what most teen-throb has-beens have neither the drive nor the gifts to do — he kept making music. Although Nelson's first LP in three years, *Playing To Win*, leans more toward rock, his original fixation on the connective tissue between rockabilly and country is still intact. Ostensibly it will meet with a measure of the success it deserves, what with folks like Dave Edmunds and Billy Burnette providing Nelson with some kind of current context in which to be appraised.

The two decades of relative hitlessness have been used by Nelson to build and maintain cross-country club support, a fandom largely made up of boppin' middle-agers who want to hear the old chartbusters. They get 'em — and also some wonderfully refined suburban rockabilly in the process. Nelson's shows are a quaint patchwork of the stages of his metamorphosis: the TV crooner subtly updating his old standards; the California country-popper with rhinestones on his bellbottoms; and the still-vital, oddly genteel veteran of rock's "golden age." Like little Ricky, big Ricky has superb taste in material and sidemen. The five road-tested young wniz boys currently with him (on drums, bass, piano, lead and rhythm guitar) surround Nelson's sure-handed rhythm on acoustic guitar with judicious measures of blatant technical excellence and bar-band high spirits. The whole band does a grinning cruise through chestnuts like "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "Believe What You Say," right to newer material such as Jonn Fogerty's "Almost Saturday Night" and Graham Parker's "Back to Schooldays."

Nelson's devotion to passing the torch of rock's classic traditions gives his performance a taint of roteness from time to time; as does his trademark, that small but silky singing voice. When I saw him in a rough-house midwestern bar last spring, the environment balanced out his propriety, while a more recent concert in a Minneapolis repertory theatre almost got polite-ed to death. Nonetheless, in the decorous fashion of the lifetime professional, comely old Ricky Nelson delivered the goods and updated his reputations with some startled old rockers in the stands. Rock's time has definitely not come and gone. Neither has Rick Nelson's. — *Laura Fissinger*

RICK NELSON

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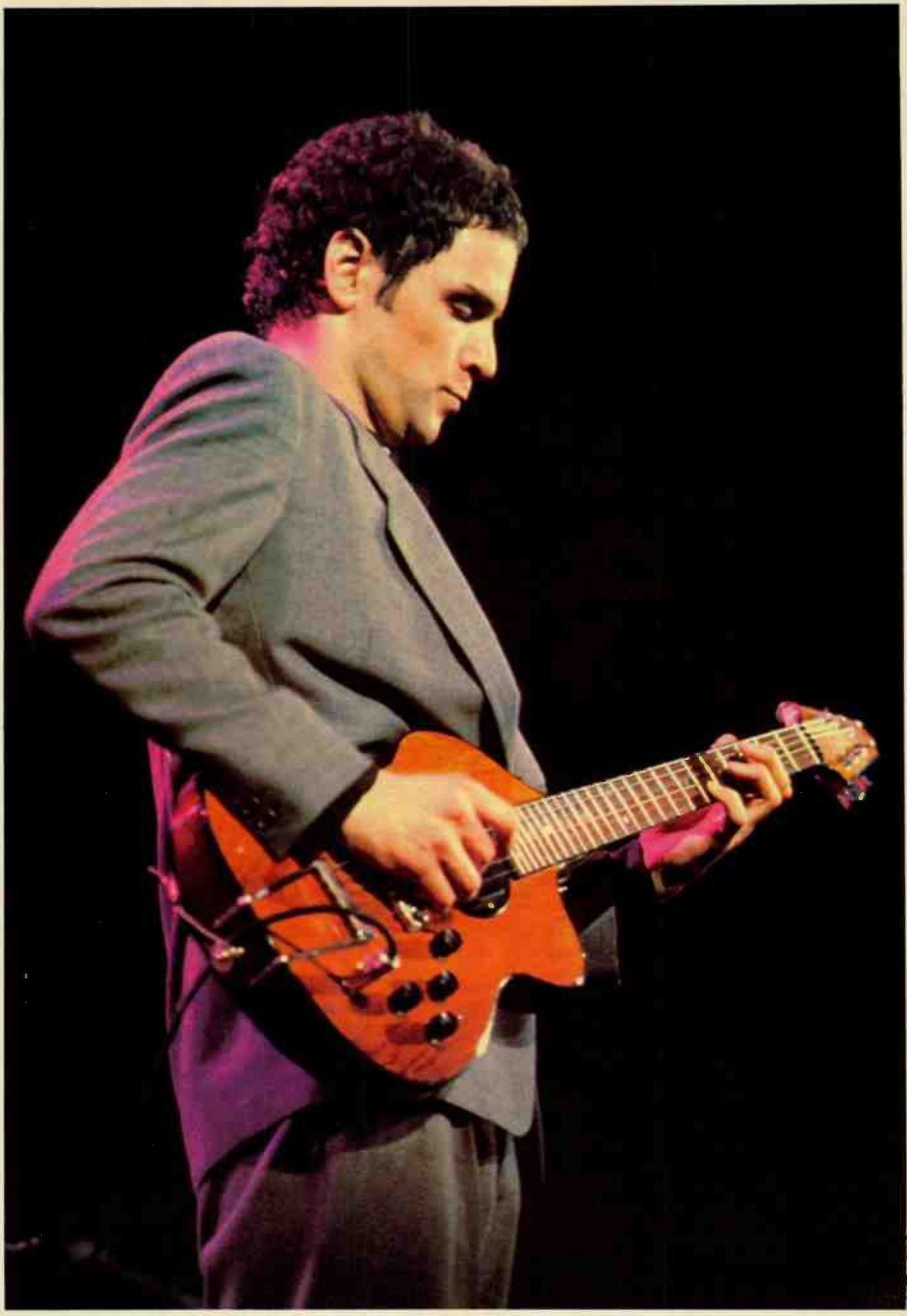

SCOTT WEINER

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

Guitarist, studio craftsman, singer and tunesmith, Lindsey Buckingham has emerged from the shadows of megapop's Big Mac as a creative force and stage presence. Herein he discusses the group's change in direction, its musical relationships, and his view of the recording process.

By Dan Forte

PAUL NATKIN /PHOTO RESERVE

Summer, 1976

More than 60,000 file into the Oakland Coliseum's outdoor stadium for a "Day On The Green" featuring Peter Frampton, Gary Wright, and Fleetwood Mac. Bill Graham is billing the concert as the British Invasion, although two-fifths of one of the acts grew up in California. Guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, 27, was in fact born in Palo Alto, about thirty miles from the Coliseum, where he is now playing as part of Fleetwood Mac. In a white peasant shirt, beard anc curly hair, Buckingham looks decidedly California.

Since the vast majority of the sun worshippers have come to hear Frampton sing "Show Me The Way," Fleetwood plays a rather abbreviated set, only partially culled from their latest, self-titled album. Midway through the program, Buckingham, who has remained in the background for most of the set, comes to the microphone. "We'd like to do a Peter Green song for you now," he says. almost self-consciously, before breaking into the band's 1970 hit, "Oh Well," written and originally sung by the group's founder.

February, 1977

Fleetwood Mac kicks off their 1977 tour with a benefit for the Jacques Cousteau Society at the Berkeley Community Theater. Except for a short film about penguins (long a symbol of Fleetwood Mac), the band is the only act on the bill. Material from their just-released *Rumours* LP is met with as much applause of recognition as songs from their previous album, which garnered three hit singles.

Midway through the show it becomes apparent that vocalist Stevie Nicks, battling a strained throat, is not going to be able to make it through the set. The spotlight turns to the band's other two songwriters, Christine McVie and, more noticeably, Lindsey Buckingham, who displays a degree of confidence and guitar technique barely hinted at on album. The concert climaxes near the end with Buckingham's dramatic "I'm So Afraid," taken a bit slower than the recorded version.

December, 1979

Dressed in a black shirt and a plain gray suit, his hair cropped short, Lindsey Buckingham is pacing the stage of San Francisco's Cow Palace. The guitarist clearly stands out from the rest of the band, both musically and visually. Whether he is singing one of his own songs from the new *Tusk* album or backing Nicks or McVie on one of their tunes, Buckingham plays and looks like a man possesed — his fixed stare never leaving the audience, a sinister grin never leaving his face.

With three rim shots from Fleetwood's snare drum and a piano glissando from Christine McVie, Buckingham shouts, "What makes you think you're the one," pointing at his ex-girlfriend Stevie Nicks. As has come to be expected, the set's highpoint is "I'm So Afraid," a tour de force study in dynamics with Lindsey Buckingham's echoing guitar building in speed, volume and intensity.

In its fifteen years as a band, Fleetwood Mac has undergone more changes than any group from the Sixties that is still intact. Starting out as an English homage to Chicago blues, they have survived underground cult status to become one of the most popular groups in pop music today. They have endured what seems like one personnel change per album, especially in the guitar department, which has seen Peter

Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan, and Bob Welch come and go. Bassist John McVie and drummer Mick Fleetwood are the band's only remaining original members.

In the past six years Fleetwood Mac's personnel has remained constant, if not necessarily stable, with Fleetwood, McVie, vocalist Stevie Nicks, McVie's ex-wife Christine on piano, and guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, who has individually gone through nearly as many changes as the band has collectively.

Buckingham was born in 1949 and took up guitar at seven, strumming along to his older brother's collection of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Everly Brothers records. He later turned to folk music (the Kingston Trio, Ian and Sylvia, John Herald), studying banjo and fingerpicking styles. In the late Sixties he played electric bass in a Bay Area rock band called Fritz, which featured vocalist Stephanie Nicks. When Fritz broke up, Lindsey and Stevie stayed together, both musically and romantically, and recorded one album for Polydor, *Buckingham Nicks*, produced and engineered by Keith Olsen (with an assist from Richard Dashut).

In December of 1974, Mick Fleetwood was looking for a studio at which to record Fleetwood Mac's next album and came to Sound City in Los Angeles where Keith Olsen played him a track from *Buckingham Nicks*, "Frozen Love." Two weeks later guitarist Bob Welch announced that he was leaving Fleetwood. On New Year's Eve the drummer telephoned Olsen to ask about the pair he'd heard on the record Olsen had played him. As it turned out Buckingham and Nicks were there at a party at Olsen's house. Without so much as an audition Fleetwood offered them both a job with the band.

Fleetwood Mac was recorded early in 1975 and gave the band an element that had previously been missing — catchy, well-crafted hit singles. "Over My Head," "Rhiannon," "Say You Love Me" — virtually every cut on the LP probably *could* have become a hit single, but the band had the good sense and taste to stop after three or four and record a follow-up album.

Rumours was recorded in 1976 amid tensions that saw the McVies divorce and Lindsey and Stevie split. When the album was released in 1977, Fleetwood Mac found themselves almost simultaneously on the covers of *Rolling Stone* and *People Magazine*. *Rumours* spun off as many hits as the previous album — "Go Your Own Way," "Dreams," "Don't Stop" — and became one of the biggest selling albums in pop music history.

Tusk, the group's quirky follow-up, sacrificed cohesion at the expense of a few million in record sales. Less a group effort than the previous LPs, it has repeatedly been compared to the Beatle's *White Album* — Nicks doing her songs with instrumental backing from the other members, McVie doing her numbers, very little harmonizing, Buckingham recording several tracks by himself at a makeshift home studio. But, while it may not hold together well as a unified album, the individual performances on *Tusk* are nevertheless outstanding, especially Buckingham's which display a startlingly new approach to recording structure, mix, and instrumentation.

Last December, after a solid year of touring, the band released its first live LP, *Fleetwood Mac Live*, before taking five months off from touring and recording. They are scheduled to go back into the studio in May to begin work on their next album.

The reasons for Fleetwood Mac's ascent to the top are hard to pinpoint. Chemistry is often a word that's batted about. Having three singer/songwriters the calibre of Buckingham, Nicks and McVie certainly doesn't hurt. But there is obviously a whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-the-parts element at work when the band is really on.

On guitar, Lindsey is as unorthodox as he is underrated. Still basically employing the techniques he learned on banjo and fingerstyle folk guitar, he sort of frails and flails his way through solos, often ending the night by bandaging bloodied fingertips. Buckingham will probably never place at the top of *Guitar Player* Magazine's reader poll as Best Rock Guitarist, but a more tasteful lead guitarist would be hard to find. In the words of John Stewart, "He knows the magic of one note."

Because of his innovative work on *Tusk*, Buckingham has become a much sought after producer, although he turns down far more offers than he takes on. He produced Walter Egan's *Not Shy* album and *Bombs Away Dream Babies* for one of his early influences, John Stewart, who regards Buckingham as "the only genius I've ever worked with in the studio." The former one-third of the Kingston Trio recounts, "Lindsey came down when we were doing the mix, and he was turning all the pots, layering the guitars. I was watching him and I said, 'Lindsey, some time you've got to tell me what you're doing.' He said, 'I'm turning the knobs till it sounds right.' A few people I know of really know how to make that mystical 'thing' happen with a record. Brian Wilson is one; Lindsey Buckingham is the master at it." (Ironically, Stewart, an acoustic folkie for twenty years, began playing electric lead guitar by listening to Lindsey's work before discovering that Buckingham had in fact learned to play acoustic guitar listening to Stewart's records with the Kingston Trio. "I got the *Fleetwood Mac* album," Stewart recalls, "and something about it sure sounded familiar." The one-note solo on *Bomb's Away*'s top ten single "Gold," while it is one of the best examples of the "Lindsey Buckingham guitar style," was actually played by Stewart.)

Onstage, perhaps even more so than in the studio, Lindsey Buckingham has become the clear leader of Fleetwood Mac. In six years he has evolved from guitarist to creative force to kinetic focal point. Even New Wavers, ready to poo-poo anything by a band that produced such soft-core rock as "Dreams" and "Over My Head," regard Buckingham as a force to be reckoned with.

While the other four members of the band have been splashed across every phase of the media, Buckingham has remained somewhat mysterious, in the shadows. As he points out in the following interview, he seldom gets fan mail and can walk down the street completely unnoticed. "Whatever appreciation is being offered towards me now," he states, "is the kind of appreciation that I would like to get. It's more from a musicianship standpoint, hopefully — it's more fundamental...it's been honest — that's for sure."

MUSICIAN: Going from total obscurity to the top of the charts is what most struggling musicians hope and pray for every day of their lives. But have there been any drawbacks to that level of *People Magazine* stardom?

BUCKINGHAM: Well, you see, I don't feel like I've been in the limelight as far as the attention focused on the group. Stevie, in the beginning, her visual presence and just her personality were so strong. That was always the figurehead of the group, and still is, in a way. In that way, I really haven't had to deal with a barrage of external adulation by any means. I very seldom get a fan letter.

MUSICIAN: Can you walk down the street and not be recognized?

BUCKINGHAM: Exactly. Oh yes. I can walk anywhere and no one cares. Also, I'm always changing my hair, so that helps.

MUSICIAN: Most people, when they think of Fleetwood Mac, probably still have an image of Stevie Nicks in a top hat and cape. But onstage your position seems to have evolved from being more or less a member of the rhythm section to being the focal point of the band, especially on the Tusk tour.

BUCKINGHAM: It's certainly working that way; I don't know if that's good or bad. It really can't be helped. But whatever appreciation is being offered towards me now is the kind of appreciation that I would like to get. It's more from a musicianship standpoint, hopefully it's from people who appreciate serious things about music. It has nothing to do with costumes or even image — it's more fundamental. It's nice to open a *Rolling Stone* and see that you have the big picture for a change, but even so, the whole external aspect of the success hasn't really gotten through. I don't feel that it's changed me, because it hasn't barraged me very much at all. It's been slow. It's been honest — that's for sure.

DAVID PETERS

"Frozen Love": Buckingham and Stevie Nicks honed their hit single format on a now-classic duo album and waltzed into Fleetwood Mac without so much as an audition, giving the band a blast of fresh air.

"Visibility is like being an actor, and being good enough at it so that no one realizes you're acting. A bad actor looks like he's acting, he's ranting and raving up there."

MUSICIAN: Has your growth within the group corresponded with you growing in confidence? Did you feel like you had to try and fit in when you first joined, and now you can do what you want to do?

BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. It's been very much a series of situations, of having to adapt. The kind of role that, say, Stevie and I had towards each other and that I had in *Buckingham Nicks* as compared to what happened six months after we joined Fleetwood Mac — I really had to turn around. It was a very good thing to happen. I gained so much more appreciation for Stevie that way. I had to reevaluate the whole thing. There's been a lot of adapting to do. When I first joined the group, I had to go and play Bob Welch's songs and all this strange stuff that had nothing to do with me or me growing as an individual. But that was all part of it; I needed to do that one way or another. Once Stevie and I had broken up and had sort of gotten through that, it was just a question of seeing what I really had to offer and trying to establish that, and saying, "Hey, I do have more to offer than just being part of the rhythm section." Also, people don't see what you contribute in the studio, and you can't expect them to. That's one thing that's always been visible to people very close to me, but never to anyone else.

MUSICIAN: Was the change from *Rumours* to *Tusk* a conscious attempt to not get pegged as a pop song group?

BUCKINGHAM: Well, it's really hard to say. In a way, yes. Speaking for myself, my songs are probably more of a departure than Stevie's or Christine's, but even theirs, the arrangements are slightly different. There's been little effort made to fit them into a single mold, whereas on *Rumours* every song was more or less crafted as that kind of song. It's not that the songs on *Tusk* are long; in fact, someone asked me when the album first came out why all my songs were so short. I just said, "Well, rock 'n' roll songs were traditionally short songs." But, for me, it was a question of experimenting with a new format in recording. Some of those tunes were recorded in my house on my 24-track. The overall atmosphere of the album just evolved by itself. We wanted to do a double album — I don't think we knew exactly where it was going. But I was interested in pursuing some things that were a little bit rawer. You just hear so much stuff on the radio that has the particular drum sound. I mean, everything is worked around the drums these days. It's all so studio-ized; I thought it was important to delve into some things that were off to the side a little bit more, so that we're not so cliched. And we certainly did that — at the expense of selling a few records. Between the *Fleetwood Mac* album and *Rumours* we changed the people we were working with totally, even though *Fleetwood Mac* had sold two and a half or three million copies. We could have stuck with a good sure thing, and we went through a lot of hell reestablishing a working relationship with other people to move forward and to try to grow, which we did on the *Rumours* LP. Now on *Tusk* we more or less did the same thing and took a lot of chances, but we did

it because it was something we felt was right to do and was important, and it shook things up. It certainly shook people's preconception of us up a bit. We divided our audience a little bit. A lot of people who were sort of on one side and saw *Rumours* as kind of MOR were really pleased by *Tusk*; and a lot of people were very disappointed, because they were expecting more of the same thing. You can't let what you think is going to sell dictate over what you think is important.

MUSICIAN: What sort of music were you listening to that might have influenced the outcome of *Tusk*?

BUCKINGHAM: Not that much of anything, specifically. The fact the New Wave stuff was emerging helped to solidify or to clarify feelings or give one a little more courage to go out and try something a little more daring. But as far as the actual way the songs turned out, it wasn't a question of listening to a certain group and trying to emulate them at all. No one in particular; the whole scene just seemed so healthy to me. The stuff on the album isn't that weird to me, but I guess it is for someone who's expecting "You Make Loving Fun" or something. I was surprised, because I was at that time, and still am, ready to hear some things that I felt were fresh and I thought were approached slightly differently, in the spirit of the old rock 'n' roll but contemporary as well. The LP sold about four million albums — nothing to cry about. It was interesting to see the reaction. Most of the critical response to the album was real good, and then some of it wasn't at all. But we definitely divided our audience.

MUSICIAN: When you write songs, do you make a complete demo tape of it and play it for the band?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes. Now I make masters, though. I've got a 24-track. There are two or three songs on *Tusk* that were done that way, just at my house, and they went onto the album.

MUSICIAN: With you playing all of the instruments?

BUCKINGHAM: Yeah. "The Ledge," "Save Me A Place," and "That's Enough For Me."

MUSICIAN: Do you still think of those as "Fleetwood Mac songs"?

BUCKINGHAM: Well, I'm not sure *they* see them as Fleetwood Mac songs [laughs]. I don't see why they can't be. I think of them as Fleetwood Mac songs — we've done some of them live. We ran down "The Ledge" a whole bunch of times and almost started doing that in the set; we were doing "That's Enough For Me" live. But we had a lot of problems trying to integrate the stuff from *Tusk* with the old set.

MUSICIAN: Do your songs come out differently if you work alone as opposed to working them out with the band members?

BUCKINGHAM: I think we're starting to do that more. One of the things that was exciting about doing *Tusk* is that we can take some of that and reapply it to a collective thing a little more than we did on *Tusk*. Certainly in terms of a group there's a desire to do that, especially after experimenting with something that was less of a cooperative venture. I think the next Fleetwood Mac studio album will be more group-oriented — it certainly won't be less. It's not like it's moving in one direction or the other; it's just expanding and contracting.

MUSICIAN: Do you think you'll ever record a solo album?

BUCKINGHAM: Sure, why not? I don't think there's any stigma to it, other than misunderstanding from the external world. If it makes you feel good, I don't see why not. But I'm not in any great hurry to do my solo album.

MUSICIAN: Would you see a solo project as an outlet to experiment more or just a chance to put more of your own songs on LP?

BUCKINGHAM: Some of both, I would say. It wouldn't be radically different — it couldn't get much more different than *Tusk*. See, one of the things about being in Fleetwood Mac is that Christine writes pretty much soft, pretty songs, and Stevie more or less does the same thing, too. They both write rock 'n' roll songs from time to time, and do it very well, but the burden of the real gutsiness usually is on me. So if Christine has X amount of songs, and Stevie has X amount of songs, my slot must almost out of necessity be filled by pretty tough kind of stuff. I think it would be a lot of fun to just experience making a statement in a broader range of things. If you took all of my songs from *Tusk*, they would probably make a more cohesive album than the whole *Tusk* album, just in terms of cohesion. I wouldn't want to get too much more fringey than something like "The Ledge," you know. The funny thing is, so many people reacted to that song like, "My God, what is that?" It didn't even seem that radical to me. See, I'm trying to learn more about writing.

MUSICIAN: Has the creative process of how a song takes shape changed much from *Buckingham Nicks* to *Tusk*?

BUCKINGHAM: I'd say it's come back around full circle, in a way, except with a whole lot more knowledge, I would hope. I've learned so much from John and Mick.

MUSICIAN: In terms of what, since they don't write songs?

BUCKINGHAM: In terms of musical sense. Mick's musical sense is hard to pin down, because it's just such an instinctive thing. But in terms of just writing songs, that hasn't changed, no. For instance, Stevie will write her words, and everything will be central to that. That's good; sometimes I wish I could do that. Mine are usually central to a groove of some sort, and everything else will follow. That hasn't changed over all this time. A lot of rock 'n' rollers do that.

MUSICIAN: Does that method make your songs more traditionally structured than Stevie's?

BUCKINGHAM: They can be, yeah. Which isn't necessarily good. There's a fine line. You take someone like Springsteen,

LINDA MATLOW

Lindsey Buckingham's Equipment

Lindsey Buckingham is currently using a Turner electric guitar. "I've got four Turners — two 6-strings, so I'll have a backup onstage in case I break a string; one with two pickups; and a new model that's got a two-octave neck. It's got a boost and a couple of parametric equalizers on it, and that's about it. It's a fairly simple guitar, which is nice — doesn't have too many gadgets. Rick [Turner] always made John's basses, when he worked at Alembic, so he was always trying to sell me Alembics on the road, but I never liked them because they were very sterile sounding and didn't feel very good. During the first few months of recording *Tusk*, Rick showed me a blueprint of this new guitar; he said, 'I'm trying to make it more mellow-sounding, warmer sounding — sort of a combination Les Paul and Alembic.'"

Buckingham uses flatwound strings on the Turner to, as he puts it, "get more of the note and less of the overtone. It's a little less 'wire' sounding."

He is now using MESA/Boogie amps through HiWatt cabinets, and his only effects are a fuzztone and an echo unit. ("I'm not sure of the brands," he admits, "Raymond [Lindsay], my guitar roadie, takes care of all that.")

For acoustic numbers, Buckingham ordinarily uses either Ovations or a Japanese Tama with a pickup in the soundhole.

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who has the best of both, I think, in terms of being a writer and someone who knows what he's doing. His phrasing can go from a certain timing in one line, and in the next line it'll be totally different, because the words are different. Whereas if I was thinking of those two lines in a song, I might just think of repeating the same thing over and over, because I would still be sort of nebulous in my mind. I wouldn't have the words completely formed. So there's an advantage by far in being able to do that, because it gives the whole feeling of the song a certain spontaneity. He's feeling the words in a certain way, and he's putting them down, and everything else will follow that. Stevie does the same thing with her words; she surprises you with phrasings. But there's an advantage to the other way, too. If you can eventually get around that, and make it so that your vocal doesn't sound stiff, then the advantage is that you're so much more aware of how to make one track sound totally different from the other, in terms of applying a certain instrument to it or something. But in terms of a structure — like A-B-A-B-C or whatever — my songs are probably a lot more that way than Stevie's, because she doesn't really know A-B-A-B-C. She writes like Mick drums.

"You just hear so much stuff on the radio that has that particular drum sound. It's all so studio-ized. I thought it was important to delve into some things that weren't so cliched."

MUSICIAN: Are your recording and producing techniques pretty much intuitive?

BUCKINGHAM: More or less. This is the first time I've had a real setup. Doing *Tusk* I had a 24-track little MCI board that I was working on. Now I've got a Studer 24-track which the band bought quite some time ago. It's a full-size console and gives me something to work with — some limiters, some EQ, some big speakers, some real equipment. For the first time I'll be able to realize or not realize some of the things that I've felt I could do. It's very frustrating sometimes in the studio, because you've got so many people in there, and technically I'm not there to twist knobs or anything. A lot of times you feel you could do a better job than somebody else, because you have the intuition and they really don't. They've had a few years technical experience, but they can't make the connection from feeling the song to this, to this, and do it all the way a painter paints, where suddenly all the intuition takes over and you're just there doing it. That *can* be what it's like, and I think it offers a lot more opportunity for very unusual things to happen. Things present themselves, and if you have the intuition to pick them up when they present themselves and not let them go by, you can get some very unusual sounds. I feel real good about my capabilities as an engineer.

MUSICIAN: Do you think trained engineers, in their pursuit to make something sound neat and clean, can destroy the emotion?

BUCKINGHAM: All the time. The idea is to capture the moment that you perceived something to be a certain way and pursue it right then. Try to pursue things that you can hear in your head to their ultimate disaster or whatever.

MUSICIAN: Do you plan on doing more outside production work with other artists?

BUCKINGHAM: A few people have wanted me to produce them lately, and it's nice to know that people want you to work with them, but I just don't think it's tne right time for me to do that. With Walter Egan and John Stewart, it just seemed like the right thing to do at those particular times. I'm real good at editing out this section, or saying, "Let's do this in here." That's the thing I'm probably best at — being able to think abstractly and say, "This isn't making it here; let's do this; put this part in here, and it'll make all the difference in the world." But choosing to do that as a whole project is something that I don't do very often. On *Bombs Away Dream Babies*, I wasn't in the studio with John as much as I would have liked to have been, because we were working on *Tusk* at the time. It kind of blew John's mind when I first met him, because I knew all his songs. I had almost all of the old Kingston Trio albums — although very few people will admit that these days. Steve Stills, I'm sure he had them all, too, but he wouldn't admit it [laughs].

MUSICIAN: Usually the lead guitarist is one of the most visible members of any band, but in your case, even with Fleetwood's phenomenal popularity, your guitar playing seems to be very underrated, if not overlooked entirely.

BUCKINGHAM: It's like being an actor and being good enough at it so that no one realizes you're acting. A bad actor is someone who looks like he's acting, and he's ranting and raving up there. I mean, a part that you're not aware of so much, that's a supportive and integral part of the song is a lot harder to come by, I think, than a part that you *must* be aware of that's so aware of itself.

MUSICIAN: Do you have any specific influences as far as playing lead guitar?

BUCKINGHAM: I can't really think of any. See, I never played "lead," per se. I started playing guitar when I was seven years old, and I played rhythm, chords to the old rock 'n' roll songs. Then I got into fingerpicking, and I was very good at melodic fingerpicking. But I never played lead until 1971, because when I was in Fritz I played bass. And the reason I played bass was because I couldn't go *whoo-whoo* at all. I couldn't play screaming lead. When I later started playing lead I was probably listening, oddly enough, to Peter Green, and then Clapton and some of those people — to cop the white blues licks. But that's about as deep as it goes — which isn't all that deep. I've always played lead begrudgingly, I'd say. There's not that much lead on the *Tusk* album, for that same reason. There's almost an underplaying of lead, to make people think, "Where's the leads?" I was just more interested in colors on that album. I'm getting better at it, though; there's some pretty decent leads on the live album.

MUSICIAN: Do you practice the guitar much these days?

BUCKINGHAM: From time to time. Probably not as much as I should. But I'll start to and then I'll think, what for? It's just a question of what direction you want to go, and right now I'd rather put more energy into trying to understand how to write better. So much of the playing comes out of just being in a state of mind where you're not conscious of what you're doing — it just comes out anyway. I'd never sit around and just try to play scales, I don't think. I probably should [*laughs*] — sometimes on stage I wish I had. I do a lot of *thinking* about the guitar, just in my head.

MUSICIAN: Your stage demeanor has changed tremendously in the past five years. The guy with the peasant shirt and the beard and the curly hair of a few years ago hardly seems like the same person as the one on the Tusk tour, with the gray suit and short hair and the demonic stare fixed at the audience. Did that change come about as the result of any groups you'd seen or listened to?

BUCKINGHAM: No, absolutely not. I'm not even aware most times of what I'm doing when I'm up there doing that.

MUSICIAN: But what about the change in appearance?

BUCKINGHAM: Well, I decided to cut my hair long before everyone else did. It wasn't necessarily to look punk or anything. I was just tired of the beard, so I shaved it. Then the hair didn't look right without the beard, so I cut the hair. It's all been gradual. Found a couple of new clothes stores, started buying some new suits... As far as the movements, it's funny, because I used to do more of that when I was playing bass in Fritz. I think maybe when I first joined the band, it was such a new thing, and I wasn't sure of my role, I just sort of withdrew into the back. It's not something that wasn't there before, as far as the stage presence; it just wasn't coming out for a long time. It was sort of beaten back, I guess. M

Earl Slick's sound changes with every album.

PHOTO: LINDA WOLF

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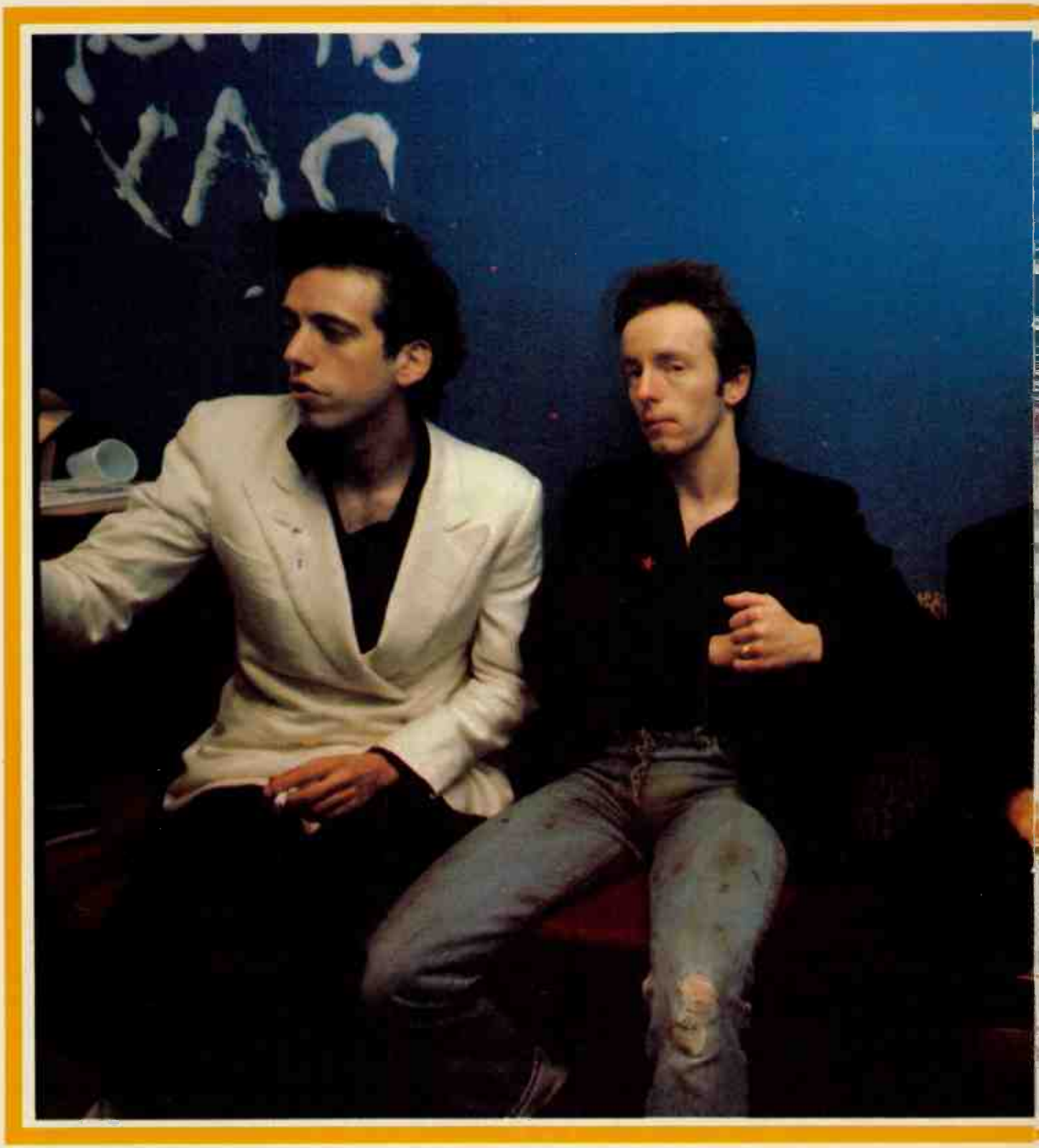
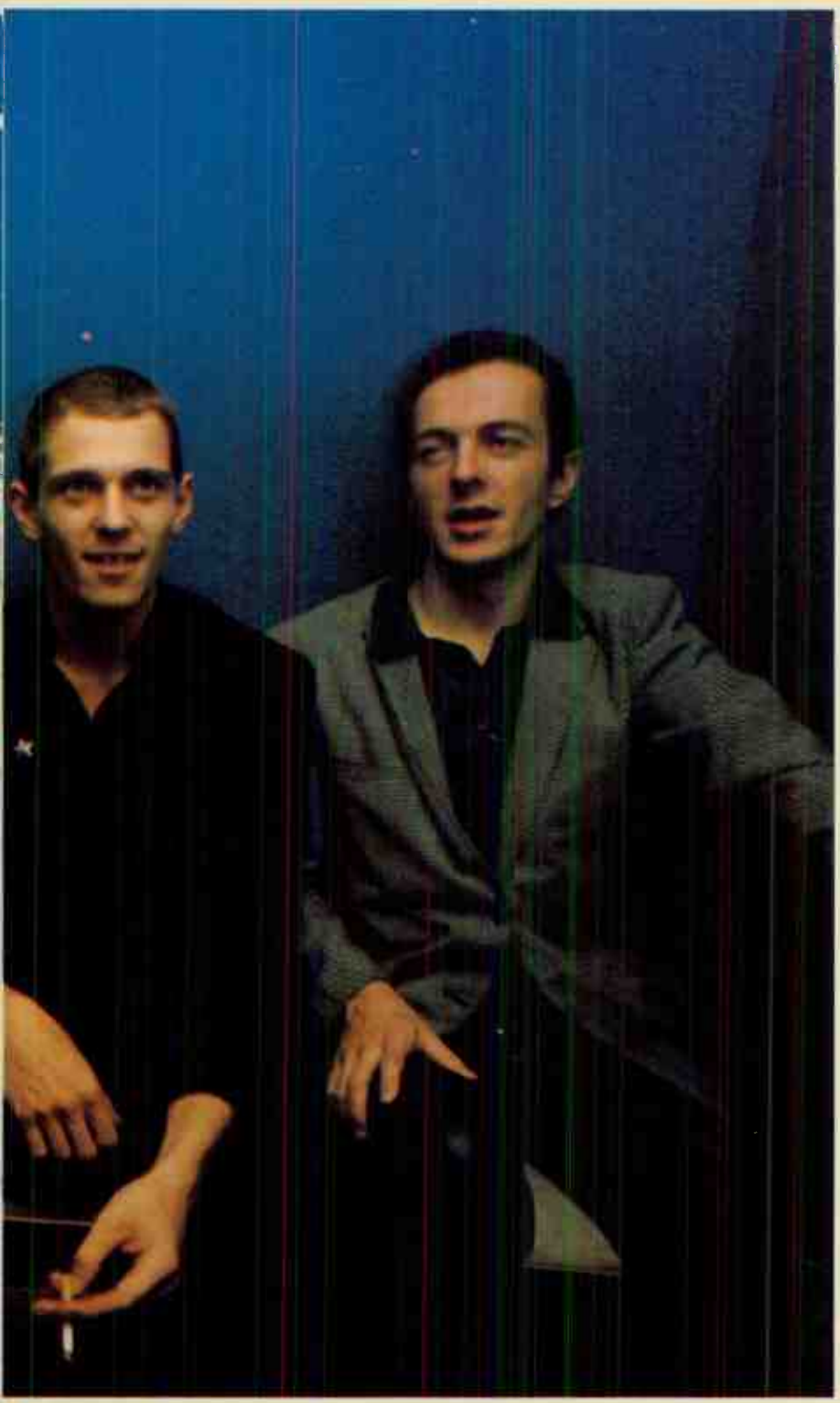


ADRIAN BOOT

THE CLASH

nymously titled debut album for almost two years after its English release in 1977. Their second English (and first American) album, *Give 'Em Enough Rope* served up the same volatile amount of frustration, anger and hope as *The Clash*, this time buffed and shined to a gloss by American producer Sandy Pearlman.

By the summer of '79 vocalist/guitarist Joe



Paul Simenon and Mick Jones

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

ROUGH BOYS

"Rough Boys running the streets
come a little closer
Rough Boys gonna get inside
your bitter mind"
P. Townshend

By Clint Roswell

Strummer, lead guitarist Mick Jones, bassist Paul Simenon, and drummer Topper Headon had reached a crisis point familiar to all students of The Pattern. That primal burst of creative frustration that had fueled the punk explosion was fast running out of petrol, and the pack was beginning to thin out. As the initial impulse waned, the so-called new wave bands were faced with a perplexing dilemma, how could they continue to refine and develop their musical abilities without losing contact with a creative spark that had made it all worth doing in the first place? What was to prevent them from gaining the world and yet losing their souls like the art rock bands of the late 60s and early 70s, whom they so roundly detested?

In early 1980 the Clash neatly resolved this paradox with *London Calling*, an album that was both a quantum leap in sophistication, and an essential re-information of the spirit and values that had established their authority four years ago. In expanding their musical horizons, they raced freely over the entire history of rock, drawing on rockabilly, early R&B, jazz, folk music, and reggae — and even coming up with a hit single with "Train in Vain." Predictably, fickle British critics staged a white riot of their own, lambasting the album and the group for what they chose to construe as a sellout to the American market. But any doubts about the Clash's continuing vitality were settled by their third American tour. Onstage at New York's Palladium, the Clash was a literally stunning experience for many, roughly equivalent to meeting a runaway locomotive head on, or kissing a lightning bolt. How do they do it? What's the secret? If there's been one consistent, crucial factor in the Clash's attitude and approach of the last five years, it's been their unyielding sense of commitment — to their music, their public, and to their own sense of integrity. For

this band, that is truly the tie that binds. It holds them together and sustains their will, creativity, and essential identity, regardless of whatever outward transformations the band may undergo. It keeps them awake, alive, and honest, and provides them with the determination to withstand the continuing backlash launched by the English press against their latest release, *Sandinista!*, a three-record set consisting primarily of dubbing reggae tunes, orchestrated ballads, and other esoterica. *Sandinista!* is a further departure from punk orthodoxy, and as such really has the English press up in arms.

"It's amazing, isn't it, all the bad press we've gotten in England," acknowledged Jones, the 25-year-old guitar-wielding rebel who founded the group in 1977. "We have been accused of selling out to the Americans, which is so untrue . . . our songs deal with England, the U.S.A., South America, Russia, China. England has turned against the Clash because a prophet is never welcome in his own home. We've come up with a pretty high prophecy quotient and they can't stand us for it, as if we're above it all."

But there is substance to their music that goes beyond the mouthing of juvenile anthems. They are punk without pretension. There is energy without hype. They are direct without being simple. The Clash are trying to get a message across, even if sounds sometimes as bracing as a slap in the face. They want to wake us up to the rhythms of the age.

Jones was an art student going nowhere six years ago, hoping to form a band when he met bassist Simenon at a rehearsal in which future PiL guitarist Keith Levene was also playing. Simenon tried out as a singer but couldn't hit a note, and he didn't fare much better on the bass. But Jones took one look at the gawky skinhead who was raised, like Jones, in the trenches of lower-class Brixton, and invited Paul to join the band.

"I grew up listening to reggae on a jukebox in my neighborhood, where you could only hear the bass lines," recalled Simenon. "I think it was probably true that I wasn't a good musician at first.

"But I think that playing along to reggae records really helped me and now I feel very active on the bass. I've been working on reggae and dub with a fretless bass that gives me the feel I want. I think each of us contributes another dimension to the band."

It was Simenon who named the group the Clash, saying it was the one word he read most in the newspaper. "The Clash have always been different because no one has our outlook. We're neither left nor right, but we sing of the oppressed because that's who and what we are. Our music's about politics, sure, but it's spelled with a small 'p'. We're much more interested in making a social statement that will make people aware of what's going on.

"I know we've been criticized for doing reggae, but it's a very flexible musical form which allows us the freedom to mesh with other styles. People say white blokes can't do reggae, but that's a lot of shit. We grew up in Brixton, all the people I knew were black, we shared the same common experience. I didn't discover reggae in a book. I grew up with it. It's part of me. A lot of black people and Jamaicans get mad at us because we do it better than they do."

It was Junior Mervin's "Police And Thieves" that brought the Clash instant popularity as a fledgling club band. They played their first gig opening for the Sex Pistols, but it was "White Riot," delivered by a ferocious-looking singer named Joe Strummer, who had come over to the Clash from 101ers, that rocked the boat. That driving indictment of establishment rock became an anthem for the British punk movement, which now had a political conscience in the Clash.

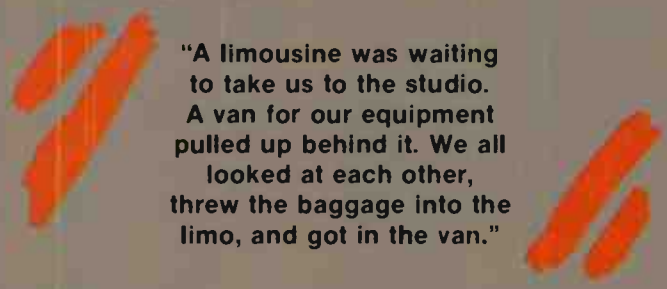
The Clash created their own chaos wherever they went. They still are subject to their own inability or reluctance to deal with the outside world. Management problems have followed the band, partially due to their uncompromising distaste for record company business and their tightly-wrapped egos.

"We're just unmanageable," says Simenon, a 25-year-old matinee idol with blond hair framing a sculptured face. "We've always like the managers we had, but the four of us are liable to do four different things when a manager tells us something. I don't know what it is about the situation.

"Maybe the tipoff came early after we had just signed with CBS Records and were coming back to London after a tour. A limousine was waiting to take us to the studio. A van for our equipment pulled up behind it. We all looked at each other, threw the baggage in the limo and got in the van. Something like a limousine has always been held up to ridicule by anyone who is poor or who comes from a neighborhood where you see only fat politicians inside."

The Clash have retained that lean and hungry look over the years because they have not fallen prey to the trappings of commercial success. Joe Strummer, the singer and prolific lyricist, sets the example. He has recently taken to squatting in his attempt to take up residence in overcrowded London, a major reason why the band has not toured for months after the January release of *Sandinista!*.

And although the band has five albums out, including three released in 1980 which contain 63 songs, the group has deferred the usual quantum leap in social status afforded rock stars for the cold comforts of still remaining within spitting distance of the street.



That doesn't mean, however, that musically the Clash has remained a three-chord garage band. Quite the contrary, they have invested all their money into studio equipment and have undertaken individual projects, including film. The most active has been Jones, the lead guitarist, who has become an accomplished producer. He has worked with England's Theatre Of Hate, plus former boyhood idol, Ian Hunter of Mott The Hoople, and most notably, singer and steady, Ellen Foley, as well as all the Clash albums.

"People think the Clash can't write love songs," says Jones, who returned to Foley's West Side apartment bearing flowers and three hours late for dinner. "Working with Ellen gave us a chance to do stuff we regularly don't do for the Clash. It worked out well all around, letting us expand our range a little."

But it's the combined efforts of the four musicians that make up the Clash that give meaning and direction to their lives. "It's something we all realize is very powerful and keeps us in tune with our viewpoints," says Simenon, an admitted insomniac who has been handling the group's management and legal duties lately.

It is precisely this lack of prurient interest that keeps the band fresh and open to new ideas. Despite being the musical force whose thrashings ignited the politics of punk, they have defied classification as a musical band recognized as one of the most potent of its era. It is the diversity of styles, the strident lyrics of Strummer, and the understated power of their reggae-pushed backbeat that makes the Clash unique while still remaining true to its musical direction. It is a derivative band which has synthesized past musical formats into a new approach.

It is also their willingness to experiment with different musical concepts and incorporate them into galvanizing social anthems that keeps the Clash a step ahead of predictability. This is most evident on *Sandinista!*, titled after the Nicaraguan revolutionaries who successfully toppled the Somoza regime in 1979. There is barely a mention of Sandinista in this album, as will be explained later by Jones, but the music has a subliminal militant feel, summoned up by a pervasive dance beat which lends itself to the political fervor of Strummer's

RICHARD E. AARON

RUDE BOYS

An Interview with Joe Strummer and Robert Fripp

By Vic Garbarini

The basic idea was fairly simple: you get the two foremost proponents of the idea of music as a force for personal and social change, sit 'em down together for a few beers, and see what happens. Now let's look at the potential problems: on the surface, polite, articulate Robert Fripp and acerbic, street-wise Joe Strummer don't appear to be the most compatible duo in rock history. I mean, you wouldn't expect them to bunk together at summer camp, would you? As musicians they seem to follow widely divergent paths, with the classically trained Fripp exploring the oceanic textures and laser-like solos of Frippertronics, or the fractured, geometric etudes of *The League of Gentlemen*, while Strummer the street poet and musical innocent bashes out three chord symphonies, or heads further up river into the dark, sensual heartland of reggae and dub. But I had a strong feeling that things were not what they seemed on the surface, and that these two had more in common than might be apparent at first glance. What links them goes far deeper than style, personality, musical

"Now I'm not a born musician like maybe Robert is..." "Not at all! I was tone deaf and had no sense of rhythm..." "I got kicked out of the choir..." "...they wouldn't even let me *join* the choir!" "Well, that's quite an achievement, Robert."

taste, or social background. It's a question of sharing a sense of commitment, both to their music and society at large, and having the courage and integrity to back up their ideals with action. It involves a willingness to risk everything — including career, financial security, and public approval — to pursue their visions without compromise. In short, I believed that Robert Fripp and Joe Strummer were tapping the same well-spring and aiming for the same goal. Originally, I had wanted the two of them to meet by themselves. When I sprang the idea on Fripp while waiting for a Manhattan subway (real men of the people, eh?) he readily agreed, provided I come along as moderator. We planned to meet in London, where Robert was going to begin rehearsal with his new band Discipline, a dream aggregation consisting, besides Fripp, of ex-Crimson mate Bill Bruford on drums, former Bowie and Talking Heads sideman Adrian Belew on guitar, and session ace Tony Levin (Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, John Lennon, among others) on bass. Strummer wasn't so easy to pin down. It took us two weeks to locate him in the small London studio, where he was rehearsing with his band for their upcoming U.S. tour, and he was hesitant at first when I mentioned bringing Fripp along. "Okay, fine," I said, "If you'd rather not I can just come over and do a straight interview." "No," answered Strummer, "I guess we can try it. After all, Fripp's probably closer to what we're trying to do than anybody I can think of." Within a week Fripp and I were standing in a funky, garage-like London studio, watching the world's greatest garage band work through some decidedly funky rhythms. (Actually, Fripp insisted on going downstairs first to watch Top of the Pops and get his hair cut by the lovely Mary Lou Green. Foreigners are like that.) Strummer seemed polite but reserved, and suggested we retire to the friendly neighborhood pub for refreshments. Once there, we positioned ourselves strategically in front of some massive stereo speakers that were connected via some cleverly concealed wires to ohmygodno! a massive turntable, which in turn was connected to a massive disc jockey. THATWASABBAWITHDANCINGQUEENANDNOWTHENEWEST SINGLEFROMDIRESTRAITS!!! Swell. Strummer ordered beers all around, one of which he shoved in my direction. As I pushed it away he smiled and asked, "what's the matter, too *big* for 'ya." I decided not to explain about my gallstones and how I'm not supposed to drink, especially on an empty stomach...oh, oh, what the hell, why not? It'll probably loosen me up. It was a decision that I would later regret, to say nothing of the chap whose shoes I would barf all over in the 'loo and the transcriptionist who would type up the tape. ("Here's your money back. *Please* do it yourself...and who the hell is that drunk guy and why didn't they turn down the music!?") In any case, I liked Strummer. He had a no-nonsense air about him, but also a considerable sense of warmth and humanity. And I was genuinely impressed by how he went out of his way to put me at ease as we started the tapes rolling.

MUSICIAN: One of the reasons I wanted to get the two of you together is...

STRUMMER: You're a bully, you know.

MUSICIAN: What?

STRUMMER: I bet you had to bully him (pointing to Fripp) as much as you had to bully me to get him here.

MUSICIAN: How did I bully you?

STRUMMER: Well, you know, you bend my ear and give me an earache, and then you probably forced him to come here and get it just as well. You don't think he'd *want* to be here, do you? Only *you* could come up with such dumb ideas!

MUSICIAN: (Smiles and nods vigorously)

STRUMMER: Not that I'm saying they're dumb completely, mind you. They might have something in them.

MUSICIAN: Look, he loved the idea. When I mentioned it to him as an aside, he immediately said he'd love to do it, right Robert?...Robert?

FRIPP: I wonder if we can get something to eat here? Maybe a ploughmans lunch, just some cheese and bread...

STRUMMER: (Conspiratorially to Fripp) He bullies people, this one.

MUSICIAN: Okay, let's start again. One of the main things you two have in common is the belief that music can actually change society. How can that happen?

STRUMMER: Because music goes directly to the head and heart of a human being. More directly and in more dimensions than the written word. And if *that* can't change anybody, then there's not a lot else that will. Music can hit as hard as if I hit you with a baseball bat, you know? But it's not an overnight thing; you can't expect everything to change quickly. I figure it's an organic process. Insidious. Look how listening to all those hippie records has affected everybody in general: everybody feels looser about things now.

FRIPP: I did a radio show in New York with Bob Geldorf of the Boomtown Rates recently, and he said he didn't believe rock and roll could change anything. And I said to him, I disagree. So he said, well, if you build up hope in Joe Bloggs in some slum in Northern Ireland, he's just going to wind up disappointed. And I said, look, if there's Joe Bloggs in his appalling social conditions in Northern Ireland with no hope, and that becomes Joe Bloggs at No. 8 in his appalling social conditions but *with* hope, you have two entirely different situations.

STRUMMER: That's right. Good point that.

FRIPP: Then it's possible for the geezer at No. 10 to get some hope, too. And then it spreads up the street, and you have a community. Then you're talking about something which isn't dramatic and exciting, but which contains the possibility of *real* change. It's easy to miss because it's essentially personal, and it's very quiet. And like Joe says, it takes time.

MUSICIAN: Is it the music itself that can do this, or does it merely serve as a rallying point?

FRIPP: Both, really. It serves as a rallying point, but it can work more directly too. I think sometimes at a really good gig when there's a certain quality in the music, a kind of liberation can take place, and you don't go home and take quite as much crap from the news as you did before, because you've actually tasted a different quality of experience which changes how you think about things. So to a degree you've been liberated.

MUSICIAN: How did you both wind up choosing music as your means of expression? How were you feeling about things in general, or what made you decide it had to be a band? That there was something you needed or could accomplish through rock?

STRUMMER: Well, I started playing music around '73. I'd tried everything else, and I couldn't find anything I wanted to do or anywhere to be. So I got into music because it seemed like the best thing around. You could say it was the thing that had the least laws and restrictions about it.

FRIPP: I was trained as a guitarist. So I took lessons and I suppose I eventually could have become a classical guitarist. But it seemed that I was spending years and years working incredibly hard to have the opportunity to play other people's music. In terms of even serious music, the guitar repertoire is pretty second rate. And it's anachronistic. Hearing Hendrix hit one chord said infinitely more to me than the entire classical guitar repertoire. And I realized that rock was very malleable

— that within it you can play classical music or jazz or blues or whatever you cared to, and it was still rock. If you went outside the form in jazz or classical you were selling out. But if you did it in rock music you were gifted!

MUSICIAN: What about you, Joe? If you had to point to your major source of inspiration who or what would it be?

STRUMMER: Bo Diddley.

MUSICIAN: Anybody else?

STRUMMER: *Bo Diddley.*

MUSICIAN: Right. Incidentally, the stuff I heard you playing at rehearsal tonight sounded a lot closer to George Clinton than to "White Riot".

STRUMMER: That's one of the most important things I've come to over the last few years — feeling more into funky music. In the beginning I just couldn't take it at all. I thought it was a waste of time. Putting people to sleep.

MUSICIAN: Do you find something in funk and reggae that rock and roll doesn't have? On *Sandinista!* you did "Police On My Back" and a few...

STRUMMER: But rock and roll doesn't exist now!

MUSICIAN: What do you mean by that?

STRUMMER: That was heavy metal — that was something to do with other people and has nothing to do with me. I don't even understand what it's all about.

MUSICIAN: Allright, what do you call what you were doing on your first two albums?

STRUMMER: That was punk rock. Which still exists, but I'm not interested in that either.

MUSICIAN: Why not? Because it's lost its creative impetus?

STRUMMER: Yeah, the fans killed it. They wanted it to stay the same, and that ended our interest in it. Now they got what they deserved: a lot of rubbish, basically.

MUSICIAN: Were you surprised by the reception you got in Jamaica, Joe? I heard that things didn't go entirely smoothly down there.

STRUMMER: If you're a white band and you want to use Channel 1 Studio, they think you're rich, which you are, really, compared to them hanging about there. And you've got to 'bounce up' the local population, you know? We didn't have anything to give them, so we had to leave. It's really tough down there now. There's not really a lot of money about.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of evolving musical forms and working in different styles: I got the new Ellen Foley record recently and I noticed that you and Mick wrote most of the tunes, and that you all (the Clash) back her up on the record. I played it for a few people and asked "now, who do you think this is?" Most people thought it was Abba...

STRUMMER: That's a compliment!

FRIPP: Abba are very, very good.

MUSICIAN: I agree, but I'm surprised to hear you both say that. What do you like about them?

STRUMMER: They hardly ever lay a turkey on you. They've kind of hit a rut these days, but they were in there just blammin' 'em onto the charts for ages, which is admirable...also the girls are nice looking!

MUSICIAN: Since *London Calling* there's been a marked change in your musical approach: more emphasis on melody, increasingly sophisticated song structures, even a few ballads. Is this something you guys felt capable of all along? How did it come about that at that point in time you blossomed musically?

STRUMMER: It's a bit like weight lifting, in a way. If we met every day and did some weight training, in a year we'd be the heroes of the beach. We were just flexing our muscles in a musical sense. Obviously, if you absorb yourself in music and practice every day, you become more capable.

MUSICIAN: And you feel that you don't have to stick to that three chord screaming punk intensity in order to keep your creative spark alive?

STRUMMER: Yeah, that's how we see it. But will the audience accept it?

MUSICIAN: Well, that's the question. What do you think? How long will it take your audience to understand what you're doing?

FRIPP: Two to five years, right? (general laughter) Seriously! It takes about that long to disseminate. It's like throwing a rock in the middle of a lake and waiting for the ripples to get to shore. And in our industry, I've noticed it takes two to five years for an idea to be accepted.

STRUMMER: God, that's depressing. Our records will be deleted by then!

MUSICIAN: It seems that during the punk era there was a tremendous release of energy, and it didn't matter how the music came out because everybody could feel the intensity...

STRUMMER: Correction. It *used* to not matter.

MUSICIAN: Allright, now it does. So you come to a point where you want to refine and develop your music, but you don't want to lose that energy. How do you do that? How do you keep it alive? How do you avoid becoming like those 70s bands, just going through the motions?

STRUMMER: Well, that's where everybody winds up, isn't it?

MUSICIAN: Are you going to end up like that?

STRUMMER: Someone would give you odds on that.

FRIPP: With the early Crimson, we were all desperate geezers..

STRUMMER: (To Fripp) Do you remember a tent in Plompton?

FRIPP: Yes!! And do you know why we played there?..

STRUMMER: I was in that tent, Robert.

FRIPP: Really? What was it like?

STRUMMER: It was terrific...*really* terrific.

FRIPP: Can I tell you why we played there? The agency that booked it hadn't been completely straight with us, so we said, you're no longer our agents. So instead of putting us on front stage — where we'd wipe out anything they had — they stuck us in the tent, so we wouldn't touch anyone. It was a deliberate agency move to fuck up our careers.

STRUMMER: And the Who were dead boring that night.

FRIPP: I remember there was a girl still there an hour after we packed up. She was still there, and suddenly she says "Is it finished"? An hour after it was over.

STRUMMER: Yeah, it was like that in that tent.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of live gigs, I was just telling Mick before that I saw you the second time you came to New York, and to tell the truth I wasn't very impressed with the show.

STRUMMER: That's not illegal.

MUSICIAN: But I kept hearing fantastic reports about you in concert, so I came to the Palladium the third time you played there and suddenly...

STRUMMER: ...A GIANT BOUNCER GRABBED YOU AND DASHED YOUR HEAD AGAINST THE WALL!! And then it all made sense. No, go on...

MUSICIAN: Actually, it *was* something like that. Suddenly it all came into focus — it was like a hole opened up and you guys were a channel for a high quality of energy. I was literally stunned.

FRIPP: It was the best rock and roll show I've seen in six years.

STRUMMER: Sometimes I think it's equally shitty every night and it's the audience that changes in their perception of it. I remember once Devo got a hold of Sandy Pearlman when he was mixing our sound at the Santa Monica Civic. They didn't come around and say hello to us, right? They snuck around back and got a hold of Sandy at the mixer and said "How do you get that sound? Tell us how it's done!" And they didn't realize it was just the way we were going like this (hunches and strums intensely) on the guitars, you know what I mean? It wasn't particularly what *slave* amps you had in the P.A. or the equalizers or whatever. It was the way we were going at it.

MUSICIAN: Do you ever feel that an audience is just sucking you dry of energy, and not really participating in the experience?

STRUMMER: Yeah, I feel that sometimes, And I get angry and tell them about it when I do.

FRIPP: Do you feel sometimes that people want you to be up there doing what they expect, and if you go off on another

RICHARD E. AARON

Unruly boys: "We have self-discipline in the studio, we have none on stage. A lot of the time it's decadent."

"We have a horror of becoming the new Rolling Stones. We felt like they'd caught a buzz off London and it had made them. This whole place is lousy — what are they doing about it?

course — like if you do a record which isn't what they think you should do — you're going to get clobbered for it? Do you feel misinterpreted at times?

STRUMMER: Yeah, sure. There was this one journalist who described us as "the best amphetamine rush in town", right? And so I went to the press reception to see what it was all about, because I felt like we were being discovered as some new kind of *drug*. I found it a bit offensive.

MUSICIAN: If you had to put into 25 words or less what it is you're trying to say when you get up on stage, what would it be?

STRUMMER: LOOK AT ME!

MUSICIAN: (Laughs) Yeah, but lots of bands do that and they don't get the same response you do. What's the difference?

FRIPP: Anything a performer does on a public platform is significant, even just scratching your ass. When I go on stage as 'Robert Fripp' it's more real, more alive. I can do stuff I can't do as 'Bob Fripp from Wimbourne, Dorset' and it has a significance quite apart from me. When I was with the Crimson team, and even now, as soon as ego gets involved in it or when the audience are dumping their egos on me, and saying "you have to be our ideal of what we think you should be", it becomes masturbation rather than consummation. It feels dirty. But when you do a gig, and maybe it's not even a good gig, but somehow there's a relationship between the audience and performers that's right, then no one's ripped anyone off. And it feels good. It feels clean. It feels like an honorable way of working. Now, both the musicians and the audiences have responsibilities to each other. For instance, sometimes you don't want to get up and play, but you said you would so you do it. You have a part of you that makes that commitment and the rest of you follows. It's like this: I don't have to do this for a living, but because I decided to do it for another three years...

STRUMMER: ...This is interesting to me. What would you do for a living if not music?

FRIPP: I'd probably still do it, but in a non-public context

STRUMMER: You mean just for your mates?

FRIPP: Yes. And some guitar teaching. Actually, I'd like to be able to go out and play 250 seaters with other musicians. At the moment, I can only afford to do it on my own. I don't want to play 3,000 seaters because I feel I can't make contact with the people I'm playing to. I told my management that today and they said "you can't do it your way; you can't pay the bills that way."

MUSICIAN: Isn't this similar to what you're doing with *Sandinista!*: keeping the price down to the point where you're not going to make any money off it unless it sells 200,000 units?

STRUMMER: Yeah, that's the specific deal for the U.K., which is going really badly now. It's a big flop. The thing I like about making a stand on prices is that it's *here and now*, and not just a promise. It's dealing with reality: how many bucks you're going to have to part with at the counter to get it. It's one of the few opportunities we have to manifest our ideals, to make them exist in a real plane. To do it in Thatcher's Britain during a recession was a kind of flamboyant gesture.

FRIPP: Can you make money just from doing gigs?

STRUMMER: No. A *big* no! It's like throwing money away. That's our ultimate aim, to be able to break even on tour. No matter how carefully you do it, you always come out in the red.

MUSICIAN: Robert, you were saying yesterday that if you went out alone and did Frippertronics on the road, you could make money. Is there any way of doing that in a group context?

FRIPP: Well, the traditional answer is yes, providing you play

3,000 seaters. But my response is that if you play 3,000 seaters, your expenses will rise accordingly. And so you say you'll play 1,000 seaters, and your expenses match that. But even so, to break even — working with four musicians — is a work of art. If I go out and play with one guy driving me around and two green boxes, I can make more money in one month flat than for all the work I've done in the past twelve years.

STRUMMER: I believe you!

FRIPP: King Crimson only made money *after we broke up*. After six years of hard work we had a deficit of $125,000. When we disbanded the records went on selling, and that's how we finally made some money. Nowadays, I spend more time working at approaches to business than I do to music. I reckon I spend 1% of my professional life actually playing guitar. And that's not an exaggeration — that's literal!

MUSICIAN: While we're on the subject of the marketplace I wanted to ask you both about success and recognition. In terms of the deeper values of the music, does it mean anything to break into a Top Forty. Is that any kind of victory?

STRUMMER: I'll tell you when it all went sour for me: When I realized that the chart was only compiled in the straight record shops, not in the specialist shops where the real fans go. It's the housewife market, really. It's a cross section of grannies and teenyboppers and mummies buying it, you know? When I saw that I lost interest in it completely. But before that, I was quite keen to make the charts. I mean, why should Bob Geldorf be Top of the fucking Pops?

FRIPP: But getting back to this thing about live gigs, Joe, do you do anything to build up energy before you go on?

STRUMMER: Yeah, I like to get into a mental panic before the show — to really wind myself up before I get onstage.

MUSICIAN: Anything else?

STRUMMER: I drink a lot of orange juice.

MUSICIAN: When the punk thing started a lot of groups were espousing a new set of ideals, but in many cases it was just words, or they couldn't sustain it. What keeps you guys honest?

STRUMMER: The horror of becoming the new Rolling Stones. We stood there in 1976 and thought, "this whole place is *lousy*. The Stones started here — what are they doing about it?" We felt like they'd caught a buzz off London and it had made them. And they could have come back and done... I don't know what...but I just felt they weren't there. And we really didn't want to become that. We saw that as the way *not* to turn out.

MUSICIAN: There's a lot of leftist ideology in your lyrics, but you're obviously not doctrinaire Marxists.

STRUMMER: Toeing any line is obviously a dodgy situation, because I'm just not into a policy or I'd have joined the Communist Party years ago. I've done my time selling *The Morning Star* at pit heads in Wales, and it's just not happening.

MUSICIAN: In the song "The Equalizer" you talk about everyone having equal income...

STRUMMER: I'm not saying that. I read this thing in Marx that really hit me about why is the person who owns the factory allowed to take more of the profits than the person who does all the work? It's an equal input — you own the factory and I do the work — so we should split the profits.

MUSICIAN: And yet on both *London Calling* and *Sandinista!* you admit that just money alone isn't the answer.

STRUMMER: Well, the Beatles said it years ago, money can't buy ya love.

MUSICIAN: Have you ever read E.F. Schumacher? He says that obviously income should be more equal, but we have to go beyond that. In America we have more wealth than anyone else and we're still miserable, because the work we do stifles our natural creativity and provides us with no sense of purpose or inner satisfaction. Reading it reminded me of the feeling I get from what you're doing: giving hope to people who are trapped in these situations and are looking for an alternative.

STRUMMER: Yeah, it's horrible to think that people spend their whole lives in a rubber factory, pulling the rubber along the belt because the machine doesn't work. I couldn't have done it. The hell with it! Is that what we have to have? I just can't believe it, and yet it seems irreversible. Maybe it's too late to say, small is beautiful, and all that.

MUSICIAN: Maybe it's too late to save the system as we know it, but maybe that's the point — that if things fall apart, there'll be a chance to build something better. That's the kind of hope I hear in your music.

FRIPP: If I can address some of these questions: Marx was something of an old fart. He was an authoritarian and a centralist, and what he proposed was essentially the same as capitalism, except with a different set of people in charge. In any kind of realistic political change you have to start on the inside, by changing the central value system. You can't start by changing the structure, change has to be a personal choice.

MUSICIAN: Meaning you can't have a just and equitable structure if the individuals that comprise it are still operating from greed and egocentricity. So no matter how well you design a house it won't stand if the individual bricks are defective.

FRIPP: Right, so change therefore has to be a personal choice. And it's got to be gradual, because normal political life has to do with changing externals by force, and any kind of force is going to breed it's opposite reaction. So, if you force a welfare society on people, but their personal values and way of life haven't changed for the better, they're going to wind up disliking each other even more than they did before. Another important thing is that if you have an aim in mind, you have to work as if it's already achieved. You can't create a democracy by imposing a dictatorship on people until they're ready for democracy. You have to be democratic yourself. Your way of going there is where you're going.

MUSICIAN: I wanted to ask Joe about his attitude towards violence. You use the imagery of violence, but I don't think you really believe it's the answer. Am I right or wrong?

STRUMMER: Of course not! Violence isn't an answer to anything. Do I want some jackoff to jump on my back right now? Of course I don't. It's so *sordid*.

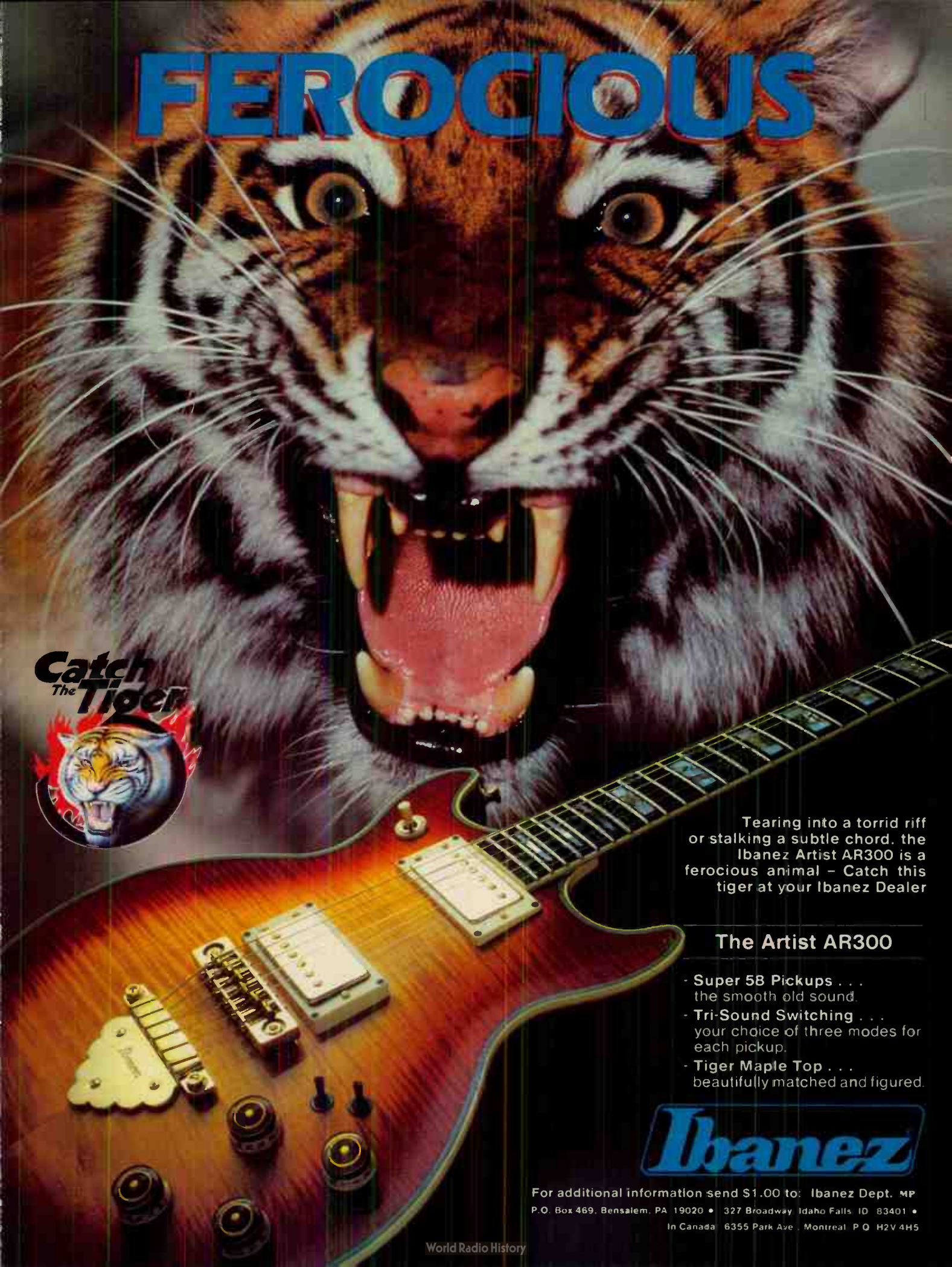
MUSICIAN: What about in the case of *Sandinista!*? Obviously, Somoza was overthrown by force.

STRUMMER: Sure, but that's practical violence. Somoza ain't going to go unless you shoot a few hundred of his guards. I'm not saying that I could get into that here in Britain, but I think in Nicaragua the situation certainly demanded it. Think of how

ROUGH TOYS

Back in the studio Paul Simenon holds his Fender Fretless Bass up to the light. "See, no frets. But there *are* little dots on the side. Sometimes, I can barely see 'em on stage, which is why we need a good lighting bloke!" Simenon favors Ampeg Bass Cabinets, and has recently switched from a Sunn to an Ampeg top. "The Sunn is more trebly and toppy so you can hear yourself better on stage, but I'm into the more bottomish sound of the Ampeg now. I've got a graphic equalizer up there so it works out fine." Topper Headon's traps consist of Pearl Ambassador drums (Mirror Finish Kit), with Evans Hydraulic Heads and Zildjian cymbals. Lead guitarist Mick Jones' arsenal includes a '58 Les Paul Sunburst, '60 Les Paul Junior and white twentieth Anniversary Model (Les Paul, of course), and a Gibson Semi-Acoustic. On stage he utilizes a brace of MXR gadgets, including the 100 Phaser, Flanger, Analog Delay, Noisegate. They're all run through a Roland Chorus Echo and on into a Mesa Boogie 1x15 100 Watt Combo (with speakers disconnected), and finally into two Marshall 4x12 Cabinets. (Whew) Joe Strummer prefers a Fender sound, specifically a venerable '52 Esquire and two Telecasters, circa '63 and '64. He's currently using Music Man amps because, in his words, "I don't have time to search for those old Fender tube amps. The Music Man is the closest thing to that sound I've found." Anything he doesn't like about them? "Yeah, that plastic motif on the front is repulsive. Those little guys in bellbottoms. Ugh!"

FEROCIOUS



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You see, Joe, music is a lot like swimming...without constant motion and a fluttering of the hands one tends to sink...but then ...as the clear viscous surrounds one...

many campesinos were slaughtered there since 1919. It must run into the *millions*! In that situation, I condone picking up a gun.

FRIPP: I've found that American bands aren't politically aware.

STRUMMER: Yeah, why is that? There's only one I know, called Prairie Fire, and they're so heavily Communist it turns you off.

FRIPP: I think English musicians are more politically acute because our social system is so crazy over here that you feel you have to explore it and find out why. America's a commercial culture, and I suppose it's nearer a pure democracy than we are, 'cause if you want to vote you just put your dollar in and it counts, and there's a great deal of social mobility as a result. Over here, if you open your mouth and you come from the East End of London, or Wales, or Dorset, you're immediately stuck in a social caste. My dad would let me know that if I did anything that prejudiced his position in the town, I would really get it. I realized later it was because he's made the transition from the working class to the lower middle class...

STRUMMER: ...and that's the most important thing in the world to people in that situation.

FRIPP: Exactly. I think the main difference between my generation and yours is that in the 60s it was "everything seems mad, therefore I question my sense. Now it's everything seems mad, therefore I *approve* my senses because everything is crazy. So my lot are a bit more schizophrenic than your lot, who are a bit more down to earth and politically directed.

MUSICIAN: Is it really necessary to suffer in order to produce something worthwhile?

STRUMMER: A great man wrote about "the lips of a poet being strangely formed, so that when he uttered cries of help people gathered around him saying, "More, more, say it again!" (general laughter) So there must be something in the soul that makes you want to make that sound.

FRIPP: Do you have to suffer for that?

STRUMMER: Happy people don't create anything. I find creation hinges on being well-fucked-up.

FRIPP: I think we're dealing with two different things here. If you suffer it does create friction and that gives you energy, but there are some kinds of suffering that are not necessary. Like the geezer who gets into coke and it gives him trouble, or he's used to having his picture in the paper so he's paranoid at the end of the week when it isn't there.

STRUMMER: Yeah, pride and vanity get you nowhere.

FRIPP: But then there's a kind of suffering where you put all you've got into a record, and you believe in it, but no one likes it. Then you still say I'm sorry, my name's on it, this is my work. And that creates a good energy.

MUSICIAN: Isn't there a kind of inner joy if you're suffering for the right reason?

FRIPP: If you know it's worth doing. If people are booing but you *know* it's a fuck of a set, you don't give a shit who boos. But when you know you're not playing well, if you know you've copped an egg, you can't face it...

STRUMMER: Yeah, there are times when I haven't played well that I ran back to the dressing room and I wanted to...just...

FRIPP: ...say I apologize. I'm sorry!

MUSICIAN: Okay, the right kind of suffering can produce something transcendent. What about anger? Joe, you wrote in "Clampdown" that anger can be power...

STRUMMER: ...Because you can either destroy things with anger, or it can motivate you to learn about your situation and follow things through. A lot of people just thought the whole punk movement was negative, but that was just a superficial reading.

FRIPP: When I first heard about punk back in '77 I'd been waiting for six years to hear that kind of commitment: to hear some geezer hit a drum as if *all he wanted to do in his life was hit a drum*. And to me it was all a great political statement. Because the movement that I'd been a part of went off course.

MUSICIAN: What went wrong?

FRIPP: It went off because a bunch of working class guys tried to move up to a middle class level of income by aping middle class traditions. Supposedly technique was important, but it became a facile technique — it wasn't real. People weren't in charge of all those endless displays of notes. They were becoming programmed, playing charts and licks, and it wasn't human.

MUSICIAN: And yet both of you get criticized by people who don't believe you can maintain your commitment and still evolve into different musical styles.

STRUMMER: Maybe they're right, but how do they arrive at that conclusion?

MUSICIAN: Well, they can feel the energy and intensity from things like "Schizoid Man" or "White Riot," but not necessarily from subtler mediums like dub and Frippertronics.

FRIPP: Yes, but when you lose your virginity there's an inno-

cence that you're never going to recapture. But that doesn't mean you're going to give up screwing! You learn to experience your innocence in a different kind of way.

STRUMMER: Great point. Listen to what he's saying...

FRIPP: When you lose your virginity it doesn't matter that you don't know what you're doing, because it has to do with innocence. So for me, art is the capacity to re-experience your innocence. How do you lose your virginity every time you make love? How do you do that musically every time you go on stage?

MUSICIAN: Okay, you asked the question. How do you?

FRIPP: You have to know what you want, and you have to have the wish. One night at the Marquee in 1969 King Crimson went out on a tangent, — maybe just for five minutes — and you never knew where the hell it was, but I was telepathic — I knew everything that was going on, and what people were thinking. Because there was that energy in the room, and... I became a human being in such a way that... if that's what it means to be a human being, then *I want to become a human being*! Once you've had it, you *have* to find a way of living like that again. Otherwise there's no point in anything. And so you go for it! You have to go on till you find a way to do it. And if you want it enough, you get nearer. There are a lot of techniques, disciplines, and inner and outer practices that can help make you open to that quality of experience. I think that mastery of a technique or subject for a musician means being both a virgin and an accomplished lover at the same time.

MUSICIAN: What's the role of technique in all this?

FRIPP: Technique is part of what you do in order to get there. But when you're there, you really don't give a shit about technique.

STRUMMER: Right, it's a combination of innocence and expertise.

FRIPP: ...and the more technique you have the more you throw away, and that gives you more authority. If you can only play one chord, and you play it with all you've got, that's pure. If you can play 10,000 chords, but you play one that's pure, it has an authority which the others don't.

STRUMMER: As Kierkegaard says, "Don't fall in the cup of wisdom that you drink from." What he's saying applies to music too. All those flurries of notes and runs are like falling in, when all you have to do is drink.

MUSICIAN: (To Strummer) That reminds me of that great line in "The Sounds of The Sinners": "Waiting for that jazz note...

STRUMMER: ...Right, looking for the great jazz note that destroyed the walls of Jericho. You hit it. That's what we're after.

MUSICIAN: In a way, that's what I felt happened that night I saw your show at the Palladium. There was this extraordinary energy coming through — a real feeling of oneness and unity. Is that what music is capable of? Is that what you're aiming for?

STRUMMER: Well, gosh, (laughs) maybe it has something to do with the price of the hot dogs that night. I don't know, maybe you're asking the wrong people.

FRIPP: About finding that great jazz note: I think the Western tradition of teaching music is pretty screwed up. Because you learn all the externals, the laws of harmony, the laws of counterpoint, the laws of rhythm, but nothing about music. On the other hand, there's a tradition among the Sufis where you play only one note on the bass end of the flute for 1000 days. You can think about as many notes as you want, but you can't play them. Just that one note for 1,000 days. Then there was that Sufi drummer you introduced me to...

MUSICIAN: Yeah, from Istanbul. Nezih Uzel.

FRIPP: That's the guy. He told me that he had to prepare himself for three years before he could even start to learn his instrument.

MUSICIAN: If you had to put into words what it is you'd like to give people through your music, what would it be?

STRUMMER: That they feel they could start to play, too. When I was a teenager I felt that musicians were a world apart — a secret society I could never join. I didn't bother to try until I was almost too old. I just hope it doesn't seem so impossible like it did for me watching Eric Clapton at Wembley and thinking *I could never do that*. It's not that hard, really. Now. I'm not a born musician like maybe Robert is...

FRIPP: Not at all! I was tone deaf and had no sense of rhythm...

STRUMMER: ...I got kicked out of the choir...

FRIPP: ...they wouldn't even let me *join* the choir!

STRUMMER: Well, that's quite an achievement, Robert. I really enjoy and appreciate what you've done.

FRIPP: Sometimes — and this is only a theory — I think that music needs a musician to play it. That the music itself is alive, but you have to be out there to know it. And at that point it may be possible that the music is waiting to be played. So it needs a musician.

STRUMMER: I've been thinking about this recently. I find that when I write a really good song, it's a blur in my mind when I actually wrote it. I know the song exists, 'cause I can play it for my friends, but I just can't remember what happened between thinking of the idea of the song and finally playing it for my friend. Something happened that I don't remember.

"I was listening and I heard the next note I had to play. And I played it. Then I heard the next note and I played that one... and it's funny, but I had to trust it, trust the music to play itself." — Fripp

MUSICIAN: That's a classic description of the creative process. The ordinary faculties are suspended in a way while something greater comes through. Is there anything you do to be more open to those moments?

STRUMMER: Every man has his own rituals to get you into the right state of consciousness. I like to have four typewriters in a row and then I feel everything is prepared.

FRIPP: I think you have to learn to listen to the music. I don't know many musicians who even listen to what they're playing — it's never automatic, you always have to make an effort to use your ears. A funny thing happened in Philadelphia a few weeks ago during my Frippertronics tour. I was listening and I heard the next note I had to play. And I played it. Then I heard the next note, and I played that one. I'd been waiting 23 years for that to happen...

STRUMMER: ...that's *real* music...

FRIPP: ...and it was the first time it ever happened to me. And I started to cry while I was playing...

STRUMMER: That's it. To know where it has to go...

FRIPP: ...and it's funny, but I had to trust it. I heard the next note, and I thought well, I'll try it. Then I heard the next one and thought well, this is shit, but I thought I should trust it. So I did. And it's a question of trusting the music to play itself.

STRUMMER: It's like that feeling when you're just sitting there and playing, and you're not conscious of it. You start doodling and your hands just take over, and your conscious mind is no longer saying you must practice, or you must play this. Then something else tunes in and I'm playing something special. My mind's not involved, and I know I've been playing real music.

MUSICIAN: One last question: What's the most important thing you've learned about playing music over the last five years?

STRUMMER: That unless you're prepared to give your heart and soul to it completely, *forget it!*

MUSICIAN: That seems like a good place to stop.

FRIPP: I'm up for some pinball. Do you play, Joe?

STRUMMER: Are you kidding? From Soho down to Brighton, I must have played them all... M

PHOTOS BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

RONALD SHANNON JACKSON

THE FUTURE OF JAZZ DRUMMING

By Rafi Zabor and David Breskin

The first wave of a fusion between jazz and rock idioms began with Miles Davis around 1970 and was quickly taken up by a generation of musicians sensing a unique artistic opportunity and by record companies smelling bigger, better bucks. With the continuing exception of Weather Report and occasional one-shot successes like Michael Mantler's Movies, *the movement was artistically bankrupt if financially solvent by the end of its first half-decade. The second wave must have begun before the first — otherwise how explain the presence of an electric band at Ornette Coleman's 1962 Town Hall concert? — but only became noticeable in 1977 with the release of Ornette Coleman's* Dancing in Your Head, *a colossal celebration of the possibilities of music and life that sounded anomalous at the time but which now can be seen to have ushered in a whole new musical genre (A&M Horizon has let it go out of print, anxious not to disturb in its inexplicable course the bizarre public fate of Ornette Coleman). This second meeting of the ways had less to do with the possibility of a dialogue between the American races — the dreams of the 60s have not died so hard after all — than with the reweaving of several strands in a more specifically black tradition. Coleman had always encountered the blues at a point aesthetically prior to its recorded traditions, before its assumption of history and form; it was as if he had touched the music's heart. With* Dancing *he celebrated the life of that heart in what should have been an unendurable chaos: screaming guitars in two keys, bass in a third, a riot of rhythms: as if in the middle of the sundering racket of our cities it were still possible for a whole human being, body and spirit, to dance. You could not immediately tell how important the drummer on the record was to the synthesis, but when* Body Meta *came out on Artists House, presenting music from the same sessions but without a multiple percussion track, it became apparent that Ronald Shannon Jackson was some new kind of drummer who could match Coleman vision for vision, violation for violation, and who might conceivably have something to say on his own. Of course by then he had appeared with Coleman's double quartet at Carnegie and, in a sudden eruption of reality, with Coleman on Saturday Night Live (leaving guest host Milton Berle more than a little puzzled and the audience apparently speechless), and gone on to join Cecil Taylor's band, in which, amid thundering tom-toms and 4/4 shuffles, he precipitated the first changes in Taylor's rhythmic landscape in nearly twenty years. Shortly thereafter he animated fellow Coleman alumnus Blood Ulmer's avant-funk quartet (with Amin Ali and David Murray), initiating a major portion of the Punk Jazz phenomenon (still largely an occurrence in the press) while starting up his own very different band, the Decoding Society. Joachim Berendt called him "simply the most important new drummer of today" while other incautious souls let on that he was the first man with something new to say on the instrument since Tony Williams. Well, you know how people talk, but clearly Shannon Jackson was a sudden force to be reckoned with — what else could have made the great ship Cecil*

From a musical education in the heartland of Texas and Missouri to the man of all styles on the pavements of the Apple, to the University of Ornette and the harmolodics of knowledge in Paris, to a 13th street apartment and a monk-like sacrifice to discover a true self, to the fulfillment of a radical new sense of space within time, the saga of Ronald Shannon Jackson is one of inspired purpose.

change course? — and a new meeting place for free rhythm, funk, tribal time polyphony and second line-marches. Shannon Jackson speaking:

I was born and raised in Fort Worth, Texas and I stayed there until I went off to college. My mother plays piano and organ, and my father always wanted to play the saxophone. He was the local juke-box man. He owned juke-boxes and record stores. He had the record store in the black neighborhood, and we sold gospel and race music and Red Foxx stuff, which was basically under the counter and illegal — for parties and all. We always had to put the most sellable blues on the jukes, because we didn't have that much money and so my father had to make the right choices; it would boil down to choosing Jimmy Reed and Muddy Waters and B.B. King and Bobby Bland and Guitar Slim and Gatemouth Brown. So I grew up listening to them, because that's what he put on the boxes — all that intermixed with Horace Silver, who was hitting at the time with that Blue Note scene. This was mid-50s. I used to spend my summers out in the country, place called Aola, Texas, way out there in east Texas. Place just has a barber shop and a little grocery store. Train didn't even stop. Local man just put the mail up on a post, trainman would snag it on the way through. That was the environment I grew up in.

I was about four years old when I saw a set of drums in a church basement in Houston, and I knew I was going to be doin' that. I didn't know what they were, but I knew they had something to do with me. I used to keep time on pots and pans and everything I could find to keep time on. When I was in 3rd grade was the first time I had actual access to a set. Fellow named John Carter, who now teaches at the University of Southern California, was my first music teacher. In the 3rd grade they asked everybody who had training on instruments, they write your name down an' all, then they send you to the band room. They gave me a clarinet, but I moved to the drums in the back of the room — which I knew I wanted to do. I just happened to have a natural talent for it. So we had to learn the Sousa's, other marches by English composers. By the time I got to junior high, we were playing Wagner. At high school, it was marching music during the football season and classical music during the rest of the year. Now for our *own* enjoyment, we used to jam during lunch hour. The band director let us have the band room. We had access to all the instruments, every day during lunch. He would just lock us in. We didn't go to lunch in those days. We weren't playing blues, we were playing jazz. Charlie Parker had been through town and there was a local contingent of guys who could really play. Dallas was bigger than Fort Worth, but Fort Worth always had the cats who were on the money in terms of the music. It had a lot to do with our music teacher there, Mr. Baxter. He played all the instruments. He loved to perfect a band. He put his whole life into music — to the point it would drive him mad, so dedicated, totally dedicated. A lot of people come through this man: he was Ornette Coleman's teacher, he was Dewey Redman's teacher, he was Julius Hemphill's teacher, Charles Moffett's teacher and John Carter's and mine. King Curtis, my father's cousin, also came from there. Billy Toman and I used to take our instruments home over the weekends, he was a saxophone player, used to play with Mingus. We couldn't get into the clubs much. I'd sneak in a lotta places 'cause my father had the juke-boxes, just long enough to catch a few sounds until someone got wise and realized I wasn't there dealing with the juke-boxes. Then we started goin' to Dallas. Saw a group called James Clay and the Red Tops, and I loved what everybody was doing and I wanted to sit in but I just wouldn't. Fellow

named Leroy Cooper, a baritone player who played with Ray Charles, was the one that got me up there. Billy had told him I played drums. I was 15 then.

I'd been so indoctrinated to the fact that the life of a musician is so hard. I'd seen a lot of musicians, and I thought I could do better in terms of living. But the music was something I just did. In church, I sang in the choir. In school, I sang in the choir. And the bands. And I played some gospel music, some spiritual music. It took a long time to actually make up my mind that this was what I was gonna do.

I went off to school, to Lincoln University in Missouri, to study music. But when I got there I realized it wasn't the kind of music I wanted. It wasn't jazz, which was the music I most liked to play. I'd been gigging in Dallas with James Clay and playing in Fort Worth. Ornette, of course, was long gone by that time, and Hemphill was four, five years ahead of me. So we didn't have a chance to play together until I got to college. In the marching band and symphony orchestra at Lincoln was Oliver Nelson, Lester Bowie, John Hicks, Julius Hemphill, a bass and tuba player, Bill Davis, and myself. There we all were in Jefferson City, Missouri. I had chosen Lincoln over other schools because Lincoln was right between St. Louis and Kansas City and I knew I'd get the chance to catch all the players that came through there. With the background I had, I was afraid to come to New York, absolutely frightened to death.

At Lincoln, I learned how to play — uh, I *had* to play — hillbilly music, which paid for my food. Pure Ozark music. Also, some Boots Randolph-type music, screamin' saxophone sorta thing. Just drums and sax in these back hills clubs up in the Ozarks. It was what they call, *real* redneck music. Redneck Honky-tonk music, it had nothin' to do with the blues. And there were like no black people in the club except me and the sax player. And they would call out the weirdest songs and we'd have to play 'em and make those people dance. Just me and the saxist: that's how I got a foundation in being able to play without a bass player or anything else. Actually, it was like a life and death situation. The saxophone player grew up in that area and all the white people knew him — he was their local idol, they always gave him work. And so he could play any song that they would ever want; it might be outa tune, in the wrong key, whatever, but he could play it. He had a good ear and he could scream.

You don't have to play it from time, you can play it from rhythm. To me, making music swing means putting a beat there without actually playing it. The beat is in your body, the pulse can just come directly from life.

We'd have to play "The Yellow Rose of Texas" and then go to "Polkadots and Moonbeams" then "Honky-tonk" then maybe "How Much Is That Doggie In The Window." People came down to get drunk and we couldn't jive 'em, we really had to be playing. They'd throw all kinds of things at us. Look: we were black so we were in trouble anyway. So we'd better not do nothin' wrong, or else; you know, just play it boy. I guess we usually came through the front door but we had to come through it pretty early in the night, which was pretty much the same thing as coming in the back. And we'd play roller skating rinks, which were much better than the bars. No organ. Just me and the saxophone. In the Ozarks I had to learn how to fill in for other instruments, like the organ at the rink, I'd hear in my head where those other instruments were supposed to be and I'd know how to fill in — and *still* swing.

See, the whole gist of what I'm doing now is to play music that swings — swings just as madly, just as profoundly as any music has ever swung — but without having to play it in the context of keeping time. In other words, I play rhythms and let the rhythms create the time itself. So having to do those type of things early on — playing with no bass or no piano for instance — helped me think about the drums in a different way. And I had to play for everything and anything: bar mitzvahs, weddings too, and Mass, and honky-tonks, and everything else. I bought my first telephone in New York with money from a strip-tease gig. Me and a saxophone player from Philly, C. Sharpe, had that gig. Bump an' grind, boom ba-ba-boom ba-ba-boom and all that. Most of it was on the toms and the bass drum, geared to your basic hip-shaking and then the undressing ceremony. Uh-huh, I've played everything.

I was at Lincoln a few weeks less than a year, 'cause I took off to see John Coltrane and Dizzy in St. Louis. Coming from Texas you could only hear all these people on record. I played in Dallas that summer and after that enrolled at Texas Southern University in Houston. I started working an evening gig, then an evening gig *and* an after-hours gig. I was working so much, I quit school again. My father became very ill and I went back home to run his business. It was then I decided to take school very seriously, in terms of trying to learn something other than music.

I had dissipated an awful lot as a young person. I was always with people much older and so I was always doin' what they were doin'. In order to prove myself I was always doin' it to the extreme. So when I went home to take care of business it was a breather for me; I got away from the life I'd been living. I'd been playing a regular singer-type gig with bass and drums from 8-to-12, and then a be-bop and blues gig from 'bout one till 6 or 7 in the morning in these gambling joints. Gambling's illegal down there and these joints stayed open all night long. We used to get raided all the time. Shot at and everything else. They'd be so bombed out all the time they just didn't care. The raids wouldn't be the sort of thing that they'd cart the black folk to jail, because where I grew up if black people killed each other it was: "Oh well, another nigger dead." No big deal. What the cops wanted was to catch up all the piles of money before the cats could grab it away. Now Texas allowed everybody to carry a gun, so everybody had one.

So from there I decided I had to go to school and study. And I went and studied ancient philosophy and business and tried to work from that end. As a music major, they'd been teaching me out of the same books as in high school and I'd been playing the same Sousa and Wagner and the other European classics. And technically, the teachers couldn't teach me nothing new. Meanwhile, I was looking for people to teach me jazz. I had this concept that people actually *taught* jazz; I'd been playing be-bop in night clubs and had the notion that someone was teaching this somewhere.

I wasn't aware at the time that the music you play comes from your life, not teaching. I was living that type of life and that's where the music was comin' from. But some of the cats I'd run into on gigs would tell me a few things about the drums and I picked up on that. I wanted to go to New York but I was too scared, so I found myself a school near there — University of Bridgeport up in Connecticut — that would be close enough so I could come down to the city. I started comin' in and got my first gig with a foot-stompin' piano player over at the Inner Circle on Sutton Place. Just piano and drums. I played a lot of duos.

At the University of Bridgeport I was truly and sincerely trying to become an American businessman. My parents wanted that. I had fucked up so royally from all the nightlife that it was time to put this other thing together. But then I found that wherever I'd be, I'd be playing music. Or if I had some time alone I'd be drawing drum sets, designing them the way I wanted them to be. I was working at United Aircraft as a market researcher. I was only there to do calculations, so I'd take off with other reports down to New York, and down there I started putting together the kind of drum set I wanted. So, needless to say, I was back playing the drums.

I gigged around in Connecticut and then moved to the city for good early in '67. I moved into Bennie Maupin's place between Avenues C and D on 10th Street. Cecil McBee was living right up the street. Another bass player's apartment

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

became vacant and I moved in there. One night at Slug's, Grachan Moncur told me about there were scholarships open for jazz musicians if you could qualify and take the tests and so on. The biggest requirement was to be able to play. I got a scholarship to N.Y.U. College of Music. My life was split between the strip-tease gig, playing at Slug's or The Five Spot or on Staten Island or New Jersey or that morning playing for high school kids. This was the situation.

Then I began working for Albert Ayler. Charles Moffett took me to a recording session he was supposed to do. He didn't want to do it because he was working with Ornette, so he asked me to do it. Charles Tyler was the leader. I met him for the first time in the studio. He told me what his kind of music was. We sat down and made the record. All first takes, no second takes. That was my very first record. Never got paid. But one of the people in the studio was Albert Ayler. Now I don't know if I'd even heard of Albert Ayler; if I had, I didn't remember him. Albert comes up to me and said he liked the way I played, would I join his band. He'd just come back from Europe and was looking for a drummer. I said: O.K. It didn't bother me, didn't faze me one way or another 'cause not only didn't I know who he was, but I didn't even think he was serious.

He called me. We started playing gigs down at the Lafayette Theatre. I'd been playing by myself a lot, and I'd played with duos and trios and orchestras and choirs, but never with someone who told me to play everything I could possibly play. It blew my mind. I could try anything. All four mediums — both feet, both hands — used to the maximum, with total concentration in each one. You know, the whole set-up was so *massive*: the total spiritual self, which can be a million different things at one time, but trying to make it concise and particular at a given moment. It was like somebody taking the plug out of a dam. So I was playing that, but one night I went over to the Five Spot where Mingus was trying to play "Stormy Weather." That was one of the songs I used to practice by myself all the time; my father used to love to hear Lena Horne sing "Stormy Weather," so it was in my psych. I used to practice it all the time, I could always play phrases on the drums from "Stormy Weather." Now Dannie Richmond was the drummer, but I had the key for the music Mingus wanted to play. But he said NO. Allright, during their break Toshiko Akioshi comes out to play some solo piano. Herb Bushler comes up and starts playing bass. So I figure, why not. When we got through playing, some tune like "I Remember April," the audience started applauding like mad. I remember a guy, right behind me, clapping LOUD. And then the guy says, "O.K. come in tomorrow." I turn around and it's Mingus. Crazy. I enjoyed it, I played with the group as the second drummer for a few weeks. He liked what I was doing and wanted to rent some tympani for me, 'cause Dannie was his regular drummer and he knew I could play them, and he was working on some pieces and all. But Albert Ayler had gotten more work and there was a conflict. I couldn't do both. I'd already been bitten by this Albert Ayler bug — he had such *presence*, he could play just two notes in a club and everyone would *have* to stop to listen — so I went to work for Albert. Which went along fine, until Albert wasn't working for awhile.

Then I started up with Betty Carter. Working with her was one of the highlights of my life. The way she sings — rhythmically, her be-bop phrasing — really allowed me to extend the playing of my left hand tremendously. She would *play with* the rhythm section. It was a beautiful thing, but unfortunately I was going through a lot of degrading things in my personal life and I dropped out of the scene for awhile. This is at the end of the 60s, marches, riots and all that. I moved to Queens. Worked on a lot of social jobs: high school gigs during the week, small bars at night, every Saturday morning a bar mitzvah or an Irish wedding, which paid me more money than I made all week on all my other jobs. At this time I made a recording with Weldon Irvine. I met him when I worked with the Joe Henderson/Kenny Dorham big band. Then I did a record with Teruo Nakamura. And then I started chanting.

I was driving to a gig with a young pianist Onaje Alan Gumbs. I was a real speed demon, so I was driving very fast. So he starts chanting. I'm speeding down the highway, double-clutching, and he's scared to death. He's chanting: *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* and I say: what in the hell are you saying? He said he'd tell me about it after the gig. He did, and I picked up from there. My life changed. I realized all the things I'd been seeking were right there in the rhythm of chanting *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*. In other words, all the discipline I needed in my life — the thing that was gonna put the pieces together for me — was the chanting. I moved back to Manhattan. I chanted. I wanted to live off music, not have to do anything else. That happened. I continued chanting; I wanted to put it to the test in terms of my life.

Up until this time I was playing totally from natural talent. But this made me think of music in a different way. I'd been very egotistical: I could go anywhere and just play, literally, in *any* musical context. And I did it all the time, sitting in all over New York: Latin, blues, rock, jazz, whatever, gospel music. But when I started chanting in '74, this changed. I began practicing. I went to a religious convention in Hawaii, played out there in a trio with Buster Williams and Onaje. Herbie (Hancock) sat in. I came back and kept chanting. Had a steady gig in a cabaret, made a lot of money: I'd make $150.00 for 15 minutes at a press party for Elizabeth Taylor, things like that, and I'd never made money like that. You would not believe some of the places in New York: money, money, money these people had. I knew this was all happening for a reason...

I said my Buddhist prayers and practiced. Pray and practice. Then one Sunday morning I went down to the Pink Tea Cup, a soul food joint in the Village, and Ornette walks in. Now I had met him every once in a while over the years, Julius Hemphill had introduced me to him. I asked him what he was doing and he said he was looking for a drummer. I gave him my number. At the time I was makin' more money than I had conceived was possible just playing the drums, so I wasn't even thinking about it: I had a nice place, a telephone with an answering service, I could close up when I wanted to and come out when I wanted to. And he *called* a day later. Bern Nix was there at the rehearsal, and he'd been chanting also. Ornette had a gig with the Symphony Orchestra in Paris and he wanted to go over and spend a month. So we rehearsed for a month: Ornette, Jamaladeen Tacuma on bass, Bern Nix and Charles Ellerbee on guitars, a Chilean percussion player and myself. We rehearsed all day, every day. They'd already moved into his loft on Prince Street. And we left for Paris. This was the first time I'd been abroad and we were like travelling gypsies. We did everything ourselves. Got our own gigs. A fellow gave us the keys to his studio; all the equipment had been stolen out of it and we could use it for as long as we liked to rehearse. We ended up staying from October to March, this

CHARLES STEWART

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is '76, '77. We go out to Italy or wherever and play for awhile. We came back from one trip round Christmas, went into the studio and recorded *Dancing In Your Head*. We'd already done the pieces with the Orchestra.

Ornette had begun to show me different things: how I was playing according to the rules about playing *behind* someone and all, and encouraged me to do some writing, and work on my ideas. There was the same freedom to play as with Albert, but in this context you'd know everything you could or would play before you got up to the bandstand. Still improvisational, but ordered — no more guessing games. Already the chanting had allowed me to put my finger on what I wanted to do. I see

JAMES HAMILTON

Ornette showed me different things, to not play according to the rules about playing* behind *someone. There was the same freedom to play as with Albert but you'd know everything you could or would play before you got up on the bandstand. Still improvisational, but ordered — no more guessing games.

music all around me. Everything is raining sixteenth and eighth notes all the time. I was becoming aware of all this and finally disciplining myself to sit down and write it out and perfect it. Since I had the keys to the studio, I'd get up early and go down there and work by myself, then the band would come by around 3:00, and we'd work till 9:00, sometimes till midnight. One night the police broke in; we were playing so late, the neighbors had complained. We played everyday, and the people 'round there weren't used to this sort of thing. And I played all day. Any day I wasn't there I'd be off to some museum of African art or history or maybe the Louvre, or the Museum of Man out at the Eiffel Tower 'cause that really had the stuff. I learned about the world, about life, and at the same time I was writing out all sorts of rhythms. The experience changed my life, changed what I wanted to play. We came back and played that Avery Fisher concert and then the spot on the "Saturday Night Live" show, which was the last thing I did with that group.

After that I had no place to live in the city, I had to move around again. I chanted and chanted so I could get a place to work on my ideas. And I ran into a saxophone player who was getting ready to leave his studio down on 13th street, which had a full apartment in back. All I had to do was move in, and I did. I wrote music and wrote music and wrote music and learned how to play the flute. I had no responsibilities: from the opening of my eyes to the closing of my eyes it was just music. I'd go out and work a press review or something for a few hundred dollars, but that would be it. I wasn't working any gigs, didn't have to. Other than rent, all I needed was 10, 15 dollars a week; I'd become a vegetarian, only eat one meal a day.

I had a loft bed, from which I'd write drum rhythms all over the ceiling. My conscious state was completely dominated by music. I'd never worked that hard, 'cause I could do all the things I'd hear being done by other drummers. But I was going for something else. I'd also been exposed to the Joujouka drummers of Morocco by Ornette. My playing was Ornette's harmolodic concept from a rhythmic point of view. Ornette is a master saxophonist, melody-writer, magician, teacher. The whole time in Paris was like being in Coleman University. We were totally under his influence. He just paid us so we'd have money to eat and expenses. He was paying the hotel bills and everything. All we had to do was rehearse. We only played concerts when they'd pay him enough money that he thought it was worth it. My concept started there, but it didn't begin to jell for me until I was alone down on 13th Street.

I realized that to get to the point that I wanted I would have to sacrifice for it. My father had always told me that. You've got to sacrifice. I'd been reading a lot of books, and learning how man can attain what he wants if he places himself in a desired state and works to stay there long enough. No one in my neighborhood cared when I played, so I played regardless of time. I'd get up at 3:00 or 5:00 in the morning and start playing the drums. Didn't bother no one. I'd play into the afternoon, go make myself a cheese sandwich or egg sandwich, go to sleep for a few more hours, wake up and start playing again. After I'd been working on my ideas for over two years, I felt I needed actual group playing to further develop them. So I kept chanting and chanting — I'd told myself that I'd never miss my morning or evening practice — and I hadn't so I knew if I set a goal for myself I could achieve it. I could send out the vibrations and basically get into the situation I desired.

So one night I'm walking up 7th Avenue, have a dollar in my pocket, figure I'll go get myself a falafel sandwich. Then something in my mind said: no, don't get something to eat now, go on up to the Vanguard. I never liked to go the Vanguard 'cause the fellah at the door and I didn't get along, and I didn't like havin' to go to places where I had to pay to get in. On this night a young lady was on the door and I just walked in and went into the kitchen and there was Cecil Taylor drinking champagne out of a bottle. We started talking. He asked me what I do, I say I play drums. He ask me how good are you? And I told him I was the best person on this planet at doing what I do. I told him I play drums the way I play them better than anybody else because nobody plays 'em the way I do: playing drums from rhythm instead of from time, but still swinging. He didn't know I had played with Ornette or anything; what impressed him was that I told him I was the baddest motherfucker that did what I did. Nobody could play drums like I could. So he said: (in a skeptical tone of voice) O.K., gimme your number. I did. The next day he calls and says come over — *with* your drums. I go over and he had five flights of stairs to walk up.Whew! We just started playing together and immediately hit it off. From the shit I was working on it was a great situation: I could modulate, I could play rhythms, I could play the numerical sequences I hear and construct myself — and still make it fit within the frame of what he's doing. I could enhance his thing and still keep the drums and the rhythms as melodic as possible Making the beat, without the time; like African rhythms, which talk about events and appearances in life, not time.

This is when I realized that the stuff I'd been working on down at the 13th street basement — 'cause I'd been down there two whole years, right? — could really happen. And Cecil liked what I was doing. So we rehearsed every day, from about 2 till 7, just the two of us. I knew he liked what I was doing 'cause friends used to call at certain times of the day. Cecil had a clock on his piano and if it was a particular time he knew someone regularly called at he'd pick up the phone, otherwise he'd let it ring and it might be from upstate or California or something, and Cecil would say "Listen to this" and go around taking all the phones in the apartment off the hook so that the whole space would be like a music chamber. Then he and I would play — maybe for 20 or 30 minutes — for these long distance calls and Cecil would pick up the phone again and say, "Did you hear *that*?" We had a ball. I have a whole library of cassette tapes of duos with Cecil. I've got alternate takes of things that are better than some of the stuff that's been put out. I'd only heard Cecil play once before I met him, very briefly at the Five Spot. And I hadn't heard Ornette either when I started playing with him, though we were supposed to be comrades, being from the same home town and all. I hadn't become

conscious of their music until I played with them. And I don't think I could have handled that if I hadn't been chanting.

Everyone sees themselves as what they are potentially capable of doing. But I think society blocks all that. There are so many obstacles. People settle for whatever they're doing, instead of accomplishing whatever they want to do. The practice of chanting allows a person to look at and reflect on what they are and what they may become. By doing it every day, it reinforces this reflection. Since the practice requires action — it's action because it's vocal and rhythmical, which are actions themselves — you begin to accumulate more and more of your potential, whatever it is. Maybe you might want to be the best cab driver? Then you focus on all the things that would make people want to ride in your cab. But more than that, it makes you see that each person is an individual jewel ... if they can take what they have and develop it. I've seen a lot of people fall by the wayside, who never got to where I am now 'cause they never stopped to change what they were doing. I realized the environment I was in wasn't gonna get me to the place I want to go. I'd worked with Ayler and Mingus and Betty Carter but I'd gone back to working bar mitzvahs and parties. I heard many things, but I didn't have the discipline to make them a reality. I was seeking, but I didn't know who I was as a person. And that's what chanting gave me. It broke down all the other characters and gave me *me*. I could sit in with anybody, anybody, 'cause I could play any kind of way — but not Shannon Jackson's way. When I was seven years old I told my mother that I was gonna become rich by the time I was 35 but before that time I figured I might as well do everything; and David, I did *everything*. Believe me. About 99% of the things humans do, I did. And it's funny, the year before my deadline I began chanting, and became rich by another standard...


TOM COPI

Cecil would say, "Listen to this," and go around taking all the phones in the apartment off the hook so that the whole place would be like a music chamber. Then he and I would play — maybe for 20 or 30 minutes — for these long distance calls and Cecil would pick up the phone again and say, "Did you hear that?" We had a ball.

Once Jackson put it together, he was unmistakable, one of the handful of drummers whose rhythmic identity is so strong that he changes every musician with whom he plays and the way you hear them. More than that, his inventions run so deep that you find yourself rethinking the American rhythmic tradition the way you had to, for example, when Elvin Jones came along.

One afternoon up at Soundscape, the New York City music loft where he practices, Jackson showed me how some of his rhythmic figures were put together, the right hand, left hand and right foot playing three different configurations of the same phrase while the left foot chopped out a steady series of eighth-notes on the high-hat. The result was a fairly funky, unusually spacious second-line beat that reminded me of some of the things Zig Modeliste had done with the Meters, but when Jackson began developing his three lines independently of one another he moved beyond the strictures of a 4/4 bar line into a rhythmic field in which any combination of polyrhythms was possible without any loss of beat.

A number of jazz-rock drummers since Tony Williams have worked out similar coordinations, and studio aces like Steve Gadd have evolved their own specialities; the big difference is the way Jackson has made it feel. It's not just that he's made the free-jazz connection or brought a lot of his playing down from the cymbals and back onto the set or even that (like two other Coleman graduates, Eddie Blackwell and Charles Moffett) he is an enthusiastic player of marches. The Jackson effect has more to do with musical essences than with new stylistic wrinkles or technical nuance; like Coleman before him, he has reconnected himself to traditions that modern jazz has either ignored or put to its own more urban uses. If music is a hidden river every artist has to find within himself, Jackson's findings have led him back from the cluttered island of modernity to the fruitful and murderous fields of America — its folk continuum, trembling wooden churches and football fields, its festivals in Congo Square and, ultimately, Africa. So we are talking about a larger landscape than the city allows and a shared, communal music in which there is no extraneous compulsion to be clever, nor any fear of the simplicity of things as they are. Jackson's technique may be extraordinary, he may dominate the bands in which he appears, but he does not communicate egocentricity. No matter how astonishing he gets, there is an implicit modesty in his work and a devotion to the music and what might come out of it. He communicates not "look what I can do" but "this is some of the power implicit in rhythm."

The Jackson discography is small for the moment but impressive. Dancing in Your Head, *nice start, is one of the (ahem) great recordings in the history of jazz, and the followup,* Body Meta, *still available on Artists House, bless 'em, comes in a notch or two lower on the pole but still sets the spirit dancing. The four recordings with Cecil Taylor reveal Jackson as the most stately free-jazz drummer in the history of the idiom, a regal and thundering presence. The two New World issues,* Cecil Taylor *and* 3 Phasis, *are colossal enough; the three-record* One Too Many Salty Swift and Not Goodby *on hat Hut is positively Wagnerian (also has the most obliquely feelthy title of the decade so far).* Live in the Black Forest, *on PAUSA, does not feature elves but does boast another shuffle and shorter, more easily assimilable pieces. Five stars to them all, or am I in the wrong magazine? Of the two albums with "James" Blood Ulmer, rock fans tends to prefer the Rough Trade import* Are You Glad to be in America? *(good God yes, especially now) for its raw, funk-punk spunk, but* No Wave *on Moers Music is my favorite for its unbridled energy and the way Jackson overpowers the already strong band of Ulmer, David Murray and Amin Ali with wave upon wave of rhythm (notice especially the stunning onslaught that opens the album).*

Clearly this was one drummer who would wind up leading a band. What's interesting about the Decoding Society's debut disc, Eye On You, *on About Time records, is not that it threatens to be the Next Big Thing (a designation apparently destined for Ulmer, who has been signed by Columbia for more money than you thought they spent on jazz) but that it looks like the beginning of a real oeuvre. Jackson did all the writing for the date — eleven tunes, since the cuts are kept short — and has effectively extended his penchant for polyrhythm into the sphere of composition. Most of the tunes are written in more than one tempo, often with haunted, Ornettish melodies suspended above faster, more driving rhythms, the orchestration thickly layered, almost sculptural in use of the two saxophone, one violin, two-guitar front line. Jackson is onto something, certainly a portion of Ornette's harmolodic vision of the divine simultaneity, but also something all Jackson's own just beginning to find its voice. I know where the rhythms come from, but why should the melodies and textures keep reminding me of China, Southeast Asia, Java, Chad ... Of course, when you begin to crack the code there's no telling what connections may turn up and what barriers may come down. The artist with*

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a thousand faces has always enjoyed chatting with himself whenever he can get his instruments working right. Jackson resumes:

Cecil and Ornette are like suns. Not planets, but light for other planets. From Cecil I learned construction, how to really structure my ideas in terms of melody. All that time I'd been working on the rhythms and I had to sit up and block the cliches. I had to de-program all of that and say: BLOOM, you don't have to go *there* no more, put in your own things. You don't have to eat hamburgers every night. BLOOM! BLOOM! You can have shrimp and garlic sauce tonight, you can have lobster — you don't have to play the same breaks and the same runs no more. You don't have to play it from time, you can play it from rhythm. And from the basic rhythm you can create a million patterns from that, and keep the whole thing flowing. To me, making Cecil's music swing means putting a beat there without actually playing it. I want the listener to feel the beat without the beat having to be there physically. The beat is in your body.

As far as be-bop time, I love the way Kenny Clarke and Max Roach and all those cats set it up. But they played it when Charlie Parker was around and this is no longer the Charlie Parker era. It's been done. So I'm doing something different, playing time by just playing rhythms. If you ever saw the gatherings down South where people would start to dance and you'd see a person start to go in a circle 'cause the spirit hit them, and the moment it hit them might not have been on one, two, three or four. It might happen on five or six, or in between the two. Or the way the hearts beat: da-*duh*, da-*duh*, da-*duh* — that kind of pulse can be used in different tempos. I can set up a time, using sixteenth or eighth notes on the sock cymbal, but the pulse don't have to be with that. The pulse can just come directly from life, or from the music that's being played. I place different rhythms, different numerical sequences together. And these rhythms aren't corporal — one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight; the rhythms of your heartbeat; a march rhythm — but rather they're spiritual, which can vary in their numerical sequence. That variation indicates a different pulse movement. The foundation might be the type of beat you hear in a ritual ceremony in an African village.

I go there in spirit all the time. I've been going there, as a matter of fact, quite frequently since 1975. I can very easily go to a dance or a celebration. I often find myself there if I begin to read something and get off in my solitude and — BLOOM — I'm there, and it will take something startling to bring me back.

The Decoding Society is an organization for decoding musical and spiritual messages. Melody itself, like poetry, comes from the spiritual world, and we serve as a medium for it. When I began to write melodies I wondered where they came from, they'd become locked in my head and I couldn't do anything about them until I wrote them down. That happens when I walk around certain parts of the city and it happens when I play the drums. In the middle of practicing the drums I naturally hear melodies. My whole life force now is directed towards presenting what I hear.

Our society has gone as far as it can possibly go in the direction we've been programmed to go in. We're becoming conscious of the problem. I think people have begun to go into themselves, much more so than even three years ago, to find some spiritual solutions. I feel I've been blessed with an opportunity and I'm gonna do all that's within my power to carry it out. Perhaps it's just that certain people are given certain keys to carry out certain plans that already exist on a metaphysical plane. Beethoven worked on *his* ideas, but also on spiritual ideas. I'm trying to structure my life the same way. Sometimes now I wish I had more classical training, because with it, I feel a whole other feeling could be brought to music. I'd like to be able to present my music in totally orchestrated form. Not traditionally, but the way I hear it. I've had glimpses of it since my youth: to be able to present the music with such joy and warmth and giving that it will carry over into the person's regular life. In ten years I'd like to take a group, a small group, to anywhere in the world and play, perhaps supplemented by an orchestra on certain pieces.

Rhythm is the pulse of life, and when you use those rhythms in the right way, in the positive way, it can carry your life into a sphere you might not experience unless you are deep into yoga or are charged with electro-telepathic impulses like a clairvoyant. There are melodies that come directly from the drums that I'd like to play that I don't get a chance to play: I've had to *create* in terms of producing the concert, getting the musicians together and rehearsing, putting out the flyers, helping organize, advertise, carry the whole thing through... All of which doesn't allow for the leisure of just going and doin' it. Many times I hit on an idea but I don't have the resources to carry it out. I found myself the other day taking money I had allocated for food and the telephone bill, and buying music books with it, just so I could keep writing music. I have a lot of music I'm working on right now, but since I don't have a contract at the moment, I can't very well ask people to rehearse it all the time. Last year, About Time gave me enough money and a month to do it the way I wanted to do it. David Baker did a fantastic job recording the instruments. This type of music would be *fantastic* in Digital. You don't need Digital for disco or be-bop, but it came along at the right time for this music. I was told at CBS there wasn't enough money for it. But if they want to — "they" being the people who market it or rather create the market for it — they could sell this music. Hell, they can create a market for whatever they want to. They can go down the beach and pick up some rocks and sell 'em on television. "Get Your Pebbles, Get Your Pebbles!!" — put it on TV commercials and you'll have a run on rocks. That's the irony of them saying there's not enough money for something. They can sell *anything* if they want to.

For a lot of people, my music is music they hear also. I know I'm not the only one hearing this music. If I'm hearing it, there are millions and millions of others hearing it in their own minds. And for those people my work would be a verification that they're not alone. I want my music to be a joy for people. The problem with it — since it's called "art" music — is that it doesn't get the same airplay as "commercial" music. And it's also not SupClub music, mine is not music to eat dinner to. It's more of a ritual. It's not "finger-popping-at-work" music, and it's certainly not "I-love-you-baby" music. But I don't ever want to be limited, 'cause my responsibility is not limited. Just because I've been associated with jazz, doesn't mean I'm limited to doing this or that. Hell, the first tune on my new record, *Sortie*, blends an Eastern-Africa feel with an overlay of a march, the kind of spiritual movement at a football game. As a young kid I used to sit behind the band at the football

Ronald Shannon Jackson's Drums

I have a standard set, a set that was self-designed. I use Sonor drums and Paiste cymbals. The cymbals are the new dark sound cymbals, New Creations. Very much like the old K. Zildjians, which were handpressed in Turkey. I use two 15" hi-hats, an 18" Chinese splash, a 21" flat ride, an 18" dark ride (as a crash), and a 16" crash — 2000 series, and also 10" 2000 series interchangeably with a small gong-like cymbal which was Tchaikovsky's which his son gave me. The drums are Sonor. Basically what I wanted was a heavier sound from the mounted tom-toms, a deeper, richer, lower sound from my left hand. One of the things I had in mind was piano design, where you come from the lower registers on up. I play more drums than cymbals, because I'm more interested in getting into the depths of drums in music — since to me, a lot of melody itself comes from rhythm.

I use two different size sticks because the two hands are different. The two hands and the two feet are not evenly matched, though I've used a matched-grip for the past 7 or 8 years. So in the right hand, I use a stick with some kind of round beater, to get the proper effect on both drum and cymbal, but of a lighter weight than the one for my left, since my right hand will always be a little stronger.

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games, and they used to spread such joy when there was a touchdown or someone caught a pass. I go *there*, to that feeling, when I play. My father used to take me to games when I was very, very small. And I would freeze, my feet would be frozen, almost frostbit by the time the game was over. But I was so into the music: they used to have some phrases everybody would sing, and the drummers, of course, would *always* be playing. That was where it was.

The second piece on the album, "Nightwhistlers," is a blues, but it's like a person walking between buildings in New York and whistling and hearing the reflection of that sound bouncing off the buildings and singing the blues all at the same time. He's humming the blues *and* whistling. In other words, coming out of the country and whistling in the kind of echo-chamber we have here in a big city creates that kind of thing. So I wrote it all down, and played it the way people feel in an environment I used to be a part of — where people worked all week picking cotton and corn, and worked in wheat fields and watermelon patches — when they'd get together, starting Saturday afternoon puttin' all the ice on the beer, and then after the sun went down they'd get together and start dancin'. And I used the kind of beat they'd dance to, it would be goin' up and down at the same time, it would be like a volleyball beat. In "Apache Love Cry" I interlocked two melodies; one is the result of being at a West Indian Festival over in Brooklyn, the other comes out of a Bowery bar where I used to stop and get a beer after everything closed. One guitar player plays the one — which is lively, happy, full of carnival gaiety — while the other guitarist plays the depths of despair. And "Apache" as a symbol for what this country is all about. They represent the true spirit of what this country was and still is; no matter how many bulldozers and buildings we put up you can still get the spirit of this country if you go check them out. "Shaman" is a tribute to Max Roach, who's a shaman. The first part, which has an African influence — and by that I mean a Southern Blues beat played in 6/5 — gives way to a drum solo and then a waltz-type thing. "Eastern Voices, Western Dreams" came through chanting. While I was chanting an Oriental voice would speak to me and this is what the voice said. I just got up and wrote down specifically what the voice said. But I come from the West. I live in a western society. I think the two of them are beautiful and will come together in this country, which of course would only bring it back to where it was at first — the American Indians already had that kind of spirit.

I do a lot of writing now from the piano 'cause I have one at my disposal, but everything on the record was written on the flute, or from the drums. For instance, "Dancers of Joy" was written on the drums. When I ride the bus and the subways I see a lot of people coming from dance classes. My thinking and feeling about that is, well, people want to dance the way they feel, not the way they're programmed to dance. If someone comes to you and says, "Here David, here's 50 $1000 bills, no stigmas attached." You might not jump up and down right then, but when you get out the door and get by yourself, you start *dancin' for joy*. Pure delight. Gurdjieff tried to use — in fact, did use — dance in his teachings, right? When people dance another element comes in, the thing that has to do with *pulse*, because when you really dance, and let the mind-body-spirit be itself then one's mental-logic-reasoning system is cut off and one goes into what the ritual of the dance can bring into a person, another dimension of the self. Whirling dervishes, right? I took the title from a Buddhist phrase, which talked about dancers of joy 3,000 years ago.

"Theme For A Prince" has two melodies. I wrote it in Europe and America. The first I wrote on top of a hill in the middle of a cemetery in France. It was after midnight, I didn't have no money, and some Algerian dude hipped me to this place. Some famous French painter, Monet or somebody, painted up there. On top of the hill there's a bar with money from all over the world, every country that has paper money has a bill pasted to the top of the ceiling. And these people were in there enjoying themselves. Really enjoying themselves. It was like: to hell with the world, the world didn't even matter. The title was for the person I wanted to play it, that's all.

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Clash *cont. from pg. 9*
listen or something. But now we want to give them something back in exchange.
MUSICIAN: About that aggression and hostility that propelled you in the beginning, is that still behind it? Or has the rage turned into faith?
JONES: Yeah, well I prefer the first, but I also think that if you apply it, you get the sort of thing where you get a lot of people who are just real angry and who just waste their energy being angry. It gets them nowhere. If you can mix the two things, right, then it can be worked out positively.
MUSICIAN: Do you find you can mix the two things, rage and faith?
JONES: You get more experienced, all the time. I'm getting older and I suppose I'm getting a bit more sense about me. The same for all of us. On the last European tour, it was like totally overbalanced. It was just all rage and really violent. It was really a drag. A lot of violence was coming from the group. They were like branching out to the audience, to a certain extent. They would get off the stage and start fighting with the audience. And this kind of stuff cast us into confusion because our role wasn't clear, right? Because people were saying we were a rock band, and those were the people who said we sold out.

"You say, well, how come so many people are scared of you, because they shouldn't be really. But there's some crappy, evil people around and they *should* be scared of us. They mustn't think we're pushovers."

MUSICIAN: I don't think you have to worry about turning commercial as long as you stick to your principles.
JONES: But we always have to take it one step further. We're very masochistic. It seems that very often we exhaust our armory, y'know, we use everything we got, and all we got left is our naked selves. It got to the point on *Sandinista!* where we told them we were going to fuckin' kill ourselves.
MUSICIAN: You told that to the record company?
JONES: Yeah, we told them we were going to split up...it's no fuckin' good. We talked seriously about it and then they came around to the point of agreeing to put out a three-record set for the price that they did ($14.98 in U.S.). I mean they got everything they could in exchange for it. They said we should release them in three yearly gaps...one at a time, I suppose...so they could get three times as much. That's what they would have done. We told 'em they couldn't, that it was all or nothing. We insisted on a price ceiling.
MUSICIAN: Were there any other problems?
JONES: We just wanted to release the single, "The Call Up," and take the money we earned from it and put it back into the mobilization against the draft here and in England. We thought if we sold a lot it would be great, but the record company wouldn't even let us give the money away. It's like we were only allowed to give so much away and they wouldn't give anything. We were trying to say, why don't you give some, we're all heading to doom and let's stop it, and they told us not to tell them what to do with their money, we'll tell you what to do with *your* money.
MUSICIAN: So did you give any money?
JONES: Yeah, whatever we made. But we had trouble with them also on the release of "Magnificent Seven" as a single. They said America wasn't ready for a six-minute Clash song. We thought, it being rap-influenced and all, that it was what was happening in America. I saw it as roots music. We did it while we were in New York last summer. It was like the Jamaican thing, based on the bass, and although the guys who do it will probably deny it, it was real roots music, the same way they do "toasts" in reggae. We thought we came up with an Englishman's impression of America, deciphering that freak-freak y'all into like You-lot, and it was a great call. A real English bloke's idea of what was happening here, only we changed the lyrical content. First, because we were English blokes. And secondly, because we wanted the lyrics to mean something. I really like Kurtis Blow's "Throughout Your Years" because it's about this bloke whose dream is about to be a rapper. I could really empathize with that. The song had a great sound to it but they passed on "Magnificent Seven" and that really put us off.
MUSICIAN: Was *Sandinista!* your biggest risk?
JONES: Yeah, it was. But we can't keep compounding our cash forever. All the royalties made off *London Calling* we put into the recording of *Sandinista!* We've been doing that all along since we signed a record contract. I'm 25, now, and I've been doing it since I'm 20. It went pretty fast. I hardly know what happened.
MUSICIAN: Do you see yourself doing this at 35?
JONES: No.
MUSICIAN: Do you see the Clash together in five years?
JONES: No. Maybe. I really can't see it. Both Joe and I will be thirty and maybe in five years we'll be completely somewhere else at that point in time. There's loads of people who go around saying the world is going to end before that anyway.
MUSICIAN: Why do you guys make things tougher on yourselves?
JONES: Self-discipline. You got to have discipline. You believe that...right?...but we're unruly as well. Say we have discipline in the studio, we have none on stage. Or on a tour, our lives in general are nuts. It's like going to war. It's like we get into our vans and go put helmets over our balls, so to speak.
MUSICIAN: Is that the lifestyle or is that induced?
JONES: It's sort of cause and effect. Sometimes we're a little scared and sometimes we're real brave. Sometimes we're real stupid. It's like one thing causes the next thing to happen. There are also side effects, so along with what may seem to the public to be this meteoric rise to fame, there's also a picture of Dorian Gray somewhere. That's why I say the Clash can't go on forever. I live with it but that's why I try to distance myself from it. I like producing new bands, working in the studio, and I'm getting good at it to the point where I feel I can record anywhere and come up with a good product really fast. But when I try to part myself with the Clash, it's real hard. The Clash is a real powerful thing, y'know.
MUSICIAN: Does it scare you?
JONES: Sometimes, because when you're in it...it's like England. It's real hard to get away from it. It's like you can't get out of it. That's why we have to keep control of it, because it has to be a good thing...and not an evil thing. Then it would be spoiled. It would be a real shame.
MUSICIAN: Would it be decadent?
JONES: It is decadent. A lot of the time it is. There's a lot of things you don't know about...right?...which we try to keep under control. There's a lot of that. It exists. We don't make such a big deal about it, but some groups exploit it. Like for instance, this group doesn't go for groupies because we have respect for women. We really try and have that, because everybody says we can't write about women. They don't know. We could be the greatest Casanovas travelling the Earth for all they know. Believe me. I'm in the position to be if I wanted to be.
MUSICIAN: Do you get frustrated with music because it really can't change the way things are?
JONES: People can change through it. I did. It doesn't make change. It's a social thing. People change, and if they change, the culture changes. I'd like to think the Clash has had something to do with it all. People say, oh it's great, the Clash aren't rip-off artists. It makes them feel better. It's easy for them to say, but I'd like a lot of people to try it. People can find out for themselves like we have. Maybe we've done it a bit and maybe we can just go and get a load of money and bleedin' settle down in Beverly Hills. M

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RECORD REVIEWS

Ellen Foley

Spirit of St. Louis (Epic/Cleveland International NJE 36984)

This is a hard record to swallow but I seem to have managed. A few scant summers ago Ellen Foley was foxing Meatloaf into a life of misery for a glimpse of paradise. Just a year or so later she was an also-ran in the leopard skin spandex sweepstakes. I can understand not wanting to co-star with Mr. Loaf or slosh around in the wake of Pat Benatar forever, but to resurface as a Clash-backed Common Market chanteuse singing torch cum art songs for romanticized resistance forces of yesteryear requires an extraordinary leap of faith from all concerned, especially the listener.

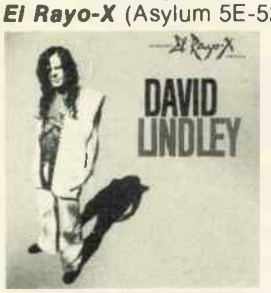
Flying bravely through the weather toward Paris, *Spirit of St. Louis* seems to pose the question: what might La Passionara have sounded like in 1981? Not your usual rock 'n' roll question, but then, this isn't your usual rock 'n' roll LP. Credited (rather coyly) as produced by "my boyfriend" (Clash guitarist Mick Jones, if you haven't kept up with Ellen's love life), *S. of St. L* offers the full Clash cast with the happy exception of Mikey Dread. Foley sings with great poise and style and without excessive self-dramatization (and with some of these songs that's a blessing, indeed.) Strummer and Jones, who wrote half the songs, are sworn overreachers and make me wince more often than I normally sit still for, but they are also daring, energetic, and endlessly resourceful.

Rather than looking westward for some New World exotica, Foley and Jones turn eastward (and backward) toward the political turmoil and melodramatic cabaret and boulevard life of prewar Europe. In "Torchlight" a marimba floats over a sharp backbeat as the resilience and passion of political commitment is evoked: "Never mind, my friend/We'll go on tonight/We can see through the dark/By torchlight." "My Legionnaire," a shameless dramatic, quintessentially Gallic Edith Piaf song of a vividly remembered night with a now-dead tatooed soldier (I'm not kidding) is saved — and well served — by a spare, clear interpretation. "The Death of the Psychoanalyst of Salvador Dali" (these folks shy away from nothing) is a kind of *Chien Andalou* for the ear. For the great headaches of the 20th century there is always R&B relief, here in the form of Tymon Dogg's "Beautiful Waste of Time" and an unexpected (everything about this record is unexpected) and wonderfully phrased cover of Nancy Wilson's "How Glad I Am."

Obviously, this is an album that loses something in the translation. Through the efforts of Jones and engineer Bill Price it sounds great throughout — a shimmering wall gives dimension to each of the carefully constructed tracks. Infelicities abound, but what are a few infelicities between close friends, especially when they're attempting something so unusual. I've been listening to it more than I could ever have imagined and I've begun recommending it. I guarantee you won't hear anything remotely like it for quite a while. — *Jeff Nesin*

David Lindley

El Rayo-X (Asylum 5E-524)



Over the past 10 years, multi-instrumentalist David Lindley has earned a reputation as rock's ultimate accompanist. Backing the likes of Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor, Crosby-Nash and, more notably, Jackson Browne, Lindley has proved himself an extremely flexible player while remaining highly individual and easily identifiable. Because of this, his debut solo album, *El Rayo-X*, suffers from none of the stigmas ordinarily associated with sideman-goes-solo LPs — lack of direction, weak vocals, endless soloing. Instead, the guitarist has crafted a cohesive, highly original record consisting of twelve compact catchy tunes (all vocals) with very little soloing for the sake of showing off.

Despite Lindley's eclectic tastes and talents (he can play just about anything with strings on it, in about any idiom on the planet), he purposely didn't make a "Whitman's Sampler." The diverse influences are all there, but are filtered through Lindley's "Topanga Canyon reggae" sound, as he calls it — a little like Ry Cooder's *Bop Till You Drop* (which David played on) but a lot more focused.

There's an "up" feel to virtually everything on the album — from the ska version of "Twist and Shout" to the calypso-flavored title cut to the Cajun waltz "Petit Fleur" (featuring Lindley on fiddle). The beautiful reggae arrangement of "Bye Bye Love" could be a strong candidate for a hit single; and the funky "Your Old Lady" would make a perfect soundtrack to a slow, deliberate cruise down Sunset.

Despite his ties to L.A.'s "mellow mafia," Lindley manages to exhibit restraint without getting *too* laid back. Bar after bar of "Ain't No Way," "Don't Look Back" and "Bye Bye Love" go by with the band simply playing the changes, adding no unnecessary fills and frills. When Lindley does decide to step forward, as on "Mercury Blues," he kicks out the jams but good. (The combination of his wailing lap steel, Ian Wallace 's massive drumming on Bob Glaub's freight engine bass reportedly fried one recording console during the taping of this track.)

Lindley's oddball sense of humor shines through on more than one occasion — his falsetto outburst on "Ain't No Way," the Spike Jones percussion breaks on "Tu-Ber-Cu-Lucas and the Sinus Flu," his overall choice of material — but never at the expense of good taste. Three tunes, including "She Took Off My Romeos" were composed by Lindley 's friend Bob "Frizz" Fuller. If you thought Warren Zevon was weird...

Although a veritable who's who of rock star headliners volunteered their services when word spread that Lindley was going into the studio, the core of the band on all cuts is made up of solid supportive players who are top-notch, albeit little-known. Drummer Ian Wal-

lace and a Rastafarian percussionist named George "Baboo" Piere comprise the rhythm section, along with either Bob Glaub or Reggie McBride who alternate on bass. William "Smitty" Smith plays organ, and, with a few exceptions, Lindley plays everything else — guitar, lap steel, fiddle, 6-string bass, banduria, Turkish saz, and Irish penny whistle. Co-producer Jackson Browne (who supplies some tasteful vocal harmonies with Baboo) has outdone most of his own efforts, in terms of sound and production (thanks also to engineer/producer Greg Ladanyi).

Four stars. It probably deserves five, but I'll reserve the extra one for Lindley's follow-up. There's a lot more music where this came from. — *Dan Forte*

Robert Fripp
The League of Gentlemen (Polydor PD-1-6317

David Byrne/Brian Eno
My Life in the Bush of Ghosts Sire SRK 6093

Awright, everybody, get on your dancing shoes, but don't forget your thinking caps, 'cause it's... rhythm 'n concept time! To get things started, here's Boppin' Bob Fripp with his happy feet, his crazy fingers, his audio collages and his avant-garage League of Gentlemen (named after a gang of 19th century Wall St. crooks). The League's laying down that basic punk groove, which Fripp's gonna embellish with some guitar dissonance (not to mention the cognitive kind) and some polyrhythmic complexities so you can hear the kind of textures all those three-chord bashers were hearing in their heads but couldn't play. Meanwhile the Roches, M,P&L contributor Chip Stern, and the late J.G. Bennett are going to explain how to dance, how to rock, and how to change the world. Bet you didn't know thinking on your feet could be this much fun did you?

Whew! Tired of pogoing already? Well let's get down with David and Brian, the friendly ghosts in the machine. They've got some piping hot Afro-funk grooves ready for ya, plus they've thrown in some taped radio voices and ethnic recordings, a little tape manipulation, and some of those neat little "accidental" things that always seem to happen when Eno gets near a tape recorder. What's the concept? Oh, background's as significant as the foreground, Third World's as "cultural" as the West, the body's as important as the mind, all the good 70s stuff. Dig the way that Lebanese mountain singer blends in with the African rhythms, and the way Eno's synthesizer

continued on next page

PAUL NATKIN PHOTO RESERVE

The Fallen Gods of Guitar

By David Fricke

The year is 1981 and rock 'n' roll is feeling no shortage of either guitars or guitar players. But where have all the heroes gone? Youngbloods like Keith Levene of Public Image Ltd. and Andy Gill of Gang of Four are, at best, anti-heroes, rebellious if pioneering spirits intent on blowing up the walls of the rock and roll Jericho erected in the late 60s and early 70s. Color Robert Fripp and James Blood Ulmer experimental isolationists, not oblivious to but certainly working in the shadows of their public acclaim.

What of the rock guitar godz of olde? Father Time and the Punk Putsch of 1977 took care of that. Hendrix, Duane Allman, and now Mike Bloomfield are dead. Jeff Beck blew a jazz-rock fuse. Jimmy Page and Led Zeppelin are in at least temporary eclipse. Johnny Winter prefers to keep a low traditional blues profile. And Eric Clapton? As one of the original guitar heroes, his has been the most conspicuous fall from grace, heightened by his deliberate debunking of his own myth ("Clapton is God," saith London subway walls circa '65) with a series of mostly sleepy sophisto-blues-rock records of which *Another Ticket* is the latest.

Actually, as recent Clapton albums go, *Another Ticket* is hardly the unmitigated bore *Backless*, *Slowhand*, and last year's double live *Just One Night* were. Of the two obligatory blues workouts here, the version of Sleepy John Estes' "Floating Bridge" is one of his best in years, the tragic poignancy of the words underlined by the tortured whine of Clapton's voice, the brittle crack of his and Albert Lee's guitars, and the artful understatement of the arrangement. His relatively straightforward reading of Muddy Waters' "Blow Wind Blow" is pedestrian by comparison.

Amid the dross, the mellow jello of "Something Special" and the title track, the melodramatic pleading of "Hold Me Lord," there is some damn good rock 'n' roll to be found — a feisty shuffle called "I Can't Stand It," the high-speed "Rita Mae," and a boisterous funk-up, "Catch Me If You Can," co-written by Clapton with former Procol Harum singer/pianist Gary Brooker. But Tom Dowd's production is antiseptically clean, the otherwise excellent band — Lee, Brooker, keysman Chris Stainton, ace U.K. sessioneers Dave Markee and Henry Spinett — never really cuts loose, and if Clapton himself has any enthusiasm at all for what he's doing, it rarely shows in his singing or playing. In fact, the only thing you can say about *Another Ticket* is that it sounds like another Eric Clapton album, nothing less but, then again, nothing more either.

The problem with *Cruisin' for a Bruisin'* is that people are likely to see it for what it most certainly is not — Mike Bloomfield's epitaph. Recorded last fall in San Francisco, the LP is not the worst album Bloomfield ever made (that honor goes to the one album he did with the less-than supergroup KGB); it's merely indicative of his recent work. Like his last Takoma release *Between the Hard Place and the Ground*, it consists mostly of loosely arranged and lazily performed blues and R&B covers. Norman Dayron's production is unforgiveably shoddy, Bloomfield's singing amounts to little more than a tuneless cough (always his Achilles heel as a solo artist), and the metallic shriek of his guitar is often obscured not only by the turgid sound quality but also his depressingly mediocre band.

Only once, on the instrumental groove "Winter Moon," does that guitar cut through, Bloomfield letting his fingers do the talking with a spirited but dignified eloquence recalling his triumphs with Butterfield, Dylan, and on the *Super Session* LP. True, his best work was long behind him when he died, but Bloomfield's only crime was that he didn't live up to everyone else's expectation of him. That his early records still stand up as his best is testimony enough to his genius.

In the rock guitar hero game, Briton

continued on next page

Robin Trower has been pinch-hitting for Jimi Hendrix ever since he left Procol Harum for commercially greener solo pastures. Whether he's merely a competent imitation or a real experience all his own is a matter of taste. But on *B.L.T.* (the B stands for guest singer/bassist Jack Bruce, the L for drummer Bill Lordan, and the T for you-know-who), Trower has come up with a really thin sandwich.

Or make that curdled Cream. The ten songs here — I use the term loosely — are every Anglo blues-rock cliche come to life, leaden riffs stretched out for three or four minutes with Bruce and Lordan dragging their rhythmic feet while Trower goes over the same improvisational ground over and over again in the vain hope of hitting a few transcendent licks. With the sole exceptions of the simple atmospheric ballad "Won't Let You Down" and the grungy metallic dirge "No Island Lost," the material is hopelessly lame (former Procol poet-in-residence Keith Reid wrote lyrics to eight of the songs), crippled by a paper-thin sound (Trower, as producer, has no one to blame but himself), Bruce's uninspired bawling, and guitar solos of little or no consequence. A super-session in concept, *B.L.T.* is a superdrag in execution.

The most disturbing thing about these three albums is that Clapton, Bloomfield, and Trower sound all played out, as if the challenge — the *thrill* — is gone. Maybe it was just the sheer joy of jamming or that old bugaboo peer pressure. But when former Deep Purple axeman Ritchie Blackmore, his old guitar teacher and session pro Big Jim Sullivan, and the aforementioned Albert Lee — a big name on the studio circuit — got together in 1971 in a London studio to record the eight jams on *Green Bullfrog*, they came out gunning for each other. And the result on this album — originally released with the players listed under pseudonyms and recently reissued after nearly a decade out of print — sounds like Shootout at the Six-String Corral.

Okay, the material runs from the sublime to the ridiculous, including takes of "My Baby Left Me," Joe South's "Walk a Mile in My Shoes," and "Makin' Time," a minor hit for 60s U.K. band Creation. The singing (by a guy named Earl Jordan) is serviceable at best and the strings and horns are a damn nuisance. But there are more hot solos on this album than on the other three albums combined. And on the seven-minute breakout "Bullfrog," everybody gets a turn to show what they're made of — first Sullivan, pealing out with Lee and his revved-up country chops yapping at his heels and Speed King Blackmore coming in last but certainly not least, firing volleys of inverted blues licks at 78 RPM. Too bad nobody makes records like *that* anymore.

follows her microtonal style. The Global Village People, all right!

Woah, what'samatter, where ya going? The monotonous repetition of dissonant one-chord riffs creates aural ugly wallpaper? Look, this stuff is art, not entertainment. You miss the solos, the emotional expression of the individual voice? You must have missed the Byrne and Eno interviews in the last issue — all that stuff is out now. These are the blueprints for the music of the 80s, so forget about all that self-indulgent, freedom of expression stuff. These times demand brilliantly hollow intellectual exercises that you can dance to...if you really wanna. — *Chris Doering*

Sarah Vaughan
Copacabana — Exclusivamente Brasil, (Pablo Today 2312 125

I was crazy about *I Love Brazil* (Pablo Today 2312 101) — in fact it's my favorite Sarah Vaughan album — because of all the strings and flutes, because of a song so deft in its pantheism that it began "Just think of things like daffodils/and peaceful sheep on clovered hills," because while Vaughan was singing another song about "Roses and roses and roses and roses" a voice

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the title cut and "Genesis (In The Beginning)," McLean's plain-speaking, neo-folkie roots are more apparent, but during a couple of actual rockers, the singer projects a pleasantly easygoing familiarity with rockabilly, most especially with his cover of Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps' "Lotta Lovin'."

James Taylor continues to record with the cream off the top of the LA studio scene and Peter Asher at the production helm. JT's been a big-time soft-rock star long enough now that many of his lyrics reflect the problems of life in a permanent passing zone, and there's a question here of just how interesting that lane is to me, John Q. Listener. On the one hand, songs like "Hour That The Morning Comes," "Hard Times," and "Believe It Or Not" sound more personal — especially as regards marital problems — than anything he's committed to wax in years. On the other hand, soul-baring as sole inspiration doesn't always make for a fabulously interesting album, and even for a James Taylor LP, this one's got some serious lulls. What the singer *does* put across convincingly here is a sense of anomaly, loneliness and upheaval, with a momentary ray of sunshine portrayed in the nicely Carib-flavored "Summer's Here." As usual, the Rick Marotta-Leland Sklar drums/bass combo lays down wonderfully tight and tangy funk in the grooves whenever the songs themselves sound a little too lugubrious. The album's by no means a musical disaster, just a little sad at its emotional core.

Jesse Winchester's songs have been frequently covered (Joan Baez, the Everly Bros., Jimmy Buffet), but since he quit America in '67 to avoid the draft and become a Canadian citizen, his own albums have been sporadic. The truth is that Winchester is a natural-born Southerner (raised in Shreveport, La. and Memphis), and *Talk Memphis* teams him with Willie Mitchell, the brilliant Memphis-based trumpeter-arranger-producer. The result is a slightly quirky, quietly melodic, R&B-flavored set that sounds a bit like Al Green meets Elvis Presley at a little country church (they drive into Memphis and have a drink with Booker T. and the MG's). Mitchell is at his best supplying tracks like the one on "Let Go," which could be an outtake from Al Green's *Let's Stay Together* LP, the funk simmering on the back burner. Winchester's at his best on songs like "Sure Enough," where he sings "it's too late to save my soul, so come on help me spend it..." *Talk Memphis* may be mellow in the extreme, but it's also genuine Memphis R&B-tinged pop, and Winchester's songs and vocal delivery reveal a comfortably familiar, earthy wisdom. He may not have Don McLean's perfectly-tuned pipes, but if he keeps it up, Jesse Winchester just might end up having the same problems plaguing James Taylor, vis-a-vis success. — *Crispin Cioe*

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Ulmer and Jackson's New Fusion

By Neil Tesser

This stuff will take the top of your head off. (One suspects it was designed, in part, to do just that.) Either it will take the top of your head off, or you're already dead.

Certainly, such a quality is one trademark of music effecting even a minor revolution. Its differentness must strike with stunning force, and its new vocabulary — coined because the old one has proven inadequate for the current message — will by necessity sound foreign, even alien. It remains to be seen just how deep this music will cut the main body of jazz, but there can be no doubt that guitarist Blood Ulmer here on *Are You Glad to be in America* (Rough Trade) and *No Wave* (Moers Music) and drummer Shannon Jackson with *Eye On You* (About Time) — especially Shannon, whose vital presence is heard on all three of these discs — are helming a new wave. Its crests are intense multirhythms, blasted harmonies, unexpectable structures. Just as bebop offered the musical correlative to the rhythms of postwar New York, this music should pace the 80s.

The music's so new, it has yet to be named. When it was first performed the term "punk jazz" was used for description, but that covered only part of the story. The rubric was accurate in the sense that the music heard here offers a brash and startling sound and sensibility, as did punk rock; indeed, Blood's Rough Trade LP is in several ways an updated "jazz fusion," incorporating the piledriver energy of the late-70s rock rather than the melodious beat of the late 60s.

But the real source of what's happening here is the mid-70s music of Ornette Coleman. In 1976, Coleman played on both of them, and Blood has worked often with Coleman both before and since those records. From Coleman, his former sidemen have taken the Harmolodic Theory, an intricate method of blurring the line between melody and harmony, as well as structuring improvisation; I can't say I fully comprehend it, but its presence is clearly heard in the large ensemble statements on *Are You Glad to be in America* (Rough Trade) and *Eye On You*.

What's more, there is a manic, at first rootless rhythm to those Coleman albums, and it has been extended even further on the more recent recordings. Shannon Jackson is writing a new chapter in polyrhythmic drumming; he states and implies so many different beats, which seem so at odds with each other, and with such fluidity, that the core is completely obscured — and yet, a regular tempo and flow are somehow maintained, so that even non-traditional concepts of "swing" must be reassessed. (Shannon fools the mind, but not the body.) As the title to one of his tunes suggests, he is a shaman: not since Sunny Murray has so radical an approach to drumming come along. Because of this, it would be easy — and incorrect — to ignore the rhythmic contributions of Blood's guitar work, which seems to seek out the main thrust of Shannon's time and then play against it.

I find *Are You Glad* very difficult listening, which is a good thing; still, its disturbing freneticism might easily wear one down. The ten tracks all but jump from one to the next; the tandem drumming of Shannon and G. Calvin Weston is recorded almost in parody, with booming bass drums and sizzly snares; both Oliver Lake and David Murray take sax solos that bespeak a gracious madness. *Are You Glad* serves as a manifesto, offering the new music in a demanding array of tempos and moods best summed up on the tune "Time Out:" impossibly busy with rhythmic propulsion, at times totally anarchic, it presents sheer sound as a physical presence.

Blood's own guitar work is hot, hard, and loud — the notes are bricks. On a tune like "Pressure" — a fast-shuffle oddball march — he solos in a fragmented, splayed style. It's as if he had taken a Grant Green solo and driven bamboo splints into it. "Interview" is an updated exploration of the AACM min-

continued on next page

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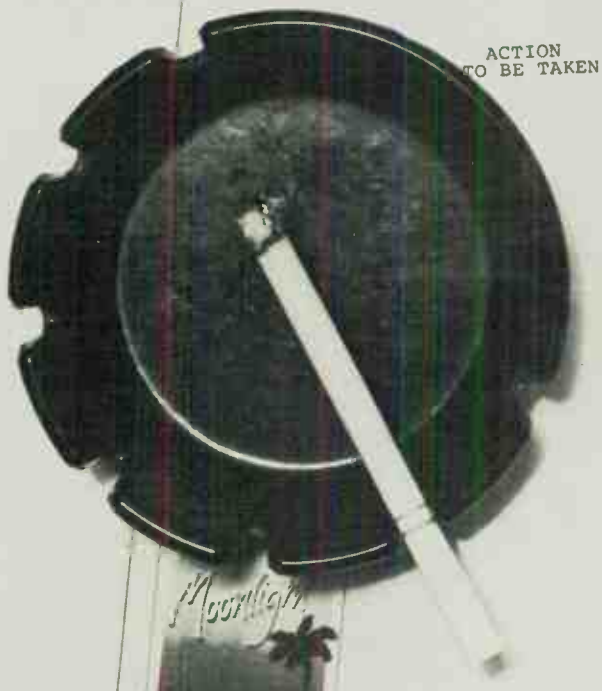

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strelry; "T.V. Blues," an alteread riff tune with a layered funk lope; while "Light Eyed" conjures up an Ornette Coleman melody from '62. But at no point can even a casual listener escape the barrage of multiple time.

If *Are You Glad* is the manifesto, the album from Blood's Music Revelation Ensemble gives him the chance to expound upon the fine points. For it is on *No Wave* that the new vocabulary yields accomplished poetry. With only a quartet — Murray (tenor and bass clarinet), Shannon, and the all-important Amin Ali on bass guitar — Blood presents only four tunes, allowing more freedom and depth. On one of them, the opportunities are squandered; the others are gems. Most impressive is "Big Tree, " redolent of American Indian music with its stately tom-tom pulse and dark melody of wide intervals; Murray's bass clarinet harmonics move from solo to rhythmic backing for Blood, and Shannon's accenting drum rolls are frequently astonishing. The theme of "Baby Talk" provides more amazement — it is actually two themes, played in different *tempos* as well as different meter.

To Blood's image as manifesto-waving firebrand, we can compare Shannon who, by virtue of the flawless *Eye On You*, reveals himself as the brainy theoretician, codifying, containing, and structuring the raw material presented by Ornette. On his own album, Shannon's drums are mixed lower than on the others — it is his writing, and his firm control of this explosive music, that are front and center here. Like *Are You Glad, Eye On You* is an armful — 11 tunes in all — but it is infinitely more varietal, and beautiful as well as fierce.

Part of the credit goes to the Decoding Society, which Shannon has structured to contain two guitars, two saxists (Charles Brackeen and Byard Lancaster, both bright and superb), and the crowning touch of Billy Bang's violin. When he solos over the weirdling theme of "Shaman," Bang is a butterfly; on several other tunes, he is a vital part of the rhythm section. And his pizzicato opening to "Ballet de Omphalos" — which turns into the LP's most enveloping showcase of ensemble intensity — symbolizes Shannon's ability to see the individual flowers among the forest of rhythm he has created. As good as the other two albums are, *Eye On You* is on another plane, and it demands that we all keep an eye on Shannon. Shannon has shown us possibilities for his music that only he could have guessed at: on one tune, this vibrant whirlwind of a percussionist plays no drums at all.

I find some interesting parallels between this new music, at the turn of the 80s, and the music that erupted at the turn of the 70s. With fusion, Miles Davis stood at the eye of the storm; with this latest development, a similarly established giant (Ornette Coleman) laid the groundwork. Miles' guitarist, John McLaughlin, went on to make the hardest, most angular music of any of Miles' proteges; Ornette's guitarist, Blood Ulmer, is following a similar course. And completing the analogy, Shannon Jackson and the Decoding Society can been seen as the new Weather Report, transcending their genre's apparent limitations to rise above category.

Whether this new "fusion" will have as wide an impact, I don't know; I tend to doubt it. But this much is certain: if you really listen to Blood and Shannon, you won't ever hear music the same way again. — *Neil Tesser*

The Who
Face Dances (Warner Bros. HS 3516)

There's a folk saying that warns "if you're not an anarchist at 20, you won't have the energy to be village fire chief by 30." Pete Townshend, when he reached 30 in 1975, was trying to douse his cynicism on *The Who By Numbers*. Since then, there have been at least 12 important deaths in his extended family — Keith Moon and 11 kids in Cincinnati — and he's earned the

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long look in the mirror that *Face Dances* represents. In the accelerated gypsy reel "Daily Records," he says he knows by now he'll never change. But he's capable of learning something from watching his two real-life daughters growing up: "Got to admit that I created private worlds/Cold sex and booze don't impress my little girls...When you are eleven the whole world's out to lunch."

A man of 37, then, living on the banks of the Thames and thinking aobut his wife and his work. He knows he and the wife have passed the point of no return, and the intro of "You Better You Bet" heralds that realization with a plangent keyboard chord, building synthesizer line, and harpies' chorus of schoolboy voices. It's a song of mature but slightly twisted love, talking sometimes obscurely, sometimes roguishly ("You work on me with open arms and open legs") but breathing warmth through its cliches: "You better love me all the time now/You better shove me back in line now."

Auteur Townshend is determined to have his husbandly say, and the following song, "Don't Let Go the Coat," tests how far the faithful will follow his logic. "It ain't really true rock and roll," he says, "Unless I'm hanging on to you when I hold it next time...I won't let go of the coat." This ambivalence between his liking for domesticity and his love for his job out there in teenage wasteland has become Townshend's most interesting ache (putting to rest the obsessed, Leopold Bloomian figure behind songs like "Squeeze Box" and "My Baby Gives It Away"). The soldierly essence of his rocker's creed seems to be a line from "Don't Let Go the Coat" that singer Roger Daltrey slips in with newly delicate inflections — "But you've got to finish everything you've started."

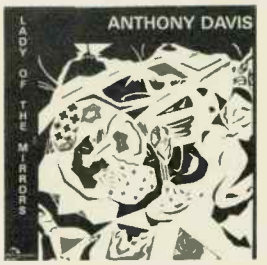
Daltrey's vocals, always colored by the phrasing of Townshend's demo tapes, have never sounded so much like the vocals on Pete's solo albums. *Face Dances*, it seems odd to realize, is the first Who studio LP since Moon's death. In place of Moon's pummeling we have Kenney Jones' spirited precision, and the entire effort is more controlled. ("The production of our records has nothing to do with sound," Pete complained to Jonathan Cott in a 1970 interview, "It's got to do with trying to keep Keith Moon on his damn drum stool and keeping him away from the booze.")

Reports from the Who's recent U.K. tour have Townshend and Daltrey feuding onstage, which may be healthy, because this LP is disciplined to a fault. While I enjoy the subtler expressiveness of Daltrey's singing — his reading of Pete's "How Can You Do It Alone" seems to reflect every gyration of the fitful Townshend mind — I also miss the animal extravagance of his delivery of, say, "Sister Disco."

Nor is this record brimming with hot guitar. The band is leaving a lot of the busy work to Rabbit Bundrick's keyboards, and I think that shortcut is one of the things that makes this album's disappointments — "Did You Steal My Money," "Another Tricky Day," and "You" (by Entwistle) — as wooden as they are mean-spirited. Bundrick's exertions sound just great underneath "You Better"'s rich mix, or drilling through the subterranean thunder of Entwistle's "The Quiet One" — but they can barely pull you from verse to verse of the diatribe songs.

What *Face Dances* comes down to is that Townshend is a lot more compelling talking about his wife than his work these days. While that may not make him ideal fodder for the next mass audience of tough boys, it does mean he's still honest enough — and when he bears down, musically powerful enough — to keep their faith. — *Fred Schruers*

Anthony Davis
Lady of the Mirrors (India Navigation 1047)



At first hearing, this solo piano album struck me as a virtuosic contemporary masterpiece, yet somewhere in my subconscious a voice whined, "It's too *structured*; contaminated by the *evil influence of European art music*." But those

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very structural considerations — the fragmented motifs and textures set in vital contrast and logical repetition in works like "Lady of the Mirrors," "Five Moods from an English Garden" and "Under the Double Moon" — began to conjure images and feelings in such a striking and unique fashion that I found myself captured. That's when I began to realize what a natural and successful expression of his musical personality Davis could make through these structures, and how completely he has developed from a composer of prodigious talent into one with the maturity and taste to match. Taken with his recent octet performance at the Kitchen, this album represents Davis at the heights of his creative powers. Not only is he an increasingly important composer but, as this release clearly illustrates, he is a piano virtuoso of seemingly limitless technical and expressive resources, and while this album may not quite reach the romantic elevation of his octet music, it certainly brings you delightfully close to the powerful structures behind his compositions, and closer to the mind and soul of the man who creates them. With Ellington as his acknowledged inspiration, what a future this young Afro-American composer/pianist has! — *Cliff Tinder*

Halveti-Jerrahi Dervishes — *Journey to the Lord of Power,* Inner Traditions International 1001. And now for a record that dwarfs every other album released this and most other months, an unusually fine stereo recording of the Halveti-Jerrahi *dhikr*, "an ancient Sufi ritual of remembrance." If you've lost the sense that music has the power to change men's lives, regain it here. This carefully sequenced ceremony combining chant, prayer, dance and music features, among others, the greatest living player of the *ney* (a Turkish end-blown flute whose only rival for elegance and spiritual penetration is the *shakuhachi* of Japan), Niyazi Sayin, who seldom records; a handful of the finest cantors in Turkey, although the legendary blind Kani Karaca is not on hand; percussionists and a chorus of dervishes whose commitment to the *dhikr* is audibly absolute. Highlights include Sayin's opening *ney* solo with *kemence* obligato by Ihsan Ozgen; the parabola of rapid *La ilaha illa'Llah*'s over which a cantor improvises a thrilling, whirling, incendiary solo; the low powerful cries to *Hu* (Him) as if the world were sustained by them; the motoric exhalations of *Ya Hayy* (The Living One) that propel a series of polyphonic hymns and further incantations; and the way the depth of prayer is carried right through a series of climaxes to the very end. This simply makes most other music sound silly and the effect of most other music seem superficial, almost remote. I mean it. The rest is silence. (I.T.I.; 377 Park Ave. South; New York, NY 10016.) — *Rafi Zabor*

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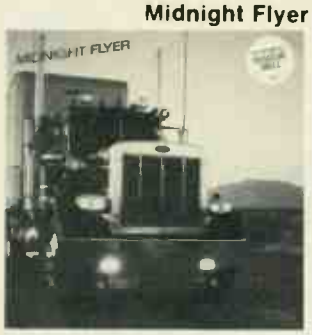
ROCK SHORT TAKES

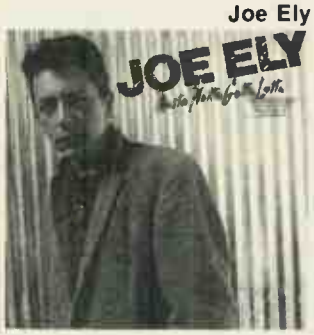
The Jam sound off, the Searchers look good, and Midnight Flyer never takes off. LKJ goes rub-a-dub-dub, but Leon Russell should stay off the bluegrass.

By David Fricke

Midnight Flyer



Joe Ely



Leon Russell

The Searchers

The Jam — *Sound Affects* (Polydor). What the Clash now take two and three albums to do the Jam still do in one, if you don't count the free single included in early copies. And where the Clash often sound forced by their own frustration with the punk form to jump on every musical bandwagon that passes by, the Jam accept the limitations of their basic sound — Who-ish three-piece thunder — while adding effective dabs of tonal color (horns, keyboards, even dub-wise mixing on the instrumental "Music For the Last Couple") in those spaces left by Paul Weller's pithy, poignant songwriting pen. So what if "Start!" is a fearless cop of Beatle George's "Taxman"? Have you ever heard the one about "My Sweet Lord" sounding like...

Abba — *Super Trouper* (Atlantic). Even at its sappiest (the tearjerking "The Way Old Friends Do" that closes this album), Abba's polar pop is good for what ails ya, as refreshing as the Nestea plunge. Bjorn and Benny add a few new wrinkles here and there as well, like the Devo-phoric overtones of "On and On and On." The winners take it all, again.

The Searchers — *Love's Melodies* (Sire). Moon Martin, John Fogerty, Will Birch of the Records, Motorsman Andy McMasters, and Alex Chilton are just a few of the ace tunesmiths who get the Searchers treatment here — crisp resonant Byrds-y guitars, snappy rhythms, and heavenly choir-like harmonies. Sure, you've heard it all done before. But rarely is it done better.

Leon Russell and New Grass Revival — *The Live Album* (Paradise). The so-called "Master of Space and Time" spins his wheels in an abortive fusion of New Grass Revival's infectious organic boogie and his own overbearing rock-gospel pretensions. Could have been worse, though. He could have done what he did on his last live album — made it a three-record set.

Joe Ely — *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta* (South Coast/MCA). The best Joe Ely album since the last Joe Ely album. Why this killer Texan — with his 180 proof blend of rock 'n' roll moxie, honky-tonk soul, and Tex-Mex jive, not to mention a band as hot as homemade chili — isn't a star is a mystery. With any luck, this album is the solution.

Good Rats — *Great American Music* (Great American). This band, a Long Island rock 'n' roll institution, seems to suffer from the same jinx bugging Joe Ely. But like the little bar band that could, the Rats keep plying their trade and with this album (their seventh) their time may finally have come. Singer Peppi Marchello writes vigorously catchy songs with clever lyrical twists ("New York Survivor," "Audience," "Rock and Roll Point of View") and the band grinds them out with neo-heavy metal fervor. So why let Long Island bars have all this fun?

The Jags — *No Tie Like a Present* (Island). Just because this English quintet replaced a couple of members for their second album doesn't mean they don't still sound like third-rate Elvis Costello clones.

Robert Rental and the Normal — *Live — West Runton Pavilion* (Rough Trade US). There's music on only one side of this twelve-inch disc (it sells for about the price of a disco single) and that one side sounds like it was recorded in a New York subway tunnel. But there is something morbidly fascinating, even hypnotic, about the manic application of abstract sounds to primal electronic composition — a kind of *musique confused* — by these two English eccentrics ("the Normal" is one Daniel Miller, best known for his dirge "Warm Leatherette"). *Not* for the faint of ear.

Pere Ubu — *The Modern Dance* (Rough Trade US). A reissue of this experimental Cleveland band's classic first LP. If you've had trouble dealing with their later, more demanding records like *New Picnic Time* and *The Art of Walking*, then this 1977 album — a no less inflammable combination of Beefheartian clamor and otherworldly melodies but firmly grounded in 20th century rock — is a good place to start. In Ubu's world, you've gotta learn to dance before you can walk.

Stiv Bators — *Disconnected* (Bomp). Former Dead Boy vocalist cools the Iggy-isms in favor of a more competent hard-rock approach on his first solo album. The result is a young, loud, and snotty Tom Petty, which is actually quite refreshing considering how many ersatz Iggys are crawling around L.A. these days. Add ten points for a bullish cover of the Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night."

Various Artists — *I.R.S. Greatest Hits Vols. 2 & 3* (I.R.S.). New wave entrepreneurs, the International Record Syndicate, pat themselves on the back with this two-record sampler of acts and tracks they've released over the last two years. Obvious selling points are the $9.98 list price and rare tracks by the Police (their debut 45 "Fall Out"), John Cale, and the Cramps, but then you also get an inexpensive chance to savor the eccentric joys of Skafish, Wazmo Nariz, Fashion, the Fall...

Various Artists — *Rising Stars of San Francisco* (War Bride). Of the eleven Bay Area hopefuls, at least four of them could qualify for this label's "Greatest Hits" in a few years. The Kingsnakes

continued on page 96

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his Rollins bag than usual. The album is spiced by the Brazilian Cliffordian Caudio Roditi and Eddie Blackwell on drums (why don't more people record with him?). Schnitter was the tenorist in Blakey's last band but one, and its leading soloist. The album's okay. Schnitter shouldn't sing. To come full circle, two early Messenger dates are reissued cheap on Columbia this month: **Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers** (37021) and *Hard Bop* (36809). The first features the second Messenger unit with Donald Byrd replacing Kenny Dorham on trumpet, Mobley, Horace Silver and Doug Watkins. Prime melodist is Silver, and the album is noteworthy for the first recordings of his "Nica's Dream" and "Ecaroh." The second album stars a young Jackie McLean in excellent spirits and the first performance of his "Little Melonae." Towering over both albums is the leader, drums roaring like a lion. They haven't recorded it yet, but I understand his current Messengers are the best in many a year.

Planissimo

It's hard to realize in retrospect how many inventions **Bill Evans** was responsible for. He created a new language for introspection in jazz, broadened the music's harmonic and emotional palette, reinvented the piano trio for the post-bop era and provided a model for several generations of white musicians genuinely looking for their native land in the continent of jazz. His historical importance has yet to be satisfactorily assessed; his artistry, like any worthy of the name, was inestimable. His loss is painful still. *You Must Believe in Spring* (Warner Bros. HS 3504) is not the last album he recorded but a session with Eddie Gomez and Elliott Zigmund from 1977. It's hard to imagine why it wasn't released then — it's one of the finest Bill Evans albums of the decade and, in the aftermath of his death, heartbreakingly beautiful. It wasn't a perfect trio, mind you, but on this date Gomez is at his least skitterish, Zigmund content to remain discreetly on brushes most of the time, and Evans luminous beyond words. If you haven't listened to him in some time, listen here. An extraordinary album. Hail and farewell.

If the Evans influence needs tracing, **Gary Peacock**'s *Shift in the Wind* (ECM 1165) is ready to hand. Art Lande is on piano, Zigmund on drums and the master bassist at center stage for an album which, if it does not approach the level of the Evans date, has fragile beauties of its own. An authoritative pre-Evans trio appears on the reissue of **Bud Powell**'s *Portrait of Thelonious* (Columbia 36805), comprising Powell, Kenny Clarke and Pierre Michelot, recorded live in Paris, 1961. The manner is typical of Powell's audibly troubled later years, but the four Monk tunes are definitive tributes, especially "Off Minor," Powell trading all his speed and brilliance for clarity of line and disturbing depth. They doused him with ammoniated water in mental hospitals and he died in a doorway in Brooklyn.

There's some indecently vigorous stride piano from *The* **Ralph Sutton** *Quartet* (Storyville 4013) and a solid, two-fisted solo album from **Sir Roland Hanna**, *Swing Me No Waltzes* (Storyville 4018), and both are recommended, but if you want to find pianism approaching the Evans level this month you'll have to go to the inexcusable and unusually flamboyant brilliance of Steve Kuhn on **Bob Moses**' *Family* (Sutra 1003), which also features some expansively swinging Dave Liebman and the unique basswork of Steve Swallow, but good grief, Kuhn was having a day for himself, with sparkling, eccentric lines, bizarre and perfect harmonies, and all his technical and emotional command in full battle array. Moses' writing is excellent, especially "Portsmouth Figurations," and his one drum solo is terrific.

And Much, Much More

Until I heard the **Mingus Dynasty** *Live at Montreux* (Atlantic 16031), I wondered what Jack Walrath was so pissed off about in the liner notes to the **Dannie Richmond** *Quintet* (Gatemouth 1004), but now I see that the Dynasty is getting topheavy with tribute and, despite the continued presence of Jimmy Knepper, very unMing. You *can't* play "Ysabel's Table Dance" again, period, and though I'm grateful for the two rare Mingus tunes on the disc, I heard Mingus on his last tour and the version of "Cumbia & Jazz Fusion" on Richmond's album is just the way it was, and unforgettable.

Folks really began to take notice of Mingus' tenor alumnus **Booker Ervin** with the release of *The Freedom Book* in '64 — that Byard/Davis/Dawson rhythm section was a revelation, and so were the tunes — but Booker was in classic form long before that. You should have heard him blow the VSOB's away at the New York jam sessions I went to in my youth, or with Roy Haynes' working band. **Roy Haynes/Booker Ervin**, Bad News Blues (Prestige MPP-2504), brings back those days of yore, and mine, with great, high-cry Booker, continuously brilliant drumming from Haynes, the great title blues, and an unexpectedly definitive pure jazz version of "Under Paris Skies," all for $5.98 list. Buy, buy, buy. Also in the new Prestige series of onefers is the best **Dexter Gordon** you'll hear this month, *The Ballad Album* (MPP 2502), recorded just before all the hero-worship began and better than anything since. Not all ballads, either. "Tangerine" goes by at a good clip and two other tunes bounce. Bonuses? How about two tart Thad Jones solos and one lush Freddie Hubbard? Purchase, purchase.

While we're in tenor heaven, stop to consider the two-tenor tandem fronted by drummer **Idris Muhammad** on *Kabsha* (Theresa 110): George Coleman is unnaturally fleet and Pharoah Sanders is a flawed but primal force, and the no-nonsense, kick-ass rhythm team of Muhammad and bassist Ray Drummond put the album over with room to spare. Sanders cuts loose once, Coleman consistently. Good, honest album. **Sonny Stitt** (*Sonny's Back*, Muse 5204) is probably still out there in the bars of America sneering down an unworthy house rhythm section, but on this disc he blows tenor terror Ricky Ford to a standstill — bastard refers to Ford in the liner notes as "a promising little musician" — with a loping generosity of swing and a fecundity of ideas you won't soon find elsewhere. Why not get this foxy character into a studio with Rollins? If he can't shake off Newk's studio chill, no one will. Stitt's got a raw deal. He should be rich and famous and he knows it and it hurts.

With all the hard-bop elegance and precision of this month's releases, the engagingly ragged ensembles of **David Murray**'s *Ming* (Black Saint 0045) came as a contemporary shock to these reminiscing ears, but the album's a winner, and Murray manages not to get blown away by his formidable cohorts Olu Dara, Henry Threadgill, George Lewis and Anthony Davis. This scaled-down version of Murray's big band is neat, folks, and the writing is good, particularly the title ballad. Murray runs his personal gamut from Ayler squeals to straight blowing (where he's best, sez I). Obtain, obtain. **Steve Lacy/Don Cherry**, *Evidence* (Prestige MPP 2505) is another welcome addition to the $5.98 reissue trend (though I hope the next Prestige batch comes with recording dates and maybe liner notes, they can use the old ones, like Columbia). Lacy has always been adept at finding partners to set off his spare, proto-Braxtonian style. Now it's burning Steve Potts, once it was flamboyant Roswell Rudd, here it's the skittish, multinoted Cherry in fine, fine form. Not all Monk tunes but all good, Billy Higgins on board to reinforce the Ornettitude, a forgotten near-classic returns and Lacy is alive and well in Paris. As veteran bores like Bob Blumenthal and I never

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Jazz Shorts *cont.*

tire of pointing out, **Bobby Hutcherson** is one of the unfailingly brilliant improvisers on planet Earth and if he played something other than vibes billions, trillions, zillions would worship him, honest. *Medina* (Blue Note 1086) is an intense and fertile session from '69 with a quintet of soulmates: Joe Chambers, Harold Land, Reggie Johnson, Stanley Cowell; and Columbia, having done Hutch the favor of deleting all his albums, has come out with *The Best of Bobby Hutcherson* (37093) but *Medina* is better than the best, and not an attempt to pop.

Back in the cheap reissue department, **Carmen McRae** *Sings "Lover Man" and Other Billie Holiday Classics* (Columbia 37002) is a most welcome return — Carmen sings even better today, but doesn't get material of this caliber (Norman Granz, *please* sign her) — but the vocal album of the month is *Billie, Ella, Lena, Sarah!* (Columbia 36811), featuring just who you'd think it does, turn and turn about, 1935-50. It's mostly Billie, and the strangest transition is from Holiday to Horne, from sexuality to sensuality, fact to fancy. Instructive Americana, at the very least. One of the most engaging hard-bop albums of the month looks like an avant-garde package, *Folks*, by drummer **Doug Hammond**, Idibib 104, featuring a host of New York all-stars including Angie Bofill doing an Annie Ross take, lots of bright original compositions, Muneer, Abdul Fattah, Byard Lancaster, Cecil McBee and an inventiveness and consistency that commends the date to your enlightened attention. (Order from Daybreak Express, 169 7th Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11215.) There are literally dozens of fine albums — by **Blue Mitchell, John Coltrane/Ray Draper, Charles Mingus/Thad Jones, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, Eric Dolphy, Rufus Reid**, and a host of others — BUT WE HAVEN'T GOT THE SPACE and I feel compelled to say something acid about **The Lounge Lizards** (EG 108), buncha ofays in white shirts and narrow ties passing themselves off as *objay dars* purveying "fake jazz," like a band for a Saturday Night Live takeoff of a beatnik 50s cafe. Not even cute. When better men can't make a living playing real jazz I have zip sympathy for this spineless and untalented twaddle. Since art *can* do more than recirculate the images and detritus of a dying culture — in fact it can create new possibilities, new lives, new human beings — these ineptly played, smartly conceived "Harlem Nocturne" tunes are an insult and a cheat and diminish us all. Have I responded according to type? *Good.*

Erratum: Last month we inadvertantly left off **James Newton**'s record company that put out his outstanding album, *The Mystery School*.. Find it on India Navigation #1046. Ⓜ

Rock Shorts *cont. from pg. 90*

feature two former Flamin' Groovies, which should be explanation enough. Debra Knox of the Fun Addicts sings "You Don't Care" with all the lust and vigor of a punky Ann Wilson. New Romans contribute a bouncy "She Doesn't Play (With Yo-Yo's)" and the sorely underrated Readymades check in with the bold menacing pop of "Runnin' Too Fast." Songstress Holly Stanton and another ex-Groovie Roy Loney, also included here, have War Bride LPs of their own out now worth checking out as **Linton Kwesi Johnson** — *L.K.J. in Dub* (Mango). Reggae poet Johnson and his pen take a vacation while co-producer/mix-master Dennis "Blackbeard" Bovelle cooks up a dub-ble bubble stew of rhythms culled from Johnson's last two LPs *Forces of Victory* and *Bass Culture*. Johnson's powerful way with words is conspicuous by his absence, but Bovelle's way with the music is sheer **Midnight Flyer** (Swan Song). The production by Mick Ralphs of Bad Company is punchy, the band (ex-Foghat, Whitesnake, among others) competent, and celebrated Scottish throat Maggie Bell has a magnificent set of Joplinesque pipes. Why, then, doesn't Midnight Flyer ever get off the ground? Because most of the songs are tired, overworked Anglo blues-rock cliches. Exceptions: the jazz-tinged "In My Eyes," a dramatic ballad called "Rough Trade," and "What Ever I Want," which is best described as heavy metal **Hawks** (Columbia). This fresh-faced five-piece, hailing from deepest darkest Iowa, uphold the Midwestern tradition of British Invasion classicism (Raspberries, Blue Ash, Cheap Trick, Shoes) with style and taste. They can't help drawing on the same '60s pop cliches as their predecessors, but their cranked-up rock 'n' roll drive, flawless instrumental mesh, and winning harmonies make all the difference in the world.

Ian Gomm — *What a Blow* (Stiff/Epic). This former Brinsley Schwarz singer-guitarist-tunesmith's brand of sophisticated pub-rock goes down just as nice and easy here as it did on his first solo album *Gomm With the Wind*. There is nothing here as immediately memorable as his 1979 hit "Hold On." Still, the mellow shuffle "Here It Comes Again (That Feeling)," the Bo Diddley-style bouncer "What a Blow," and his version of Jack Tempchin's "Slow Dancin'" (very much like the way the Brinsleys might have done it) come real close.

Ted Nugent — *Intensities in 10 Cities* (Epic). He sings like a hyena in heat, plays his Gibson like an instrument of war, and the closest thing to a ballad on this live album of mostly new material is the Nuge's nuking of "Land of a Thousand Dances." True, if you have one Nugent album, you've basically got them all. But don't kid yourself. Ignoring him won't make him go away. Ⓜ

Independents *cont. from pg. 27*

ground floor of our loft building in Chinatown.

From then on our experience was probably like every other young band's who've only been in a demo studio or two, and dealt with surly club soundmen. We looked for a "professional," i.e. more than eight-track, place to record, and someone who knew the ropes to produce us and help get us heard. In both cases we lucked out in some ways and screwed up at the same time. The 16-track was cheap and beautifully equipped, but very new, and the engineer/owner managed to somehow ruin several perfect takes. Lesson #1 to prospective independent discers: in any recording situation, a good engineer means everything, and is much more important than fancy hi-tech stuff, especially if you want to knock off something simple, spontaneous, and energetic in a short (cheap) amount of time.

Our producer was a space case with a few good ideas. He knew everyone and everything about records, promised the moon, and delivered zip. Lesson #2: forget "producers." Know what you want beforehand soundwise, delegate group authority to one or two members, and deal strictly with engineers. The same idea holds true for any business after: trust yourselves, or get a manager who really believes.

Finally, we got a cheap deal in the mastering (that's where the "mother" and "stamper" discs are made, from which come the vinyl copies) and pressing, and ended up with 500 seven-inch EPs that were all slightly warped and did *not* sound like our final master mixed-down tape. Lesson #3: find out who does this stuff reliably, and insist most forcibly on a test pressing, which we were promised but did not get.

What did this cost? Including the rather charming black and white picture sleeves we cut and glued by hand, and the liquor bill, it set us back about 1000 bucks for a reasonably distinctive bit of wistful glory. Was it worth it? Well, even though there were only a few ignorant and stumbling attempts to get them into shops (Rough Trade actually took a few off me when I went to London later that year) once every so often an acquaintance will find our EP in the New Wave bin someplace we least expected, or someone will remember or have heard of us. Yeah, it's worth it, even if only to show to your descendants: "What did you do during the Punk Rock explosion, Gramps?"

A record doesn't mean anything unless it's heard. Useful info: Rockpool is very open minded. Send them an advance copy of yours at 66 Delancey Street, New York, NY 10002, #(212) 777-1132. Rough Trade is now operating in America, releasing records (by Pere Ubu, Joy Division, A Certain Ratio, among others) at domestic prices. They most urgently want to collaborate, learn from, and work with other organizations involved in new music. If you are interested, or have a retail outfit and want to deal directly with them, or if you are just an ordinary person who wants their mail-order catalogue (they import a lot of rare neat stuff; enclose an 18-cent stamp), write to 1412 Grant Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133, #(415) 548-9211.

Following is the pick of the recent indies. These are not quaint oddities; as a DJ, I assure you that each is a literal gem, better than 99% of the official product. Consider it a personal guarantee.

Our Daughter's Wedding — *Lawnchairs/Airline* Design Records 45. This is near-perfect electropop, a bit like Gary Numan, but much more loony and perky. Faster, in a word. O.D.W. are three guys who play a variety of synths, keyboards, rhythm boxes and electronic percussion devices. Of course, the song makes no sense: "lawnchairs are everywhere, they're everywhere in my mind... Are you sleeping with someone special tonight? Does she drink tall drinks? does she make you feel right?" Delicious, idiotic dance music. Order from Rockpool, attn. D. Heaps/O.D.W. $3.

Pylon — *Gyrate* DB Records LP. This brilliant debut album was mentioned most favorably a few issues back in *MP&L*. I can only reiterate that is resembles an ideal crossbreeding between the wild free noise of Public Image Limited and the toetapping machine riffs of the B-52s. Really, Pylon are true originals: exultant modernists who make you want to screw and fight and dance, all at the same time. American music, Manson and marshmallows. Order from DB Recs., 432 Moreland Ave., North East, Atlanta, GA 30307. $6.98.

The Bongos — *Hunting/In The Congo/Mambo Sun* Fetish Records 12-inch EP. Mix Yardbirdsy proto-metal, some sun and surf prettiness'n'angst, and a little bump and grind, and you get this from Jersey's own beatboys, beautifully packaged and superbly big sounding. The songs are somehow affectingly innocent, even a little sad, despite the fact that this is smart purepop: lots of singalong high tenor choruses, brisk tempos, very clean. "Mambo Sun" is an old T. Rex tune, delicately raunchy. That's a clue. Order from Fetish Records/Bob Singerman, 611 Broadway, Suite 214, New York, NY 10012. $3.50 plus $1.40 shipping (UPS).

Bush Tetras — *Too Many Creeps/Snakes Crawl/You Taste Like the Tropics* 99 Records 45. *The* NYC (read downtown Manhattan) indie of the past six months, mostly because of "Creeps," a song you might hum while strutting through the Lower East Side, polishing your blade and your look. Three women and a guy, the Tetras play arty, dissonant ultrafunk, and they play it very well indeed. An instant classic of 1980's bigbeat urban shriek. Order from 99 Records, Lower Level, 99 Macdougal St., NYC, NY 10012, Attn. Ed. $3.

The Outsets — *I'm Searchin' For You/Fever* Contender Records 45. Outsets include master players Ivan Julian, ex-guitar in R. Hell's Voidoids, and Vinne De Nunzio, ex-drums for Feelies and Richard Lloyd. "Searchin'" is a genuine teendream lovecry a la Hollies, but pushed hard enough — the edgy, furious pace, the burnt, bitter tone of the guitar solo — to hint at maddened pain (though it's mesmerisingly melodic). "Fever" is the old Peggy Lee torcher, done like the Stones in '64. A sleeper, and a delight. Order from Contender Rec., Box 776, Philadelphia, PA 19105. $2.

The Colors — *Jealousy/Growin' Up American/West End/Have You Seen Her/Rave It Up* Infinite Records 7-inch EP. Blondie's drummer Clem Burke produces and plays on this, which means the boomboom is great, just to begin with. One side's 33 and the other's 45, and it's some weird value: insanely sixties-ish intricate ditties, at least two of which ("Jealousy" and "Have You See Her") could be Top Ten somewhere, anywhere. This is not progressive but it's very groovy, and better than any of the insincere major-label powerpoppers you've heard. Order from Infinite Records, 208 Mercer St., NYC, NY 10012. Include $2.50 (some deal!). M

THE NEW PLASTIC GUITARS

By J.C. Costa

As new materials are applied in guitar construction, wholly different instruments with their own unique sound and touch are appearing that are more than trendy replacements for wooden ones.

The words "plastic" and "guitar" have seldom, if ever, been used together without eliciting a twinge of embarrassment. The luthier's art has been traditionally tied to the mystical domain of wood — from exotic species like Brazilian rosewood, African ebony or Hawaiian koa to rugged North American hardwoods like maple, alder or ash. The thought of using plastic, inert and dull as the decade which heralded its seemingly limitless potential, to make resonant musical instruments is still heresy for those rooted in the enduring mystique of acoustic and electric guitars.

Early contact with plastic guitars recalls those snappy little "Cartoon" specials down at the local five and ten which featured garish colors, adventurous body shapes and nylon strings attached to arthritic tuning pegs. Their admittedly low and fast action was undercut by an extraordinarily limited tonal response and a total lack of projection. Obviously useless for anyone seriously committed to the guitar, these "instruments" eventually found their niche as props for precocious rock 'n' roll poseurs.

A variety of cheapo plastic Fender Strat imitations surfaced on both sides of the Atlantic during the late fifties and early sixties. Bizarre interpretations of Leo Fender's steamlined prototype with Art Deco *in extremis* bodies and rows of extraneous switches, these guitars are *still* unplayable and exist mainly as "light relief" items in electric guitar collections.

Always the innovator, Dan Armstrong made the first serious attempt at building a plastic electric guitar with his Lucite solid body in the late sixties. Lucite, a trade name, is an acrylic resin or plastic which comes in chunks that can be carved like wood. Besides a certain rigidity and density typical of many plastic materials, its main attribute is a novel appearance. Polished to a high gloss it becomes a perfectly transparent, glass-like substance. Armstrong's guitar was actually a hybrid instrument with a wooden neck and trendy features like instantly replaceable pickups, and was sporadically used by players like Keith Richards who appreciated its unusual looks and grungy, down-to-earth sound. Unfortunately, its ponderous body weight overwhelmed most players and it soon became a curiosity item. A few modern companies like Guitarman, who build custom guitars for Chic and solid body violins for Indian virtuoso L. Shankar, still use Lucite because of its visual appeal, but it has been largely passed over as a legitimate acoustic alternative.

The first all-encompassing effort to incorporate plastics into acoustic guitar construction came from Charles Kaman, founder and president of Ovation Instruments. His extensive background in the aerospace industry — he also owns Kaman Aviation — and affinity for the instrument made him the perfect candidate to break new ground in what had always been the most conservative area of guitar manufacturing. He developed a round-backed bowl as a substitute for the traditional "wooden box" made of Lyrachord, a combination of fiberglass and polyester resins originally used as a shell for spruce rotor blades to prevent warping in tropical climates. Lyrachord was well adapted to guitar construction because of its light weight, strength and consistent vibration patterns throughout. Even more important was its "repeatability," an inherent advantage most plastics have over wood which allows their specific mass and density to be controlled and recorded so the manufacturer can insure consistency from one guitar to the next and exactly duplicate any given instrument years after it comes off the line.

The Ovation "acoustic/electrics" have been a popular item with musicians because of their durability, efficient transducer pickups that eliminate feedback in live applications and distinctively crisp tonal characteristics never intended as a *re-creation* of wooden guitars. But Kaman's masterwork is the Adamas guitar. Taking plastics one step further, he created an instrument with a Lyrachord body and a carbon graphite top. The only concession to conventional materials is a thin layer of birch veneer sandwiched between two pieces of graphite to soften and deepen the sound.

To strengthen the necks of their instruments, Ovation uses a technique called resin impregnation wherein the wood (American black walnut) is first *vacuumed* then injected with a clear monomer resin all the way to the core to add strength and stiffness while retaining the original appearance of the wood. Carbon graphite strips or "extrusions" are also used to reinforce the necks on

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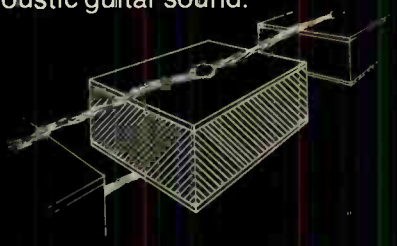

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selected electric models. Recent developments include the UK-2, an electric solid body made with Uralite (urethane material) on an aluminum frame.

Certain manufacturers like Kramer and Charles Fox (GRD) have opted for phenolic (a highly compressed laminate of resin and other materials with a subtle fibrous structure) fingerboards as a more stable and consistent alternative to ebony or rosewood. In order not to alienate the purist and maintain a tenuous connective link to the original wood, Kramer has come up with the name Ebonol. Fox, who is working on a limited series of state-of-the-art rock 'n' roll guitars, feels that phenolic is superior to wood both acoustically and practically, "because it doesn't have a life of its own. It doesn't shrink or swell, there's no wear between frets and the inlays and binding won't pop out because of warping. You can float along the fingerboard without experiencing the features of the wood where the topography asserts itself. Its stiffness and consistency on the neck becomes a key acoustic factor because people actually play a *neck* when they play a guitar."

The jury is still out on the Gibson "Sonex," a solid body guitar made of a composite resinwood on a wood core designed to compete with lower priced electrics. Hartley Peavey, whose company was the first to use numerical control and sophisticated machining equipment for wooden instruments to streamline production and keep costs down, has been experimenting with a low priced electric guitar (T-25) made of Sustanite, a combination of urethane and styrene plastics. He started this project as an attempt to find a lower priced alternative to wood but since petroleum-based products have been running at roughly a five percent premium *over* inflation, Peavey is going back to readily available woods like maple as an economically viable base material.

These experiments have left us with some basic conclusions about thermoplastic materials. More controllable and stable than wood, they offer no dramatic acoustic improvements over the original except in specific applications like phenolic fingerboards. There is a plentiful supply of domestic hardwoods, exploding the myth that plastics were developed to "replace" wood. Skyrocketing oil prices have greatly reduced cost-effectiveness and the actual resonant properties of solid plastic guitar bodies are still a hotly debated issue, so we are left with an interesting half-step with a somewhat cloudy future given the current economic picture.

Carbon graphite seems to embody the wave of the future in reinforced plastics. A thermoset (unlike the previously mentioned thermoplastics which change and become soft when heated, thermoset is *permanently* bonded once the chemical reaction has taken place) which costs around 80 to 100 dollars a pound for lower and medium grades, graphite is made up of long carbon fibers that approximate wood grain and offer ten times the stiffness of Lucite or other acrylics and more tensile strength than steel. The almost supernatural stiffness of this material, specifically when applied to guitar necks, is the cornerstone for a new approach to acoustics totally divorced from wood.

Geoffry Gould, former aerospace engineer and bass player, was an early proponent of molded graphite necks for guitars and basses. His company, Modulus Graphite Products, makes a wide variety of replacement necks for Fender-style guitars and basses and the necks for many of the Alembic basses. Made up of graphite bonded to an epoxy matrix material, this reinforced plastic's extraordinary stiffness-to-weight ratio guarantees the stability of the neck while providing a smooth, clean sustain with a completely distinctive aural personality of its own. Again, the Modulus approach is a hybridization since the graphite necks are generally used in tandem with wooden bodies.

With all of this, it took a young design engineer from Brooklyn named Ned Steinberger to take the use of plastic materials, as part of a total design concept, to its most advanced evolutionary state. Working with Bob Young, a pioneer in the construction of fiberglass lifeboats, he has created the radically new Steinberger bass guitar. With a one piece molded body and neck made of graphite reinforced with fiberglass, the bass has no peghead (strings are attached to the end of the neck with direct-pull tuners located on the body behind the bridge) and uses a strap support plate which pivots at the exact center of gravity so it can "be played at any angle in perfect balance with full access to all 24 frets." The rigid structure of neck eliminates the need for a truss rod system and, combined with Steinberger's massive bridge configuration, produces a very clear, brilliant sustain light years beyond conventional wood-oriented terms like "warmth."

Already being used by session musicians like Tony Levin and Russ Kunkel, the Steinberger Bass works because reinforced plastic is an integral part of a total design package owing nothing to wooden antecedents. It is not necessarily better or worse than wood, just *different*. The fact that Steinberger has created an instrument whose strengths are based on the reinforced plastic material used to build it and an entirely fresh and new set of tonal characteristics gives us a glimpse into the future. To view plastics as a substitute for wood is beside the point. Ideally, these efficient and controllable substances, used the right way, can open up an exciting new chapter in the ongoing development of guitar construction.

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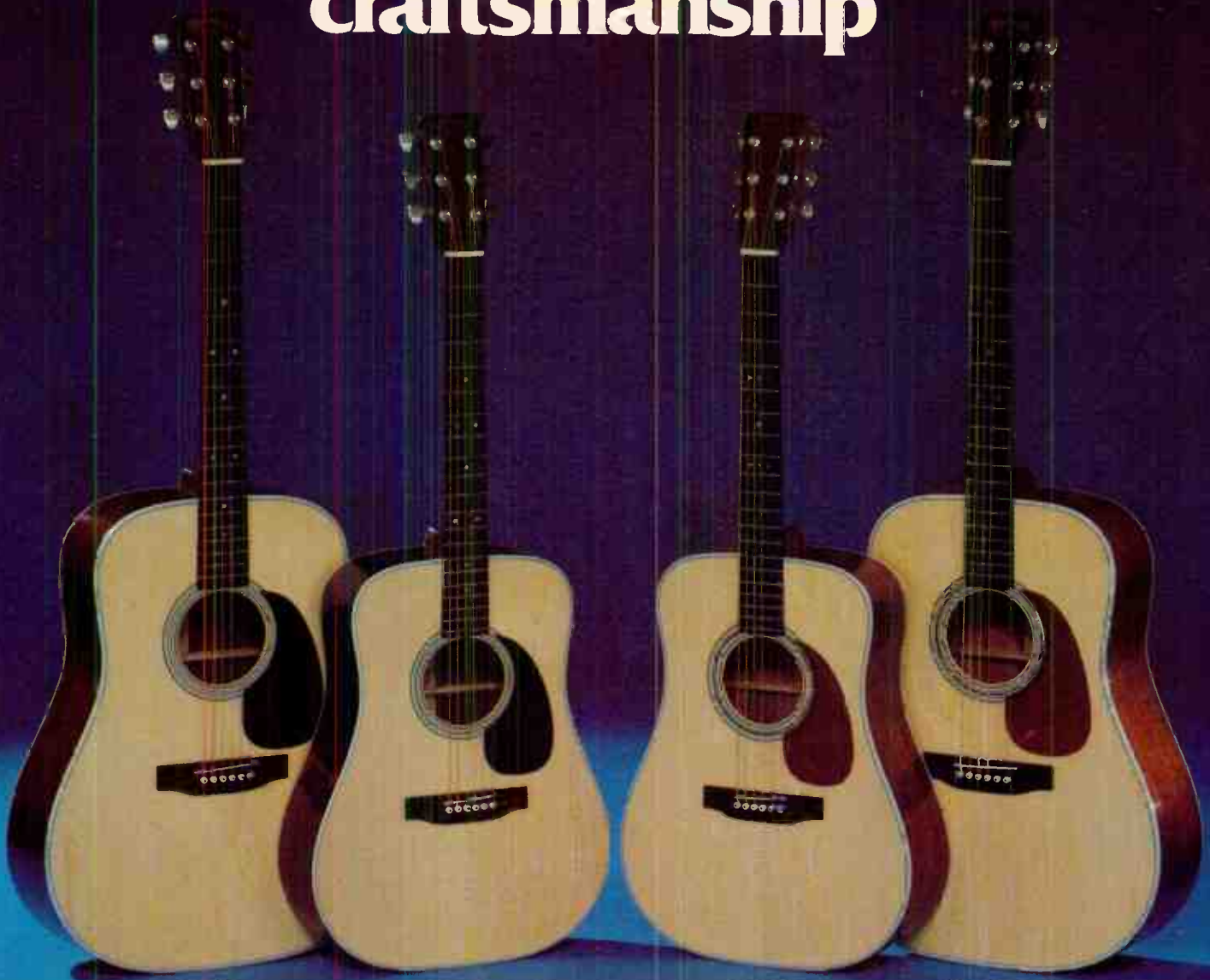

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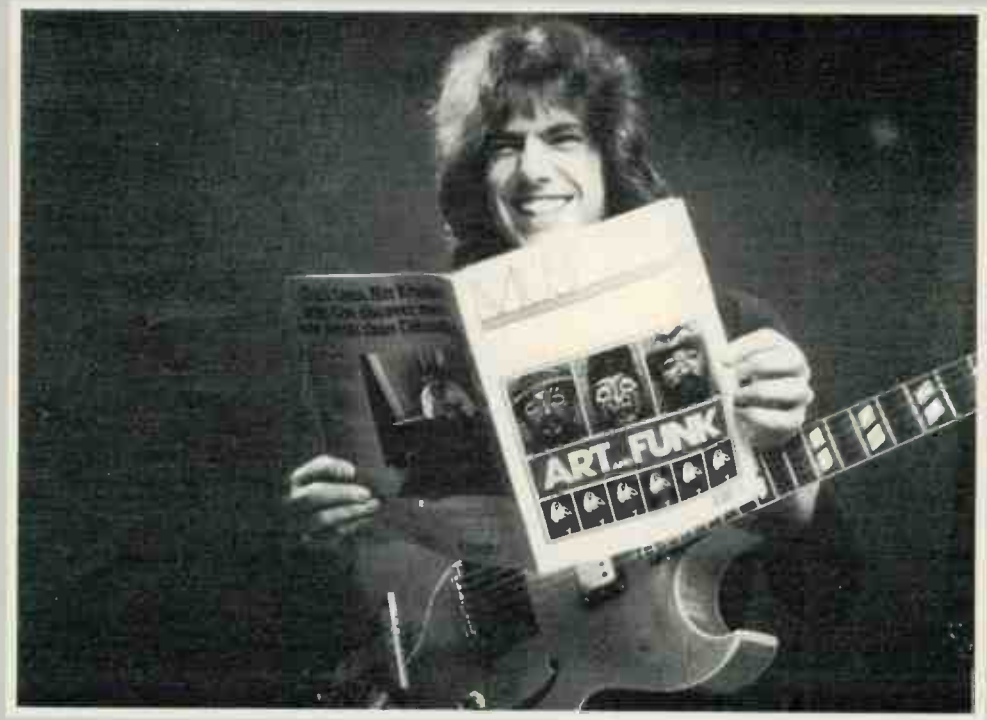

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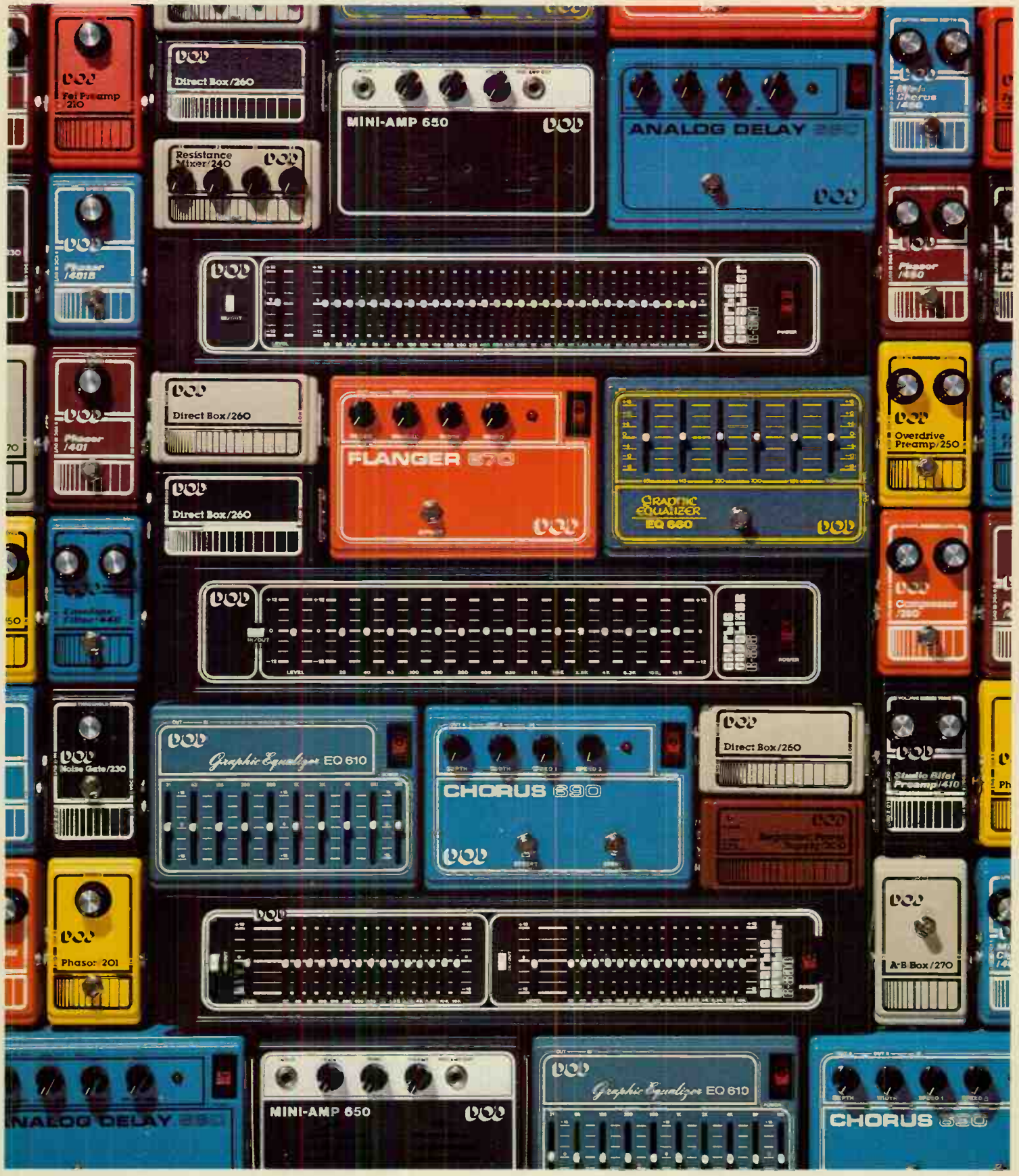

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RECORDING WITH THE STUDIO

By Mark Silag

How can musicians become more intimate with their recorded sound, making the studio an extension of their instruments? Steve Jordan, Hiram Bullock, Darius Brubeck, Buddy Williams, and Neil Jason, all studio journeymen, supply answers.

Because we're addressing a medium where the state of the art changes with the tides and updated hardware is revealed in the light of each new moon, playing catch-up is part of the game for studio owners and engineers, economic conditions notwithstanding. Theoretically, the recording studio is an environment that is never completed; it could change tomorrow and probably will. Too often, the danger of keeping abreast of technology's winds of change is that new equipment is installed or used for the same reason the mountaineer climbs the proverbial mountain, because it's there.

Each new device or technique that pops up in the studio can not only effect the engineer's approach to the task at hand, but can also have a marked impact on the approach the player takes in laying down his or her tracks. The plethora of studio effects and tricks available to today's player would fill a hefty volume or two. The player familiar with the technology stands to fare better in the studio if the equipment and engineering techniques have been incorporated into his playing skills. Spend a little time at the bar in Possible 20, a favorite watering hole of New York's studio elite and you'll hear talk of the newer consoles, a computer mix "written" at a session earlier that day or a new piece of outboard gear utilizing micro-computer technology. From the tone of such conversations one might reasonably assume he was eavesdropping on people who hold respectable engineering positions. Fact is, those "technicians" talking about the 3M Pulse Code Modulation format are musicians.

The state of the art ten years ago may seem primitive by today's standards, but it undoubtedly produced some great records. In what ways have working musicians assimilated the developments of the last decade into their playing style and approach to sound reproduction? The answer is a complex one involving artistic talents, technical understanding of the medium and economic considerations during a time when employment is not taken for granted by the professional musician.

Musicians of some stature readily agree that the studio is a major component of what they play and *how* they play it. Just as the guitarist uses a pick, and a drummer a pair of sticks, session musicians and studio artists consider the studio an extension of their instrument and an aid to the construction and arrangement of musical compositions. With some studios offering as many as 48 tracks or more, the sheer quantity of outboard equipment available to augment or even supplant a particular instrument is staggering. Remaining "current" can be a full time job and few musicians take the time to "study" new technology, but each of the players we spoke to had an innate sense of what was what in the studio environment and why it was there. For the most part, these musicians have absorbed this knowledge as they've bounced from one studio to the next over the years.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

To Steve Jordan, getting the right sound for a drum track is as important as playing

Hiram Bullock, whose burning Stratocaster has fired up sessions for Bob James, Billy Joel and, most recently, Steely Dan, explains his relationship with the studio. "For me, the studio is a learning device in many ways. A lot of the effects and outboard equipment available force me to study the idiosyncracies of my playing. The first time I plugged into an envelope follower I became more aware of the dynamics of my playing because the unit responds to how hard or softly I strike a note or chord."

Bullock also points out the benefits of understanding as much as possible about how the studio works and which effect will give you a particular sound. "It's a given fact that session guys have to read well, but if you're doing a jingle date and the producer's looking for a particular sound on the guitar track, I'm more valuable to him if I can get the sound quickly with little or no experimentation. By the same token, if the producer is at a loss for an idea, knowing the full range of the effects available lets me serve him up something he'll like. If knowing how to get certain sounds like that keeps me working, then I guess you'd say the studio's affected my playing." Hiram also explains how the studio has actually changed his entire perspective of playing music. "In the studio I become much more aware of each facet of the piece we're playing. I'm not just thinking about the guitar part. The studio opened my eyes in that respect. Because it's so easy to isolate everything in the studio, I'm much more aware of the whole."

Darius Brubeck, known more for his work with Two Generations of Brubeck than as a session player per se, considers multi-track recording facilities indispensable to his music and composition. "Multi-tracking allows a keyboard musician to play more efficiently, to play less on each track with a greater variety of sounds. What I might write as a big band arrangement can be compressed into the essential lines and textures of a piece on six keyboard tracks." Brubeck is "completely aware" of the recording studio as a musician's tool and teacher and suggests that musicians who do session work regularly become better players because they must adapt to so many different styles; like playing a jingle date, then doing a soundtrack or perhaps a session for Roberta Flack, all in the same day.

An established studio drummer on both coasts, Buddy Williams agrees with Brubeck. "Playing sessions exposes me to all kinds of music, other people's projects, jingles, that kind of thing. As I play more dates, all the different things I play creep into my work when I play live dates like *Saturday Night Live*. As for the studio itself, I don't just play, I'm aware of the technical thing too. I use effects now and then, like the Eventide Harmonizer to fatten up the bass drum or to put a bit of phasing on the hi-hat track, little touches like that are interesting. Effects should be used with moderation, it's easy to overdo it. I'm a Hendrix fiend from way back. On *Axis Bold As Love*

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Studio *cont. from previous page*

and *Electric Ladyland*, Mitch Mitchell was running cymbal tracks backwards! Now that was hip and I was into it. I think Jimi was the first to record *with* the studio instead of just *in* it." Williams, though well-versed with the technology available in the studio, insists it is up to the engineers to work *with* the players to use everything the studio has to offer. Buddy plays his basic tracks then collaborates with the engineer in the mix to get the sound he's heard in his head, using the particular effect that suits his needs.

We broach the touchy subject of the "click track" (electronic rhythmic background pulse) to Williams, comparing his comments with those of Steve Jordan, drummer with the Blues Brothers band. At the mere mention of the term both drummers recoil in mock terror, quickly regaining their composure and spewing forth a number of technical terms better left to the imagination. Jordan uncurls his upper lip long enough to comment: "The first thing a drummer thinks when they tell him they're using the click track is 'Why'd they bring me in at all?' But a lot of people use a click track on their dates and it's indispensable if you have to sync up the audio to a film or video clip." Williams reluctantly agrees with Jordan, "The click track is part of the gig, I doubt if anyone's going to throw it out of the studio. It makes you play stiffer because it's not a human instrument, it's a machine and *you* have to go with *it*! It's like the drummer suddenly becomes the conga player coloring the time within the click track."

Working at home with his Teac 4-track cassette recorder, Jordan tries various effects until he gets what he's looking for. "If I can get the sound at home, I know I can get it in the studio. The main thing is *realizing* the sound I hear in my head. A lot of times I take what could only be called a musicological approach. On the Blues Brothers sound track (Steve did not appear in the movie because of schedule conflicts) I wanted to have a drum sound just like the one you hear on the Coaster's tune, "Charlie Brown." I knew exactly how my drums should sound so I had to use the studio to duplicate a recording done over twenty years ago. I really take my sound personally, one reason why I don't play as many sessions as I used to. I like to use every bit of the studio to get the tracks right."

One thing the musicians we spoke to agreed on is the benefits reaped from mixing on a computerized console. The computerized mix has become a fundamental studio tool, reducing the burden of mixing twenty-four or more tracks as you mix and "write" the mix section by section. They also have some provocative comments on the effect "new wave" rock 'n' roll has on recording techniques. It seems more

continued on next page

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Studio *cont. from pg. 106*

and more great recordings are done on fewer tracks without overdubs. Hiram Bullock feels this approach "keeps a player more honest. Make a mistake and you do the entire take over again. I don't think you can say one way is better than another. Twenty-four tracks give you more isolation, and with drum sounds that's important.

"You can actually date a record by the sound of the drums. As more tracks have been added over the years the drums have really begun to stand out. The drum sound is the foundation for that record's total sound. I'm not saying you've got to have twenty-four tracks to get a good drum mix, you can get a good mix with four mikes if you know what you're doing." Steve Jordan concurs, "Knowing how to mike the drums is important. I use two mikes on the snare, a (Shure) SM57 on the bottom and a Sennheiser 421 on top. I also like the sound of an AKG 414 on the hi-hat and tom mikes depend on the tune. I'm using those PZM plates for overheads in the studio, I think Crown makes them. They sound real crisp."

The underlying attitude in all of our conversations is that the studio, unlike playing live, places the musician's style under a microscope. Neil Jason, currently working on a Nils Lofgren project in California, is one of the most active bass players in New York session circles and has this to offer about playing well in the studio. "If you play live a lot and suddenly enter the studio without taking into account the technical fact that your instrument is being recorded and every little nuance can be picked up, you'll have a hard time getting a good sound on the tape. Playing in the studio, I've sort of "semi-adjusted" inside my fingers, so to speak, knowing what it's going to sound like when it comes out on tape. It's something that becomes a part of your style."

We asked Jason about the future of recording technology. Will it ever level off? "I don't think so. Sixteen track recording held on real well for a couple of years and it still means a lot to certain people. There's a certain cleanliness with twenty-four and forty-eight track digital recording that's not good for all types of music. For classical music, digital might be the greatest thing that ever happened. But if you're recording a rock 'n' roll band and you want them to sound like they're in a club, digital could be the *worst* thing you could use. Sixteen track tape has a certain sound that lends itself to the sound of a rock 'n' roll record.

"When things started to turn towards disco and heavy over-dubbing, forty-eight tracks seemed to be the viable way to get the thing done. You could set down each individual piece, track by track, completely isolated from everything else. Which was one of the main things that brought on the onslaught of technology in the seventies. Engineers became producers and producers became engineers. The fine line between everybody's job in the studio became finer. If music goes back into a heavy rock 'n' roll period it could change the way records sound again. It's hard to say what's going to effect what first, if the technical end is going to grab the music or the music is going to grab the technology. I tend to believe the music will direct the technical end." M

$$ Quartet *cont. from pg. 15*

But there's nothing at stake in this music. These are rock and roll pioneers all right, but they're relaxing, not trailblazing. When Perkins cuts loose with a hot rockabilly solo in the midst of "Down By The Riverside," it's shocking, the one and only reminder of who we're really dealing with here.

Almost anything any of these men recorded officially for Sun (and literally everything that Elvis did there) is distinctly superior. This doesn't demean the legend of The Million Dollar Quartet (especially since at least another hour of it, probably with Cash, remains unheard). But, like all legends, the Quartet needs to be put in perspective. Great rock — great anything — isn't the result of accidental cloud-bursts of primitive talent and nature. Rather, great music is made by the combination of such talent and instinct with all the craft and technique that a performer can command. Rock and roll isn't a contradiction of this truth; it's the most bizarre and elaborate proof of it.

One final note: Since I have gone on record as opposing the release of random junk from the Jimi Hendirx archives, because it distorts the historical record of deliberate record making, it may seem strange that I complain above of RCA's obstinate refusal to issue *The Million Dollar Quartet.* But Presley's career is anomalous, both because RCA and Col. Parker have paid his artistry so little regard, and because Elvis himself did. Chances are, Elvis would have been all for an album of old vocals with new backing tracks, since it would have saved him a lot of effort. So interested parties are entitled to the legitimate trivia, too. M

Martyn *cont. from pg. 22*

man to drink. As a matter of fact, it did.

To get through any number of dismal tours, John began drinking heavily and indulging in excess, earning himself a reputation as an erratic and troublesome performer who might go through an entire set of odd electronic gyrations for an audience composed of folk purists, treat rock and roll fans to an evening of traditional and acoustic ballads, talk in Celtic tongues, and occasionally fall over drunk. Island had recorded a live album at Leeds, which shows the other side of the coin: Martyn in front of an enthusiastic crowd, backed by Danny Thompson on bass and John Stevens on drums, in fine voice and in full control, weaving intricate patterns. For some reason they decided against releasing it, so Martyn pressed it himself (with, apparently, Island's help and blessings) and distributed it from his home in Hastings.

One World, Martyn's last record, released in 1978, was produced by Island president Chris Blackwell, in the hopes that this would finally establish John as a major artist in America. A moody and meandering album, it almost insured the opposite: despite several beautiful songs and delicate instrumental passages, it was insular, self-reverential, and weary — the perfect cult album by the perfect cult artist.

Grace And Danger, Martyn's newest album, is exactly the opposite — fresh, open, and self-assured, it draws on all his past work and reassembles it, re-shaping the sound in small ways, and re-shaping the sense behind the sound, as if, after all this time, he remembered why he began listening to music and playing music in the first place. With Martyn leading a quartet that features Tommy Eyre on keyboards, John Giblin on bass, and Phil Collins on drums, the record has the strength and directness that only came through in performance and on the live album in the past. His voice is less slurred, more evocative and horn-like than before, and his phrasing is both more natural and more startling in its rightness (the way George Jones and Smokey Robinson make every turn, every breath seem just right, just so).

Mining the same territory as Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks*, it chronicles the deterioration and disintegration of Martyn's marriage with a heartbreaking simplicity. Martyn's songs and music have always conjured up and evoked a dream world, a world of spirit and half-light, so to hear him confront the loss of a dream and see what is left at the back of the heart in full light of day is a chilling and sobering experience. The second side of the record, from "Sweet Little Mystery" through "Our Love," is the most difficult, most fully-realized work he has ever recorded.

Our love
Once was deeper than the darkest
blue could be
Now I have to search my mind
To find the smallest trace of you in me.
—John Martyn © 1980 UFO Music

The new album may or may not make him a star over here, but that's not the point. Anyone who can look their past and their life squarely in the face and sing with their eyes wide open can probably do anything in the world they want. Grace and danger to you, John. M

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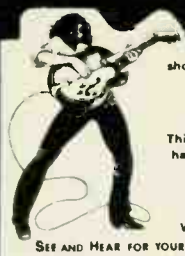

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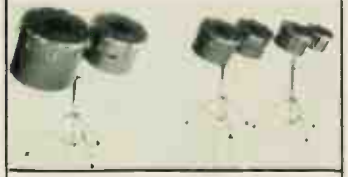

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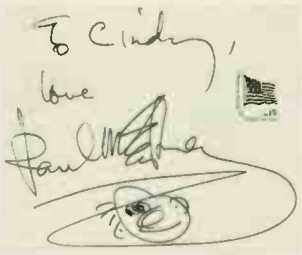
Signatures

By Karl Schaffenberger

"Graphology: The study of handwriting, especially as a clue to character, aptitudes, etc." Webster



Paul McCartney

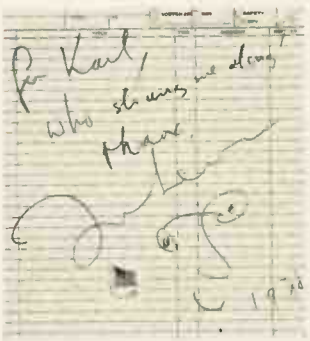
An evolved, intelligent handwriting, yet the handwriting of someone subject to moods and whose response to emotional stimuli (or reaction to action) will vary greatly. This is evidenced in the fluctuating slant of the up-strokes (measured from where the stroke leaves the baseline to where it peaks). Note how the letters *ndy* of "Cindy" almost lie on their sides in places (impulsiveness) while the first up-stroke of the *o* in the world "love" is almost vertical (objectivity) and the second is decidedly backhanded (emotional withdrawal). This, by-the-way, has nothing to do with the fact that McCartney is left-handed. His handedness is revealed in the right-to-left beginning of the *T* in "To."

The letters in the word "Cindy" begin large and steadily decrease in size which is a form of diplomacy...someone who can assert himself, then back off, giving those around him the opportunity to digest what he has just said or done.

Paul is basically a loner (no lower loop on the *y*) and impatient with people (the exaggerated, hasty punctuation). The disintegrating endings of his words (Cindy, McCartney), in this case, are indicative of someone who is thinking much faster than he is writing. Notice too how those same endings seem to scoop-up the space to the right of the word...an achiever, voraciously taking on what is set before him. Although these traits will bolster his impatience, this capacity for instantaneousness, almost involuntary mental dexterity is one of McCartney's strongest assets.

Phoebe Snow

This handwriting is a little surprising. For someone who could best be described musically as a stylist, her handwriting is anything but stylized. Very middle-ground...soft, rounded, patient, vulnerable, honest, trusting and unpretentious...the traditional, conservative handwriting of someone looking for the traditional, conservative things out of life. Destined for motherhood. I see her as being somewhat overwhelmed by the music industry. Phoebe is not constructed out of whatever it is that enables a person to effectively deal with the business/promotion/hustle aspects of the business. She is, I'm sure, very much at the mercy of her management. Some years back, shortly after the release of her first album, I happened upon an article entitled, "Sound Systems of the Stars..." It pictured one "star" with his 40 thousand dollar equalized whatever, another "star" with his nuclear powered digital somethingelse and, at the end, there was a photograph of Phoebe, sitting at a table with a vase of flowers and her "sound system"...your basic $15 transistor radio. That says it all.



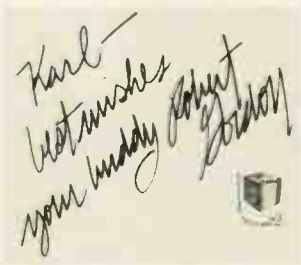
John Lennon

Lennon's handwriting is the right combination of fluidity, spontaneity, originality and dash... the skeletal, no-frills writing of a person gifted with the ability to see situations as they are...to mentally separate the wheat from the chaff, the important from the unimportant. Notice how he has reduced the complex Palmer-method G into a simple S formation ("strung" and "along") and combined the letters *n* and *x* ("thanx") into a single letter.

The wedges in the middle zone (*h* in "who" and *m* in "me") are intellectual curiosity and the open ovals (o in "for," *a* in "Karl," o in "who" and the *a* and o in "along") are talkativeness. I can't imagine him ever being bored. I'm sure he could find amusement in the mundane and delight in the everyday.

Although Lennon was certainly a capable person, I don't believe he was particularly motivated or ambitious...a dreamer (his word). Down strokes from the baseline are personal determination...the longer, straighter and stronger the stroke, the greater the determination. Lennon's are short and curved (the *g*'s in "strung" and "along"). Plus his T-bar ("strung"), though it is well placed on the T-stem, is nothing more than a dot. This is a lack of enthusiasm in oneself. He was a go-with-the-flow type, someone who would take advantage of an occasion if it arose...an opportunist in a good sense of the word.

It is a great writing...one that reinforces the witty and versatile picture we have collectively painted of the enigmatic "I've got blisters on my fingers" member of the Lennon/McCartney songwriting team.



Robert Gordon

An angular handwriting...the sign of activity and aggression, both mental and physical. Deliberate (well-formed letters, consistency in size and spacing, a round, well-placed I-dot) yet flowing. A demanding person, both of himself and of others. Downstrokes ending bluntly at the baseline are positiveness...like stamping one's foot. Several of Gordon's downstrokes (the two *t*'s and the *n*) pass through the baseline, into the lower zone and are augmented by sharp terminal barbs (tenacity). A demonstrative combination of strokes...assertiveness in the extreme. Note the constricted ovals. Not too much daylight in those *a*'s, *o*'s, *d*'s and *e*'s, Bob. This is a form of closed-mindedness. Gordon has his own ideas about things...he knows what he likes. You may get him to listen, but forget changing his mind. I see him as being very much in control in the studio. The lower loops hooking back to the left (the past) are interesting. They are uncharacteristically soft (rounded) in comparison to the rest of Gordon's writing and may very well be a graphic illustration of his love affair with an era gone by.

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