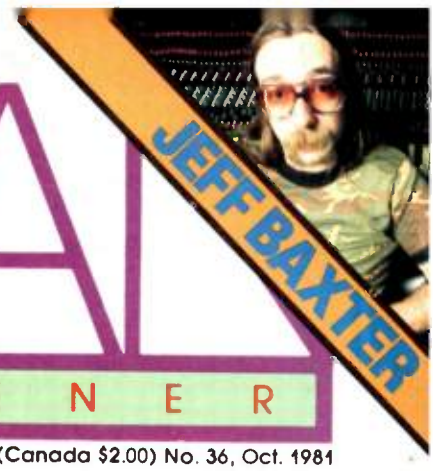
MUSICIAN

PLAYER & LISTENER



JEFF BAXTER

ICD 08582

$1.75 (Canada $2.00) No. 36, Oct. 1981

GRATEFUL DEAD

KID CREOLE
DAVID JOHANSEN
JOURNEY, REO

KOOL JAZZ
MILES DAVIS
FRANK ZAPPA

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A four-way joystick for one finger control of pitchbend, vibrato, and trill effects. Or, use variable delayed vibrato effect for hands-off control.

Extensive voltage control inputs for easy external control over all performing levels.

A built-in flanger, assignable to any section.

Keyboard split can assign any section to upper, lower or both ends.

16 different polyphonic synthesizer programs.

Solo Release allows automatic damping of previously played notes, for lead line capabilities.

A String Effects Section with controls for bowing, vibrato and ensemble effects.

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Here's the big plus! Thanks to Trident's unique layering capabilities, you are able to play as many as three voices at once on each key, in stereo or mono. It's like having a 24-voice synthesizer at your command!

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The garage tapes, the live tapes, the tapes that fell behind the sofa, the studio tapes that didn't sink into Baltimore Harbor, the radio tapes.

Nineteen songs, from demos to diamonds that got lost on the way to their once-destined albums, along with several previously-released classics and two great new recordings.

It's 13 years of Little Feat's previously missing links, precisely assembled in a luxurious two- album set which includes a 12-page brochette chock-full of Little Feat stories, pix and fax.

On Warner Bros. Records and Cassettes.

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MUSICIAN
PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 36, SEPT.—OCT. 1981

Skunk Baxter's guitar energy was laced all through the first three Steely Dan albums and changed the Doobie Brothers into a new band. Now he's back full time in the land of the studio, with his hands behind the board and his ears at the ready.

The Grateful Dead have a lot to say about the special quality of live improvised discovery, as well they should. Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzman, Mickey Hart and Phil Lesh have been doing it longer and better than any rock 'n' roll band; Vic Garbarini hears some Dead memories and converses at length with Jerry Garcia.

The Koolathon: this year's version of the Newport Jazz Festival, went down in Manhattan in an action-packed week. Miles came back, Max Roach generaled, Ornette blew mountains and many others had floats in the summer's biggest parade. Musician flooded the city with reporters who got every M'Boom and glissando, while Ernie Santosuosso got a few words with Miles.

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Cover: Grateful Dead by Steve Smith, Jeff Baxter by Terry Miller

Understanding Technology Series

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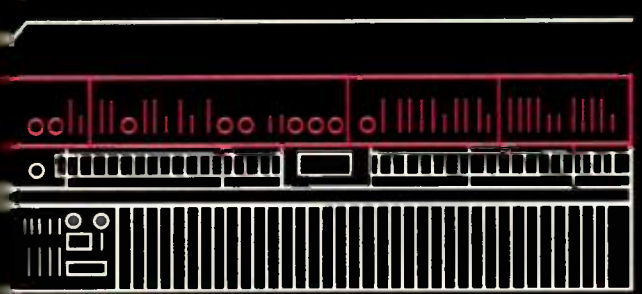
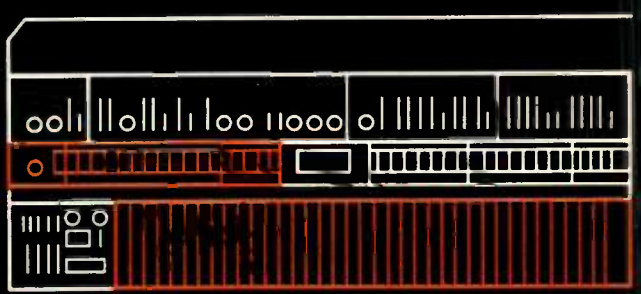


Sound Flexibility and Potential



Keyboard Capabilities

he potential for creating ounds has never been reater than on the Jupiter-8. he sixteen stable VCOs go well beyond the norm to offer six different waveforms and he broadest range of controls. Syncing is possible with modulation by both the LFO and ADSR, and Cross Modulation is provided for complex sounds or ring modulator effects.

he LFO features three waveforms, polyphonic sample and hold, and Roland's unique programmable delay for natural vibrato. The Filter Section features a Low Pass Filter that can be switched between 12 and 24dB/octave settings, and a separate Hi Pass Filter. Another unique feature of the JP-8 is a Key Follow function on the ADSR that allows notes lower on the keyboard to ring slightly longer than those on the top, for lifelike piano and other patches.

All controls on the Jupiter-8 are continuously variable rather than pushbuttons which limit the controls' flexibility and sound possibilities.

A key to the Jupiter-8's unsurpassed performance ability is an advanced computer-assigned keyboard that can operate in a number of ways. The keyboard can assign one patch over its entire length or it can be split with one patch on the upper three octaves, and another on the lower two. The Dual Mode literally layers two patches on top of each other for unique patch combinations.

The Solo Assign Mode allows the keyboard to perform as if it were monophonic for lead word, while a Unison Mode assigns all sixteen oscillators to a single key press, and divides them as more keys are played. Two Poly Assign Modes respond to allow either all notes, or only the last notes played, to reach their full release length.

The Arpeggiator allows the sequencing of automatic arpeggios live off notes played, shifting harmony in a way no sequencer can. The Arpeggiator can also be assigned to the lower half of a split keyboard, leaving the top free for other work

nd

Subject
Polyphony,
Programmability,
and Creative Potential

Extensive Programmer Section

Another key to the flexibility of the Jupiter-8 is its large programmer section. Every synthesizer function including Volume is programmable into any one of sixty-four memories—more complete programming than on any other instrument. The Patch Presets call up eight programmable patch combinations to a split keyboard.

Any program can be edited simply by changing the desired control, even in live performance. The new edit will not be written into memory unless the JP-8 is instructed to do so. Any program can be afforded two levels of Memory Protection to prevent accidental edits.

If more than sixty-four programs are necessary, the JP-8 can dump programs onto any tape recorder for later recall. Partial loading or dumping is also possible, and any program can easily be shuffled to another memory location.

Performance Control Options

The Jupiter-8 features an extensive performance control section including a center-sprung Bender that always returns to exactly where it began. The Bender has separate controls so that the amount of oscillator or filter sweep can be preset and switched in or out for exactly the effect desired. A separate touch pad brings in LFO modulation of the VCO or VCF completely independent of the Bender or programmed LFO.

Polyphonic portamento can be assigned to the entire keyboard, or just the upper half.

Other peripheral performance functions of the Jupiter-8 include CV and Gate Outputs off the highes note, for connection to othe synthesizers or sequencers and Clock or Trigger jacks so the Arpeggiator can be synced with instruments like the Roland TR-808 Rhythm Composer.

We Want You To

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PLAYER & LISTENER

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Savor the high.

Steve Gadd
Recording Artist.

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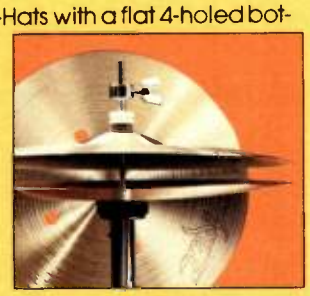

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WRH

LETTERS

A BIRD, A PLANE, A GOD!

I cannot understand how such a good magazine could publish such an awful article on the Greatest Man, Poet, Performer, Philosopher of our times, James Douglas Morrison.

Please remember the Doors aren't just a group — they are a Religion, a Belief and a Way of Life. You are either Morrisonesque or you're not. I am quite concerned with keeping Jim's memory alive. I want young people to like the Doors and have the right impression. Your article was not what the young people should think about Jim.

Let's not forget for one moment that James Morrison was the Greatest Man of our time. I feel *lucky* to have seen him in concert; I thank God every day of my life for that. Anyone who doesn't believe had better go back to the Moronic Beatles.

Sandra Kerwath
Des Moines, IO

POOR LESTER

You people topped yourselves with the special issue on Jim Morrison. With the exception of the article by Lester Bangs it was probably the best stuff I have read on Jim. The article on David Lindley was superb. One of rock's most underlooked musicians.

Brad Hughes
Independence, LA

THE BUSH DEFENDED

I don't claim to be a psychefunk fan or whatever, but what exactly did Chris Doering expect from a New Wave's forefronter's first actual bona-fide dip into African musics? Actual Swahili chanting and Rastafarian Rave-ups? I'm getting a little tired of hearing critics like Dave Marsh, Ken Tucker, et al. accusing Byrne of trivializing African rhythms. Authentic *Bush of Ghosts* may not be, but it's not trivial by a longshot.

Judith Graham
Morro Bay, CA

LET THE BOY BE

All I am saying is leave him alone. Honest to God, I can't get through a music magazine these days without seeing Bruce Springsteen's name in every other paragraph. This may sound odd coming from an avid Springsteen fan, but he has become too much of a standard these days. Okay, so most intelligent rock critics worship the water he walks on. But there is no way he can live up to the level of expectations set for him. Meanwhile the public gathers around like vultures waiting for that fatal mistake which will make him like all the others.

He's not the new Dylan, the future of rock 'n' roll, the Boss, or St. Thomas Aquinas. He's just a very talented and dedicated musician. Personally, I couldn't ask for more.

Barbara Hall
Harrisonburg, VA

BECAUSE WE LIVE FAR AWAY

Just wanted to take a few minutes to tell you all what a wonderful job you do — most all the time, even. Sure, there are times when I'd like to dash the nasty rag against the wall in a fit of piqued disgust, but, then again, we all have our days, don't we? On the whole, much more agreeable than that movie magazine Wenner puts out these days.

One question: how can you guys be owned by *Billboard* and still get away with your anti-industry stance? However, whatever you do, keep it up. Sooner or later, the music must return to the people. And I believe you all have helped.

Barry Haney
Cincinnati, OH

AND WE'VE NEVER BEEN TO N.D.

I've never written a letter before.

I just read the interview with Wayne Shorter (*Musician* 6/81).

It made me alive again.

Kevin Dammen
Minot, ND

THE CRUELEST BLOW

My admiration for Carla Bley was sorely tested by your irresponsible article on her in the August issue. Of course, it wasn't really an article — just a taped memento of a visit that may have been fun for all concerned (I learned as much about Rafi Zabor as Bley, which isn't much), but makes no case for Bley and is of no value to the reader.

Zabor makes big claims, and then walks away from them. And his sense of history is askew: "...all the great writers have been great players, with Tadd Dameron virtually the only exception..." What about Edgar Sampson, Gil Evans, Ram Ramirez, John Carisi, Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson, and Billy Strayhorn? Were they great players?

He says Carla created "some of the freest, funniest music in or out of jazz," and then goes right into "A Genuine Tong Funeral," "Liberation Music," and "Escalator." "Tong Funeral" is one of the most meticulously composed and played and somber works of the 60s; "Liberation Music" is acidic, satiric, blowzy, and grand — but the funniest and freest? Why is it so important that Carla be billed as funster when she's so much more?

And then the cruelest blow: "With one wholly idiosyncratic leap, Carla Bley has landed in the same ballpark as Duke Ellington and Mingus." Is that all it takes? One idiosyncratic leap and Carla's up there with the man who invented big band orchestration, who wrote the most-played and best-loved body of work in the whole jazz repertoire? That's worse than irresponsible writing; it's pure philistinism, and no service to Carla, whose real contribution is made a mockery.

Recalling similar hype jobs in the mag, maybe you should change the name from *Musician* to *Genius of the Month*.

Joan Mellers
New York, NY

CARLA'S CULT

Your feature on Carla Bley has been long overdue. I fail to understand why she has been neglected for so long by both the media and the public. Her music is challenging and so outrageously accessible that it can't stay in the cult status much longer.

Carlie Stivers
Kalamazoo, MI

TURN OFF THE WRITER

I had to take exception to your recent article by J.C. Costa, "Turn up the Drummer," in which he states that the musical instrument industry is developing the rhythm unit because "good drummers are hard to find." From our point of view, this simply is not true, and I believe that it wrongfully gives drummers the impression that technology is working against them, to the point of replacing them. We're not trying to replace any musicians. The industry's development of rhythm units and other programmable products is simply technological progress that allows us all to create more and better music. We are, however, working on a device to replace musical instrument column writers.

Roland F. Wilkerson
Vice President/Marketing
RolandCorp US

KOTTKE DEFENDED

I'd like to take issue with Brian Cullman's contention that Leo Kottke's music is "redundant," or that he is a guitarist of "no particular focus." As a guitarist who plays both John Fahey and Leo Kottke pieces, I can tell you that Leo's are much harder to play and much more interesting. The virtuosity that Mr. Cullman seems to find pretentious is simply a sign of a superior musician.

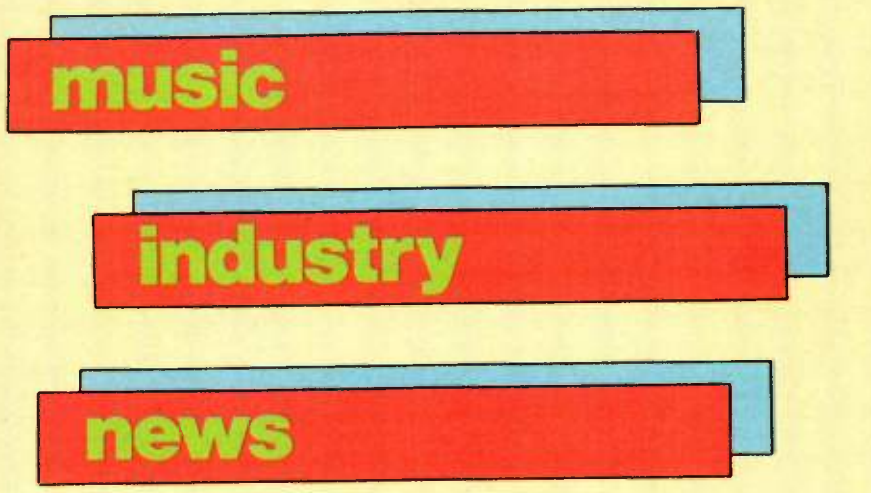
Dale Osborn
Grand Rapids, MI

VIVA LA CLASHA!

Thanks a lot for the double-header on the Clash. Rather than the negativity and willful ignorance offered up to us by spineless media and insecure industry clones on this fine band, you offer something that contains both insight and fun — something worth giving out to friends who deserve it. Viva la causa!

Badger Green
Creston, Montana

The new standard in monophonic synthesizers! For more information, see your dealer, or write Sequential Circuits, Dept. I, 3051 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95134.



Industry Notes

The British record industry failed in its attempt to get the government to levy a blank tape sales tax to make up their losses due to home taping. Record moguls insisted that such draconian measures were necessary and bitterly declared their industry "seriously threatened"... Elsewhere in England, the ongoing rioting has brought criticism of music and the music press, particularly *Sounds*, for intensifying racial hostilities. The skinhead phenomenon, which *Sounds* promotes, is being characterized as being anti-black (an anthology album, titled *Strength Through Oi*, was adapted from a Nazi slogan), while the reggae/ska followers are said to be inciting minorities...

King Crimson, which broke up "forever" in 1974, has been reformed by **Robert Fripp** with old mate **Bill Bruford** on drums and the addition of **Adrian Belew** (guitar, vocals) and **Tony Levin** (bass, stick). "They have been called back to active service at a time of need," says Fripp. While in London making their new album, *Discipline*, the boys strapped a tape recorder on volunteer Belew and sent him into the tough Nottinghill area around Island Studios "to get the feel of being on the street" for a track about urban violence called "Thala Hunginjeet."

Not only did Belew get accosted and roughed up by a street gang, but during his shaking retreat back to the studio he was halted and questioned by a suspicious local police patrol. Belew not only survived to begin work on a solo album for Island Records — he got the whole episode on tape, and it shows up on *Discipline*.

Recent reports of a running battle between **Mick Jagger** and **Keith Richards** during sessions for their forthcoming *Tattoo You* — some said the feud escalated to erasing of each other's recorded tracks — brought to mind a little-known incident that occurred during the making of *Let It Bleed*. On "You Got the Silver," a track Keith sang (it appeared to good effect on the soundtrack of Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*) Jagger had laid down a vocal (our reputable source heard it) which somehow got "misplaced."

Bruce Springsteen played a week of shows inaugurating New Jersey's Byrne-Meadowlands Arena. Although overwork and air conditioning gave Springsteen a sort throat, he showed up after his North Jersey stand for the opening night of **Clarence Clemons'** new club, Big Man's West, in Red Bank, New Jersey. No air conditioning this time, but Bruce and the E-Street band ripped through a sweaty, six-song set (including "Summertime Blues") before he threw up his hands and said, "Game called on account of heat."

Paul McCartney was reported recently to be traveling with the Jacksons, disguised under glasses and a floppy hat. Paul's tagging along so he and **Michael Jackson** can collaborate on songs; Michael will apparently sing one tune on Paul's new LP, due this fall, and Paul will return the favor later.

Miles Davis showed up in the wings at **Willie Nelson**'s recent Las Vegas stand, whereupon Willie went over and kissed him. They got together backstage, and Willie was next seen sporting a Miles Davis promotional T-shirt. They even went so far as to write a song together, called "Expect Me Around."

Chart Action

The Moody Blues ripped through the album charts and sit comfortably at the top with a diluted encore of their 70s triumphs, *Long Distance Voyager*, followed by Kim Carnes' *Mistaken Identity*, a catchy compendium of her new, raspy, Rod Stewart vocal style. REO Speedwagon and Styx, as well as ex-Genesis hand Phil Collins, represent the powerful commercial potential of hard pop with their ongoing grip on the top ten. Rick James has his best-selling LP yet with *Street Songs*, great funk 'n' roll instrumental tracks under unbelievably adolescent lyrics. The success of a pastiche of Beatles tunes stitched together over a disco four-beat has spawned a hit album, *Stars on Long Play*; the album features a longer medley of the fab four's biggies for an appealing side one but waxes truly obnoxious with a side-two collection of top 40 you didn't need to hear again. The success of this concept has spawned more medleys, including one self-produced by the Beach Boys. Tom Petty's *Hard Promises* is also doing well, with a duet between Petty and Stevie Nicks getting lots of AC airplay. Kenny Rogers' new *Share Your Love* shot into the top ten while Pat Benatar's *Precious Time* and Foreigner's *4* lurk just below.

Air Supply has the top single with mega-shmaltzy "The One That You Love," while Kim Carnes' "Betty Davis Eyes" continues to ring cash registers. (A novelty spinoff by Bruce "Baby-man" Baum is getting some airplay, a ditty called "Marty Feldman Eyes.") Television has spilled over into recordland, as *General Hospital* star (and former Aussie rocker) Rick Springfield offers a straight ahead power-pop tune, "Jessie's Girl," and Joey Scarbury's version of "The Greatest American Hero" theme, taken right off the titles of the show, hold at #3 and #4. Hall and Oates have yet another single from their *Voices* album, this one called "You Make My Dreams." Rumor has it that the Philly duo have completed a new album but RCA won't release it until this one is bled dry of singles.

Rich James tops the soul charts with *Street Songs* while a new release by last years's chart toppers, Cameo's *Knights of the Sound Table* and newcomer Teena Marie's *It Must Be Magic* hover below. Stephanie Mills has done well with her new release while a live album by an excellent live group, Maze, has crept to the top five. The Brothers Johnson have a new one that's threatening, appropriately entitled *Winners*. The top soul single is a tune by Frankie Smith, "Double Dutch Bus," and all the above-mentioned hit albums are represented in the top ten.

FOREIGNER
BREAKS THE SILENCE

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THEIR NEW ALBUM
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ON ATLANTIC RECORDS
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LOOK FOR FOREIGNER'S FALL TOUR. STARTS SEPT. 10, 1981

THE ROCK N' ROLL CONSPIRACY

David sallies forth to smite two publishing Goliaths for inventing phoney conspiracies and their suspicious nostalgia for the bad old days.

By Dave Marsh

Most of the readers of this magazine, both players and listeners, presume that the place of rock and roll in American culture is well-established, as entertainment if not art. Indeed, in recent years, a good deal of the most heated dialogue found in the pages of *Musician* and much of the rest of the rock press has centered on whether rock has become too acceptable. From the all-out attack of punk to Robert Fripp's maddeningly reasonable diatribes about alternative creative and business approaches, the shared assumption is that rock is safely embedded in the social mainstream, that it is, in fact, damned nearly respectable.

This is true to the extent that, after 25 years of celebrity and notoriety, rock has insured its survival at least as the nomenclature for pop music with a pronounced beat. Thus, there will be rock forever, no matter the unseemly directions in which the music may develop. Even most anti-rock types have made a form of peace with the stuff: it's hard to imagine even a high school band without some swing arrangement of a Beatles, Dylan or Presley standard in its book, and Tom Petty, Billy Joel and Bob Seger can be heard as theme music for network football telecasts.

In other ways, though, rock continues to be treated as a second class form. Rock musicians are as frequently impoverished as any other group of artists, yet not even Fripp has suggested that they should be included among the myriad of artists supported by federal and private grants, to which even jazz musicians and filmmakers have some access. In the long run, this lack of connection with Arts Establishment funding is healthy for rock, since nothing can compromise a creator more than having to explain himself to a board of directors. But the exclusion of rock performers from this economic process is both anomalous and symptomatic.

More importantly, there is a school of thought still current which insists that rock is the product of some vague plot or conspiracy, that without this (anonymous yet nefarious) aid, it would cease to exist and that once the massive fraud is exposed, music will return to normalcy and rock, like the state in the Marxist-Leninist fairy tales, will wither away, or more accurately, vanish in a puff of smoke.

It was all a hoax...

I'm not referring to the kind of race-baiting conspiracy accusations made by right wing cranks like the White Citizens Council in the fifties or Rev. Billie James Hargis in the early seventies. No, the theory outlined above is the conviction of the *New York Times*, at least in its Sunday editions. (In its daily editions, though the *Times* persists in referring to Mr. Diddley and Mr. Loaf, the paper has had competent rock criticism since John Rockwell's arrival in 1974 and, since Robert Palmer took over as principal rock writer last year, probably the most intelligent and certainly the most well informed daily criticism in the country.)

In the Sunday *Times*, even on those occasions (roughly monthly) when rock is covered, it is not allowed to appear on the Music page. Instead, all rock copy, and most jazz copy appears only on the Recordings page. This is meant to convey a message about rock's status as "music," which it does quite effectively, more so in fact than such crank items as John Leonard's "obituary" of John Lennon, which quickly turned into a rant against the intellectual bankruptcy of ALL other rock, including Bob Dylan's. (Dylan was written off as a Kahil Gibran reader — an apparent factual error. It was Elvis Presley who lived by *The Prophet*.)

The *Times* published its most explicit attack ever on rock in the June 21, 1981 edition of the Sunday magazine. The cover of that issue sported a photo of Frank Sinatra with the reasonable, if questionably valid, headline "Outlasting Rock." But what Sidney Zion wrote inside was not a celebration of Sinatra's post-"New York, New York" triumphs but an indiscriminate attack on rock itself as "a lower form of music [sold] to impressionable adolescents." According to Zion, rock was a hype in the first place, its popularity solely the result of the great masters of what he calls Style — Tony Bennett, Rosemary Clooney — being forced off the radio airwaves. Now, as demographics shift, Zion argues, rock is slowly dying out, and it will be replaced by True Style once again.

A remarkable thesis, Zion buttresses it with little fact, an utter absence of musical analysis (Zion's chief credential as a music critic seems to be a dinner he once had with Sinatra) and some of the most inept sociology ever written, even in the *Times Magazine*. (The demographic bulge of over-forties we are about to experience will consist almost entirely of people who grew up listening to rock.)

It's hardly worth detailing the rest of Zion's paranoiac fantasies about popular music, although some of his argument is amazing. He completely ignores questions of race, for instance, although the glaring fact is that ninety percent of his pantheon of style is white, while one of rock's most important contributions was opening at least the airwaves to black performers. But Zion is so concerned with defending his Masters of Style, that he becomes completely carried away at certain points, lapsing into gibberish more tasteless than anything Ted Nugent has ever conceived. For inventing the lounges of Las Vegas, that Citadel of Style, Zion proposes that the mobster Bugsy Siegel should be given a "special niche in the Songwriters' Hall of Fame." The fact that his children and their friends "don't know the voices of Crosby and Astaire" is "cultural genocide," and the fault of rock and roll.

There's no real need to further enumerate Zion's arguments, the inaccuracy and wish-fulfillment of which speak for themselves. Ahmet Ertegun demol-

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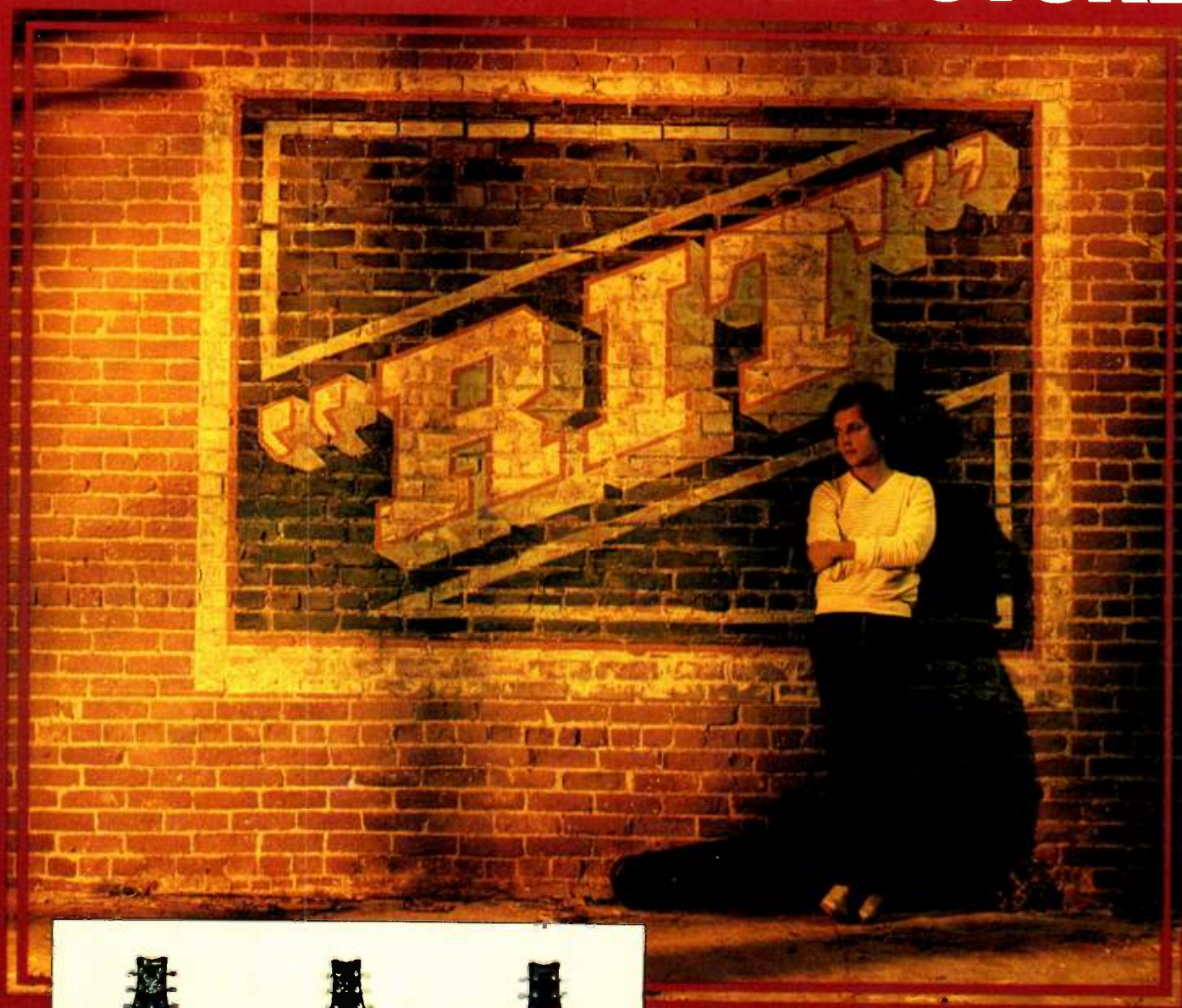

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ishes almost everything Zion says with a few well-chosen words toward the end of the piece. But any serious rocker who believes that rock is now a safe part of American culture should dig up the Zion piece. Its witch hunt rhetoric is amazing, and maybe a little frightening, despite the patent stupidity of its arguments.

One might argue that the *Times* represents a very conservative wing of the American culture establishment. But Grove Press certainly doesn't, and with the publication of *The Day the Music Died* by Joseph C. Smith, Grove has joined the ranks of those who claim that rock was the product solely of conspiracy and hype.

Before he became a conspiracy theorist and purveyor of *roman a clef*, Smith was the R&B musician Sonny Knight, who had a couple of minor hits in the fifties and early sixties. Knight loathes rock and roll, considers it nothing more than a cheapened and bastardized form of rhythm and blues and suspects sinister forces behind its rise and success. Indeed, the premise of his novel might be summed up in one of Zion's more hallucinatory sentences: "Some people don't believe that the Beatles avalanche was a natural phenomenon but rather was one of the greatest hypes in the annals of popular music." Zion doesn't bother to explain this, but Smith fleshes out the theory. According to *The Day the Music Died*, the Beatles (or the British quartet which stands in for them in the "novel") were made famous by the collusion of conspiratorial British capital ("the world's third largest pool of private wealth" or something like that) with Mafia muscle. In this version of rock history, by the early sixties major media empires (modeled after CBS and RCA) might have been controlled by the Mafia, solely as the result of their association with rock. (It's amazing that none of those who view rock as a mob product can explain why the music doesn't appear in the main rooms of Vegas, the one part of the entertainment industry *overtly* mob-controlled.)

But the details of Smith's fantasies aren't important. It is more significant that a house like Grove Press has published a potboiler which its own press releases compare to Harold Robbins, not the sort of dignified first novel it usually chooses to print and promote seriously. But Grove, of course, is not interested in *The Day the Music Died* as fiction but as a version of "fact" — Smith is an "insider" who reveals the connivances by which rock was made popular. A loathing for all that rock is or was permeates every page of this book; that hatred of the music and what it represents was Smith's motivation for writing and it is the only thing that might justify Grove's publishing it. For Smith, as for Zion, rock is a scandal waiting to be

continued on pg. 40

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BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE NEW YORK DOLLS

The proto-punk New York Dolls blew away all the rock conventions and then splintered before time proved them prophets. Survivors David Johansen and Syl Sylvain thrive in the aftermath.

By Roy Trakin

The first time I ever laid eyes on the New York Dolls was New Year's Eve, 1972, at the old Mercer Arts Center, and, quite frankly, I didn't understand all the fuss. But, what did I know? I was just a wide-eyed junior between semesters at college, still excited about the release of *Eat A Peach* and the Grateful Dead's three-record live-in-Europe set. What was so special about this sleazy three-chord garage band that reportedly dressed in women's clothes and could barely stand up during a performance, let alone play their instruments? And the singer, who did he think he was, with his fake Mick Jagger pout and high-heeled "take-me" pumps, sporting a goldfish in each heel? The lead guitarist was wearing a chiffon dress with his hair teased into a beehive, while the bass player's outfit consisted of a plastic garbage bag with three holes cut out of it, one for his head and two for his arms.

David Johansen prefers to leave the psycho-social frontier to other explorers now and makes a more accessible rock 'n' roll for the heartland, free from irony and anarchy.

What the New York Dolls *were* up to was changing the style of modern rock 'n' roll. Simultaneously stripping down the pretensions which had accrued during the hyperbolic 60s and building them back up with spit and glitter, the Dolls made rock 'n' roll matter again. While parodying the macho stances of bands like the Rolling Stones, the Dolls were creating their own viable alternative with songs like "Trash," "Personality Crisis" and "Looking For A Kiss." Of course, the anarchic spirit the Dolls brought to pop was, by its very nature, transient. As other bands like Aerosmith and Kiss parlayed the Dolls' outrageousness into commercial gain, the band that started it all splintered in disarray after only two LPs, the second aptly dubbed *Too Much Too Soon*. After spawning a new hierarchy, which included groups from the Sex Pistols to the Ramones and from Talking Heads to Blondie, the individual members of the Dolls were forced to go their separate ways.

The New York Dolls may have generated a great deal of media coverage, but unfortunately, didn't sell nearly enough records to survive. Hell-bent lead guitarist Johnny Thunder, still in his early twenties, went off with drummer Jerry Nolan to form a succession of local bands under various names, including the Heartbreakers, Gang War and the Heroes. The only obstacle standing between Johnny and the Keith Richards-type stardom predicted for him has been his sometime dabbling in drugs, which turned most major record companies off pronto. To this day, Johnny Thunder symbolizes the quintessential wasted rock 'n' roller, whose flashes of guitar genius (after all, he did practically invent punk chording) are only dulled by his deadly habits.

Amiable Arthur "Killer" Kane, distinguished mainly for not plugging his bass in most of the time, drifted into a variety of outfits with fitting names like the Corpse-Grinders. Only David Johansen and guitarist Syl Sylvain have been able to consistently put out major label records, David with Epic and Syl with RCA, and it's been a real struggle for both in establishing post-Dolls profiles in today's marketplace.

Here Comes The Night is David Johansen's third solo album, after his promising self-titled debut and a poorly-received follow-up, *In Style*. Despite its insistence on rock cliche, the new LP returns him to a more direct, gut-level musicality, thanks to South African guitarist Blondie Chaplin. But in his quest for wider acceptance, David Jo has been forced to abandon the sly, street-smart wit of his Dolls days for an accessible approach.

"I think there is humor on this album, though you might have to put yourself into a more teenaged frame of mind to appreciate it," the likable Staten Island native tells me in Blue Sky's New York offices recently. "I think I'm less cynical now than I was last year. And certainly less cynical than I was with the Dolls..."

Was being an ex-member of the Dolls a help or a hindrance to David in getting his solo career in gear?

"Well, I consider the Dolls like my college days, my old alma mater," he offers. "The make-up and costumes was the Dolls' thing, their *shtick*. That's how we used to dress when we were kids. We used to pick clothes out of the garbage can. We never sat down and planned it. It was just something you had to get out of your system, like an exorcism. I have no desire to wear high-heeled shoes anymore...except in my most private moments."

The hardest thing to accept about the New York Dolls' failure to take the rock world by storm was the realization that things we thought were funny and ironically self-conscious went completely over most listeners heads. The New York dolls, as it were, didn't play in Peoria, did they? And, of course, that may be the reason Johansen doesn't write many subway songs these days...

"All that stuff is too colloquial," he says. "It just doesn't translate well. It may go over in Paris because it's like Charlie Parker in 1947. Oddities from the States. Y'know, like Josephine Baker. I'm looking to make rock 'n' roll that's hot, that's accessible, that swings and

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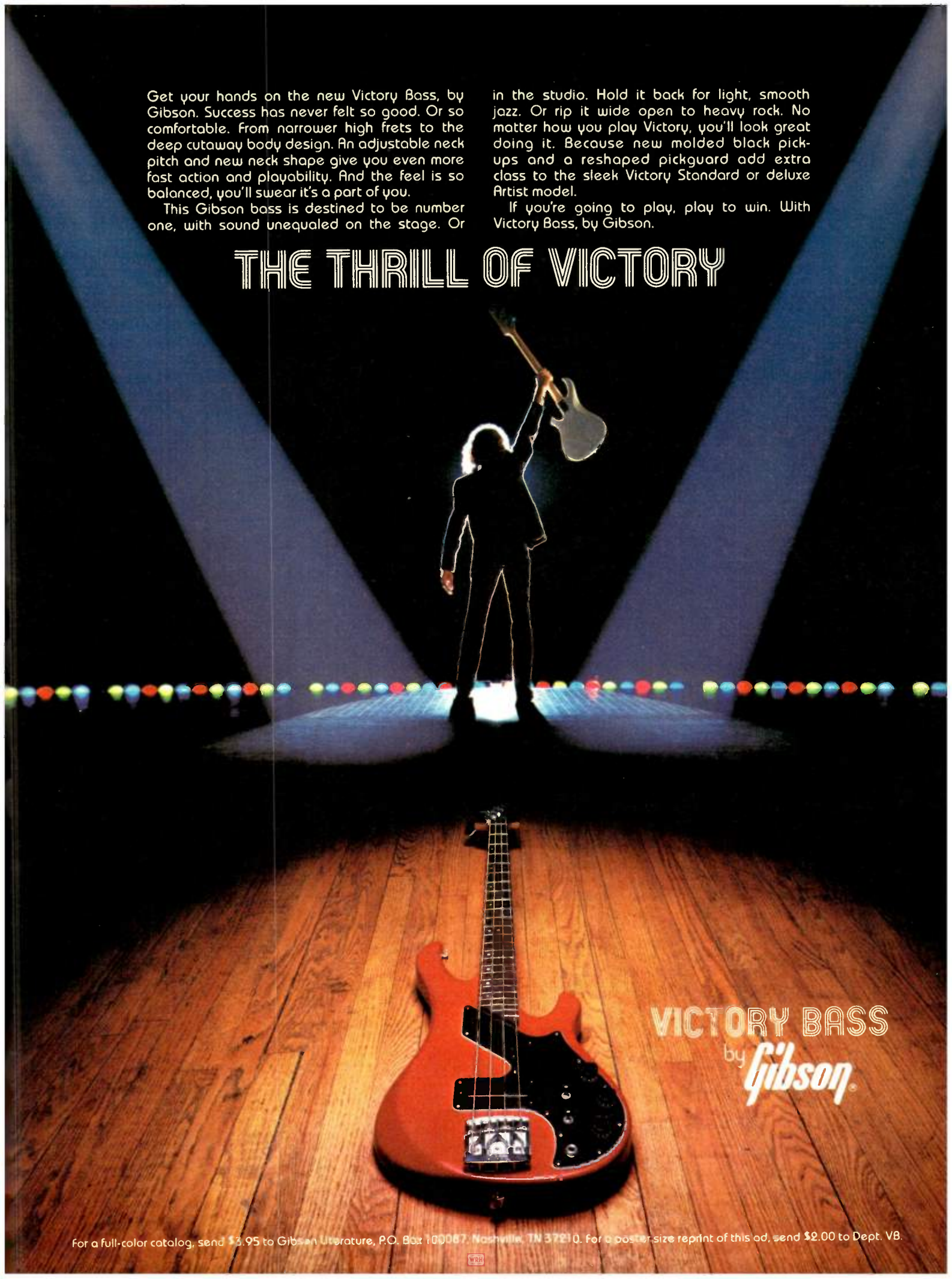

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that gets everybody all riled up. That's what I'm into now."

But, but...the New York Dolls were about so much more than just making danceable music, weren't they? They were about a peculiarly urban attitude, one that recognized the need for cultural melting pots, tolerance of outsiders, romance, fantasy, passion, community and the need to escape every now and then...

"Johnny was just sitting there, going like this on his guitar," Johansen physically demonstrates that moment when the group played its first note. "Arthur plugged in, Billy [Murcia] banged on some drums, I started screaming and that was it."

How has it changed since then?

"Professionalism," states David. "The Dolls made such a mess of everything. I don't think they could have ever transcended it all. If we did, we could've wound up like Kiss and that really would've been a drag."

Did David miss the constant madness that surrounded the Dolls?

"It *is* different when you're in a gang than when you're all alone," he says. "Now, though, I know everybody onstage is gonna be sober and sane, things will move along with a beginning, middle and end. That's nice to know before you go out there.

"I can still be quite anarchic. When you're young, I think you have an idealistic idea of anarchy that changes as you get older. When you're a kid, you never think you're gonna die. I wanna last a long time. I wanna be able to sit down when I perform, like Muddy Waters does."

If Johansen played Jagger to Thunders' Richards, then Syl Sylvain, the corkscrewed Egyptian-born Sephardic Jew, was the Dolls' Brian Jones, their inspiration and ethnic touchstone. After the breakup of the group, Syl played around with David in a new version of the band that did a very successful tour of stadiums in Japan. The duo continued to collaborate on winning songs like "Funky But Chic," "Girls," "Cool Metro" and "Frenchette," from Johansen's debut album, and "She Knew She Was Falling In Love," "Wreckless Crazy" and "Flamingo Road," on the less-successful *In Style*. Sylvain even accompanied David on his first solo tour, though he was itching to form his own band, which he finally did with the Criminals. One independent single later, Syl was inked to RCA, where he's released two LPs very quietly, last year's *Sylvain Sylvain* and this summer's *Syl Sylvain and the Teardrops*. Both are straight-ahead albums of subtle pleasures, with New Orleans honky-tonk keyboards, scattered Latin reggae rhythms, blaring Stax sax and a nonstop urban rockabilly beat. No message beyond the joy of the moment.

His band now trimmed down to a lean trio — aside from Syl, it includes his girlfriend Rosie Rex on drums and Danny "Tubby" Reid on bass — they are currently in the midst of a self-financed West Coast tour, undertaken thanks to a van lent to them by a loyal fan.

Syl complains that RCA isn't supporting his efforts. "We're making a lot of new fans, but the record company insists on stressing my past accomplishments instead of the present. They see me as an East Coast regional performer, not a potential international artist. All I have going for me out there is my name. You begin to realize how tied to New York you are when you get out into the country."

What has Syl learned about the business since his days in the Dolls?

"You've got to be a real *shnook*-face to get bitten twice," he remarks ruefully. "It's not like love, it's business. And I'm a fairly business-oriented cat. It's just not enough to have people who like you. Even with a good manager, a good agent and good press, I get lost at a

continued on pg. 110

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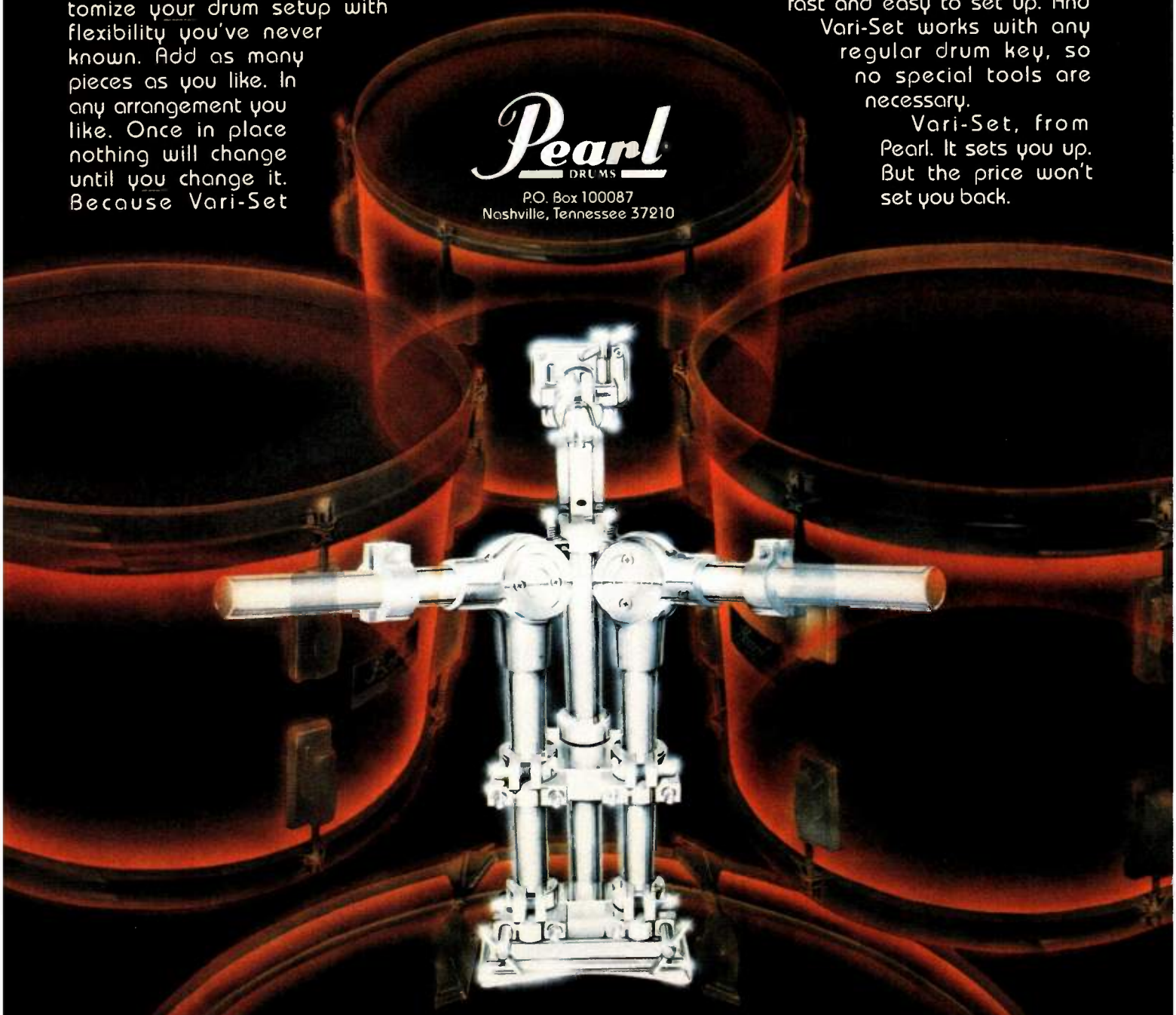

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BIG NOISE FROM DOWN UNDER

A running tour through the best of Outback Rock, mature, original and always danceable.

By David Fricke

LAURA LEVINE

Split Enz, who once scandalized audiences with disturbing costumes and theatrics, now concentrate on turning out solid, punchy AM hits.

Hard as this may be to believe for those of you who snored through your high school history and geography classes, America and Australia share a lot more in common than the first and last letters of their names.

For starters, as former British colonies made good, they are both subject to the racist bulldog wrath of the Mother Country, typified in Australia's case by the wickedly funny Monty Python sketch about the four "Bruces" swilling warm Foster's lager in the dusty outback and piercing the air with their war cry "No poofters!" As far as civilization goes, Australians themselves often describe life on the main drags of Sydney and Melbourne as California upside down.

Americans and Australians also share an irrepressible pioneer spirit that comes from taming their respective lands the hard way. Originally a penal colony where the convicted scum of English society were sent to either work the land or die on it, Australia has literally built itself from the ground up. And in so much as art is said to imitate life, the same can be said for Australian culture, illustrated by the fierce, independent streak running through many of their films (*My Brilliant Career, Breaker Morant*) and most of their rock 'n' roll bands — heavy metal champeens AC/DC, cool ghouls Skyhooks, pub-flavored rhythm and bluesers the Sports and Jo Jo Zep & the Falcons, native New Zealanders Split Enz and Mi-Sex, and now chartbusting youngbloods Cold Chisel and Icehouse.

In the beginning, of course, there were the Easybeats. And they were good, actually *great* — a kind of Rolling Beatles whose Anglomanic gumbo of punky electric raunch and melodic smarts not only made them teenybop sensations at home but pop legends everywhere else, if only because they made one of the all-time weekend songs in "Friday On My Mind." The exhaustive 40-track compilation *The Easybeats/Absolute Anthology* on the Australian Albert label, produced by ace Aussie rock historian Glenn A. Baker, is conclusive proof of the band's — and its prime movers Harry Vanda and George Young's — remarkably precocious grasp of pop recording and songwriting tenets and the ambitious ways they bent them at will. From the early Pretty Things-style punch of "Wedding Ring" and "Sorry" to their artier post-*Pepper* fluff, the Easybeats blazed pop trails identical to those of their Yankee and European counterparts. But if they didn't reinvent rock 'n' roll, they certainly jacked it up Down Under with a determination and offbeat personality that was indigenously Australian. After the Easybeats, of course, were the Bee Gees. Moving right along...

The Easybeats' successors often went the max. Fifties revisionists Daddy Cool livened up their act with Little Rascals get-ups and Mouseketeer ears. One kiddie-pop band called Zoot (which included *General Hospital* soap star Rick Springfield) did it all in pink — outfits, amplifiers, even their limousine. As for the late, notorious Skyhooks, their post-Ziggy mondo-sexual shock tactics on stage and disc were so far out they were in for a few manic years in the 70s until the band brought their heavily-hyped act to the States and were promptly stoned by critics as third-rate Alice Cooper.

"Skyhooks demonstrated a particular quirk in Australian character," insisted pianist-songwriter Don Walker of Cold Chisel (whose top five LP *East* is now out here). "It's a sort of larrikinism" — "larrikin" defined by Webster's as a hoodlum or rowdy — "that really isn't understood in America. In your country, larrikinism is considered to be immaturity."

But where once that kind of prankish, in Skyhooks' case, vulgar attention-getting often eclipsed the actual music being made, Australian bands are now displaying a poise rivalling the practiced commercial sophistication of U.S. and U.K. acts without sacrificing their individuality. Excellent case in point are Split Enz, who scandalized England and America in the mid-70s with their visually disturbing psycho-geometric coiffures and op-art clown threads, although they also had a vibrant original sound going for them that borrowed from the Beatles, the Roxy-Genesis art-rock family, and the British music hall tradition all at once. Their problem in the States was people couldn't see the music through the method.

"We didn't want to admit it for ages," confesses singer Tim Finn, responsible, with his younger brother Neil, for most of the recent Enz repertoire. "We wanted, almost, to pursue the image for its own sake. We didn't want to give in and admit it was standing in the way of the music. But we eventually had to admit it. Where before we used to disorient people, now

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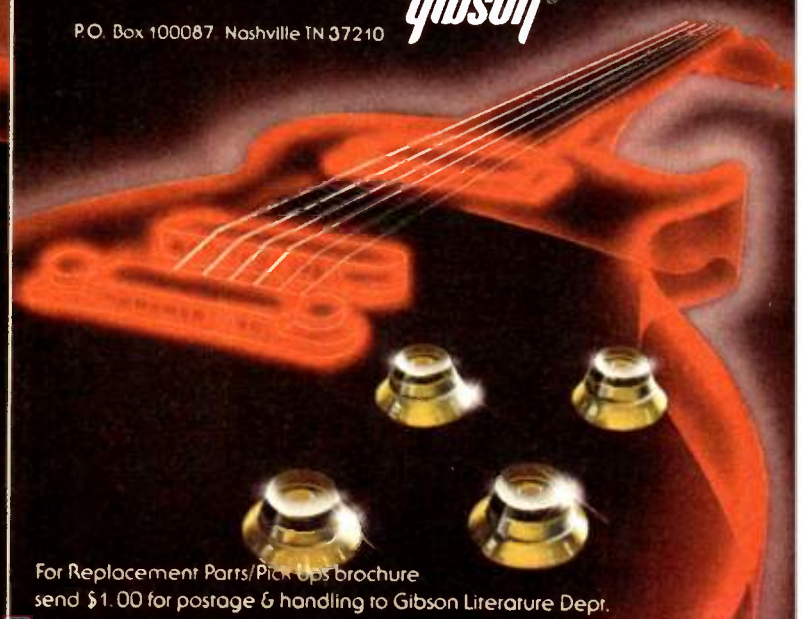

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Pure pop for ska people: Jo Jo Zep & the Falcons, forged in sweat box pubs, are a brass tacks body band. Don't ask them about Elvis Costello.

we charm them."

They do it by dangling impeccably crafted Anglo-pop songhooks in front of you, only to playfully invert and pervert them with curious vocal, guitar, and keyboard figures. Last year's *True Colours*, Split Enz' first U.S. release in almost three years, was practically Singles City, leading off with the wonderfully nagging "I Got You"(an Australian smash, a near-miss here) whose streamlined McCartney-like naivete was complemented by the hyper-Devo raver, "Shark Attack" and Tim Finn's jerky, pointedly ironic "Nobody Takes Me Seriously."

No less short on AM winners, the Enz' latest A&M LP, *Waiata*, is a consolidation of their impressive songwriting chops with a few nervier departures in terms of arranging. Neil Finn's dreamy ballad, "Iris" floats on a cloud of resonant Lennon-style guitar arpeggios copped from "Dear Prudence," hits a rocky Duane Eddy-like middle eight, and is punctuated by keysman Eddie Rayner's ghostly synthesizer. Stitched together Frankenstein-style with a thin thread of a songhook, "Walking Through The Ruins" is truly antic Enz featuring a beat that won't stand still, vocal chorus shenanigans, and a patchwork collection of guitar and keyboard riffs. And with numbers like "History Never Repeats" — a bold guitar-powered strut with high Stygian harmonies — it's no wonder they called the album *Waiata*. In the native tongue of New Zealand's Maori tribe, the word means a celebration of singing, dancing, and whistling.

Ditto *Hats Off Step Lively*, the second U.S. release by the sorely underrated Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons. The physical abandon and alcoholic exuberance of their randy fusion of R&B moxie, reggae moves, and rock 'n' roll drive is one of the best "live" experiences Australian currently has on offer, which makes the chauvinistic accusations by Yanks and Brits alike of Costello, Parker, and singer-leader-saxman Joe Camilleri a.k.a. Zep have simply mined the same sources, shared the same musical loves, and put the pieces together in their own particular order and with their own unique flair. That they accept their similarities, bloodbrothers of a kind, is proven by Costello's inclusion of Camilleri and the Falcons' "So Young" in his set on one Australian tour.

"People relate to my music in the U.S. as 'Well, here's an Elvis Costello clone,'" snorts Camilleri, of diminutive height and excess stage fury. "But they never relate to Costello as a clone of someone else. Take his album *Get Happy*. It's dynamite. But it's all Stax, it's bleeding Booker T and the MGs with Elvis singing up front. But who cares? It's a certain kind of expression. Influences are something you soak in and it comes out at a later date."

If Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons wear their influences on their sleeves, they also roll up those sleeves when there's a job to be done. And *Hats Off Step Lively* — a collection of new tracks, stuff from their last Aussie album of the same name, and two covers co-produced by K.C. of the Sunshine Band — is a job exceptionally well-done. Although they smack of his U.S. label Columbia's no-risk bids for a hit single, the versions here of J.J. Jackson's "But It's Alright" and the Brenton Wood's "Gimme Little Sign" maintain all the spunk of the Falcon's live show while providing a historical reference for the fun that follows.

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Moving Targets, the big winners on *Hats Off Step Lively* stir a killer hook into a dancefloor stew of R&B/R&R meat. Fuzzed up guitar meets cornball calypso in "Too Hot To Touch," Camilleri waxes a tortured kind of soulful against a heavy metal disco goosestep in "Fool Enough," and "Puppet on a String" is pure pop for ska people — and vice versa. This is the kind of fusion music that comes from playing for hard-drinking audiences night after night in the sweat-box pubs and clubs that make up the Australian gig circuit. "We are a dance band, a *great* dance band," proclaims Camilleri with justifiable pride. "In Australia, you have to be. There, everybody dances. And if you can't make 'em dance, you can't play."

Hard-rock-hounds Cold Chisel, signed to Elektra in America, have been playing by that rule for years and have only recently seen their big payoff with the huge Australian sales of *East* and the new double-live *Swingshift*. "The whole Australian music scene is built on live performances," agrees Chisel's Don Walker. "There isn't a big enough population to sustain more than one or two bands solely on record sales. So a lot of Australian original music tends to be developed in a very hot, hermetically-sealed live atmosphere. It's impossible for a band to survive in Australia unless they develop their songs in a way that works live."

That Chisel's songs, most by Walker, sound every bit as live on the studio *East* as they do on the concert *Swingshift* (unissued in the States) bears him out. Dubbed by one Aussie pundit as that country's Clash, Cold Chisel tackles protest topics like unemployment (the REO-cum-Springsteen charge of "Standing on the Outside"), Australians fighting in Vietnam (Khe Sanh," a gritty C & W blues), and political and social repression (the HM raging of "Star Hotel") with a commitment reflected in their amplified roar, guitarist Ian Moss' six stinging strings and singer Jim Barnes' gritty bawl that belies their commercial savvy. The result is thinking man's metal, the kind of mind *with* muscle that rightly embarrasses most of the cotton candy and gorilla sludge that passes for hard rock in this country.

The development of, for lack of a better word, the new wave in Australia epitomizes the separate but equal evolution of rock 'n' roll there, parallel to but not necessarily imitative of what's doin' in the Western World. For example, proto-punks the Saints recorded and released on their own label the classic buzzsaw killer "I'm Stranded" in 1976 *before* the release of the first Ramones album. After three albums and a breakup, the Saints are realigned under singer Chris Bailey and their new Australian LP *Monkey Puzzle* — out on their own Lost label — is a refreshing variation on the usual pinhead bamalam with references to early Who, new electric Dylan, and jump-pin' 50s jive. At the other extreme are the Birthday Party whose *Prayers On Fire* album, available on England's 4 A.D. Records, is oh-so-modern Pere Ubu/Pop Group tribal art-punk with a mean rhythm underpinning that could probably be traced to native aboriginal music.

Somewhere in between is Flowers, now billed in America as Icehouse (the title of their debut Chrysalis album). Their combination of cold wave electronic sheen, punky assertion, and oblique pop gestures suggests a hybrid of recent Ultravox and the Cars on *Panorama*. *Icehouse* was as popular in Australia as lifeboats on the *Titanic* and the remixed U.S. version of the LP — with its boosted bottom and physically rougher sound — could score big points here as well on the strength of such cool pop DOR as "Sister" and "Not My Kind" while purists opt for the electro-brooding of the title track.

And there's more where this came from — the Reels, In Excess, Mental as Anything, the Swingers, to name a handful. The growing number and surprising quality of new Australian bands has a lot to do with increased trafficking in local and imported records as well as the rock media presence there. Australian radio has just given birth to its first commercial FM stations, but print outlets like *RAM* and the Australian edition of *Rolling Stone* spend a good percentage of

continued on pg. 40

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THE AVANT-GARDE IN THE KITCHEN

A tenth anniversary celebration of art for art's sake walks a fine line between indulgence and innovation, revealing the connections between the fringe and the mainstream.

By Jon Pareles

There's nothing more self-conscious than a self-styled avant-garde — and nothing that gets obsolete faster. The artists involved seem to spend a lot of time looking over their shoulders: dreaming of/dreading mainstream acceptance, searching for funds in the meantime, nervously awaiting rejection by the *next* avant-garde. All under the scrutiny of media — in mass, specialist, and in-group sizes — that rush to canonize and cannibalize new aesthetic notions, shunting them in and out of the spotlight like other "fashion trends." It's a tricky position for any artist whose vision isn't so armor-clad, and an even trickier one for any place purporting to be an avant-garde "institution" — it's a contradiction from the get-go.

These natterings are prompted by the tenth anniversary celebration of the Kitchen, probably the best-known (to foundation grantors, the NEA and the *New York Times*, anyway) avant-garde hotspot in America. For two "Aluminum Nights" in June, Kitchen regulars and sympathizers staged marathon shows at Bond's disco (which is a lot larger than the Kitchen's SoHo loft) as a benefit for next year's artists' fees. There was music by Philip Glass, George Lewis (currently the Kitchen's music director), DNA, Julius Hemphill, Laura Dean, Todd Rundgren, Glenn Branca, Love of Life Orchestra, Steve Reich's musicians, Lydia Lunch, the Raybeats, and others; videotapes and installations by or of Nam June Paik, Brian Eno, Shalom Gorewitz, the Kipper Kids, Public Image Ltd., and others; various dance troupes, and performance hybrids by Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson, and Robert Ashley. It wasn't a historically accurate summation of the last ten years of the Kitchen or the New York scene, but it provided some illumination on the fate of the 70s avant-garde.

Cynics at the benefit suggested that what happened in the 70s was the continuation of the 60s avant-garde by other means. Watching three TV screens worth of Eno's varicolor New York skyline and recalling Andy Warhol's Empire State Building film, I could've agreed. And like most of the self-conscious vanguards of this century, 70s types made their own attempts to defy categories, to meld various arts, and to come to terms with technology. Naturally, there were some 60s holdovers and some direct follow-ups — where would Reich, Glass, et al., have been without La Monte Young? — although the technology (video!), the dress code and many of the participants were new. The telltale change, however, was in vocabulary and attitude: the 70s avant-garde replaced "cosmic" with "interesting." No more of that goofy, awestruck, vaguely deistic hippie stuff — art experiments in the 70s would be conducted in a dispassionate, value-free state of mind. Instead of invoking murky mystical ideals or programmatic manifestos, the 70s avant-garde simply claimed what Robert Fripp, prefacing a Kitchen concert, called "the right to be boring."

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Glenn Branca performing his galvanizing "Ascension of Christ," a crescendo of tremolo guitar overtones climaxing in three volcanic power chords.

Just like oh-wow hippies, but with clearer heads, Kitchen audiences were generally willing to suspend judgment for the duration of an "event" (not a "happening," by the way). Where 60s vanguardists would throw in anything that looked vaguely useful, 70s types tended to be exclusive, carefully limiting their devices. People at new-music concerts might listen to a single note with its pitch being varied infinitesimally at great length, or to simple patterns repeated over and over, or to free improvisations, or — as at the Kitchen-sponsored "New Music, New York" festival in 1979 — to pieces like William Hellermann's "Squeek," — written for the various-register tones produced by an unlubricated swivel chair, on which Hellermann had developed remarkably precise buttocks technique. Some of the "boring" stuff turned out to be just that; some was self-indulgent; some, like "Squeek," made the most out of a fascinating dead end, and some was not only "interesting" but influential.

In the course of the 70s, minimalism — those simple repeated patterns — escaped the avant-garde and found itself an audience. Although some minimal procedures germinated in the 60s, the Kitchen (with its media savvy and status as an "institution") has been closely associated with the growing respect accorded Glass, Reich, and fellow travelers including Laura Dean, Michael Nyman, Eno, and others. As art music goes, minimalism has definitely hit the bigtime. Instead of playing for 200 people at the Kitchen, Glass and Reich can each sell out Carnegie Hall annually. As for outreach, their ideas have filtered into pop music via Talking Heads, XTC, Feelies, Public Image Ltd., David Bowie, Robert Fripp, even Giorgio Moroder and the Police. Perhaps because minimalism dovetails with the drone of rock and the repetition of funk (Reich has studied the African connection in Ghana), there's no culture shock between pop and this facet of the avant-garde. The presence on the benefit program of the Raybeats (surf-minimalism),

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Bush Tetras (hard-funk minimalism), Love of Life Orchestra (atonal jam-funk minimalism), Lydia Lunch (abrasive minimalism) and Red Decade (suite minimalism) showed how much cross-fertilization has occurred. Throughout the 70s, art types have kept a close, admiring watch on pop culture, and vice versa. Downtown New York even offered propinquity: the Kitchen's first home was the literal kitchen of the Mercer Arts Center — where the New York Dolls reigned — because there was space for video equipment and concerts. The art-punk connection now attracts a slew of poseurs, yet important new-music composers still seem more eager to be John Lydon than John Cage. (And, of course, any 70s-vintage record exec will be glad to tell you about his roster of "artists.")

Not that new-music composers are writing pop songs. The static-harmony, simple-rhythms repetition that rock picked up on is only one aspect of what Reich and Glass (and Meredith Monk and George Lewis and Glenn Branca and Robert Ashley and Laurie Anderson and Rhys Chatham) are doing. With the occasional exception of Monk and Anderson, these composers use time-spans much longer than the average pop tune, and they don't honor pop's clear distinctions between foreground and background. Glass' music has as much melody in the bass and midrange as in the treble, and it's so information-packed that it seems to refer to the whole of music history; allusions I heard for the first time at the Bond's performances of "Dance No. 3" and "Train Spaceship" included German oompah bands, "Chopsticks," dervish chants, Buxtehude organ polyphony and Romantic woodwind twitters. Glenn Branca's "The Ascension of Christ," the most galvanizing piece I heard at the benefit, was simpler: battering-ram drums and bass behind four noisy electric guitars playing tremolo chords, their overtones combining and colliding and reverberating, in a long slow crescendo that culminated in three volcanic power chords. Like Ravel's and Stravinsky's approximations of early jazz, Branca's music has nothing to do with pop structure, but it wouldn't exist if he didn't have an earful of rock 'n' roll.

Few of the other acts on the bill were such showstoppers; true to the Kitchen's past, there were experiments, including flops like the Feelies' percussion-and-guitar instrumentals (they sounded like inner tracks from *Crazy Rhythms*) and poet John Giorno's echoplexed rant, in which the technology overwhelmed the meaning. George Lewis' "Atlantic" called for a trombone quartet to sustain unison and near-unison notes for tests of overtone perception, overly reminiscent of Stockhausen's *Stimmung*. Nor

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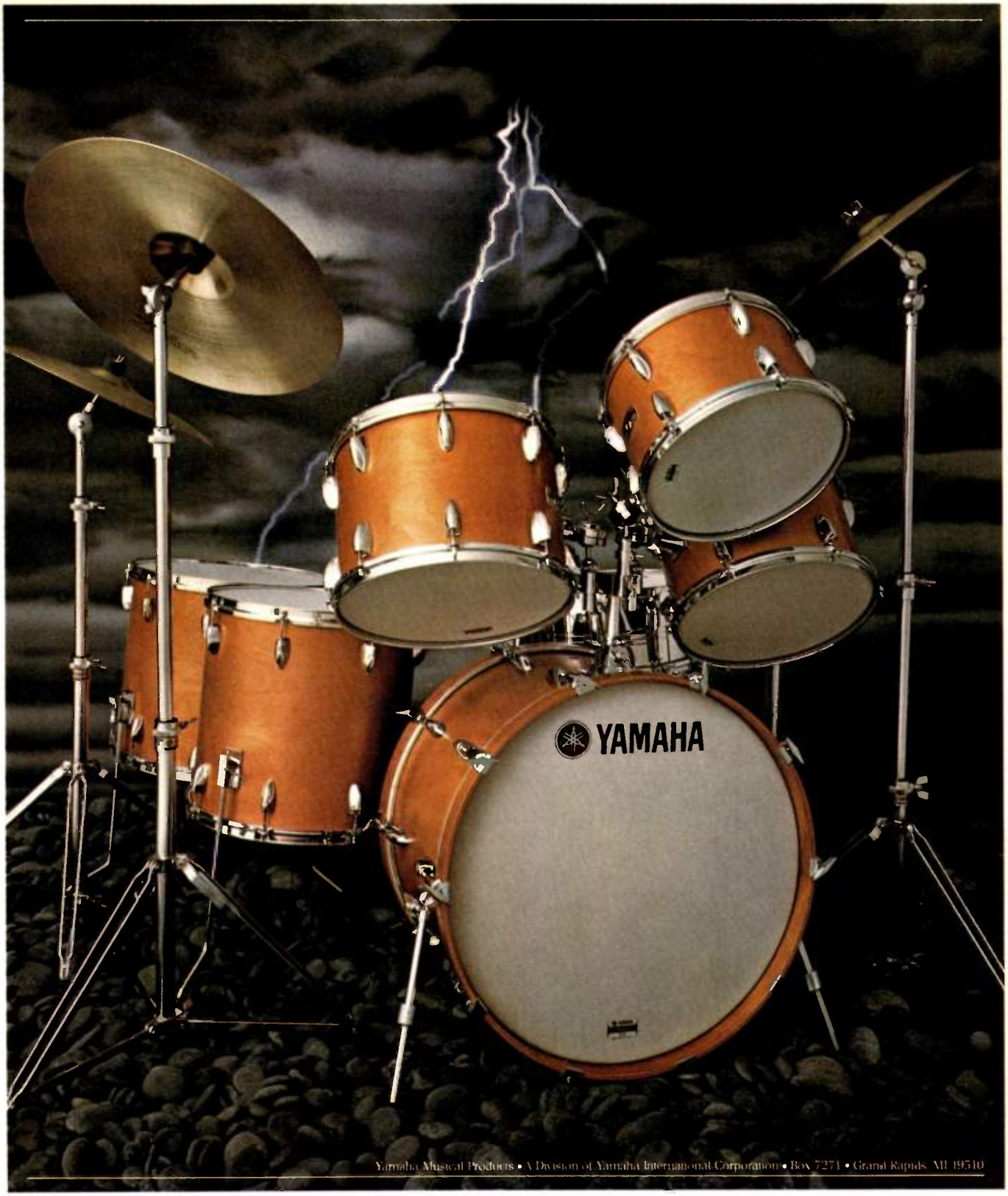

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was minimalism the only permitted style. Julius Hemphill improvised a bluesy, innocent melody while K. Curtis Lyle danced; DNA played a set of their laconic yet grating no-wave; and Maryanne Amacher sat primly behind an electronic console and unleashed vast, oceanic surges of sound in a piece called "Critical Band."

On the interesting/self-indulgent borderline was Garrett List's "The Kids Are Hungry," a half-sung, half-played "cantata" for voice and trombone, sort of a thinking-man's equivalent of a talking blues. There was also a streak of opportunism — something the Kitchen generally avoids — in the appearances of noted videophile Todd Rundgren (singing hippy-dippy acoustic protest songs), of Oliver Lake's execrable Jump Up (a sellout attempt that's not even funny, much less funky; Lake's singing is its worst insult) and of Jim Carroll, who read a passage that managed to combine his two basic shticks — heroin and Catholicism — in its opening sentences. Ten years ago, playing at the Kitchen meant a chance for in-group exposure; now it confers legitimacy like any other institution.

The 70s avant-garde had a heightened awareness of context; in fact, the only thing that united most Kitchen events was the notion of "performance" — the realization that every presentation involved some sort of transaction with the audience, whether it was a collusion, a ritual, a confrontation, an amusement, a put-on. The audience participation of the 60s turned into the audience self-consciousness of the 70s: if the emperor was, indeed, nude, was it cool to say so? At the benefit, guitarist Ned Sublette came onstage guitar-less in cowboy shirt, along with Glenn Branca, who strummed away on acoustic guitar while Sublette rasped and yodeled and howled an interminable ballad in some weirdly inauthentic hillbilly style, deadpan all the way. It was the sort of thing that might make you reconsider the great American redneck ethos, or might send you running for a Bob Wills record; since nobody knew what to make of it, I guess it worked. Conceptualism (and considerable intensity of execution) strikes again.

The implications of "performance" — something rockers have always considered — inspired composers and visual artists to come up with a new hybrid in the 70s: performance art, a catchall term for experimental presentations that were not exactly concerts or drama or dance or whatever. Quite a few performance pieces turned out to be eclectic, pretentious duds, but the benefit included three good ones. Meredith Monk's "Turtle Dreams (Waltz)" will no doubt stand on its own as music when ECM releases it in August, as a minimal minor-key vamp for electric keyboards with four-part vocal polyphony; in performance, the singers also dance in patterns, and a woman in a white hoop skirt drifts enigmatically across the stage at the end. Robert Ashley's *Perfect Live (Private Parts)*, portions of which are on two Lovely Music LPs, sounds like a bluesy vamp with deadpan narration, but it's actually a made-for-television opera, and its videotape version has so much going on that it'll take more than one (or ten) viewings to figure out all the connections. Most eclectic of all was Laurie Anderson's "Songs from United States," excerpts from her four-part magnum opus, which uses koan-like tests, slides and film and shadow projections, minimal vamps with lyrics (quasi-songs), and in one grand non-sequitur, a sax section that segues from Ellington-style chords to James Brown to marching-band stolidity to out-and-out noise. All of Anderson's puzzle pieces shouldn't fit together, but they do. What more can you ask from a maturing avant-garde?

Just one thing, but it's a tough one. Too many 70s avant-garde efforts — even in allegedly visceral rock 'n' roll — have been performed in deadpan, noncommittal style, as if even the idea of emotion would contaminate the experiment. After 50s and 60s vanguards tried to open up our feelings and senses, the 70s avant-garde reacted with strategies of alienation, indirection, irony; self-consciousness makes emotion seem unhip. One thing the 80s avant-garde should learn from pop culture is that no matter how smart you are it's possible — and a good thing — to move people's bodies and hearts as well as their minds. M

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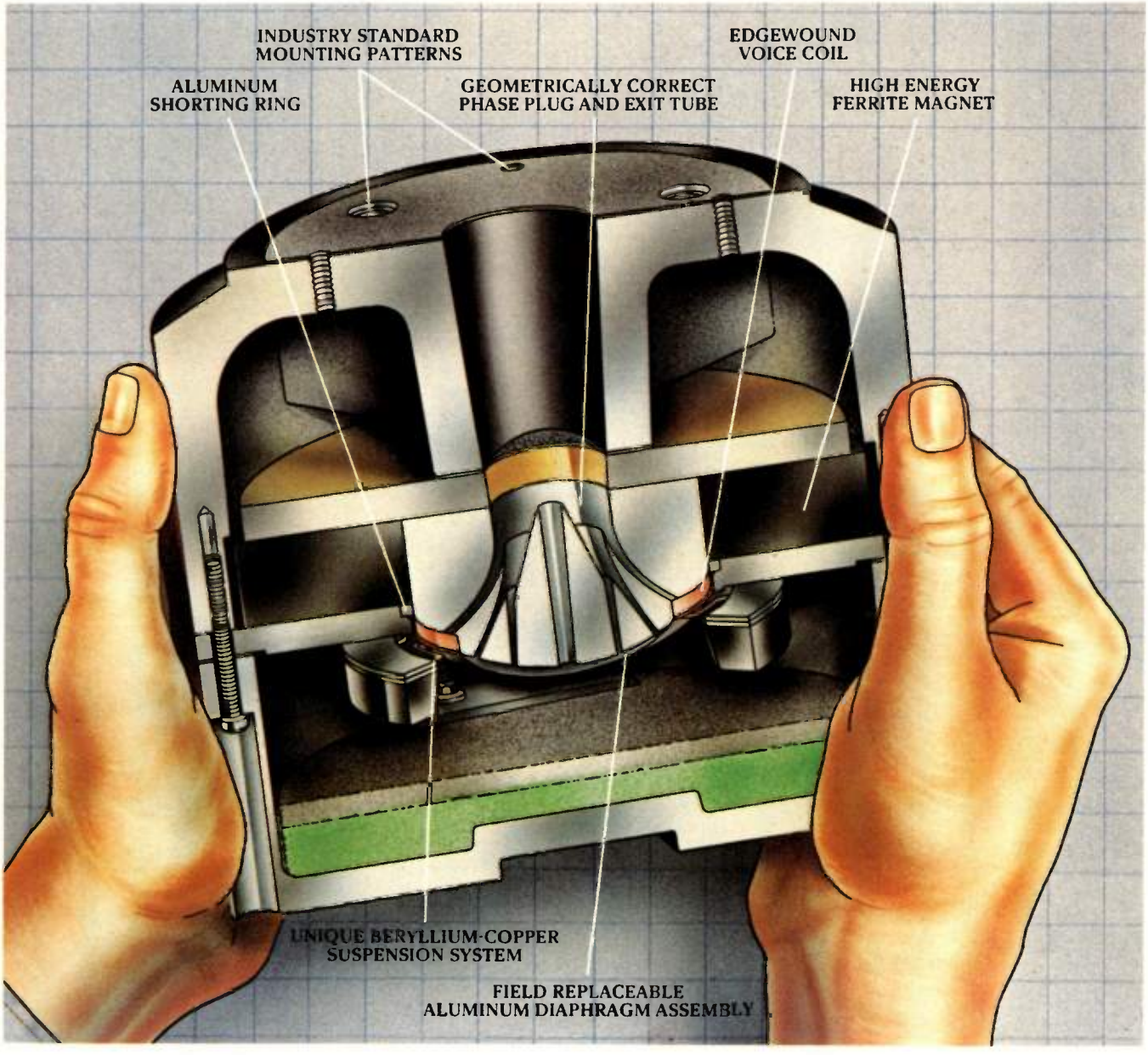

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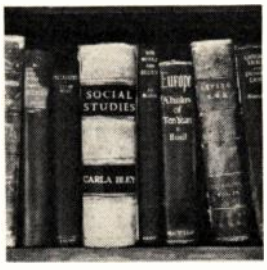

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R & R Conspiracy *cont. from pg. 16*

exposed, and this time, the writer thinks he has the goods. Maybe he does, since Smith's major source of outrage seems to be that white R&B isn't as good as the black original. No argument here, although it is insipid to contend that white R&B is all that rock and roll is, which is just what Smith does argue. Chances are, Grove lacks the sophistication to see the flaws in that contention, but the tragedy is that the author's argument is disproved by his own career.

Sonny Knight's first R&B hit, "But Officer," never made the pop charts in his version. But the year was 1952, and Knight's success was taken from him not by a rocker but by one of the biggest antirockists of all, Steve Allen, who made a cover version. In December, 1956, after a white rock and roll singer named Elvis Presley had opened the door for black vocalists on pop radio, Sonny Knight finally made the top 20 with "Confidential." You figure out who ripped Knight off worse: rock singers who expropriated elements of his style, but usually credited the black musicians they used as sources, or pop singers who stole the songs outright, without even a nod to the real creators. If the *New York Times* wants to explore cultural genocide, it might look at the system of popular music *before* rock and roll, when the voices of the lower classes and racial minorities were deliberately excluded from the pop charts and airwaves. Zion's era of "Style" was in fact founded on a racist ethic, in which Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller would forever prosper by looting the repertoire of Fletcher Henderson and Count Basie, and the heroic "stylist" Frankie Laine wiped out all the important stylistic characteristics of Hank Williams hits as he coined money with them. If that era of bigotry and oppression is what Zion, Smith, the *Times* and Grove would like to see return, they're welcome to it. Over my dead body. M

Australians *cont. from pg. 30*

space on homegrown music. There are two nationwide rock TV programs and all the local stations have pop shows of their own.

"There have always been great bands in Australia," insists Don Walker, "ever since the Easybeats. But in those days, a band could get to the top in Australia and much as they'd like to come to America, all they could do was buy a tourist ticket, stand out in the street in Los Angeles, and say, 'What do we do now?' Now it's gotten to a stage where if you have a good manager in Australia, he'll make contact in the States. Now when record companies and agents in America hear you're from Australia, they say, 'Yeah, let's have a listen.' It's a long way from the old days when the response was, 'Oh, do they have music down there?'" M

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Far from the coastal capitals, the heartland throbs with jazz of resilience and savvy, a surprising mix of heart and innovation.

By Neil Tesser

On any given Monday night, down at the Enterprise bar-and-lounge on Chicago's South Side, you can find tenor man Von Freeman, hard at work and pleasing the folks with his buoyant personality and his strange, variegated sound. Each solo he plays on his Martin saxophone — an off-brand model that appears to be older than he is — sounds as if it is compressing his whole life; each solo sprawls across the tune's structure, swiftly rambles from place to place, brimming with the anecdotes of 59 years in Chicago. The city is hulking and tough, often small-town and venal, but it can also encompass an unforced frivolity: all these things, especially the last, are part of what Von Freeman plays, blowing with a force that suggests the Windy City might have been named for *him*.

Hearing Von Freeman in Chicago is like reading Dickens in London, viewing Toulouse-Lautrec in Paris, or eating schnitzel in Vienna. It is, I imagine, much like hearing Buck Hill in Washington, D.C., the hometown he's inhabited all his 54 years. Chicago is the City That Works, but Washington's the City They Work For. Washington is less wide-open, more controlled, reputedly as lusty but with a finer edge: so is Buck Hill, who, like Freeman, is a vital local legend. He is the sax man of choice when it comes to rounding out a visiting band or providing good-natured competition for an imported tenorist (a tradition that dates back to when some local Kansas City boys named Ben Webster and Herschel Evans cut the reigning king, Coleman Hawkins). Hill's sound is less quirky, more of a traditional tenor tone, but with a separate balance, a different *weight* if you will, which sets it apart. What's more, his improvisations — though less woolly than Freeman's — are no less original; on record, they are small masterpieces. Ever in the Power Center, he plays with an unusually centered potency.

Where have they been all these years?

Separated by more than 1,000 miles — and by the immeasurable distance between Eastern seaboard and Midwestern cornfields — both Von Freeman and Buck Hill are living, working proof of something we tend to forget: A musician need not live in New York or Los Angeles, the Coastal Capitals, to develop resiliency and savvy, a jazz style of innovation and import. Unfortunately, hardly anyone will ever know about you if you live anywhere else.

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

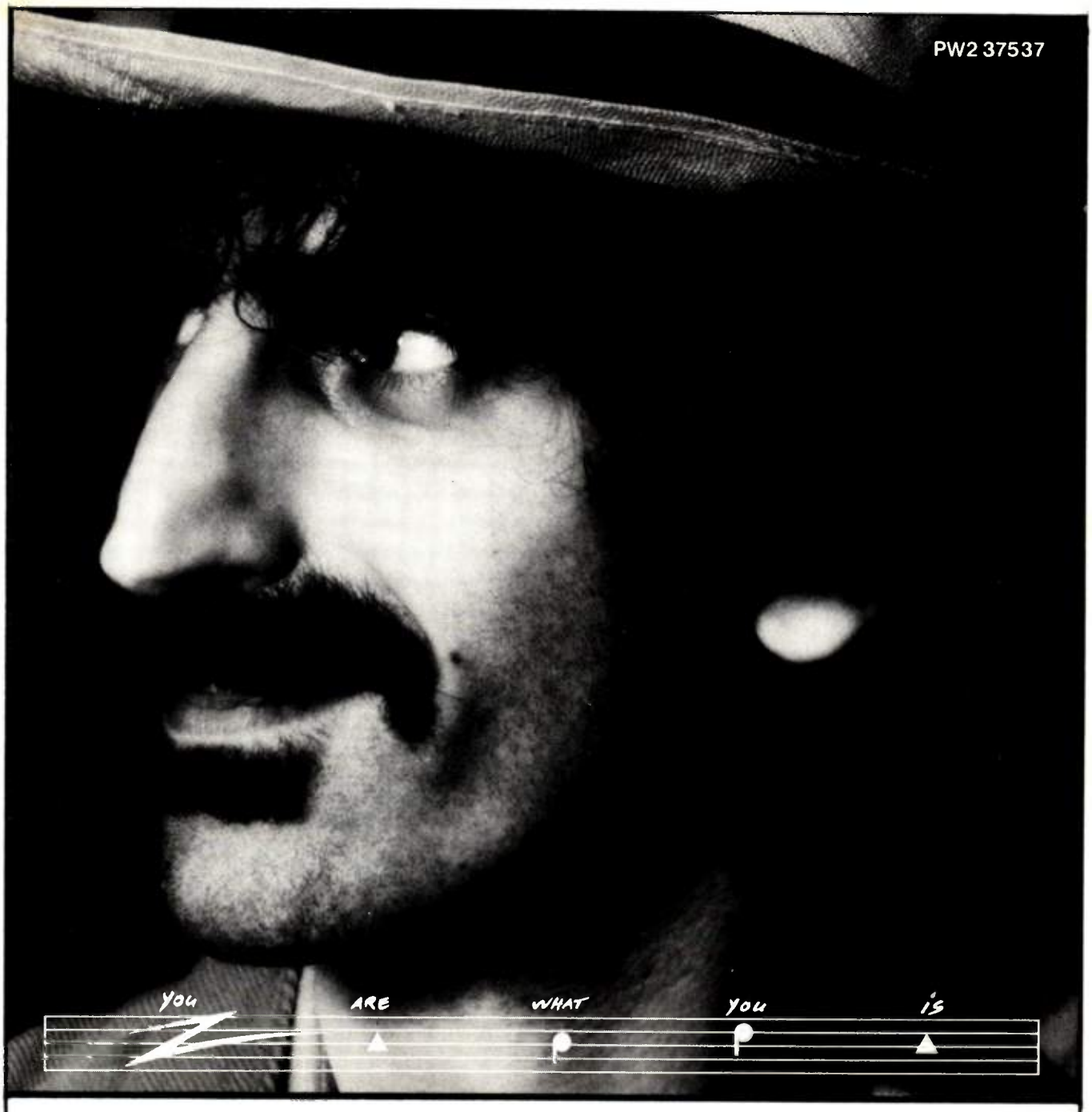
Von Freeman is a thinking heart, slappy and anecdotal, while Buck Hill is an emotional head, controlled and compositional.

Whatever else people may think of this nation, they usually agree on one thing — America's strength, at least its potential, lies in the variety found within its borders. Certainly, jazz has always benefited from such localism. In the 30s, the music in Missouri was fundamentally different from that in New York, and a barnstorming John Hammond was able to discover Count Basie and Billie Holiday playing the all-night clubs in Kansas City; as recently as the mid-70s, the addition of bass guitarist Jaco Pastorius' "Florida sound" was the major factor in Weather Report's revitalization. Different places breed different music, and I defy anyone to complain about that.

But John Hammond is old now, and doesn't travel as well as he used to; his son is singing blues; no one else is riding the rails to feel out the music (and not simply because the rails are gone). In the Coastal Capitals, most record labels and the critics wait, secure in the sort of bipolar centrism that lets the music come to them. It usually does.

There's some justification for all this. The breakthroughs in jazz are most often collaborative, and since the music's most vital voices are usually situated in either the New York, L.A., or San Francisco metropolitan areas, it's true these cities are where almost everything important happens. The key word is "almost" — as was graphically illustrated, during the 70s, in the Mysterious Case of the AACM. In Chicago, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians was laying the foundation for the next 15 years' developments in the avant-garde, and it was indeed a collaborative effort; yet official sanction did not really come until the AACM's members began shuttling to, and eventually moving to, New York. New York writers claimed familiarity with what was occurring in Chicago — but they weren't traveling out for the AACM's anniversary festivals to see for themselves. There weren't any John Hammonds.

The recent emergence — "discovery" some would call it — of Hill and Freeman is but another reminder that there's more music in America than the Coastal Capitals syndrome allows for. Both Hill and Freeman have played regularly since the 40s, their reputations spread by the touring jazzmen who performed with them. Yet neither man led his first record date until the 70s. By then, their impressively original styles struck listeners as remarkable. The effect was compounded by hearing those styles fully formed and in the flower of maturity. Rather than hearing a



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new tenor on the scene and watching him develop, listeners were treated to the archaeological thrill of unearthing an unknown giant, reveling as much in the shock as in the music itself.

The saxists themselves show many similarities. Both stem from an era and climate that fostered nicknames: Earl Lavon Freeman and Roger Hill were not considered jazzy enough at the time. Both have worked for the government: Freeman played in a Navy band for four years, and Hill continues to make his living as a postal worker. Both are family men, and homebodies, having lived their entire lives in the cities where they were born. And both have acted as mentors: Hill gave a young Washington drummer named Billy Hart his first gig, and it was at an open session led by Freeman that I first heard a young trombonist named George Lewis, home from Yale for the summer and sitting in.

Buck Hill's case is the sillier: after all, he was just down the coast from New York, playing his ass off, and yet escaping notice on a regular basis. (It was finally Billy Hart who brought Hill to the attention of the Danish jazz label, SteepleChase.) Von Freeman's story is the more ironic: it wasn't until his son Chico — the AACM reedman and popular figure in the organization's third wave — attracted notice, that interest began to focus on Von as well. (The result was a European tour for Freeman father and son, and a soon-to-be-released collaboration on Columbia.)

Hill and Freeman are also profoundly different. Buck Hill constructs solos that tempt a listener to transcribe them and commit them to memory. Utilizing a tough, controlled tone he tears through a song with the sort of fire that builds entirely from the development of his statement. A structuralist of the highest order, he dots his improvisations with only an occasional reference to a standard, or one of his own compositions; mostly, he motors along on a lyricism completely in the service of his striking compositional sense. He plays as hard and fast as anyone, but his flurries of technique are not placed for show. They are there for the advancement of the solo.

Equally striking are the tunes Hill writes; in fact, if all his reeds dried out, I suspect he'd do well supplying material for a host of needy jazzmen. On the two albums he's led for SteepleChase — *This Is Buck Hill* (SCS 1095) and *Scope* (SCS 1123) — he features nine of his pieces, and at least five of them should find their way into the general repertoire soon. As you might expect, they often feature sophisticated structures: his "Ballad Repeter" is a framework for a particularly lovely phrase that is sounded over and again, and many of his pieces rely on a hearty two-part form that suggests a simplified rondo. It may take only one more album before astute listeners can recognize a Buck Hill tune by ear. (Where's he *been* all these years?)

Von Freeman is not a composer of Hill's sophistication. You have to go back to his out-of-print 1972 Atlantic LP *Doin' It Right Now* — produced by Rahsaan Roland Kirk, by the way — to find Freeman tunes as ambitious as Hill's, and even so, they stick to familiar chord patterns and formats. But Von Freeman is not a composer at heart: that much is clear from his improvising, which reveals a thinking heart more than an emotionally committed head. Freeman's solo style is firmly defined on the two albums (*Have No Fear* and *Serenade & Blues*) he recorded for the small Chicago-based label Nessa Records, on which he blows lengthy, enveloping statements that seem, like a flock of sparrows, to fly wherever they fly.

Freeman's style was once described as "profligate, if not neat;" ideas appear, disappear, run together and then make room for more. His solos develop, not as much linearly as holistically, leaving an afterimage of full-throated strength instead of carefully composed development. He represents an entirely different solo ethos from Hill's, in that his improvising is totally entwined with his odd technique — full of slappy, juicy articulation — and his odder tone, which is at once thin and powerful, "incorrect" in its delightful, wavering intonation, and remarkably speechlike. (In retrospect,

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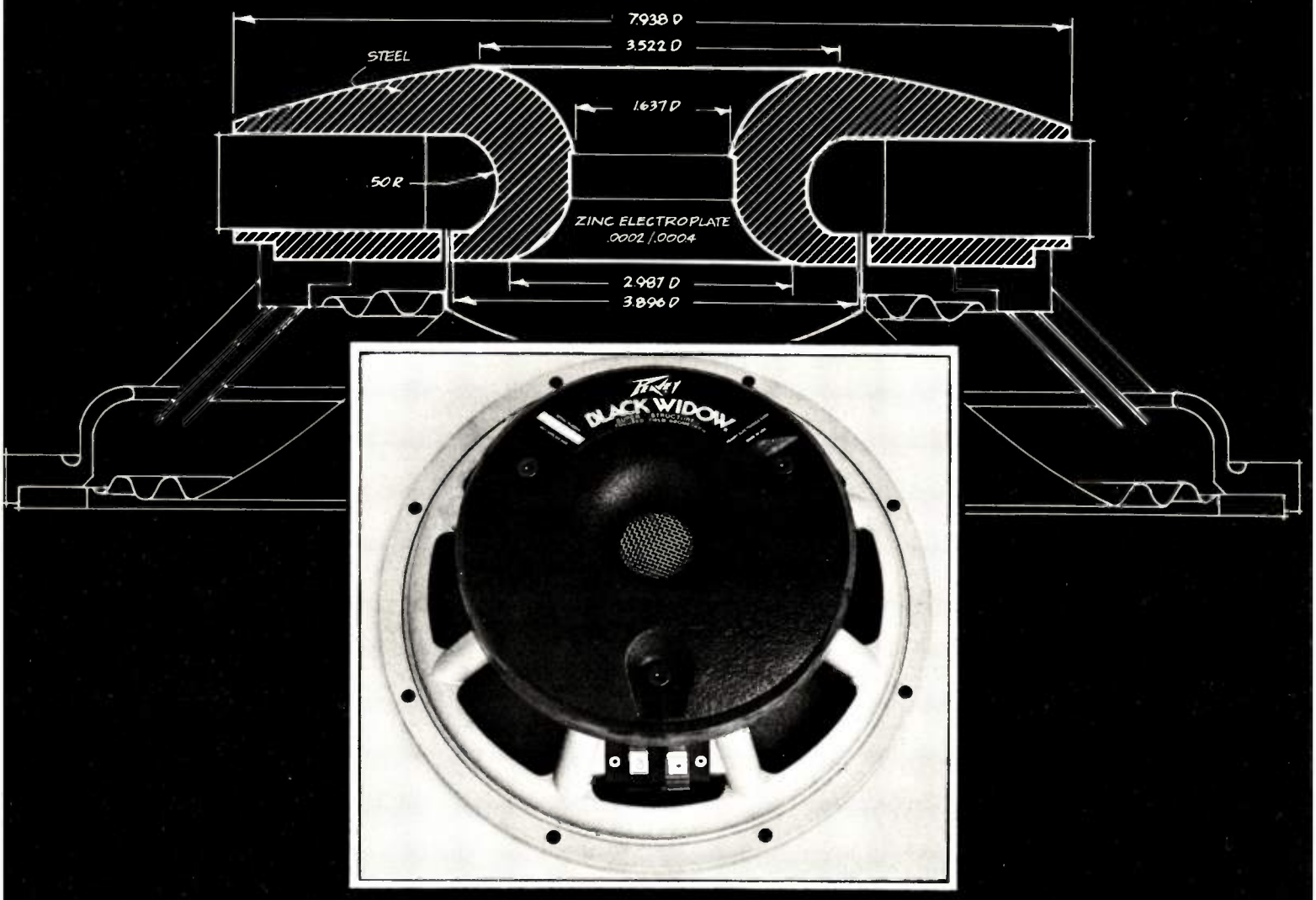

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PAUL CANTY/LFI

THE JAM

BOB DYLAN

Bob Dylan did just three American dates in June before heading across the Atlantic for a European tour. At the end of his show in Columbia, Maryland, he told the crowd: "Clap if we didn't play the songs you came to hear." Strong clapping. "Now clap if we did play the songs you came to hear." Even stronger clapping. "I'm confused," he admitted.

The Bob Dylan at this concert was clearly an artist in transition, groping for a new persona to replace his born-again convert role. Dylan has a history of changing his entire persona — as reflected in his music, lyrics, themes, interviews and even appearance — every two or three years, and he's due for another transformation. The evidence from his latest tour is that he still believes in Christianity, but he doesn't want it to overwhelm everything else as it did just a year ago in Hartford, where he sang nothing but gospel in a grim, solemn manner. This summer, the spirituals accounted for less than half the show, and flashes of the old, impish iconoclast shone through.

The most depressing aspect of Dylan's two gospel albums was their total lack of humor. The most encouraging aspect of this concert was the reemergence of the old Dylan wit. Wearing a loud Hawaiian shirt and jogging shoes, Dylan told the crowd: "As long as we're out in the country, I guess we should sing a song about a farm." He then led his band through a very hard rock version of "Maggie's Farm." He and bassist Tim Drummond danced around the stage and broke out laughing as if they just remembered how much fun rock 'n' roll protest could be. Dylan grinned devilishly on "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" when he sang, "I started out on burgundy, but soon hit the harder stuff," teasing his new Christian friends as he once teased his old folkie friends.

Even more encouraging were the three new songs Dylan unveiled. Only one of them, "Dead Man, Dead Man, When Will You Arise," was religious in nature, and that was done with three pounding guitars that would empty most churches. "Watered Down Love" was a strong addition to Dylan's long line of snarling put-down love songs. The third new song was a stirring eulogy for Lenny Bruce, hardly what you'd expect from a fundamentalist. Over rumbling percussion and organ, Dylan cried: "Lenny Bruce is gone, but his spirit lives on," and raised his left arm triumphantly.

As every Bob Dylan show has since his 1979 conversion, this one began with half a dozen traditional hymns sung by his accompanying gospel singers. Clydie King, Regina McCrary, Carolyn Dennis and Madelyn Quebec displayed gorgeous voices that soared into the emotional stratosphere of quivering falsettos. Accompanied only by pianist William "Smitty" Smith (who also appears on David Lindley's new record), these opening hymns were the evening's highpoint, from a purely musical standpoint.

Dylan sang only four songs from *Slow Train Coming* and just one from *Saved*. These religious songs featured less fire and brimstone than the studio versions, and more rock 'n' roll. Steve Ripley — in an L.A. punk outfit — and Fred Tackett — looking rabbinical — pumped every song with thrashing chords and biting leads. Jim Keltner contributed some very physical drumming, and William Smith rivaled Garth Hudson in his use of soulful organ and note-splattering piano.

Dylan was apparently ambivalent about his older songs. He gave "Like a Rolling Stone" an embarrassingly perfunctory reading, and forgot the lyrics to "Don't Think Twice." On the other hand, his solo acoustic version of "Girl Of The North Country" was understated beautifully, and "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" was a joyful romp. "Forever Young" was the show's dramatic highlight with a long, strong harmonica solo and sincere singing from Dylan.

Dylan sang three songs that he didn't write. He closed the show with the traditional gospel hymn, "Did They See Him?" He sang "We Just Disagree" (written by Jim Krueger for Dave Mason), and its "live-and-let-live" philosophy contrasted sharply with the narrow intolerance of "Gotta Serve Somebody." Halfway during the show, Dylan and Clydie King sat on the piano bench and sang "Abraham, Martin and John" by themselves. When Dylan sang the line, "Has anybody here seen my old friend, Bobby? Can you tell me where he's gone?" the crowd buzzed excitedly. It was a question people in the audience had been asking all night. It's obviously a question that Bobby has been asking himself. — *Geoffrey Himes*

BOB DYLAN

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

THE JAM

When the Jam play America these days it seems like they're in enemy territory — which is sort of true and also sort of ridiculous. Originally, the band didn't even want to do the one-night gig where I caught them at the Ritz in New York. In fact they said they'd only come to America if their last record, *Sound Affects* sold really well (it didn't) or if they got a spot on national TV (which they did — on Tom Snyder). Since they had to be in town anyway, they agreed to do this one show in N.Y., one in Boston, a few in Canada, but that's it. You see, over the course of four U.S. tours and five albums the Jam have barely been able to nick the U.S. charts and lately they've expressed extreme disinterest in making it here at all. Whether this is sour grapes, xenophobia or whatever, one really can't blame the band for being fed up with a country ruled by Styx and REO Spudwagon. But the Jam's show at the Ritz proved that their idealism and anger is something America is sorely in need of.

Of course this isn't to say the Jam themselves have made it easy for people — and I'm not talking about their firmly rooted Britishness. The Jam have always had a less accessible, rawer sound than a band like the Clash, whose similarly angry punk has been accepted by conservative American audiences. The Jam, as a three-piece, has never had quite the heavy metal angle or the Rolling Stones-style rousing unity of the Clash.

Actually, it's Paul Weller's vocals, or more precisely, his persona — that's probably the most "difficult" element of the Jam. He's a lonely, troublesome figure, which is exactly what makes him so fascinating. His curt vocal delivery and irritable onstage attitude

make him seem terribly self-obsessed. Bruce Foxton's chorus backup yells give some release to the songs but Weller, especially live, broods and internalizes.

And yet with the material on the new album, which dominated the Ritz show, Weller is singing many of his most direct "look-me-in-the-eye-and-say-that" lyrics to date. In the song "Monday," Weller sings "I will never be embarrassed about love again." And in "Scrape Away" it's inspiring to hear him say: "Your twisted cynicism makes me sick/your open disgust for idealistic naivete...what makes once-young minds get in this state?"

This kind of moral obsessiveness was carried through live in the band's muscular playing. The guitar, bass and drums bounced where they could have thunked, making this the most "jumpy" performance I've seen the Jam give since their earliest shows in N.Y. Weller as a physical figure and persona may have kept some distance, but the band's tough playing and the honesty of the songs connected immediately. And later in the show when Weller dedicated "Little Boy Soldiers" to General "I'm-in-charge-here" Haig, it re-emphasized how well the Jam's music ought to translate on this side of the Atlantic. By the time the group got to one of the encores, "Eton Rifles," a unity in the face of all odds did arise. If only for the moment, a bond was established that made Weller's distance, plus the mutual distrust of the Jam and the U.S., all seem utterly irrelevant. — *Jim Farber*

LINDA MATLOW

ALBERT COLLINS/STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

Finally, courtesy of *Musician*, some real blues at a Chicago NAMM Show. Windy City locale notwithstanding, the annual summer conclave of the National Association of Music Merchants (musical instruments and related pro sound equipment) usually features static technical displays from various session heavyweights, or brassy hyperbolic shows by graying jazz vets as nighttime entertainment. *Musician*'s concert embodied a fairly radical departure from the norm by offering an eclectic blend of flesh and blood music which included Emmett Chapman, inventor and principal exponent of the Stick, Stevie Ray Vaughan and the legendary "Master of the Telecaster," Albert Collins.

Perfectly in keeping with the magazine's pronounced tendency for unpredictable musical cross-pollination, the odd confluence of Californian instrumental futurism and white/black Texas blues took place deep in the bowels of the sleek Hyatt Regency hotel. Chapman, accompanied by a drummer, started things off on a more introspective note with a series of brilliant improvisations on the Stick, a revolutionary electric stringed instrument wherein both hands are used to press down the strings as opposed to the conventional picking and fingering technique used on guitars.

Young Stevie Ray Vaughan, brother of Thunderbirds' guitarist Jimmie Vaughan, followed Chapman and instantly pumped up the evening's energy level with a torrid if slightly cliched set of blues and rock 'n' roll standards. Fronting his Texas trio, Double Trouble, Stevie Ray Vaughan pushed his vintage Strat ("aged" in the glorious Rory Gallagher tradition) to the limits; squeezing, bending and literally shaking notes out of the guitar. His gruff, sympathetic vocal style, compact, rhythm-based guitar playing and total commitment to the blues form (with frequent nods to Hendrix) bode well for Vaughan in the future. Especially if he can transcend the obvious blues scales and stretch out a bit more melodically.

A short delay as everyone scrambled to find the key for the dressing room door where Albert Collins' guitar was cooling off prior to the performance. His solid four-piece backup group, led by A.C. Reed on electric tenor sax, coolly covered up for their leader's temporary absence by setting up a solid Texas funk groove tight enough to keep anyone on the edge of their seat. Undeterred by logistical delays or the rather sterile environment of the luxury hotel ballroom, Collins eventually strode out on stage and took over the evening, as is his habit. With that knife-edge "glacial" sound immortalized on tunes like "Frosty," "The Freeze," "De-Frost," and "Sno-Cone," Collins quickly mobilized all of the by now disparate energy in the room into a single wellspring of excitement and good feelings. People finally got up off their collective posteriors and started *dancing* on convention-weary legs. Moving all over the stage or running out into the audience with his 100-foot guitar cord to "jam" with the folks sitting at the tables, Collins manipulated the proceedings with the kind of subtle mastery earned from playing 300-plus club dates a year. The keening, metallic sound produced by his modified Fender Telecaster in tandem with a heavy fingerpicking attack and his very own eccentric phrasing produces a direct effect on the cerebral cortex like nothing else on this planet. After working hard to the point where the audience is right there *with* him, Collins graciously brought on Vaughan for a raucous "blues jam" finale, providing the only fitting emotional conclusion for this show. Who knows? Maybe this concert will start a trend for Chicago NAMM. Next time they might even feature some Chicago blues.

— *J.C. Costa*

GEORGE LEWIS

In his typically witty fashion, George Lewis, music director of the Kitchen, announced that perhaps the New Music and jazz segments of the audience should separate to opposite sides of the room to avoid any disruptive cross-pollinating during performances. After all, New York critics, especially the New Music variety, have been falling all over each other in alluding to the utopian possibilities of the New Music/New Jazz fusion that Lewis' programming at the Kitchen and his own conspicuously category-defying music seem to suggest. "Well, on second thought, you look just like a 'Music Audience' to me," Lewis concluded with a snicker, sending people scurrying back to their original seats. Although I could have sworn that I saw more than one New Music composer and a handful of jazz greats, it was this newly created "Music Audience" that turned out in full force to witness Lewis' penetrating music for solo trombone and trombone quartet at the Dance Theater Workshop.

From the opening phrases, it was clear that we would hear little of the smoking, punchy trombone work that permeates Lewis' jazz-oriented playing. The focus of the three works performed was on compositional structures rather than on the prodigious trombone talents involved. Utilizing some of the "new sonorities" of contemporary trombone literature — just to see if "any of them could stand the test of five minutes' time" — he grunted and groaned and slid up and down the entire range of the instrument, juxtaposing and developing the various effects the way more traditional composers use motifs.

Bringing out three of the most promising young trombonists around — Ray Anderson, Craig Harris and Peter Zummo — Lewis explored what he calls the "phantom drone" of Coltrane's music (i.e., the way Coltrane constantly circles back to the root of the C dorian mode on "Alabama"). As the title implies, "Unison" began with a rich chorus of unison lines, adding "secret" variations along the way that maintained the integrity of the whole rather than featuring soloists.

The most unusual and extended piece of the night was "Atlantic," a composition for four trombones electronically altered by six bypass filters attached to condenser-miked plunger mutes. The overall effect of the electronic manipulation was to cloud distinct pitches by accentuating the natural overtone series of the instrument. By then using circular breathing throughout (!), the quartet created a huge monolith of sound that seemed to hang in the air like a great stone sculpture with the most intricate and subtle designs chiseled on its exterior. I got the feeling that I could have walked around this mass and examined in detail the changes in texture and color the performers created by altering articulations and multiphonics, and manipulating plunger mutes to change the overtone emphasis.

I attended Lewis' performance expecting to hear a little more of the jazzy Lewis (just like a jazz critic), hoping for some of the gutsy playing featured on albums like Sam Rivers' *Contrasts*. Instead, his compositions opened yet another view of this man's original music; a view that defies simple categories. — *Clifford Tinder*

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

GEORGE LEWIS

KID CREOLE & THE COCONUTS

Urban time warps and geomusical quantum leaps later, Kid Creole and his pal Sugar-Coated are washed up on a sandy island with only their wits and zoot suits to impress dance-crazed natives. ***By Geoffrey Himes***

EBET ROBERTS

The glamorous, big-production musical is Kid Creole's method for his jungle-jangle madness.

Fresh Fruit in Foreign Places is "the first rap musical," claims composer August Darnell. But the album of the same name on Sire/ZE Records contains only the full-fledged songs from the show. It omits the rap numbers that hold together the narrative of an epic odyssey by Kid Creole & the Coconuts through mythical tropical islands in search of the elusive Mimi. "You really have to see the whole show," Darnell insists over the phone.

So I find myself at the Bayou in Washington; it's late in the show, and a single, white spotlight slices through the smoky air to find Sharon Kuzy dressed in a scanty red-and-white sailor's suit with a ponytail sticking straight out of her head. She gyrates like a wind-up *Shindig* go-go dancer under a street corner lamp post which holds a rotating globe of the earth instead of a bulb. As the band hiding in the shadows punches out a rhythmic vamp, Kuzy delivers her rap in perfect Sugarhill Gang diction. She explains in doggerel couplets how Kid Creole's banana boat crew escaped the police of Minskeberg Island only to flounder in a whirlpool. They finally land on the island republic of Iyo, only to discover they've walked into the middle of a civil war over control of a radio station. The conflict is between "Spanish music and Negro music," Kuzy concludes: "If it wasn't for the sand and heat, you'd swear you were on 42nd Street."

With that, the lights go up on the main stage — there is Kid Creole himself (a.k.a. August Darnell) walking ashore in a green pastel zoot suit and cream-colored Panama hat. To his right, his first mate Coatimundi (a.k.a. Andy "Sugar-Coated " Hernandez) is showing the ill-effects of the shipwreck: his white sailor suit is rumpled, and he's wearing orange gym shorts on his head. The 11-piece band saunters into a particularly saucy salsa, and the Kid glances at Coatimundi worriedly. "I'm so confused," Kid Creole confesses, "this Latin music's got me so, so bemused; the accent's worse than cockney!" From the back of the stage come the three Coconuts tossing their bright red polka dot skirts to and fro to the beat. "Uh oh!" they sing, "it's Carmen Miranda; the Coconuts got a brand new cha-cha. Oh no! The rhumba and samba; whatever happened to the hullabaloo?" Before long, the infectious island music gets a grip on Kid Creole, and soon he's cakewalking with a Latin roll in his hips.

Bam! the song is over and the stage-lights dim. Zing! the spotlight finds Kuzy again, and she delivers another transitional rap. Bang! the lights go up again and the crew is on B'Dilli Island, and the song is "Table Manners." Kid Creole and Lori Eastside share the vocals over aggressive new wave guitars and keyboards. Darnell's subversive lyrics are full of wonderful double entendres about sexual etiquette under the new egalitarianism. The ringing rhythm guitar figure underscores the inevitability of Eastside's advice: "When a handsome guy doesn't want dessert, then a pretty girl gets her feelings hurt. If it's understood the confection's good, and she offers all and she really should, then he must oblige, he must oblige."

The Kid Creole & the Coconuts road show is the latest attempt by August Darnell to create the great American melting pot mulatto musical. His earlier attempts — where he wrote and produced records for Kid Creole & the Coconuts, Machine, Cristina, Gichy Dan's Beachwood #9, James White, and Don Armando's Second Ave. Rhumba Band — were among the wittiest, most adventurous dance records of the past five years. But it all goes back to Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band, which Darnell founded with his older brother, Stony Browder, Jr. While every-

one was pigeonholing that band as a disco act in 1976, they were recording soundtracks for their own imagined movies with Ellingtonian swing, Motown backbeat and Brechtian lyrics.

Darnell's dream is to internationalize rock 'n' roll with accents far stranger than cockney. He not only wants to combine Bronx rap with British punk, he wants to bring in every brand of polyrhythm found south of New Orleans: calypso, salsa, ska, reggae, samba, bossa nova. And he wants to use this brand new jungle-jangle rock 'n' roll as the basis for a revival of glamorous, big-production musicals.

Those musicals are associated with that time in the late 40s when American cities seemed the most glamorous places on earth. Neon signs and skyscraper lights seemed to twinkle as swing jazz swooned out from ballrooms like sunset cloud banks. Before long, that dream soured, and the white middle class deserted the big cities. The blacks, Latins and bohemians who were left behind inherited the cities but not the glamor. Darnell's ingenious strategy is to reach back to the 40s and pick up the continuity of urban glamor where it had broken off. Only in his musicals, every cultural group in the city would be represented, both thematically and musically.

"I wouldn't be true to my mission and myself," Darnell argues, "if I didn't pursue my dream the way I dreamed it. I wanted to combine music and theater, I wanted to bring back the optimism of the old musicals, but raise them to the level of rock 'n' roll. But I also wanted to reflect all the cultures and juxtapositions out there. There's such a potpourri here in New York; it wouldn't be fair to have just one part." The 17-person Kid Creole & the Coconuts troupe includes men, women, blacks, whites, Hispanics and various shades in between. "I wouldn't be true to myself otherwise," Darnell admits, "for I myself am the product of different cultures."

August Darnell (now 31) and Stony Browder, Jr. (now 33) were the sons of a French-Canadian mother and an Afro-American father who lived in the Bronx. The two brothers soon developed an addiction for movie and stage musicals. "We must have seen *Casablanca* 120 times," confesses Darnell. "We saw it so much we must have thought we were in it. Even today, I love Rodgers & Hammerstein, Gershwin, Sondheim. So much of the lyric-writing is simple, but very expressive. And Stony was crazy about the swing bands: Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie.

"But it was rather weird. We'd turn the tube on and see this glorification of street living and life itself. Then we'd step outside and we'd see drunks on the stoops and whores on the corner. It was hard to reconcile the two. Maybe that's why there's such a juxtaposition between our music and our lyrics today. In some ways, though, the music itself was the most difficult to reconcile. We'd hear these Busby Berkeley musicals, and then we'd walk down the street hearing salsa and nitty gritty street music. How do you make sense out of that?"

JONATHAN POSTAL/RETNA LTD

Andy Hernandez and August Darnell saw *Casablanca* so many times, they thought they were in it.

Stony Browder made wonderful sense out of this strange mix as he cut demos with his old high school band: little brother August on bass and vocals; madman Andy Hernandez on vibes, marimba and accordion; Mickey Sevilla on percussion, and the sultry Cory Daye on vocals. The band had gone through many names at James Monroe High School in the Bronx, but finally settled on Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band, taken from a bayou voodoo legend.

Darnell was working on a masters degree in English lit and teaching English at Hempstead High School on Long Island as he put lyrics to the cassettes Browder sent him. Browder and Darnell insist to this day that they had no intention of making a disco record, but their music's high polish, swing momentum and strong beat and the band's dapper image fit 1976 like a hand in a glove. The first single, "Cherchez La Femme," caught on at gay discos at Fire Island, Manhattan and D.C., then at straight discos, and then on radios everywhere. Suddenly they were stars.

EBET ROBERTS

Sharon Kuzy raps the sad tale of missing Mimi as the Coconuts coolly cook.

The credits on *Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band* (RCA) read: "Screenplay by August Darnell. Musical director: Stony Browder, Jr." If that 1976 album implied a Hollywood soundtrack beneath the dance beat, the 1977 successor, *Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band Meets King Penett* (RCA) made the big band ballroom sound explicit. It was gorgeous, sophisticated, subtle music, but it didn't even vaguely resemble the follow-up disco hit that RCA was looking for. To exacerbate tensions more, Browder refused to take the band out on tour unless RCA underwrote his complete concept of horns, strings, costumes and props. RCA coudn't believe that this flash-in-the-pan disco band was acting the superstar art-rock band.

So Dr. Buzzard disappeared for two-and-a-half years before resurfacing with *James Monroe H.S. Presents: Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band Goes to Washington* (Elektra) at the end of 1979. At that time, Browder released a fascinating press statement. "We're defenders of art," he declared. "When we first started, our whole idea was to create a sound that said to people, 'Hey! There are other musical combinations than synthesizers and vampire drums!' Now, maybe that was an overly romantic notion on our part, but that's how the sound came about...

"Then we released a second album that was different in its musical direction. It blew the record executives' little minds. They didn't promote what they couldn't understand...Our first album was zoot-suit city music. The second was more swing-oriented in the Hollywood sense. *The Savannah Band Goes to Washington* is really degenerated rock 'n' roll. We're a lot punkier now. It's funny. We started moving in that direction when our first record company started driving us out of our minds. This new sound was my way of rebelling against the pressures of the industry. They put down our second album because I was beginning to lean in the area melodically. When they objected, we all just moved into it more quickly. It was an instinctive move. We've always been a pretty rebellious band. We're the alternative to whatever there is, and there is a lot of *whatever there is* floating out there today."

Unfortunately, Elektra could make no

more sense of Dr. Buzzard's music than RCA. Elektra not only refused to promote the album, but they canceled a scheduled fourth album. Today Darnell insists that Dr. Buzzard is still a living band, even though it's never performed outside New York and has yet to release an album in the 80s. "We've been together since high school," Darnell explains, "and we'll be together the rest of our lives. In fact, we're cutting some demos this summer and looking for the right record company. But Andy and I wanted to get on stage and perform, so we formed Kid Creole."

As the impasse between Browder and the industry deepened, everyone got restless. Singer Cory Daye made a classy solo disco album in 1979, *Cory and Me* (New York International). Also in 1979, Darnell wrote and produced the salsa-oriented *Machine* (RCA), which yielded the hit single, "There But For the Grace of God Go I."

At the same time, Darnell and Hernandez drifted down to lower Manhattan where they fell in with the new wave scene. There they met Michael Zilkha, whose ZE Records was recording the more dance-oriented punk bands. "Meeting Zilkha was a blessing for me," Darnell maintains. "He was the most open-minded recording executive I've ever met." Darnell and Zilkha set up a 50/50 partnership in Puddle Productions, Darnell became an in-house producer for ZE and ZE backed Darnell's dreams for Kid Creole & the Coconuts. Darnell produced *Christina* (ZE ZEA) for Zilkha's Nico-like chanteuse and ex-girl friend. Hernandez produced *Don Armando's Second Ave. Rhumba Band.*

The real focus was on Kid Creole, however. "There was so much of that Caribbean sound that I couldn't ventilate with the Savannah Band," explains Darnell. "Stony is not into reggae at all. I got into it very heavily as a result of hearing 'I Shot the Sheriff' in college. I became a raving reggae fanatic. Stony would just laugh at me and say, 'No monkey music in this band. This is not a reggae show; this is the 40s.'" "Also," pipes in the nearby Hernandez, "we desperately wanted to perform for live audiences."

Darnell wrote only lyrics, never music, for the Savannah Band, which was essentially Browder's project. As Kid Creole, though, Darnell wrote everything. Last year's debut album, *Off the Coast of Me* (ZE/Antilles) reinforced Darnell's stature as soul's sharpest lyricist since Smokey Robinson. But,where Robinson wrote with an innocent idealism, Darnell writes with experienced irony. On "Darrio," the Coconuts purr, "Darrio, can you get me into Studio 54?" Darnell protests that disco is dead and boring to boot; wouldn't she rather go see the B-52s or James White? She just repeats her request all the more seductively. One gets the feeling that Darnell is really dialoguing with the Dr. Buzzard fans and managers who resented the band's move into more progressive music.

Even more ambitious is the new *Fresh Fruit in Foreign Places* (ZE/Sire), which is a Buzzard-like soundtrack, only the setting has shifted from a Manhattan ballroom to a Caribbean cruise. The new band includes supple Carol Colman on bass, a three-man horn section, former Archie Shepp pianist Peter Schott on keyboards, hot new wave guitarist Jim Ripp and drummer Winston Grennan from Jamaica's legendary Skatalites. "The advantages of a multiracial band are multifarious," quips Darnell. "Though Andy and I run a tight ship when it comes to improvisation, so much comes out in the way someone delivers a line; the person will bring his whole world with him. I knew I wanted Winston on drums, because I wanted that island feel; he helped invent ska, you know. And I wanted Jim Ripp, who comes from a totally different background than a black guitarist, because I knew he would give the music a hard rock 'n' roll edge."

The musical's narrative was suggested by an actual incident. Darnell had a real girl friend named Mimi, who simply disappeared one day without warning and prompted him to scurry around New York looking for her. He simply expanded that hunt into a calypso odyssey tale. "It was romantic, simple — a boy looking for a girl — and it led to some interesting idea runs," Darnell recalls. "Besides Andy and I were looking for a vehicle to explain why our music is such a potpourri of different sounds. A travelogue was the perfect vehicle." Darnell is currently talking to producers about staging the musical with complete props and costumes for multi-week runs in New York and Los Angeles this year. "Eventually I'd like to write for the screen," he confesses. "I'd like to be responsible for a rebirth of the old musical style of the 40s; you know, flimsy plots, lots of music, lots of dancing, wonderful, mindless entertainment."

Yet Darnell's songs so far have been far from mindless. Though the music suggests carefree escapades, the wryly ironic lyrics take a close look at the bitter fighting between men and women; between artists and business; between different cultures. "It comes from the way I view the world," Darnell shrugs. "After being steeped in the whole college world, and then coming out into the real world, I found this great juxtaposition. Someone was not telling the truth. This led to my cynical side which led me to investigating everything. What I found out made me rather political, so I write political stories. But radio listeners don't expect lyrics to be any more than 'Let's dance the night away' or 'Gimme, gimme.' Somehow I feel they deserve more. I believe there should be caviar for the masses. If the other fools won't give it to them, then Andy and I will." M

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SKUNK

PHOTOS BY TERRY MILLER

BAXTER

Studio magician and guitar virtuostic, Jeff Baxter walked away from active memberships in Steely Dan and the Doobies to explore fertile new sounds, his usual studio chores and a new role as producer-catalyst.

By Dan Forte

Barricaded behind a wall of sound baffles in Hollywood's Cherokee Studio, rock 'n' roller Nils Lofgren is laying down vocal tracks for his upcoming album on Backstreet Records. On the other side of the glass, scribbling notes on a xeroxed lyric sheet, is ace session guitarist, road veteran and former Doobie Brother, Jeff "Skunk" Baxter. "I guess the guy's shy," he mumbles, staring into the studio where a disembodied voice is singing, "Pretty girl, please come dancin' with me."

Lofgren has been running down the song for half an hour, with Baxter combing the lyric sheet word by word. "*Scoop* 'dog' a little bit, Nils," Jeff says through the talk-back. "Give that line some personality. Speak it."

Nils takes another pass at the tune, before Baxter stops him with some ideas on altering the melody. "If it's not natural," he stresses, "don't do it."

Lofgren's words and music finally seem to be jelling with Baxter's production ideas, and he delivers a convincing, if not perfect, rendition in one fell swoop. "Those two lines I was saving?" Baxter coaches. "I'm going to keep the *other* lines and go over those two. You're singing stronger now."

The lead track patched together, Lofgren suggests doubling the entire vocal. Suddenly, what sounded like a somewhat raw, churning pop rocker sounds like a raw but catchy hit record. "Whoo!" Baxter is bouncing up and down in his revolving chair. "This won't take a second."

Since leaving the Doobie Brothers in 1978, Jeff Baxter, an already sought-after sideman and session player, has also become an in-demand record producer. "It feels real natural," he says of his latest musical role, "because it's really a question of where you stop giving input. I assume the people that hire me as a guitarist expect me to give everything I've got — they'll define where it is they want me to stop. And I expect the same from the guys that I hire. In other words, if you have guitar suggestions, I would assume that the guitar player would give me every idea he had. But if he's standing in the control room and it comes time to do vocals, then I have to take over from there and say, 'Okay, thank you for responsibility up to here; now I have to take responsibility for this.' As a producer, you keep going with your input through the whole project."

During the recording of the Doobies' *Minute By Minute* album, Jeff took on his first assignment behind the console, for the Paul Bliss Band [*Dinner With Raoul*, on Columbia]. Since then he has produced Livingston Taylor's *Man's Best Friend* and *Malice In Wonderland* by Nazareth. Whenever his schedule permits, he also plays guitar and pedal steel with R&B singer/songwriter Billy Vera, in Billy & the Beaters, whose first album [*Billy & the Beaters*, Alfa 10001] Baxter produced. "The original concept of the band was as a place where studio musicians could go to have some fun. And there was no actual seeking of a recording contract. That's what made it nice; there was no pressure. So we waited for the record companies to come to us — and they did. We got offers from all the biggies, but they all said you can't have a successful live first album. So we've already proven them wrong. It's good to see that Billy, being such an R&B cat and such a guy from the past, would take such a drastic, outside move and pull it off."

Playing steel guitar on "Strollin' With Bones" Monday nights at midnight at the Troubadour seems a far cry from the multi-platinum success of the Doobie Brothers. The obvious ques-

tion is, why did Baxter choose to leave one of the most successful bands in pop music at their peak? A more interesting question though, is why did he decide to leave Steely Dan, on the verge of becoming superstars, to join the Doobies, at the time seemingly on the verge of nothing special.

"I was looking for a band that was raw enough, but that could be developed," he says. "I thought I had kind of an idea where music was headed, and I was looking for a band that I could work with and be a part of. But I was interested in trying some new stuff. I was already going on the road with the Doobies and playing on their records while I was still in Steely Dan, and I really liked it. So I saw it as a chance to possibly take a bunch of talented guys, who in a way didn't even know how good they were — the stuff they ended up playing, some of that stuff on *Living On The Fault Line* and *Taking It To The Streets*, was incredible — and doing something in a band context. I was taking lessons I'd learned from Steely Dan and applying them to a much more accessible band.

"The real important thing I wanted in the band was a keyboard player," he continues, "so that's when I asked Michael McDonald if he'd like to join. The keyboards are really, to me, what gives a band musical legitimacy. With that basis, with the configuration the band had at the time, it was fertile ground."

After realizing the potential he saw in the band, Skunk left the group because, in his words, "I didn't see it being any better. There were some personal reasons as well; I just wasn't having as much fun. I also saw that the time had come to get into doing something else, besides just being a road sausage. I had the opportunity, and I thought it would make good sense for me to leave while everything was happening. Can you think of a better time to leave a group?"

Jeff Baxter was born in Washington, D.C. on December 13, 1948. At age five he began classical piano lessons, which he kept up for 15 years. When Jeff was in fourth grade, his father was promoted to head of Latin American public relations for an advertising agency, and the family moved to Mexico for six years. In Mexico, Baxter bought an electric guitar and started playing in Mexican rock bands. "I had an Alamo single-pickup guitar made in San Antonio and a Comet amplifier made in Germany — with 'pulsating vibrato.' The sweep, from the high to the low end of the tremolo, was so drastic it just tore the speaker cabinet apart — real cheapo speaker.

"I was an only child, and I liked being alone. That really helps you when you want to be a musician, because that puts you in a situation where you can practice. I just dug music. I felt like I could express myself a lot better that way. Even before rock 'n' roll — just being able to sit down and make music any time you want."

At the precocious age of ten, Jeff played on his first record, with a combo called the Tarantulas. "We made a record called 'Tarantula,'" he laughs. "'Tarantula' by the Tarantulas. It was an instrumental — got to number 15 on the charts. Instrumentals were everything in those days. We had three guitars, a drummer, and some plastic organ."

Baxter's two major influences at this point were the jazz and R&B he heard from his father's record collection and guitar-oriented instrumental rock. "The Ventures, the Pyramids, Johnny & the Hurricanes, Sandy Nelson, Jorgen Ingmann — all the instrumental bands," he lists with reverence. "Al Caiola, Billy Mure — all the guys who were making instrumental albums, playing melody lines of songs on the guitar. And then when I was ten years old, a disc-jockey friend of my father's gave me Howard Roberts' first two records — *Color Him Funky* and *H.R. Is A Dirty Guitar Player*. When I listened to those I just said, 'ALL RIGHT!' I also met a kid named Johnny Ortega who was in a band called Locos El Ritmo — the Rhythm Crazies. They were the top rock 'n' roll band in Mexico — just exceptional. And Johnny had a Les Paul guitar that he put banjo strings on, and he was using four [Fender] Concert amplifiers. I never heard anything like it. That combined with the Howard Roberts records was the beginning or whatever style I've evolved — plus listening to a lot of trumpet and saxophone players."

In 1964 the Baxter family moved to New York City, and Jeff got a job at Jimmy's Music Shop on 48th Street. He also expanded his guitar vocabulary playing bar mitzvahs in outfits such as the Dick Goldring Orchestra. "I think everybody in the band was over 65 except for me," he remembers. "And I'd get up every ten songs and try to sing and play, like, 'Johnny B. Goode' with these cats on accordion and saxophone. It was a scream. But I learned all the standards out of the fake books. I remember one time we did 'Let's Twist Again,' and the drummer, who was pretty well over the hill, played it like a shuffle. With brushes," he laughs. "It was pret-ty amazing. Like *Mose Allison Plays Chubby Checker*."

While at Jimmy's Music Shop, Baxter began repairing and building guitars, using skills he'd taught himself in Mexico. "I learned about guitars from living in Mexico and not having *anyplace* to take *anything* to get fixed," he explains. "You just start unscrewing screws. You know they put it together, so there's got to be a way to take it apart. Just like a car. Of course, I destroyed several guitars, and shocked myself a thousand times. Then when I started repairing guitars at Jimmy's Music Shop, Dan Armstrong started noticing that there wasn't a whole lot of work coming out of Jimmy's. So he came down and checked it out, took me out to lunch, offered me five an hour. I was making a buck and a quarter, and I was there from 8:00 till 6:00. Danny said, 'I'll offer you five an hour, and we start at noon and end at six.' I said, 'Great! When do I start?' That's when I *really* started working on guitars."

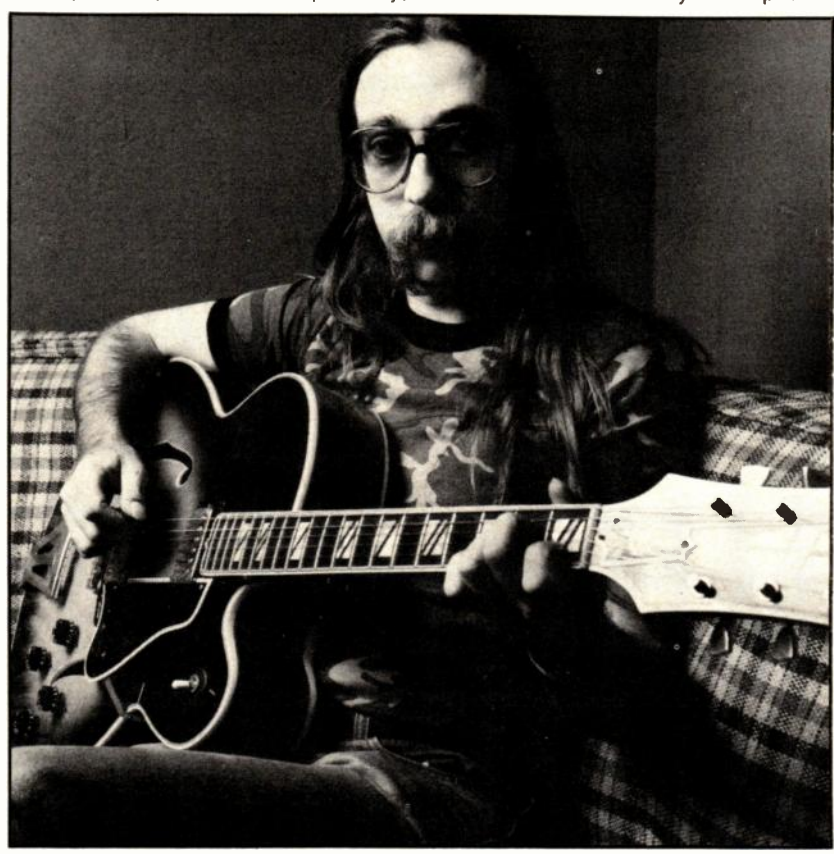
After graduating from Taft prep school, Jeff attended Boston College, all the while playing in a long succession of bands. Asked to list them in order, Baxter has to concentrate to remember them all. "Let's see... *during* the Doobies there was Elton John. We did the *Captain Fantastic* album at Wembley Stadium. Before that was Steely Dan, and during Steely Dan was Linda Ronstadt, around '73 or '74. We had Ritchie Hayward on drums, John Boylan on piano, Bob Worford on guitar, myself on steel and congas, Andrew Gold on guitar, and Doug Haywood on bass. Steamroller rock 'n' roll band! Then before Steely Dan would be Buzzy Linhart, and before that, the Holy Modal Rounders. That was, like, 1969, '70. At that time I was doing records with Carly Simon. Before that I was in Ultimate Spinach, and before that, that would put me back in high school, playing in bands in the Village. I played on and off for a while with Jimmy James and the Blue Flames [Jimi Hendrix' group before Chas Chandler discovered him and took him to England]. I was working at Jimmy's Music Shop, and I made a guitar trade with Hendrix. I traded him a white Stratocaster for a Duosonic. He was working at the Cafe Wah, and he said, 'Why don't you come down some night?' I was playing in a group called the Other Ones at the Cafe Bizarre, and I'd go down and play bass with Hendrix once in a while. He was playing his ass off."

Baxter began doing studio work, on a casual basis, while still working in music stores. "You'd deliver stuff to recording sessions," he explains, "and sometimes they needed a guitar player. Just rock 'n' roll and silly songs."

Jeff's studio log got a bit thicker during his period with Buzzy Linhart and started overflowing after contributing his distinctive brand of lead guitar to Steely Dan's *Can't Buy A Thrill*, *Countdown To Ecstasy*, and *Pretzel Logic*. "I think what producers call me for," he reflects, "is the energy, number one. Gary Katz [Steely Dan's producer] would always say he'd never keep a solo I'd done until I turned purple while I was playing it. And he has a point. To really do it, you have to really give it everything you've got; you have to blow your brains out. I think people ask me to play for that reason — because I can bring that into the studio. And, secondly, I think they would like to have something less than a standard approach. The guitar soloist is really the thread that sews the vocal together. He plays underneath the vocal, and then he plays a seam that stitches the vocal together — gives it relief, yet doesn't let you lose it. I think a lot of producers or artists like the way I carry the musical idea from one side of the canyon to the other. That combined with the power."

Baxter's personality is both laid back and energetic, a strange combination of what appears to be lackadaisical but is in actuality total business. "That keeps me from being hyperactive," he responds, "because I take that energy and I just use it up, every ounce of it. The secret to being a good studio musician — or one of the secrets — is to be able to combine relaxation with concentration and technical ability. Now, it's easy to get technical ability, and a lot of people can concentrate, but relaxing is really the key. Everybody has their own way of relaxing. Jai Winding plays standards in between takes, myself and Michael Baird play surf music, Lee Sklar comes in and kids me about how terrible my clothing is and then sits down and plays his ass off. Everyone relaxes their own way. My way is to be kind of laid back, I guess, trying not to be one more thorn in anybody's side in the studio situation — because it's already tense for most people. I've never found people to be bothered by that, because when you sit down and the light goes on, that's when you really do your thing. There's no lack of work, so I must be doing something right. It's so many things. It's musicianship, it's experience, it's diplomacy, it's gut feeling sometimes. It's everything you've got."

How he specifically approaches a solo, Jeff says, "depends completely on what's going on. If you could say that there's one thing in general that I like to convey in my solos it's humor, and the fact that life ain't *too* bad and you can get a giggle out of a couple of things. I may have the theme song from the *Gale Storm Show* on my mind, and when the guy says, 'Play a solo,' I use that as the basis for it. A smile will come to somebody's face in the control room, and that's it. I've just done the job. That's really what I think music is supposed to do. It's supposed to run you through the gamut of emotions, but I believe that running through that gamut is meant to be a purging, not a punishment. I think when you get to the other end of it, you're supposed to feel pretty good. It's like primal therapy; you get it all out, and even though you've been through a horrible time maybe — you've heard a song that's brought you to tears — on the other end you find relief. Because you needed that — it's good medicine."



TERRY MILLER

"Steely Dan producer Gary Katz would always say he'd never keep a solo I'd done until I turned purple while I was playing it. You have to really give it everything you've got, you have to blow your brains out every time."

What does Baxter think of music that doesn't have much humor involved in it, for instance much of the cold new wave coming from Great Britain? "Well, that's a different kind of music," he allows. "You see, the music that's coming out of England is desperate music. The whole new wave/punk scene started much the same as rock 'n' roll started. Music in the forties had gotten to the point where kids just said, 'We can't play this stuff! I mean, it's gonna take me *years* to play like Charlie Parker. What the hell, I'm getting me a guitar — I'm *stealing* me a guitar — and I'm getting four more guys to help steal it with me, and we're gonna go find ourselves a gig, and we're gonna bash and crash and drink beer and make a lot of noise, and tell people that we're pissed about the fact that, number one, we can't play the music!' So in England, you have the same thing — because music has gotten so sophisticated, with Yes and 10cc. Those aren't the bands of the skiffle days; those are well-matured, very sophisticated bands. So these kids are saying, 'Well, later for that.' The other thing that enters into it is the desperation that comes with a ferociously horrifying economic situation. It's brutal; there's no jobs. So other than tearing up the streets — which is happening anyway — kids took to the music again. Music is the thing that everybody goes to when they want to speak. And punk music was speaking. 'We don't need your values, we don't *want* your values, we don't really know *what* we want, but we're gonna play music the way *we* hear it, and who cares if nobody knows how to play? It's feeling, can't you see?'"

Recently Baxter has spent a lot of time in Japan, and he sees in that country the potential for major musical innovations. "The age group of young musicians in Japan falls at just about the same period for them as sort of post-War time did for rock 'n' roll," he states. "They're in a fairly revolutionary period. The only thing they don't have is the anger. The motivation is different. It's hard to explain. The rock 'n' roll anger was aimed directly at your parents, directly at society — whereas the rock 'n' roll anger that comes from Japan I think comes from a feeling that there's something wrong but not knowing what it is yet. It's kind of an uneasiness. Which I think is important; you have to have tension.

"I see in Japanese musicians now a maturity that I haven't seen before. It's almost like the Japanese guitar industry; the guitars they make now have gone beyond copying, and gone beyond *good* copies — they've become something in themselves. I'm starting to put together situations in which the Japanese and American musicians really play together. That's what I want to see, and that's what I'm concentrating on. Because I see the Japanese as having something really heavy to offer. The British gave us back the blues, and if we let the Japanese mess with our music they might give us something back that we're missing. Let's face it, the Beatles came out of Britain; who knows what could come out of Japan?"

Despite his notoriety to MOR listeners via his stint with the Doobie Brothers, Skunk Baxter has a good deal of knowledge of, and appreciation for, both extremes of the musical/sociological spectrum, from the sophisticated to the primitive. "Well,

it's the way of the universe," he smiles. "It's infinitely complex, but when you go to the basis of it, it's a very simple system of building blocks that always work the same. The wonder of it is the simplicity. The simplicity produces the sublime. In music, it's the same way. You have to appreciate the infinite varieties of ways to play music, but because there are ways to get there — ways that music is put together — there's a common denominator, a sort of emotional bottom line that all music has. That's where you start from. And the best way to make a statement is in as few words as possible, because the idea is to trigger the other person into filling in the spaces. It's like if you give someone a pencil sketch and say, 'Finish it' — as opposed to showing them a finished painting. They can look at the painting and appreciate it — as in a classical piece of music — and enjoy it for what it is. But if you understate and keep it simple, the person that's listening to your music — and this is very important — feels like he's participating because he is adding to what you do in *his* head. That's why a guy throws a Coke bottle at you in a concert. It's not because the person doesn't like you; it's because in his own way he's trying to reach out and be a part of it. Fair enough. It's really important to understand the part that the other person plays in your music. Because if you don't," he laughs, "you get progressive jazz."

Jeff leans back and smiles. "Now we're getting to the interesting stuff," he says "which is *why* I do what I do, instead of *what* I do. When you talk about the philosophy, the idea being that the didacticism that's involved in being a musician is that you have to enjoy, and you have to teach. Because as soon as you know how to do something, you have to pass that on to other people, or at least the best parts of it.

"In other words, a great chef may not tell you how he's preparing his special dessert, but by him making the dessert and you eating it, you've learned something about it even if he hasn't told you. But he wants to teach you that that's good, and what *is* good about it. But only if you want to learn — only if you order it will you get it. See, that's what's nice — it's a no pressure situation on the part of the second party. It's a totally positive movement. There's a zero point where you start from, and everything's positive from there."

BAXTER EQUIPMENT

Jeff Baxter's collection of guitars and amplifiers reflects his attitude towards music. A combination of the elaborate and the basic, the sublime and the ridiculous. At the high end of the sonic and price tag spectrum is his new polyphonic Roland guitar synthesizer, the GR300. For a few years now, Baxter has worked in the research and development department for Roland, first using the prototype for the GR500 monophonic guitar synthesizer on *Living On The Fault Line*. "I'd been experimenting with taking the tape heads off a couple of echo units and placing them under the guitar strings and building a real primitve pitch to voltage converter," he details, "and Roland had pretty much gone the same route."

Baxter also uses Roland amps in addition to his Fender Princeton and Deluxe, which were modified by Paul Rivera of Rivera Research and Pignose.

"My favorite guitar," Skunk reveals, "is a homemade Stratocaster I built solely for playing direct into the console. Then I've got a good rosewood Telecaster, again with my own electronics. I've also got a green Burns Bison, with the 'Wild Dog' setting and everything on it, but I prefer the sound of my red Baby Bison. That's what I did the Donna Summer *Bad Girls* album with [including a solo on 'Hot Stuff']."

Then there's the famous "Baxtercaster" Tele with the "Skunk-o-sonic" pickups. "I put that together," Jeff recounts, "out of just garbage, to use as a test bed for some pickups I'd designed. And I liked the way it sounded so much I took it on

continued on pg. 110

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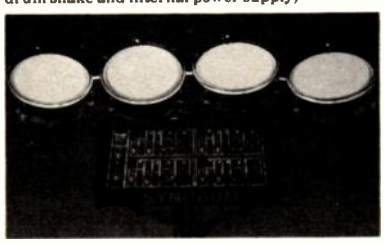

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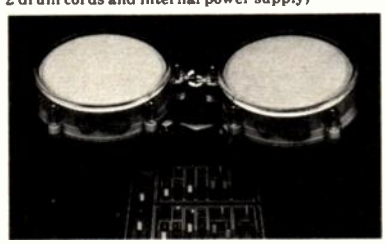

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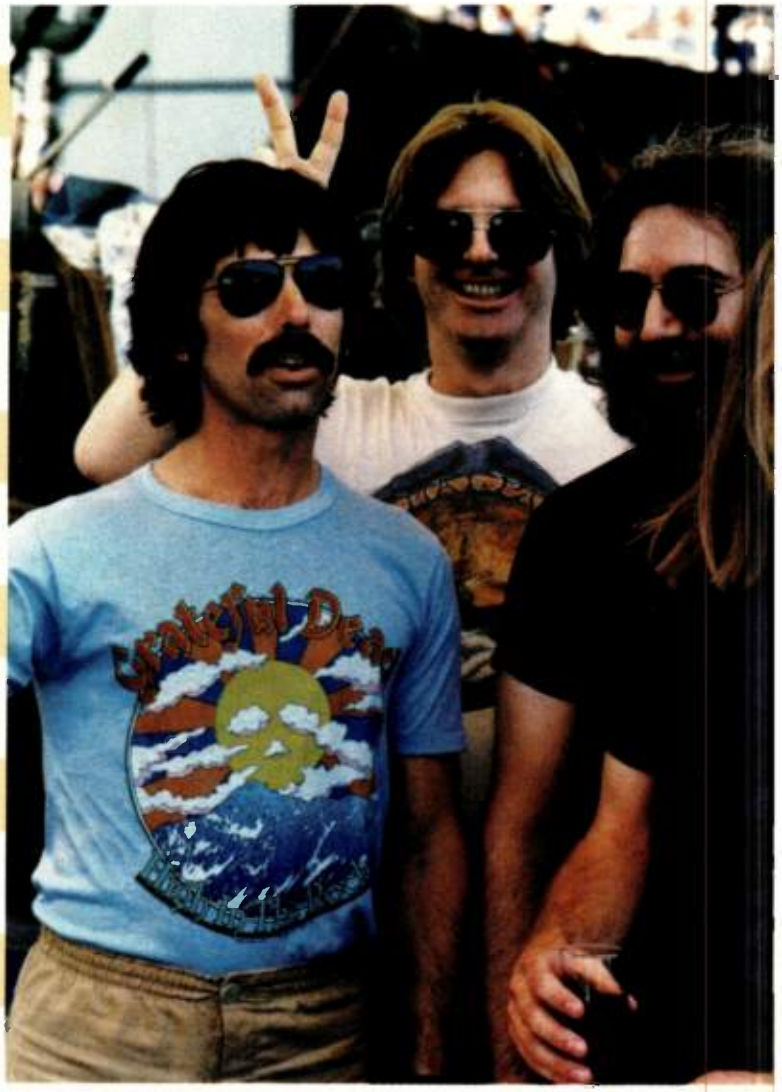
IN SEARCH OF THE GRATEFU

By Vic Garbarini



He's a 35-year-old happily married father of four — the respected director of a research institute in Washington, D.C. But Jerry Toporovsky has a secret obsession, and on this cool All Hallows Eve he's about to drive six long hours to New York's Radio City Music Hall to indulge it. "Sometimes I try to reason with myself," explains Toporovsky. "I'm pushing 40, I've got a family and a full-time job — I've gotta be *crazy* to be doing this. But then I think of the last time I saw them and realize it's going to be worth it. It always is." Yes, friends, it's sad but true: Jerry Toporovsky is a confirmed Deadhead.

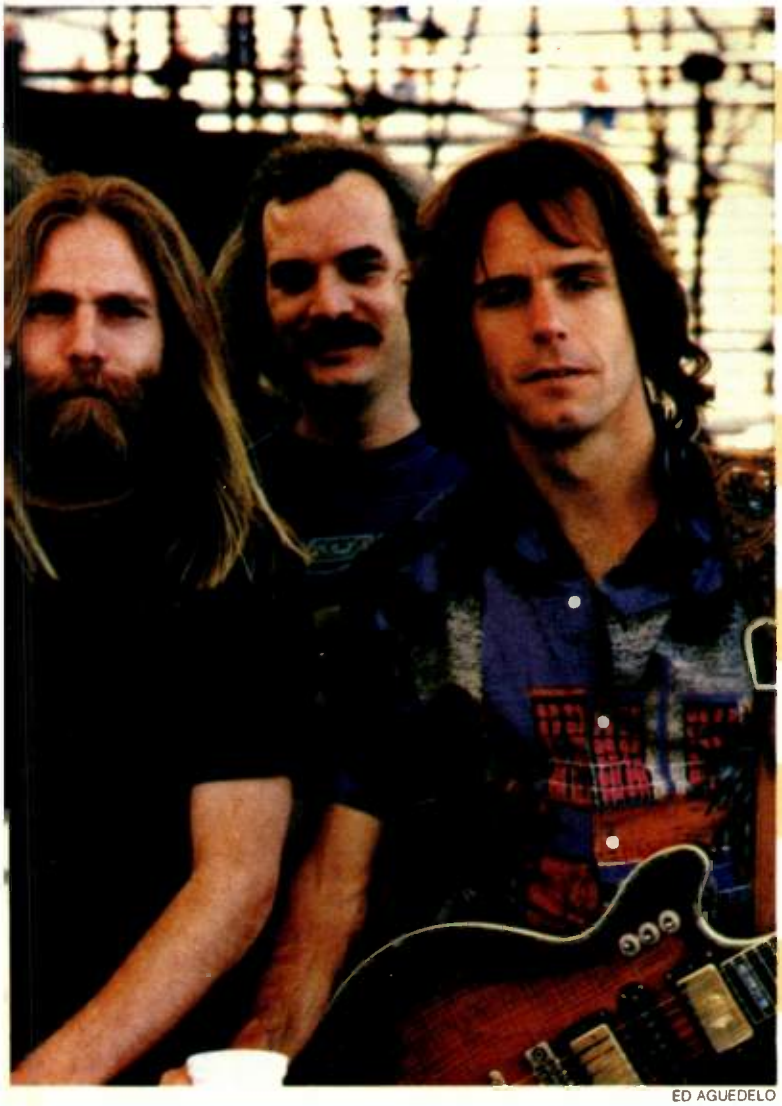
There is no known cure.

There are thousands like him who follow the Grateful Dead's moveable feast around the country like medieval pilgrims pursuing some mobile Canterbury. They range in age from 16 to 60, and some have been "on the bus," as Ken Kesey might put it, since the band's inception over fifteen years ago. What is it that attracts them? Certainly not nostalgia. The Grateful Dead are *not* the Beach Boys — a traveling oldie show cranking out sentimental favorites for aging hippies. No, the Dead are a living, evolving phenomenon who are still capable of acting as channels for the special quality of energy that can transform an ordinary concert into a transcendent event. Unfortunately, very little of this magic (what Garcia refers to as their "x chemistry") finds its way onto vinyl, making it difficult for the average un-Deadhead to understand what all the hoopla is about. "There are a few passages on 'Dark Star' and some of the other material from the live albums or old concert tapes that capture that 'otherness,' but they're the exception," explains Toporovsky. "We just don't play with the same fire in the studio," concurs guitarist Bob Weir. "We've even toyed with the idea of taking the time off from touring to learn how to make records in the studio; desperation being the mother of invention, we'd have to come up with something!"

Well, maybe.

True, *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* came close, but those were albums of simpler, more concise material that sidestepped the real problem of how to deal with the more free-form exploration of a "Dark Star" or "Saint Stephen." It's not simply a question of capturing the spirit of the jam; there's another dimension that emerges when the Dead

JL DEAD



ED AGUEDELO

walk into their free-wheeling improvisation, a quality that seems impossible to recreate in the studio. "It's not just a question of jamming — it's a little bit like jazz, but that's not it either," says Toporovsky. "It's a question of really connecting on a higher level with each other." Since a principal difference between the Dead live and the Dead in the studio involves the presence of an audience, it would follow that interacting with said audience is an indispensable part of the Grateful Dead experience. "Sure, we can get that magic on a record," laughs drummer Bill Kreutzman, "just cram about 5000 people in a studio with us while we record!"

Considering the band's early involvement with psychedelics, some have claimed that this "x chemistry" is entirely dependent on drugs. "Not true," argues Toporovsky. "Acid can give you a headstart in getting to that 'other' place, but it's not required in order to plug into the experience. I haven't taken psychedelics in over five years but I still get the same high at a Dead concert now without drugs as I did on acid in the beginning." In addition to having an audience to work with, the other indispensable factor in the Grateful Dead equation is their commitment to taking risks. Not just propositional and conceptual risks, but a willingness to step out over the edge every night in concert.

"That spirit of adventure is crucial," claims Weir. "We're dedicated to pushing everything a little further each time. Every time another verse comes up, even if I've played it a thousand times before, I try to play it a little differently, to understand and make it a little better each time...and then when we're *really* loosened up, we go for something we've *never* played before." In short, nothing is allowed to ossify into a predictable pattern — everything is kept alive, fresh, and evolving: the Rolling Stones may be content to gather moss, but not the Dead. They have firmly grasped the idea that the only way to maintain their connection with the ineffable is through constant growth and change.

As the band's newest member, keyboardist Brent Mydland discovered just before his first Dead concert two years ago, living with the unexpected can be a bit disorienting at first. "The day before the concert I asked what tunes we'd be doing, so I could concentrate on those songs, but no one would tell me. It freaked me a bit, but then when we got on stage, I

realized that *nobody* knew what we were going to play. Keeps you on your toes..." Once into those swirling, birth-of-the-universe jams, almost anything goes; even long forgotten songs may emerge from the maelstrom like time travelers popping out of a black hole: "'Cold Rain and Snow' just reappeared after six years in the middle of a jam 'cause Garcia realized he could superimpose it over what we were doing," reflects Weir. Band members encourage each other to step out at any point; if somebody states a theme emphatically enough, the rest will inevitably follow. "Well, *almost* always," corrects Weir. "Sometimes only *half* the guys will come along — but that's rare." Of course, the same is true of the mysterious "X factor:" "We can prepare ourselves to be proper vehicles for it, but we can't guarantee it'll happen on any given night," explains the Dead's other drummer, Mickey Hart. "We can raise the sail, but we can't make the wind come." Toporovsky agrees: "Out of any five given concerts, one will be mediocre, one or two will be very, very good, and one or two will be utterly incredible." In the old days the dead would often come into an area for a sustained engagement of half-a-dozen shows, guaranteeing compulsive Deadheads at least one or two transcendent performances. Today, engagements are generally limited to two or three per city, and the faithful often have to catch the band in at least two different towns to secure their cosmic hit.

But the amazing thing is that those moments *do* happen. In the course of interviewing all the band members (except Phil Lesh, who wasn't available), I tried to get them to articulate what they'd discovered about the principles that sustained this matrix, that kept the cosmic dance between performer, audience, and the music itself from collapsing into a chaotic jumble. This was more than a matter of mere curiosity on my part; the problem of longevity is one that must haunt every band as their youthful passion and energy wanes. Any group that's been around for 15 years and can still call down that illuminative power has something to teach all of us. Maybe something that could even save somebody's life. I can't help but think of a Bruce Springsteen concert a few weeks back. The magic just wasn't happening during the first set, and Bruce knew it. But being Bruce, he insisted on pushing himself and his band with a harsh urgency bordering on desperation, as if he hoped to break through to the other side on sheer bravado alone. It hurt to watch him struggle like some beached swimmer, who thinks he can bring back an ebbing tide if he just continues to flail away hard enough on the sand. "My God," said a voice in the next aisle, "if he keeps that up, he'll kill himself." It was a frightening thought, and one that came back to haunt me the other day when I heard that Springsteen had cancelled a series of midwestern dates on account of exhaustion.

After a decade and a half of experimentation, the Dead are convinced that sheer force alone isn't the answer. "It is not even a question of concentration," insists Weir. "You've got to let go and surrender to it; drop your cares, and be there for it." Okay, but who calls the shots? "Nobody calls the shots," counters Weir. "The Dead is bigger than the sum of its parts," adds Garcia. "We go where it leads us." Sounds simple enough, but how the hell do you keep everybody's egos from tearing apart the delicate balance needed to keep things open? According to the Dead, the answer involves standing the normal traditional Western attitude towards music on its head: concentration and individual assertiveness give way to a more diffuse awareness and the commitment to ensemble playing. According to Weir, "You have to reverse gears from the way you originally learned things. For a musician to master his instrument requires excruciating concentration; each note has to be conquered, then strung together to form riffs and passages. For ensemble playing you've got to let all that go and be aware of others. The key here is *listening to what everybody else is doing*. You can always tell when somebody's not listening, because they play too much and spoil the chemistry." So you divide your attention between what you're doing and what the group is doing? "No," insists Weir, "that's not it. Dividing your attention implies a separation between yourself and the music where none exists. Actually, I *am* the music and all that's necessary is to maintain a little concentration, just enough to articulate my part so it blends with the whole."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Stoned? The Dead in '67, peering fearlessly through doors of perception.

The Dead are guaranteed to constantly confound your expectations: every time you think you've got them pegged they toss you another curve. On their debut album they were cleverly disguised as an electric jug band, progressive-minded, but obviously tied to their blues and folk roots. Then came *Anthem of the Sun* — an about-face if ever there was one. It was an acid-drenched psychedelic garage sale that owed more to Stockhausen and Coltrane than Kweskin or Seeger. Next came *Aoxomoxoa*, a noble if not entirely successful attempt to compress all that weirdness into traditional three-minute segments.

It wasn't until the double *Live Dead* that the record-buying public got a glimpse of what all the excitement was about. Although it remains for many, including most of the band members I polled, the quintessential Dead album, the fact that it's simply a taped concert performance served to highlight the Dead's inability to produce a studio recording that reflected their essential nature. They decided to shift gears once again, this time abandoning their complex improvisational material in favor of simpler musical forms whose spirit might be easier to capture on tape. The resulting albums, *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* are the musical equivalent of the Gothic flying buttress: slender, delicate structures that somehow support a cathedral of sound and feeling. About this time the Dead were presented with a challenge of a different nature, with the death of the lead vocalist and keyboardist, Ron McKernan (alias Pigpen). Mickey Hart remembers: "A lot of people may not realize it now, but Pigpen was the boss in those days; it was

his band, he was the leader, not Jerry or Bob. When he died, his responsibilities fell on everybody else's shoulders." It was also a time when rock bands were undergoing fundamental changes in their relationship with their audiences. The sense of communion, of oneness between player and listener was disintegrating as musicians became unreachable superstars, and the audience in turn chose entertainment over communication. Instinctively, the Dead opted out of the whole mad game. They gave up the chance to become superstars, but it didn't matter. They had discovered how to keep that inner dynamic alive within themselves, and there was no way they could commercialize that without crushing its essence. They had something that money couldn't buy (besides, the very thought of Jerry Garcia in a gold lame jumpsuit is too painful to bear).

Compelled by what Garcia refers to as "the call of the weird," the Dead returned to experimental themes on albums like *Blues For Allah* and *Terrapin Station*. The latter album's orchestral sweep, pristine production values, and superb ensemble playing qualify it as probably the most successful attempt yet at a studio rendering of their concert persona. Producer Lowell George brought a taste of funk to *Shakedown Street* and in the process showed the band how to take greater advantage of the rhythmic dynamics inherent in their two-drummer configuration in the studio. Last year's *The Grateful Dead Go To Heaven* was disappointingly tame AOR fare, though Garcia's peppy 'Alabama Getaway" was the closest thing they've had to a hit in years.

This summer the Dead have presented us with a double-double dose of what they do best: two double live albums, one acoustic and one electric, both recorded last fall in New York and San Francisco, the twin capitals of Dead-dom. (The band jokingly refers to the N.Y.-Long Island area as "The Grateful Dead Belt".) These releases are being heralded as the "definitive" Dead albums, and on the evidence presented by the acoustic set, which is the only one available now — the electric record should be coming out by the time you read this — that may be a fair assessment. Dan Healy's recording and production are state-of-the-art, and the performances are among the best I've ever heard from the band.

Is the Grateful Dead satisfied enough with these live efforts to give up their eternal quest for perfection in the studio? Are they finally willing to concede that it can't be done without the help of an audience? "Well, maybe," says Garcia, sitting like a Buddha in a black T-shirt in his San Rafael home, "but I feel it's time for another wave of weirdness to hit, and I was thinking about trying a few ideas in the studio..."

During a break in the interview, I buttonholed Brent Mydland, figuring as the new guy in the band maybe he'll give me some tips on dealing with the Ancient Ones. "I'll tell ya' a funny thing," says Mydland. "When I first joined these guys I had the feeling I was on the outside of a massive inside joke, but I think I'm beginning to catch on." Gee, Brent, can you toss me any clues? "Of course not!" he replies in mock anger. "Are you trying to get me in trouble or something!?"

That's what I like about the Dead: they never preach or proselytize. Instead, they quietly go about constructing a working model of what might be a brave new world, based on openness to change and risk, diffusion of ego, sensitivity to the needs of the moment, and receptivity to higher forces. Rather than mere relics of a mythic past, Garcia and company may yet prove to be touchstones for a viable future.

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The audience, the "eighth member" of the Grateful Dead, drives them to spaces they seldom reach in the studio.

We knew that the only kind of energy management that counted was the liberating kind. So we were always determined to avoid the fascistic, crowd control implications of rock. It's always been a matter of personal honor to me not to manipulate the crowd.

Jerry Garcia: In Search of the X Factor

MUSICIAN: You guys have probably put out more live albums than anyone I can think of — two double live releases this summer alone. Is the mysterious "x factor" that sometimes transforms a Grateful Dead concert impossible to capture in a studio situation?

GARCIA: I'm not sure if it can or can't be captured in the studio, though I agree that so far *we've* failed to capture it there. But we've never really been set up to perform in the studio. Our idea of performance is what we do live, and making records is more of a concession to the realities of the music business than a real expression of our natural flow. Let's put it this way: if making records was a thing you did as a hobby, it's possible we might have turned to it at one point or another. But I really think live music is where it's at for us.

MUSICIAN: How about playing live in the studio?

GARCIA: Yeah, we've tried that, but it's difficult to do with the type of band set-up we have, especially the technical problem of recording two drummers at once. We can't baffle or isolate them; they have to be together, they have to communicate. So live in the studio the microphone hears them as one big drum set, and that's not something you can straighten out in the mix.

MUSICIAN: But isn't there also a psychological reason having to do with the role of the audience?

GARCIA: Very definitely. But that's something we have to talk around; we can't talk about it directly. It's not an exact science, it's more an intuitive thing, and you're right, it does have a lot to do with interacting with the audience. But we don't manipulate them, we don't go out there and try to psyche them out or anything. It's quite involuntary.

MUSICIAN: Can you feel when its happening?

GARCIA: There are times when both the audience and the band can feel it happening, and then there are times when we have to listen to the tapes afterwards to confirm our subjective impressions and see what really happened. That's the way we've been able to deduce the existence of this "x" chemistry. In any case, it doesn't have to do with our will.

MUSICIAN: Is there something you can consciously do to facilitate it?

GARCIA: Well, in a way that's what we're all about: making an effort to facilitate this phenomenon. But the most we can do is be there for it to happen. It just isn't anything we can control on any level we've been able to discover.

MUSICIAN: All right, if it isn't what you do, maybe it's who you are: the chemistry between you; the internal dynamics of the band; your value system; what you eat for breakfast...

GARCIA: I'm sure that's a major part of it.

MUSICIAN: Can you delineate some of the principles that you feel help maintain who you are?

GARCIA: Actually, trying to pinpoint those principles is our real work — it's what we're all about. As far as I can tell, they have to do with maintaining a moment-to-moment approach, in both a macro- and micro-cosmic sense. It's hard to maintain that moment-to-moment freedom in large-scale activities because things like booking tours have to be planned well in advance. So it's in the smaller increments, the note-to-note things, that we get to cop a little freedom. You can see it in our songs, where there's an established form and structure, but the particulars are left open. In terms of the macrocosm — the big picture — we know the tune, but in terms of the note-to-note microcosm, we don't know exactly how we'll play on any given night, what the variations might be. Even simple cowboy tunes like "Me and My Uncle" and "El Paso" change minutely from tour to tour. "Friend of the Devil" is another tune that's changed enormously from its original concept. On *American Beauty* it had kind of a bluegrassy feel, and now we do it somewhere between a ballad and a reggae tune. The song has a whole different personality as a result.

MUSICIAN: How much improvisational space is built into the longer, more exploratory pieces like "St. Stephen" and "Terrapin Station"?

GARCIA: An awful lot...it depends on the piece. "Terrapin" has some sections that are extremely tight, that you could actually describe as being arranged; there are specific notes that each of us have elected to play. The melody, lyrics, and chord changes are set, but the specific licks that anyone wants to play are left open.

MUSICIAN: Would you say that this looseness, this willingness to stay open and take risks is a crucial factor in creating a space for that special energy to enter?

GARCIA: Absolutely! It's even affected the way I write songs. In the past, when I had an idea for a song, I also had an idea for an arrangement. Since then I've sort of purged myself of that habit. There's simply no point in working out all those details, because when a song goes into the Dead, it's anybody's guess how it'll come out. So why disappoint myself?

MUSICIAN: Who or what gives the Dead its overall direction, then?

GARCIA: It's been some time since any of us have had specific directional ideas about the band...the Grateful Dead is in its own hands now; it makes up its own mind, and we give it its head and let it go where it wants. We've gotten to be kind of confident about it at this point. It's become an evolving process that unfolds in front of us.

MUSICIAN: As a band you guys seem to have a dual personality; on one hand there's the improvisational, exploratory material like "Anthem" and "Dark Star," while on the other there's this very structured, tradition-bound sort of music. It was generally the earlier material that was stretching boundaries, while the albums from *Workingman's Dead* onwards have been more structured. So I was wondering if that was because the relationship between artist and audience was falling apart at that point, and that 60s energy envelope you were tapping into was beginning to disintegrate, forcing you to resort to simpler, more formalized material that didn't depend on that energy field?

GARCIA: No.

MUSICIAN: Darn...it was such a great little theory...

GARCIA: Let me straighten that out right now. First of all, you're right about the audience/artist communication thing falling apart, although that didn't happen to us. Let me give you a time frame that might shed some light on all this: at the time we were recording and performing the *Live Dead* material onstage, we were in the studio recording *Workingman's Dead*. We weren't having much success getting that experimental stuff down in the studio, so we thought we'd strip it down to the bare bones and make a record of very simple music and see if *that* worked. Time was another factor. We'd been spending a long time in the studio with those exploratory albums, six to eight months apiece, and it was really eating up our lives.

MUSICIAN: You didn't feel any aesthetic conflict?

GARCIA: No, not at all. Because those two poles have always been part of our musical background. I was a bluegrass banjo player into that Bakersfield country stuff while Phil was studying Stockhausen and all those avant-gardists.

MUSICIAN: Is that where the...

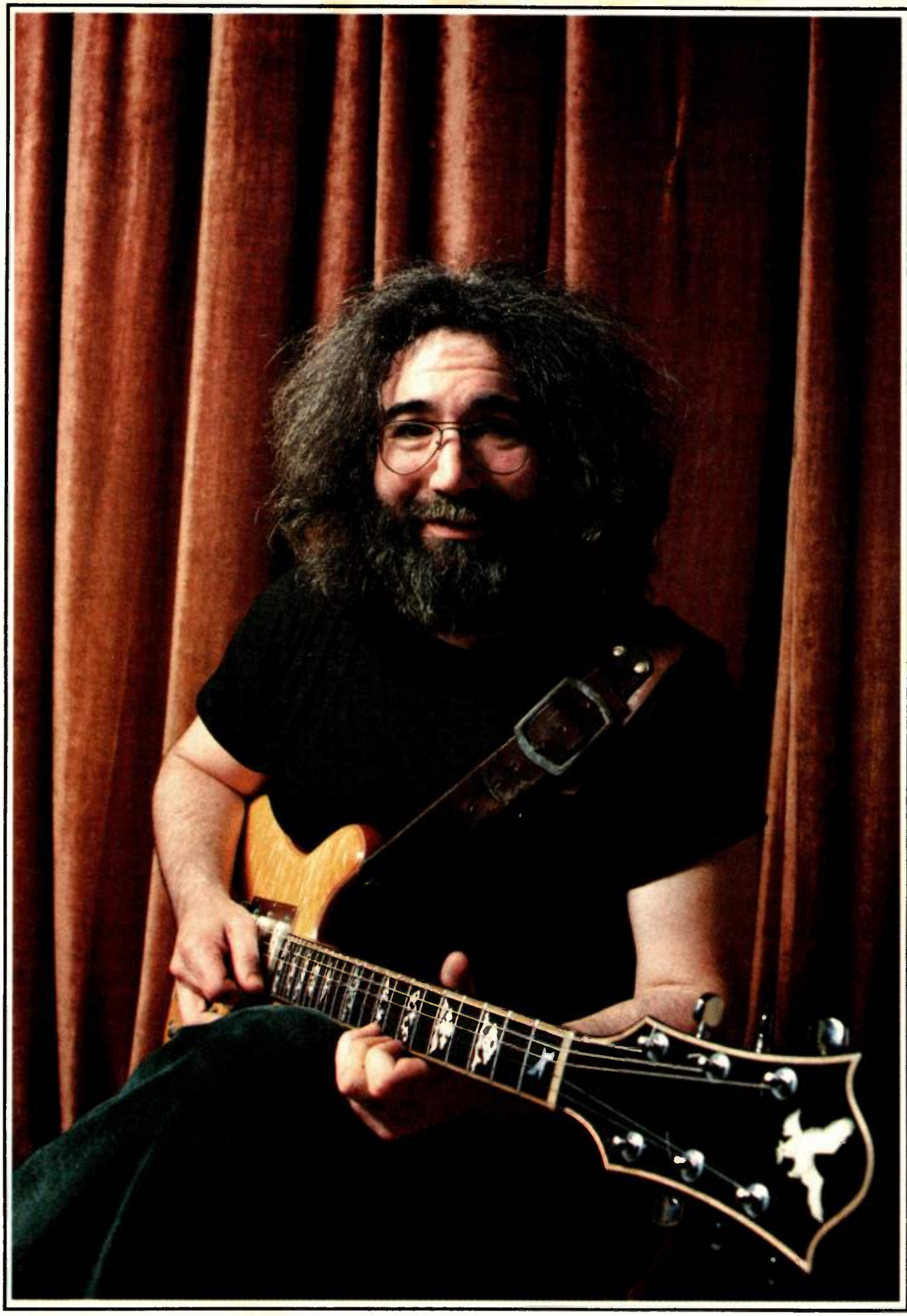
GARCIA: ...prepared piano stuff on "Anthem" comes from? Sure.

MUSICIAN: *Wait a minute, how did you know I was going to ask that?!*

GARCIA: (Smiles)

MUSICIAN: Okay, never mind, but what happens when you reverse the procedure and play *Workingman's Dead* in concert? Can you still get the same kineticism?

GARCIA: Yes, it turns out we can. For the last year or so we've been doing some of those tunes, like "Uncle John's Band" and



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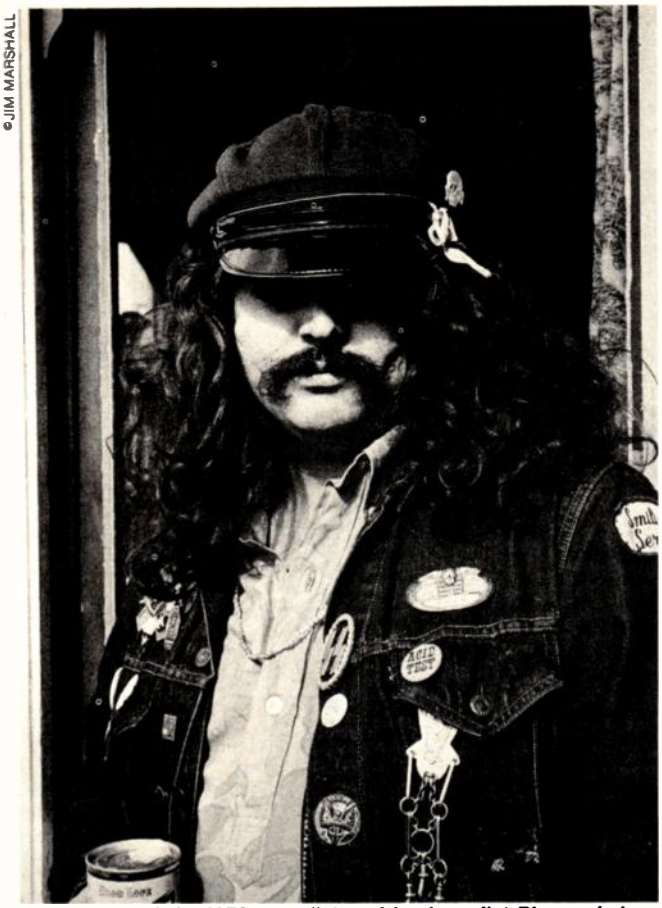


Until his death in 1972, vocalist and keyboardist Pigpen (a.k.a. Ron McKernan) was actually the leader of the group.

"Black Peter," and they fit in well in that they become poles of familiarity in a sea of weirdness. It's nice to come into this homey space and make a simple statement. It comes off very beautifully sometimes. And inevitably it draws some of the weirdness into it. What's happening with the Grateful Dead musically is that these poles are stretching towards each other.

MUSICIAN: Which of your albums do you believe come closest to capturing the band's essence?

GARCIA: I'd pick the same things that everybody else would: *Live Dead, Workingman's Dead, American Beauty, Europe '72.* I'd take *Terrapin Station*, too, the whole record. I'd also definitely recommend the two live sets that just came out.

MUSICIAN: How important is the acoustic approach to the band?

GARCIA: Not very, because we only do it in special situations. In fact, there have only been two periods in our career when we did acoustic material: first in the early 70s, and then again just lately.

MUSICIAN: Why did you come back to it?

GARCIA: It's something that's fun for us because of the intimacy involved; it brings us closer together, both physically and psychologically, and as a result we play with a lot of sensitivity. I mean, I can just turn around like this and go (swats imaginary band member) HEY, WAKE UP! Lotsa' fun...

MUSICIAN: Speaking of direction: some people are wondering if you've gone totally off the experimental approach, since you haven't released anything in that vein since *Terrapin Station* back in '77.

GARCIA: Yeah, but '77 isn't really so long ago in Grateful Dead terms, you know. That's just a few records ago! Ideas around here take a year or so just to find their way to the surface, much less achieve their expression, which can take three or four years. We're always looking at the bigger picture. People have been hollering for us to bring back "Dark Star" and stuff like that for some time now, and we will. But in our own time.

MUSICIAN: You're not afraid of your old material?

GARCIA: Oh, absolutely not. It's partly that there's a new guy who hasn't been through all that with us, and we have to bring him up through all those steps slowly. It's not that he's a slow learner, it's because we originally spent months and months rehearsing those things that were in odd times.

MUSICIAN: Like "The Eleven"?

GARCIA: Right, that was tacked onto the "Dark Star" sequence. It's called "The Eleven" because that's the time it's in. We rehearsed that for months before we even performed it in public. Luckily Brent's a much better musician now than we were then, so it shouldn't take that long. But we've still got to find the rehearsal time to put those songs together again.

MUSICIAN: Are you ever concerned that any of you will fall into cliched patterns, either as individuals or as a group?

GARCIA: No, because the musical personalities of the various members have been so consistently surprising to me over the years that I'm still completely unable to predict what they would play in any given situation. In fact, I'd challenge anyone to check out any Grateful Dead album and listen to, say, what Phil plays, and look for stylistic consistency. You won't find it. These guys are truly original musical thinkers, especially Phil. Let me give you an example: Phil played on four songs for a solo album of mine called *Reflections*. Now, I write pretty conventionally structured songs, so I asked Phil to play basically the same lines on each chorus so I could anchor it in the bass. But I didn't really see the beauty of what he'd done 'til later when I was running off copies of the tape at fast forward. The bass was brought up to a nice, skipping tempo, right in that mellow, mid-range guitar tone, and I was struck by the amazing beauty of his bass line; there was this wonderful syncopation and beautiful harmonic ideas that were barely perceptible at regular speed, but when it's brought up to twice the speed...God, it just blew me out.

MUSICIAN: Considering all the improvisations you do, I'm surprised you don't acknowledge jazz more as an influence on your playing. You had to be listening to Coltrane, at least.

GARCIA: Oh, definitely Coltrane, for sure. But I never sat down and stole ideas from him; it was more his sense of flow that I learned from. That and the way his personality was always right there — the presence of the man just comes stomping out of those records. It's not something I would've been able to learn through any analytical approach, it was one of those things I just had to flash on. I also get that from Django Reinhardt's records. You can actually hear him shift mood...

MUSICIAN: The humor in his solo on "Somewhere Beyond the Sea" is amazing...

GARCIA: Anger, too. You can hear him get mad and play some nasty, mean little thing. It's incredible how clearly his personality comes through. It's one of those things I've always been impressed with in music. There's no way to steal that, but it's something you can model your playing on. Not in the sense of copying someone else's personality, but in the hopes that maybe I could learn how to let my own personality come through.

MUSICIAN: So it's a question of imitating essence, not form.

GARCIA: Right. My models for being onstage developed from being in the audience, because I've been a music fan longer than I've been a musician. A very important model for me was a bluegrass fiddle player named Scotty Sternman, who was just a house-a-fire crazed fiddle player. He was a monster technically, played like the devil. Anyway, he was a terribly burnt-out alcohol case by the time I saw him, but I remember hearing him take a simple fiddle tune and stretch it into this incredible 20-minute extravaganza in which you heard just *everything* come out of that fiddle, and I was so moved emotionally that he became one of my models...I mean, there I was standing in that audience with just tears rolling out of my eyes — it was just so amazing. And it was the essence that counted, none of the rest of it.

MUSICIAN: Looking back, were there any other groups or artists that were pivotal influences on your concept of the band?


PETER SIMON

Although they seldom perform acoustic material, the Dead enjoy the closeness and nuance of the quieter medium.

Our music isn't something we decided on or invented. In fact, it's inventing us, in a way. We're just agreeing that it should happen and volunteering for the part.

GARCIA: There have been a couple of different things for a couple of different people. For myself, I was very, very impressed by the music of Robbie Robertson and the Band. There isn't any real textural similarity between what we play; I just admired their work very much.

MUSICIAN: Is there anybody on the current scene that you feel a particular kinship or identification with?

GARCIA: The Who. I think the Who are one of the few truly important architects of rock 'n' roll. Pete Townshend may be one of rock 'n' roll's rare authentic geniuses. And there's also the fact that they're among our few surviving contemporaries...I'm just really glad they exist.

MUSICIAN: I was talking with Ray Manzarek recently and he remembered reading Kerouac describe this sax player in a bar who had "it" that night, and how badly Ray wanted to get "it" too...whatever the hell it was.

GARCIA: Hey, that same passage was important to us! Very definitely. Our association with Neil Cassidy was also tremendously helpful to us in that way.

MUSICIAN: And of course there was Kesey and the Acid Tests. That must also have been about going for the essence and not getting stuck in forms...

GARCIA: Right, because the forms were the first thing to go in that situation. You see, the Acid Tests represented the freedom to go out there and try this stuff and just blow.

MUSICIAN: Did the acid simply amplify that impulse, or did it open you to the possibility in the first place?

GARCIA: Both. The Acid Test opened up possibilities to us because there were no strictures. In other words, people weren't coming there to hear the Grateful Dead, so we didn't have the responsibilites to the audience in the normal sense. Hell, they didn't know what to expect! Sometimes we'd get onstage and only tune up. Or play about five notes, freak out, and leave! That happened a couple of times; other times we'd get hung up and play off in some weird zone. All these things were okay, the reality of the situation permitted everything. That's something that doesn't happen in regular musical circles — it took a special situation to turn us on to that level of freedom.

MUSICIAN: Had you experimented with either acid or musical "weirdness" before?

GARCIA: Yeah, we'd taken acid before, and while we were on the bar circuit playing seven nights a week, five sets a night, we'd use that fifth set when there was almost nobody there but us and the bartenders to get weird. We joined the Acid Tests partly to escape the rigors of that 45 on, 15 off structure that the bars laid on us every night.

MUSICIAN: Did you have ideas about what all this might open you up to, or was it just "let's step through this doorway"?

GARCIA: Just that: let's step through this doorway. We didn't have any expectations.

MUSICIAN: Do you feel any ambivalence about it now? Acid had a down side for some people...

GARCIA: No, I loved it. I'd do it again in a second because it was such a totally positive experience for me, especially when you consider that we were at the tail end of the beatnik thing, in which an awful lot of my energy was spent sitting around and waiting for something to happen. And finally, when something *did* happen, boy, I couldn't get *enough* of it! When we fell in with the Acid Test, I was ready to pack up and hit the road. We all went for it.

MUSICIAN: How did that evolve into the whole Haight-Ashbury scene?

GARCIA: What happened was that the Acid Test fell apart when acid became illegal, and Kesey had to flee to Mexico. We ended up down in L.A. hanging out with Owsley in Watts, then moved back to San Francisco three or four months later.

A Tale of Two Drummers

Bill Kreutzman's music career did not begin auspiciously; his teacher tossed him out of the school band because he couldn't keep the beat. His revenge was twenty years coming but well worth the wait. Encouraged by a sympathetic high school music instructor, Bill eventually wound up teaching drums in a Palo Alto music store, where he and another instructor named Jerry Garcia got the idea of starting a band. The Warlocks soon metamorphosed into the Grateful Dead, and a debut album was cut for Warners. Shortly after its release, Kreutzman faced a crisis when the band invited Mickey Hart to join as a second percussionist. "In my darkest moments," admits Kreutzman, "I was sure he was trying to get me out of the band so he could take over. But in the end I saw it wasn't so, and that spirit of conflict served as a catalyst for getting me off my duff and deeper into the music." Thus began one of rock's most successful double-drummer combinations.

Both drummers soon discovered that their styles were naturally complementary. "I tend to play the more rudimentary, straight ahead stuff," explains Kreutzman, "while Mickey handles the embellishments, tom fills, and other exotica." Hart agrees: "Usually Bill winds up doing the straighter, rock 'n' rollish stuff, while I'm turning it in, out and around. But there are no rules." How do they determine their respective responsibilities on any given tune? "Normally we just attack it and see what happens," says Mickey. "We might then discuss it, but we find the best work doesn't come from our minds, but from somewhere deeper. We actually *breathe* in the same time. It's not just two good drummers playing together; something is different between me and Bill. We feel our pulses before a show to get in common time, and we really are beating together."

"You can never be afraid to take chances," says Kreutzman, "We may play the same song a lot, but it's different every performance. If you try to hold on to something you inevitably kill it." Hart takes it even further: "It's more than just an option — we *have* to take risks. I go up there every night hoping that someone will have a great idea that will take me away, that'll really make me understand what music is about after all these years. But you're part of an ensemble, so you wait for a good idea to come up, and if it's right, something makes you do it and it inspires the rest of the band." Sometimes this creative risk-taking spills out beyond the boundaries of the songs to fill in the spaces between tunes. "Call it rhythmic modulation," offers Bill. "Instead of a sudden modulation or key shift between songs, we try to establish a rhythmic relationship so we can slowly amble from one to the other. It's one of my favorite exercises, but it's damn tricky to pull off."

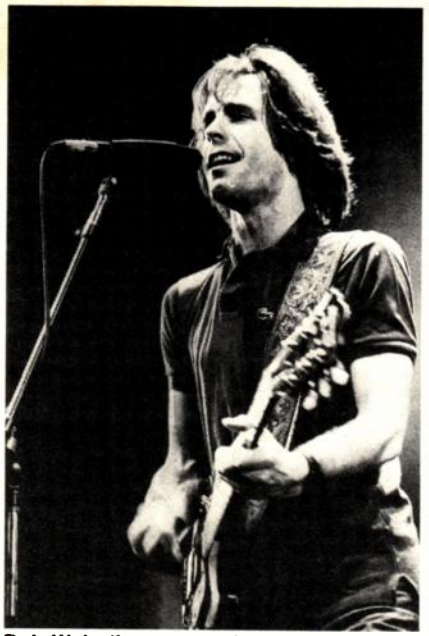
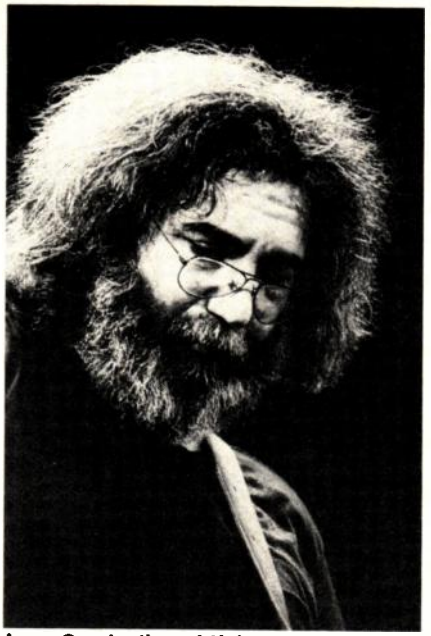
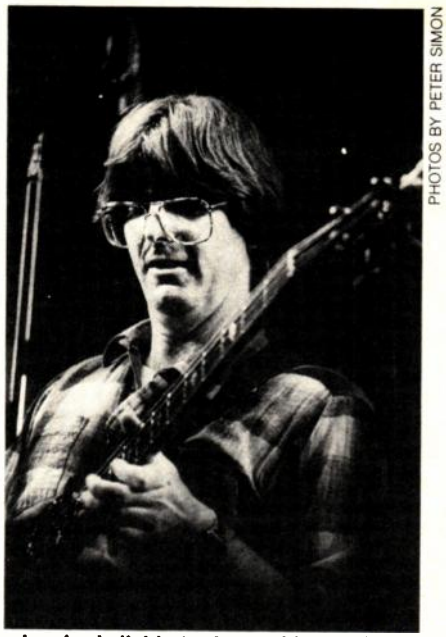
Both Kreutzman and Hart are deeply involved with Asian, African and American ethnic musics. For Hart, interest centers on what he refers to as "pre-entertainment music:" "It's music that's not based just on entertainment; it deals with activities such as making work easier or chasing away demons or washing clothes."

One incident that helped Hart develop a healthy respect for the innate power of this kind of music involved a gift from his friend, Airto Moreira, the noted Brazilian percussionist. "Airto gave me this Brazilian stringed instrument called the berimbau. He gave me a quick lesson in how to play it, and I took it home to practice on. Well, I wound up just staring into the fire and playing this thing for weeks. It just took over; I wouldn't accept phone calls or anything," laughs Hart. "Three weeks later I called up Airto and asked him what the hell was going on!' He explained that in Brazil the berimbau was used to induce an altered state of consciousness for practicing the martial arts." Hart pauses. "The weird thing is that I've been into the martial arts for years, but had let it go for a while, and then got back into it when I started playing the berimbau... And there was Airto talking about how this jungle instrument could take you without you even knowing it!"

Both Hart and Kreutzman cite Sudanese oud player Hamza El Din as a major source of both musical and spiritual inspiration. "It's so great to meet someone who could be so damn strong and yet not exude even a trace of evil, meaness, or fear." A few years ago, Hart accompanied Hamza on a journey up the Nile to visit his ancestral village in the Nubian Desert. "The first thing those Nubian drummers taught me was that Bo Diddley didn't invent that beat," said Mickey. Not speaking Arabic, Hart utilized the universal language of music to exchange ideas and converse with the Sudanese, who were impressed with his dexterity. "Hamza had taught me to play the tar, a single-membraned African drum, and his people were really blown out by the rhythmic exercises I'd worked up." The Nubians would often hold the same rhythmic groove for hours, with different sections of the ensemble coming forward to improvise over the basic pattern. But when Hart's turn to solo came up he met with an unexpected reaction from his hosts. "My polyrhythms startled them at first. I asked Hamza why they were staring at me, and he explained that when they heard the off beat and polyrhythms they felt I was forcing the drum. They feel the drums should tell you what to do, and not vice versa, which they see as artificial. They say, 'Excite the drum and it will tell you what to play'," reflects Hart: "It's a great concept, and I've found it works if you approach the instrument with the right attitude."

Both Hart and Kreutzman were afforded an opportunity to draw on their work with African and Brazilian musics when they, along with with bassist Phil Lesh, Airto, Flora Purim and others, accepted a commission from Francis Ford Coppola to compose the score for *Apocalypse Now — The Rhythm Devils Play River Music*. Hart's marching orders from Coppola were short and to the point: "All Francis said was 'you know what I want — you know how to make magic. Do it!'" recalled Hart. "I watched the film constantly. I had it on video cassette in my kitchen, in my bedroom, and in the studio. It played continuously for three months." Their task was complicated by the fact that the battle sound effects Coppola brought back from the Phillipines sounded unconvincing. In the end they were asked to find a way of simulating the cacophony of war in the studio. "Try reproducing the sounds of a napalm attack using wooden instruments and bells;" suggests Hart wryly. "The artillery sounded like cheap firecrackers, so we had to reinforce that, too, with steel drums I had built, and other percussive devices. We had over fifteen hours of material!"

For all their inventiveness, both drummers are surprisingly self-effacing about the Dead's success. "It's the audience that's the key," reveals Kreutzman. "They're really the eighth band member. There is some power, be it God or whatever, that enters the Grateful Dead on certain nights, and it has to do with us being open and getting together with the audience. If we can do that, then it comes...and spreads everywhere."

PHOTOS BY PETER SIMON

Bob Weir, the prototypical rhythm guitarist; Jerry Garcia, thoughtful maestro; and Phil Lesh, who is liable to do anything on bass.

MUSICIAN: Were psychedelics really the main catalysts in initiating the Haight scene?

GARCIA: I think it was a very, very important part of it. Everyone at that time was looking hard for that special magic thing, and it was like there were clues everywhere. Everybody I knew at least had a copy of *The Doors Of Perception*, and wanted to find out what was behind the veil.

MUSICIAN: What closed that doorway?

GARCIA: COPS!!

MUSICIAN: Just cops?

GARCIA: That's it, really, cops... It was also that this group of people who were trying to meet each other finally came together, shook hands, and split. It was all those kids that read Kerouac in high school — the ones who were a little weird. The Haight-Ashbury was like that at first, and then it became a magnet for every kid who was dissatisfied: a kind of central dream, or someplace to run to. It was a place for seekers, and San Francisco always had that tradition anyway.

MUSICIAN: Sort of a school for consciousness.

GARCIA: Yes, very much so, and in a good way. It was sweet. A special thing.

MUSICIAN: Sometimes I think that whole scene was a chance for our generation to glimpse the goal, and now we've got to find out how to get back there.

GARCIA: Right, and many people have gone on to reinforce that with their own personal energy. It *is* possible to pursue that goal and feed the dog at the same time. It just takes a little extra effort.

Many people have gone on to reinforce Haight-Ashbury with their own personal energy. It's possible to pursue that goal and feed the dog at the same time. It just takes a little extra effort.

MUSICIAN: Can you talk about your relationship with the Hell's Angels? I played in a band backed by them in Berkeley and it was, uh... an ambivalent experience.

GARCIA: Well, that's it. It *is* ambivalent. I've always liked them because they don't hide what they are, and I think all they require of you is honesty — they just require that you don't bullshit them — and if you're out front with them, I think you don't have anything to worry about.

The Angels are very conscious of their roots and history, so the fact that we played at Chocolate George's funeral way back during the Haight-Ashbury was really significant to them. They didn't have many friends in those days, and so anybody who would come out for one of their members was demonstrating true friendship. And with them, that really counts for something.

MUSICIAN: What do you feel attracted Kesey to them in the first place? The noble savage concept?

GARCIA: No, I think Ken saw them for what they are: a definite force of their own which you can't hope to control. When they come around, it's reality, and you go with it.

MUSICIAN: What about Altamont?

GARCIA: Horrible.

MUSICIAN: It sure was. But having been in the Bay area at the time, I can understand how you might have thought it a good idea to recommend them as security people...

GARCIA: *We* didn't recommend them!!

MUSICIAN: I thought the Stones people said you suggested it?

GARCIA: Absolutely not! No, we would never do that. The Angels were planning on being there, and I guess the Stones crew thought this might be a good way to deal with that fact.

MUSICIAN: The Angels aside, as soon as you entered that place you could feel this incredible selfishness — the complete antithesis of what went on at Monterey and Woodstock.

GARCIA: Yeah, that's what it was: an incredibly selfish scene. Steve Gaskin pinned it down best when he said that Altamont was "the little bit of sadism in your sex life the Rolling Stones had been singing about all those years, brought to its most ugly, razor-toothed extreme." Kind of ironic, since they were the ones who started that "Sympathy For The Devil" stuff.

MUSICIAN: You guys have avoided falling into the darker side of things. Did that require constant vigilance on your part?

GARCIA: It did for me at any rate. During the psychedelic experience the fear and awfulness inherent in making a big mistake with that kind of energy was very apparent to me. For me, psychedelics represented a series of teaching and cautionary tales, and a lot of the message was *"Boy, don't blow this!"* Back in the Haight there really were some Charlie Manson characters running around, really weird people who believed they were Christ risen and whatever, and who meant in the worst possible way to take the power. Some of them saw that the Grateful Dead raised energy and they wanted to control it. But we knew that the only kind of energy management that counted was the liberating kind — the kind that frees people, not constrains them. So we were always determined to avoid those fascistic, crowd control implications of rock. It's always been a matter of personal honor to me not to manipulate the crowd.

Since its introductic
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Synclavier II creates sounds never before possible from any synthesizer.

In April of this year New England Digital Corporation introduced a stereo LP demo record to illustrate some of Synclavier II's incredible sounds. After hearing this record, many people called to say they couldn't believe all the sounds on the demo could possibly have been created by any synthesizer. However, after seeing and hearing Synclavier II for themselves, they were amazed at more than just the absolute realism of its instrumental sounds. They were awed by the infinite variety of tonal colors, unique sounds, and special effects so easily created by this incredible instrument. We might add, many of these people now own a Synclavier II.

Synclavier II not only produces sounds no other synthesizer can produce, it also offers more live performance control than any other synthesizer.

Synclavier II gives you an extraordinary ability to change sounds as you play them. Using Synclavier II's real-time controllers you can accurately recreate many of the subtle changes real instruments make during a live performance.

Here are some of the real-time controls that have made Synclavier II famous: Attacks can be individually altered both in length and brightness for each note. Vibratos can be brought in at different times. Vibrato depths can be changed at will. Individual notes and entire chords can be made to crescendo and decrescendo smoothly and naturally. Final decays of percussive sounds can be made to ring out longer for low notes than for high notes. In strummed chords, some notes can ring out longer than others to compensate for the differences between open strings and stopped strings. Individual notes and entire chords can be pitch bent up or down. The overtone content of any sound can be completely varied from one note to the next. Up to four different rates of portamento can be performed on the keyboard at one time. Some of the harmonics of a sound can remain stationary while other harmonics of the same sound slide against them. And the list goes on.

The possibilities for programming new sounds with Synclavier II are limitless.

Although Synclavier II comes preprogrammed with over 128 preset sounds, it does not lock you into these preset sounds. All of these presets can be modified any way you wish. The possibilities for creating sounds from scratch are limited only by your own skill and imagination.

Synclavier II can store an unlimited number of sounds.

Any sound created on Synclavier II can be permanently stored on a floppy disc with just the touch of a button. From 64 to 256 separate sounds can be stored on a single mini-diskette. The number of mini-diskettes you can use with Synclavier II is unlimited.

All of this is just a glimpse of Synclavier II's enormous potential. The real potential of Synclavier II can be more completely understood by taking a close look at Synclavier II's super advanced hardware and software. The capabilities of Synclavier II's hardware and software extend far beyond any demands currently being made on them.

Synclavier II is controlled by the most powerful computer available in any synthesizer made today.

New England Digital Corporation leads the field in the development and use of hardware applications for music synthesis.

New England Digital uses a powerful 16 bit computer that addresses up to 128k bytes of memory. Other digital manufacturers design their systems around microcomputers. Microcomputers are simply not powerful enough to control large numbers of voices on the keyboard at one time. Most current digital systems are limited to 8 usable voices. When these systems try to control more than 8 voices at once, the speed at which these voices can be played on the keyboard slows down considerably. So, for musical applications, more than 8 voices can not be played on the keyboard at one time.

These microcomputers are also not fast enough to permit extensive real-time control of a sound while it is being played on the keyboard. A few real-time features are available while other important features are deleted because of speed limitations of the microcomputers.

New England Digital Corporation designs and builds its own 16 bit computer, as well as the Synclavier II synthesizer.

New England Digital's 16 bit computer and Synclavier II synthesizer are so unique, New England Digital has been awarded three basic patents on their design, and has several others pending.

The speed of Synclavier II's computer is unmatched by any other digital synthesizer system on the market today. Synclavier II's computer can easily control up to 32 voices on the keyboard at one time without slowing down. No other digital system in the world comes close to this kind of control.

While some synthesizer manufacturers consider a "voice" to be one separately controlled sine wave, one voice of a Synclavier II synthesizer consists of the following: (1) 24 sine waves, (2) a volume envelope generator, (3) a harmonic envelope generator, (4) very sophisticated digital FM controls, (5) an extensive vibrato control, featuring up to 10 different low frequency wave forms, (6) a portamento control that can be either logarithmic or linear, (7) a decay adjust feature, permitting lower notes to have longer decays than higher notes.

n just one year ago, ner digital systems combined.

Synclavier II's 16 track digital memory recorder is more sophisticated and has more features than any other synthesizer recorder or sequencer in the world.

Synclavier II's digital memory recorder has enormous capabilities because its computer is fast enough to perform the millions of math computations necessary to make all these features operational at one time.

For example, Synclavier II's digital memory recorder enables you to set independent loop points for each of its 16 tracks. So, you could have 8 notes repeating on track #1, with 64 notes repeating on track #3, and 2 notes repeating on track #7, and so on. All 16 tracks can be looping independently at the same time but still be in perfect sync.

In addition, you can transpose each separate track individually. Track #6 could be transposed up a 4th, while track #8 was transposed down a 5th, and so on.

Other recording features made possible by Synclavier II's ultra fast computer.

Sounds can be bounced from one track to another. You can overdub on just one track, without losing the material already recorded on that track. You can change the volume of individual tracks. You can change the speed of the recorder without changing the pitch. You can punch in and out instantaneously. You can fast forward or rewind just as you would on a 16 track tape machine. You can instantly erase any number of tracks in the recorder.

You can change the scale of a piece of music already recorded in the recorder. For example, if you had a piece recorded in the key of C, you could change it to the key of B flat minor without rerecording a single note in the recorder. Or you could change a piece of music already recorded in the recorder from a tempered scale to a microtonal scale, without recording a single note over again.

You could keep the notes of an instrument that was recorded on one of the tracks in the recorder, and assign a new instrument to play the previous instrument's notes. For example, if a flute were playing on track #5, you could assign a guitar to track #5 and have it play the flute's notes automatically.

Synclavier II's computer is not only the fastest and most powerful computer available on any synthesizer today, it's also enormously expandable, with A to D converters, D to A converters, real time clocks, printers, modems, and alphanumeric and graphic CRT's.

The New England Digital Computer has had 5 years of proven production and successful sales to scientific end users for real-time applications. This history of steadfast reliability has been a major part of Synclavier II's unparalleled success in a market place choked with new products.

Synclavier II has the fastest and most accessible software available in any synthesizer today.

Synclavier II uses an extremely high level structured language called XPL. XPL has proven to be an extremely fast language which has continually provided the means to add new features to Synclavier II on a regular basis.

Other synthesizers are still using languages too limited for our purposes. Assembler is a good example. It is by far a much slower and more difficult programming process to use than XPL. Software improvements made by Assembler language could take months. But with XPL we've been able to add totally new features to Synclavier II in a few days.

New England Digital can add new features to your Synclavier II synthesizer through the mail.

During the 10 months since the introduction of Synclavier II, New England Digital has issued four software updates to the owners of Synclavier II synthesizers. Those updates were mailed out to Synclavier II owners automatically. They included new software that customers had asked for. The updates also included new features and improvements that New England Digital felt were a strong enhancement to the operation of Synclavier II.

Software updates ensure the Synclavier II customer that his system will always be state-of-the-art.

When you buy a Synclavier II, you will automatically be sent new features as they are developed this year, next year, and for years to come.

The Synclavier II synthesizer is not a temporary answer in a technological world moving at warp speed. It is the answer. When you buy a Synclavier II, the instrument improves as fast as our technology improves. Since we're already leading the field of digital synthesis, we feel you are comfortably safe in assuming Synclavier II will be your companion for a long time to come.

When you own Synclavier II, you will never need to sell your "old" system in order to buy a better one. Your Synclavier II system becomes better automatically.

For further information and a copy of Synclavier II's stereo LP demo record send your address plus $2.50 (outside USA $6.00) to either of the following:

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MUSICIAN: Did that temptation present itself?
GARCIA: Yeah, sometimes we'd discover a little trick that would get everybody on their feet right away, and we'd say let's *not* do that — if that's going to happen, then let's discover it new every time. Let's not plan it.
MUSICIAN: Back in those days there was a real bond between the audience and musicians. Something changed around '71, and it became a spectacle, with the audiences sucking up your energy and the band falling into egotistical superstar routines. It was entertainment rather than communication, and something special was lost. Were you aware of this change, or am I crazy?
GARCIA: Yeah, it was obvious, because in spite of all that talk about community, we knew it couldn't happen among the musicians, because each wanted to be the best and overshadow the others. A truly cooperative spirit was not likely to happen.
MUSICIAN: Was it the record companies and the materialistic orientation they represent that spoiled it?
GARCIA: I don't think so. To me, the record companies have never been a malicious presence...they're more like a mindless juggernaut.
MUSICIAN: I didn't mean that it was intentional on their part. I just feel they represent a set of values and a means of organization that are at odds with the goals of music. They created an environment in which the soul of music couldn't survive...
GARCIA: Yeah, I agree it was the music business and entertainment as a whole that killed it, because in entertainment there's always this formula thinking that encourages you to repeat your successes. All that posturing and stuff is what show business is all about, and that's what a lot of rock became: show business. It's just human weakness, and I guess it's perfectly valid for a rock star to get up there and...
MUSICIAN: But wasn't what happened in San Francisco a few years earlier on a much higher plane of experience? Audience and performer were meeting and interacting in a real way...
GARCIA: That's true, but that was something that just happened in the Bay Area, you know. It never made it to the East Coast, and it definitely didn't make it to England. And so those people were coming from a much more rigorous model of what it meant to be a rock 'n' roll star. That came from their management and business levels, as things were lined up for them in advance and they were given those models as the way to do things. When we met English rock stars at the time, it was like meeting birds in gilded cages; they really wished there was some way of breaking out of what they were into, but they were trapped.
MUSICIAN: What happened to the energy field you'd established with your audience when you went to, say, New York or London?
GARCIA: We found that we'd brought it along with us, and the people who came to see us entered right into it. And that's what's made it so amazing for us, because our audience, in terms of genuineness, has been pretty much the same as it was back in the 60s. And so has our own experience.
MUSICIAN: Including your new generation of fans?
GARCIA: Sure. The 16-year-olds coming to see us now are no different than they were in the Haight; they're looking for a real experience, not just a show.

The Grateful Dead's P.A. **By Marc Silag**

Specs alone have never determined the Grateful Dead's selection of P.A. reinforcement systems. To Dan Healy, the Dead's sound mixer for fifteen years, attitude and philosophy are as important as crossover points and speaker configurations. Over the years the Dead and Healy have made some formidable contributions to P.A. theory and practice. The Wall of Sound, the band's first and last excursion into the P.A. business during the mid-seventies was recognized as a major step toward accurate reproduction of stage dynamics and fidelity. The Dead's press kit has nearly as much to say about the band's technical direction as it does about their musical route.

Like many groups who perform in coliseum-type venues, the Dead favor the systems built and maintained by Clair Brothers of Lititz, Pennsylvania. These systems depend on two Clair Brothers exclusives, the S-4 speaker cabinet and the 32x6x2 portable mixing console designed and engineered by Bruce Jackson with the cooperation of Ron Bothwick.

The S-4 consists of two 18" speakers, four 10" lo-mid speakers and two hi-mid horns utilizing JBL 2405 Type Drivers using passive crossovers. The cabinets, when suspended from the ceilings of a typical large venue, are strapped in vertical stacks to promote "Line Source Coupling." This affords Healy with more directionality and forward loudness. Each box requires about 1000 watts of power and Clair provides banks of Phase Linear 700 power amps to drive as many as 64 cabinets, depending on the size and acoustical characteristics of the venue.

The Jackson-Bothwick board is a self-contained unit featuring 32 inputs and six stereo submasters, with two main outputs. Three-band eq is parametric and four effects sends are provided with equalized returns. A unique "bar graph fader" design displays peak *and* average signal readouts, pre- or post-fader. Steve Dove, an engineer familiar with the board under the duress of touring, has never known one of the six Clair Brothers' boards of this type to fail.

Outboard equipment includes dbx 162 compressor/limiters for each band-width, Crown D-75 power for headset monitoring, a White Spectrum Analyzer/Noise Generator and White 1/6 and 1/3 octave equalizers.

There have been three notable occasions when the Dead have used an altogether different system than the one outlined above. For shows in San Francisco, New York and the Oakland Coliseum last year, Healy brought three separate audio companies together and fabricated a "super system" so elaborate in its engineering and logistics as to make carrying it on tour an economic impossibility.

Healy's trademark is an open attitude towards new methods of producing full-bodied live sound, eliminating the shackles imposed by electrically produced phase distortion and harsh room reflections that debase the intended sound image. Using documented and patented theories of linear response established by John Meyer and his company, Meyer Sound Labs (MSLI) of San Francisco, the Dead are capable of producing "three dimensional" live reinforcement. Healy is the only sound engineer we've run across who uses the term "holographic" in discussing his work.

McCune Audio of San Francisco supplies the Dead with stage stacks consisting of twelve 12" woofers, six mid-range horns and thirty tweeters per side. The system, known as the JM-10, incorporates Meyer's theory of linear response in which accurate imaging is dependent on the electrical *pre*-distortion of the P.A. signal before it reaches the speakers and drivers. In the case of equipment listed here, speakers and drivers are manufactured in Europe to Meyer's specs. By carefully matching each transducer to the circuitry employed to pre-distort the signal, it is possible to compensate for phase distortion created when the transducer changes electrical energy into acoustic energy. Elimination of phase distortion is the prime mover of this system and both the JM-10 and the Bill Graham Presents System 80 that flies over center stage are "time corrected," using another design of MSLI, the Group Delay Equalizer. The GDE shapes the wave forms to be projected by the system(s) by delaying specified frequencies within a given bandwidth, allowing all frequencies to arrive at the listener's ear at the same time. This also makes room reflections more controllable, and the ping-ponging of certain frequencies in a room is greatly reduced. The System 80 is a cluster arrangement consisting of sixty 12" woofers, twelve MSLI horns and twenty-four Heil tweeters. The third company using Meyer's technology is Ultrasound of Larkspur, California, who provide sub-woofer assemblies Meyer designed for the sound track of *Apocalypse Now*. These cabinets house 18" ferro-fluid speakers to handle the low end of the Dead's sound.

In the house, McCune equips Healy with a 22x4 mix console with 3-band eq, augmented by a Tangent 2402 mixer for the drums. Although outboard eq is available, Healy uses it sparingly. Healy claims the only usable form of eq comes in the selection of placement of stage mics. No special outboard equipment is used aside from some special effects, the nature of which Healy would not divulge.

The sound of this system is extraordinary. It played a major role in the recording of the recently released live Dead LP, in that Healy relied heavily on room mics in the mix of the album. For the audio-conscious Deadheads of the world, it is Healy's hope that such a system will eventually join the Dead on tour.

Synclavier II's Terminal Support Package.

The Terminal Support Package provides a completely new method to access Synclavier II's computer. The Terminal Support Package consists of three items: (1) Graphics, (2) Script, a music language, (3) Max, a programming language.

GRAPHICS

The Graphics Package allows the user of Synclavier II to have a readout of numerical data printed out on a computer terminal screen. With the depression of the return character on the terminal, the numerical data is changed into a graphic display. A clear depiction of the volume and harmonic envelopes are drawn out on the screen. The relative volumes of each sine wave, comprising the sound whose envelopes are currently on the screen, is also displayed.

The graphics display provides an extremely valuable visual tool for programming new sounds and for thoroughly analyzing sounds which have already been programmed for Synclavier II.

SCRIPT

Script is a music language. It can be used as a composing tool to write musical performances into Synclavier II's computer without playing anything on the keyboard. Precise polyrhythmic melodies can be developed which would be difficult or even impossible to play on a keyboard. Composing with Script gives you up to 16 tracks to record on.

All the real-time changes available with Synclavier II's digital memory recorder can also be programmed through a terminal with Script. This includes dynamics and other musical accents.

Any composition created with Script can be stored on a disk, and then loaded into Synclavier II's digital memory recorder. All compositions created with Script can be made to play back in perfect sync with a multi-track recorder.

Another feature which is extremely helpful for musicians is the editing feature of Script. This allows you to edit existing compositions through the terminal. You can cut apart, reassemble, or tailor in any manner a composition without ever risking a loss of any of the original elements.

MAX

Max is a complete music applications development system. It allows you to control all of New England Digital's special purpose hardware, i.e., the computer, analog-to-digital converters, digital-to-analog converters, and other devices like a scientific timer which can be programmed to be SMPTE compatible.

Max comes complete with documentation for the Synclavier II hardware interfaces to enable a programmer to design his own software program. This language is for people who possess a much more sophisticated knowledge of programming computers. Basically it is a superset of XPL, the software language New England Digital uses to program Synclavier II's computer.

Max is designed to permit the owner of Synclavier II to take greater advantage of New England Digital's powerful 16 bit computer. Up to now, all software had to be written by New England Digital. The Terminal Support Package with the Max language gives you the opportunity to explore new ground on your own. The ways in which Synclavier II's hardware can be used by Max is virtually limitless.

All of us at New England Digital feel we've only begun to explore and tap the awesome potential of the Synclavier II digital synthesizer. The Terminal Support Package is just one more step in an exciting journey toward this realization.

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MUSICIAN: Going back to the idea that there was an opening for a while to a different quality of experience that gave people a taste of something other, it seeems — and I don't want to sound mawkish — that you guys are one of the guardians of that experience. On a good night, anyway. It's as if you guys serve as a touchstone for some people.

GARCIA: Well, that's the way it's sort of working out, but it isn't something we decided or invented. In fact, it's inventing us, in a way. We're just agreeing that it should happen, and volunteering for the part.

MUSICIAN: I wonder how many people really believe this is a bona fide phenomenon you're talking about, and not just a purely subjective impression.

GARCIA: Deadheads already know, but they disqualify themselves just by being Deadheads. We try to measure it all the time, but it's hard to communicate to people. But that's okay, 'cause it probably isn't everybody's cup of tea. But it ought to be there for those who can dig it.

MUSICIAN: This conversation keeps bringing me back to something I heard in an interview a few months ago. It was the idea that maybe music is looking for a musician to play it...

GARCIA: There's more truth in that than you can know. It just chooses its channel and goes through. And you may be able to spoil it in other situations, but you can't spoil it in the Grateful Dead.

MUSICIAN: But couldn't you destroy that matrix by egotistically closing yourselves off from each other and the audience. Lots of other bands have.

GARCIA: Certainly, but luckily for us the music has always been the big thing for the Grateful Dead, and all that other ego-oriented stuff is secondary. I mean, we've had our hassles, who doesn't? But all of those things have only added more and more into the experience. Nothing has made it smaller. It's been a fascinating process and...

MUSICIAN: ...a long, strange trip?

GARCIA: (Laughs) Yeah! And it still is. Ⓜ

The Dead's Equipment

The Dead have gone through enough equipment during the past decade and a half to outfit a small musical army. Guitarist Garcia started his recording career with a Guild Starfire, then switched to Gibson (a '57 Les Paul and '60 SG) for *Anthem of The Sun*. But by *Workingman's Dead* he'd changed again, this time opting for a Stratocaster. "I decided that Strat sound was what I was really looking for, so I played standard models for a while, and then in '73 settled in with a couple of custom models designed for me by Doug Irwin. It's a basic Strat set-up, with three DiMarzio Dual Sound Pickups that allow me to still get that Gibson sound if I need it, though I generally prefer the Fender tone." Garcia uses Vinci strings and Fender Twin Reverb Amps for both concert and studio performances. Effects include a Mutron Octave Divider by Mutronics, and MXR Distortion Plus, Phaser, and Analog Delay units. Rhythm guitarist Bob Weir is another custom guitar man. In his case it's an Ibanez "Bob Weir" model, designed by Bob and Jeff Hasselberger. Weir also favors the Ibanez UE400 Multi Effects Unit and Flanger/Delay, as well as a Furman Reverb, Peavey Mace Guitar Section, and IVP Pre Amp. Bob uses D'Addario Strings on his Ibanez. Like Garcia, bassist Phil Lesh uses a Doug Irwin Custom model and Dean Markley Bass Strings, which is fed into an IVP Myers Sound Lab Amp and/or a Great American Sound "Godzilla" Power Amp. Relative newcomer Brent Mydland's arsenal includes a Fender Rhodes Piano, Prophet 5 Synthesizer, Mini Moog, and Hammond Organ, plus an Ibanez Effects System. Both Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzman play Sonar Drums and Zildjian Cymbals. (They make a yearly pilgrimage to Zildjian's Massachusetts factory to select complementary sets.) Kreutzman prefers Pollard Heads and uses a Tama snare.

The only synthesizer that can improve on Synclavier® II is Synclavier® II.

New England Digital is the only digital synthesizer manufacturer in the world that completely designs and builds its own computer as well as its own synthesizer. New England Digital's powerful 16 bit computer, along with the XPL language used to program it, make Synclavier II more versatile, flexible, and expandable than any other synthesizer made.

In order to understand how advanced Synclavier II truly is, it's necessary to understand the enormous differences between Synclavier II's hardware and softwear, and that of other digital systems.

No other digital synthesizer on the market is capable of keeping pace with Synclavier II's XPL language.

XPL is a high level structured language, which offers tremendously fast and accurate control for writing complex real-time digital synthesis programs. Synclavier II is the only digital synthesizer programmed in a high level structured language.

Other digital systems are programmed in much simpler languages, like Assembler. Using Assembler language, it's very difficult to write complex programs with any degree of speed or accuracy.

XPL language uses a compiler. The compiler automatically translates the way we think into the way the computer thinks. Assembler doesn't use a compiler. So the programmer has to do his own translating from the way he thinks into the way the computer thinks.

For example: If you wanted to express the equation A = 2 + 5 in Assembler, you would have to go through the following instructions:

(1) Find a register in the computer that is empty.
(Let's say it's register 0)
(2) Assign register 0 to contain A.
(3) Load register 0 with a 2.
(4) Add to register 0 a 5.

In XPL, the programmer just types in A = 2 + 5. That's it. The compiler automatically translates that equation into a series of instructions that the computer can understand.

If you wanted to compute the square root of five in XPL, you would simply write A = SQR(5); the compiler would automatically generate a set of instructions to communicate that equation to the computer. In Assembler, the programmer would have to write almost 100 instructions all by himself in order to get the same result.

The more complicated a program gets, the more XPL pays off. The inverse is true for Assembler. The more complex a program gets, the more impossible it is for the Assembler programmer to keep track of all the enormous details all by himself.

Synclavier II allows software changes to be made quicker and more accurately than any other digital synthesizer.

It's no small wonder that Synclavier II offers more than five times the features found on any other digital system. Synclavier II's XPL language is the most advanced programming process currently being used to program a digital synthesizer. XPL offers solutions to digital programming that other languages can't offer.

For example, one big problem encountered in programming is how to change one small function of a synthesizer system without changing something else in the process.

A change such as this is not always so easy to do in Assembler language. In order to change the function of just one button in Assembler, the programmer would have to rewrite the software program for practically the entire synthesizer. This is an extremely difficult task because the programmer himself is totally responsible for keeping track of every detail of the software program. Making a software change with Assembler is like having to tear down a finished house and rebuild it from the ground up, just to add a new window.

This tearing down and rebuilding process required by Assembler takes an immense amount of time, not to mention money. Furthermore, the chances are very great that the rebuilt "house" will have more variations on the original structure than the one change the programmer intended to make.

Using XPL to add a new feature to Synclavier II doesn't require the programmer to start over from scratch. The programmer can specifically address the one feature he wishes to change and let the XPL compiler take care of the rest. The compiler allows the new information to be incorporated into the present software without destroying any part of already existing features.

With XPL, New England Digital can afford to add new features to Synclavier II on a regular basis. In this way Synclavier II can remain state-of-the-art for years and years to come.

Synclavier II is the only digital synthesizer that can make affordable changes in its hardware.

What happens when a digital synthesizer eventually uses up all the computing power available in its computer by adding too many new features or options?

If you change any part of the hardware in a digital system programmed by Assembler, nothing will work at all. The new computer hardware won't know what to do with the old software. In order to make the new computer hardware work, an entirely new program must be constructed from scratch. This is a far greater project than merely adding on new software feature to an existing program. The time required to redesign Assembler software so it could deal with a hardware change, could take up to a year or more.

The architecture of Synclavier II makes hardware changes easy to incorporate. Synclavier II uses a MOVE architecture computer. Synclavier II's MOVE architecture allows additional computing power external to the computer's central processor itself. This means that the possibilities for implementing new hardware can be done in a modular form.

Synclavier II's software is designed so modular hardware additions can be handled by modular software additions. The use of hardware and software modules gives New England Digital total freedom to create any new operation they want for Synclavier II.

If the constant addition of new features eventually exhausts the computing power of Synclavier II's computer, New England Digital will already have the means to accommodate additional computing power for the Synclavier II system at a very reasonable cost. Other digital manufacturers will eventually be forced into a complete redesign of their systems at an enormous cost.

No other digital synthesizer in the world is capable of improving on Synclavier II's advanced technology.

No other digital synthesizer on the market is controlled by a computer anywhere near as fast as Synclavier II's. In fact, Synclavier II's 16 bit computer is more than 10 times faster than any microprocessor currently being used by other digital systems.

No other digital synthesizer is programmed in a high level structured language like XPL. The likelihood of another synthesizer manufacturer developing a high level language compiler competitive to New England Digital's, is not something to bet your future on. To bring New England Digital's XPL compiler to its present state has required more than 10 man years of development.

Synclavier II not only has the fastest computer and the most advanced software, it also has the only architecture that is flexible and expandable enough to permit serious advancements in its system's design without taking forever.

Synclavier II is truly designed to be a state-of-the-art digital system today, tomorrow, and for years to come. And New England Digital is the only synthesizer manufacturer that can honestly say it has the means to upgrade every Synclavier II they sell to keep pace with new changes in digital technology.

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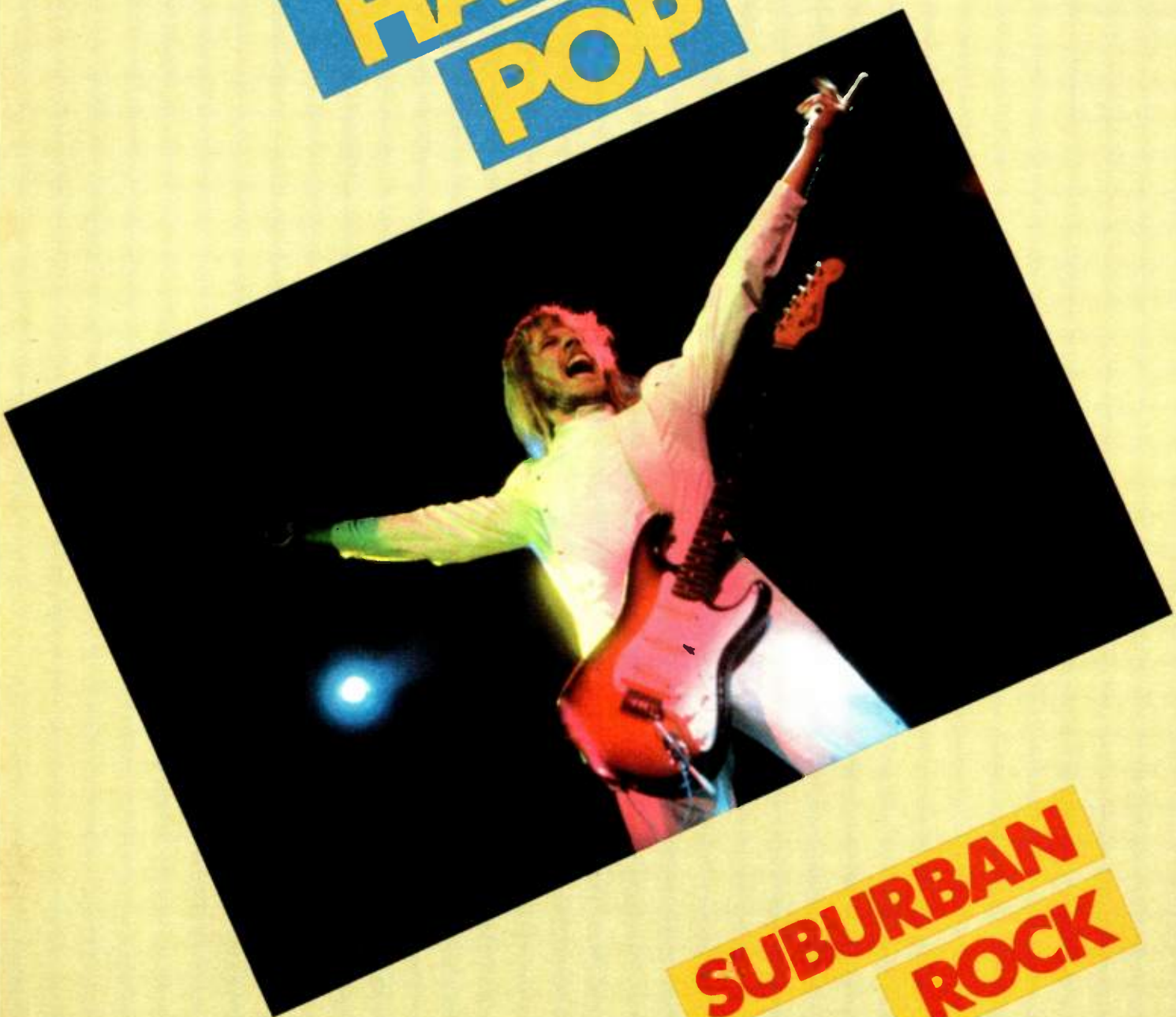
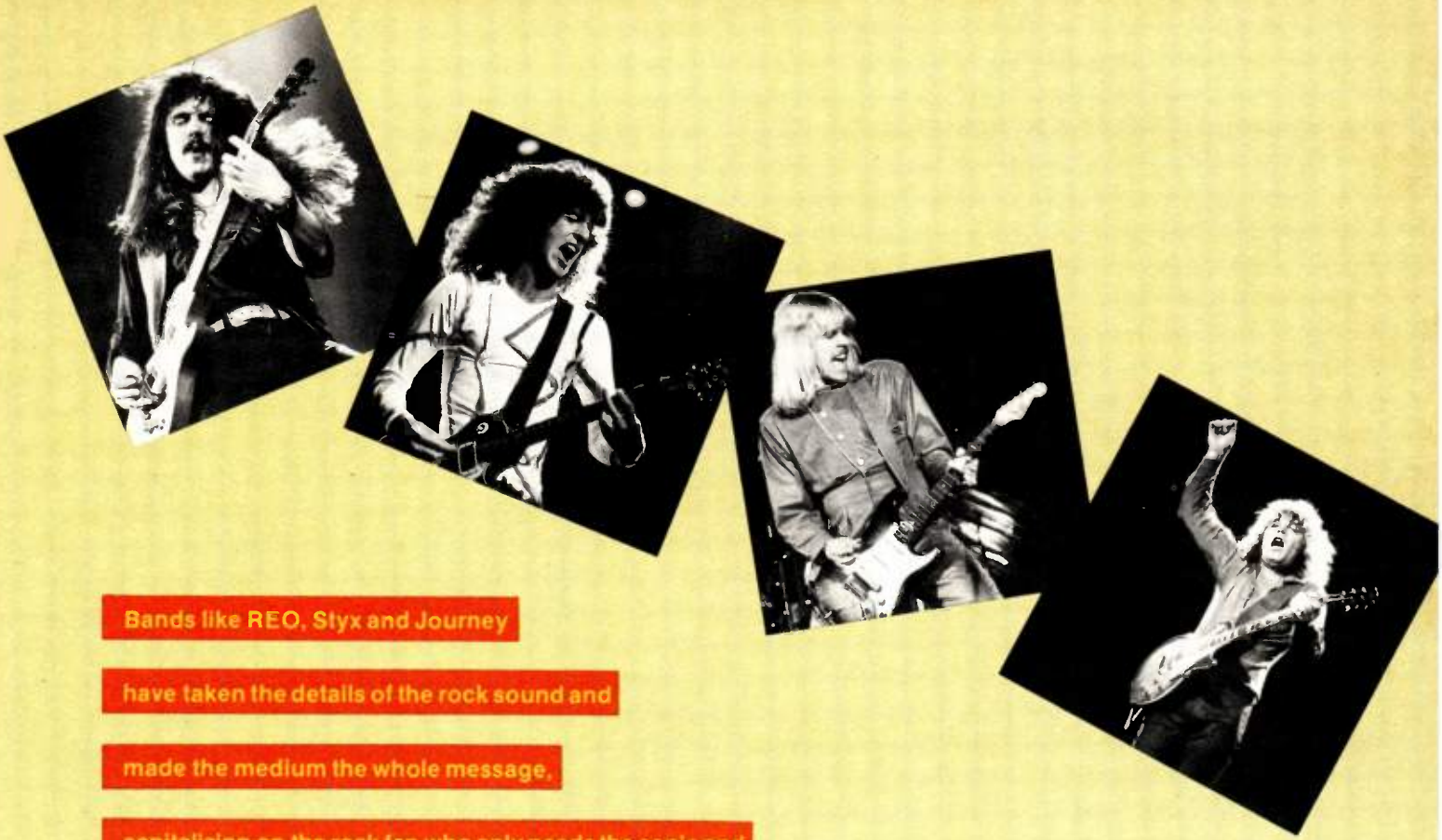
HARD POP



SUBURBAN ROCK



Bands like REO, Styx and Journey have taken the details of the rock sound and made the medium the whole message, capitalizing on the rock fan who only needs the sonic and theatrical cues to salivate happily. Is there gold or only glitter?

By J.D. Considine

There's been a minor revolution in rock over the past four years that's gone almost unnoticed by the rock press. The funny thing is, missing it is like not seeing the forest for the trees, because as disco, punk, reggae and rap fade in and out of popularity, this music has consistently sold well among the great unwashed hordes of mainstream rock fans.

It doesn't have a name as such — ask a fan, and he or she will simply call it "rock 'n' roll" — nor does it boast a theoretical base. For our purposes, call it hard pop: hard, because its sound derives from the contours of hard rock and heavy metal; pop, because its formal structure is oriented toward popsong melodicism, not the sprawling, riff-based jamming of traditional heavy metal.

Prime practitioners include REO Speedwagon, a one-time bar band from the Midwest whose 10th album, *Hi Infidelity*, took it from the semi-obscurity of the arena rock circuit straight to the top of the charts (where it has remained since January); Styx, a Chicago-based arena act whose blend of slick, semi-classical progressive rock and slicker Manilow-style ballads have earned it triple-platinum albums since 1977; Journey, a group of musical chameleons who stumbled onto a phenomenally commercial mutation of the San Francisco sound; Foreigner, a savvy progressive outfit whose pop smarts are undercut by purposefully dumb lyrical posturing; and Boston, a techno-crazed basement band that developed its stadium sound in the studio, and then had to learn how to duplicate it in actual stadiums.

In terms of pure music, what these groups and others offer isn't terribly exceptional. At best, as with Foreigner, the music is a sophisticated test of its own limits; at worst, as with Journey, it's musical junk food, overly sweet and utterly non-nutritious.

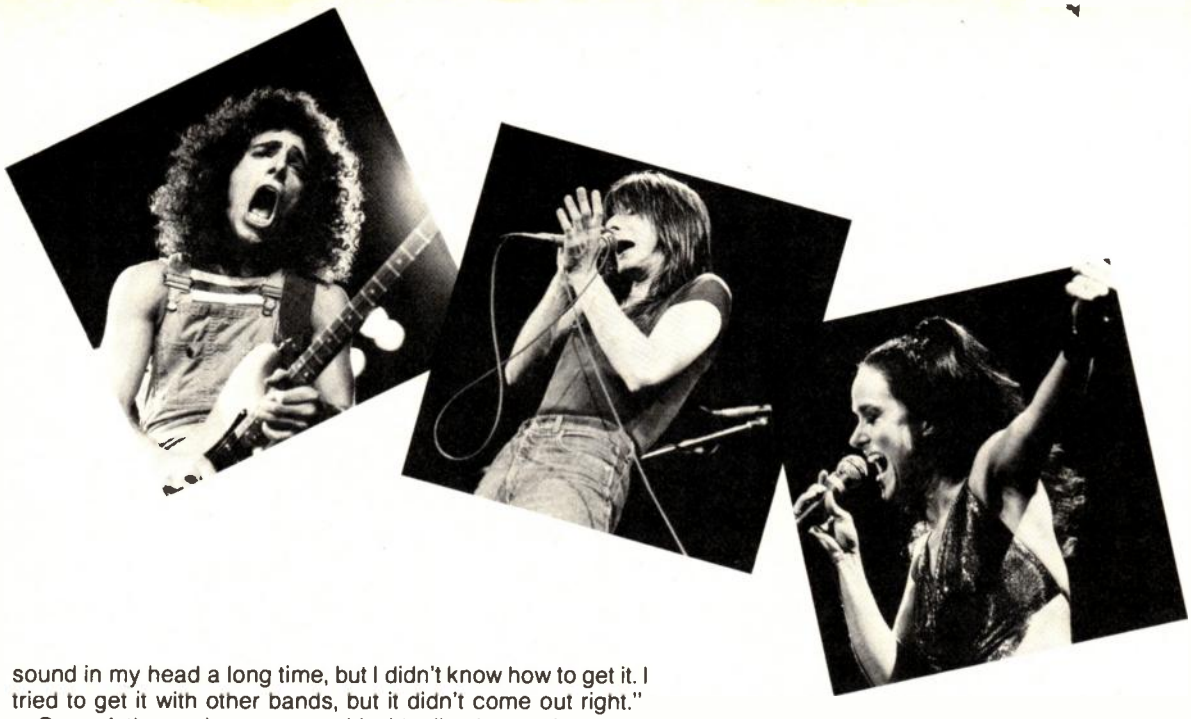
What is significant is the way this sound evolved, and the attitudes toward music its popularity reflects. These are, after all, second generation rock bands, operating on a level where experience has replaced experimentation, and where the concept of what works is tempered by reaction from an audience that has grown to take certain aspects of rock 'n' roll style as unquestioned givens. In a sense, rock has been taken over by its own phenomenology, so that details of sound have almost become the substance, not merely the fabric, of the music.

The end result is that today's rock fan, like Pavlov's dogs, has come to associate specific sounds with certain gratification, and salivates accordingly. Hence, if a band sports a fat, distortion-heavy guitar sound, a huge, throbbing drum beat and a muscular tenor voice, the listener is more likely to associate that sound with big-time rock 'n' roll. And if the pot is sweetened by applying that sound to hookish pop instead of the basic crunch-and-holler of hard rock, so much the better.

So goes the theory, anyway. Unfortunately, the reality isn't anywhere near as neat. One of the biggest reasons that this school of music has gone unnoticed for so long (aside from the fact that most rock writers found it too aesthetically unrewarding to be deserving of much brainwork) is that its evolution has been both painfully slow and maddeningly diffuse. The sound's development wasn't linear at all, and as such the strands of cause and effect are loosely wrapped.

On an elementary level, what happened was that the vistas opened by sound technology, both in the studio and on the stage, were combined with certain essentials of style to form a new notion of how rock should sound. But the articulation of this new sound was almost unconscious. As Paul Dean, the prime architect of the Loverboy sound, explained, "I had this

PHOTOS BY STEVE KAGAN, BILL RICHERT AND PAUL NATKIN OF PHOTO RESERVE, AND EBET ROBERTS



It ain't the meat, it's the motion. Maestros of the Pavlovian knee-jerk rock reaction: Neil Schon and Steve Perry of Journey and Grace Slick of Jefferson Starship.

sound in my head a long time, but I didn't know how to get it. I tried to get it with other bands, but it didn't come out right."

One of the major reasons this idealized sound was so elusive was that is began as a studio illusion. As Dean put it, "As a family of recording artists, we've learned a lot of tricks."

Perhaps the earliest of those tricks was the realization that a recording was a thing in itself, and not necessarily a document of live or concert sound. Although this discovery lead to a certain amount of studio trickery for its own sake, it also emphasized the importance of looking at instrumental sound in terms of how it *could* sound, not how it *should* sound.

Technology furthered this trend two ways. First, the advent of multi-track recording techniques lead to intense scrutiny of each instrumental presence, considering each as a component in the overall sound instead of simply looking at the instrumental tracks as a block of sound. This was particularly useful in developing the "L.A. sound" of the early 70s, wherein the reliance on studio musicians and the perception of producer as *auteur* lead to a recorded sound utterly removed from the exigencies of concert sound. Instrumental tracks became settings, where color and texture were far more important than any notion of audio verite.

This in turn was quickly approved by a mass audience increasingly attuned to improvements in audio equipment. As sophisticated, high-quality sound equipment became more and more affordable, rock fans in their late teens and twenties commonly owned stereo systems of good to excellent quality, and began to demand records that made the most of their audio resources. Once they'd spent several hundred dollars on a stereo, they weren't going to settle for the wall-of-noise production of *Vincebus Eruptum*.

Furthermore, the musicians themselves greatly appreciated the flattery of the improved studio sound. Consequently, not only was this unnaturally clean sound eagerly pursued, but it lead to efforts to live up to the studio sound in concert performances. As such, stage sound was no longer the result of massive banks of amplifiers; instead, smaller amps were miked, just like in the studio, and fed through the P.A. system. As the technological advances were matched by ingenious application, more and more concert acts were able to duplicate studio tricks in concert arenas around the world.

None of this happened immediately, of course, or even with much simultaneity. While the mellow rockers were quick to take advantage of the new sound technology, most hard rock and heavy metal still tried to bludgeon its way to audio verite. Generally the results neither duplicated the stage excitement nor matched the depth and slickness of mellow rock's studio sound, as records made by Deep Purple, Humble Pie or Grand Funk Railroad can attest. Unfortunately, producers then sought to recreate volume and impact by retaining the noise level found in live performances. As a result, the sound on these albums is quite dated.

As a performer and producer who lived and worked through this period of transition, Roger Glover of Rainbow is about as authoritative as they come. "I think what most people have realized," he said, "is that most hard rock has all been softened by harmonies. One can think of Foreigner and Boston, Styx, Journey; even softer stuff like Fleetwood Mac and Frampton are all lush with harmonies."

But, Glover said, that reliance on harmony vocals, profitable though it may be, has its own cost. "There's only 100% of sound you can get on tape. You can't possibly get 120%, so you always have to work a limit. And so if there's going to be harmonies and louder vocals, something's going to have to give. And usually, that's the instrumental side. Guitar sounds are getting smaller."

Hard rock traditionally worked on the converse principle. Explained Glover, "The reason John Bonham of Led Zeppelin got such a huge drum sound was that there was nothing else in his way. The bass was always very muted and very bassy; the guitar sound was also very thin. Jimmy Page's sound was always very thin. Which leaves a lot of room for Bonham to get that huge sound.

"Now, with a band like Rainbow that's very difficult, because Ritchie [Blackmore] doesn't have a thin sound. He has an *enormous* sound...his guitar sound alone could take up 100% of the tape. When you top all that with the traditional huge drum sound we go for, plus Don Airey likes a huge organ/keyboard sound, what I've got to do is juggle a lot."

Properly juggling the instrumental mix is crucial to the success of this sound, because as Glover pointed out, the desired effect is to create a sound that is absolutely huge, but without actually being any larger than necessary.

In order to scale the instrumental tracks down, one of the first things that had to go was the amount of noise traditionally allowed for hard rock. The trouble was, the producer couldn't afford to let the sound get *too* clean, otherwise the recording would miss the point. As Glover put it, "I haven't tried at all to *soften* the instrumental sound, because I think that would take away from what *is* Rainbow. I think if Rainbow came out sounding like Journey, it would be wrong. We still want to

sound aggressive and hard."

What happened was that an engineer working for Polaroid came up with the ideal studio guitar sound, and used it to push his band out of its basement and onto the top of the charts. That engineer was Tom Scholz, and the band was Boston.

Scholz's big trick was to create a semblance of volume by selectively duplicating its contours. In other words, Scholz analyzed why a screaming stack of Marshall cabinets sounds so loud, and then figured out what in that sound was essential and what wasn't. Boston's Barry Goudreau explained, "First of all, we use a tremendous amount of distortion on the guitars. We use equalizers before the amplifiers, and we boost certain midrange frequencies. And that accounts for the sound. A lot of the lower frequencies are dumped off, so the ones that are boosted stand out. That way, when they are mixed in with the other instruments, the guitars really stand out."

Somebody in the ad department at Epic turned an old General Electric slogan on its head and called it "Better music through science." But to the thousands of kids who experienced rock 'n' roll not as live music but as radio and records, Boston was a dream come true. Finally, here was a band that completely fit their idea of what a rock 'n' roll sound was, not only in terms of guitar sound, but also through its mix of hard sound and pop songwriting. After all, if all it took was the right guitar sound, Barry Goudreau's solo album wouldn't have been such a flop.

Hard rock was no stranger to the pop charts, of course. Bands like Grand Funk Railroad and Kiss proved a long time ago that a crude, noisy instrumental sound was no real obstacle to mass-market success. The difference was that while those bands had the sales to put them on top of the charts, the demographics behind those dollars were extremely limited. Aside from ballads like "Beth" or "Only Women Bleed," both of which amounted to little more than transparent ploys to tap the housewife market, hard rock desperadoes like Kiss and Alice Cooper were pretty much stuck with a following whose median age was 14. Which was fine for the moment, but didn't promise much in longevity, particularly as statistic-crazed program directors began to realize that 14-year olds weren't much of an advertising base.

The vistas opened by sound technology were combined with certain essentials of style to form a new notion of how rock should sound, a sound that is absolutely huge but without actually being larger than necessary.

What needed to happen was for hard rock to soften enough for it to cross over into pop without softening so much that it lost its rock credibility. The first band to really capitalize on this was Queen, whose "Bohemian Rhapsody" combined enough vocal corn to intrigue casual top 40 listeners with carefully underplayed guitar breaks full of the bite and energy that typified the band's earlier efforts. Although Roy Thomas Baker's production, which stressed the vocals over everything else and reduced the guitar crunch to a polite buzz, was a step in the right direction, the single's success was more the product of its gimmickry than a compromise between styles.

Compromise is an important factor in this music, because as a commercial sound it takes pains to appeal to a highly variegated audience. Consider REO Speedwagon, whose 11-year history reveals it to be an arena rock act above all else. Now, its *Hi Infidelity* has sat on top of the charts so long it seems to have a mortgage, and singles like "Keep On Lovin' You" prosper at a time when the chief competition is aural dental floss like Sheena Easton's "Morning Train" or Kim Carnes' "Betty Davis Eyes."

Clearly, the key to REO Speedwagon's success is that the band sounds enough like hard rock to fool the kids, while dealing in lightweight pop melodies that appeal to today's Adult Contemporary market (which, as any radio adman will tell you, is where the profitable demographics are).

Kevin Cronin and Gary Richrath of REO Speedwagon.

To hear REO Speedwagon's Kevin Cronin tell it, compromise is everything to the band's sound. "What had happened in the past," he said, "was that both Gary [Richrath] and I have real outlined musical tastes and real outlined talents. I always lean to more harmonies, a more acoustic and more melodic approach, and Gary's more obvious influence is this tougher, more rock 'n' roll approach.

"There hadn't been a producer who could handle us both at the same time. What would end up happening is he'd end up siding with one of us, or siding with the other one of us, and it would really cause a conflict in the group.

"So what happened was that Gary and I got together and realized that we don't need anybody between us. What we need is to work closer together." Cronin and Richrath first got a bead on the material REO Speedwagon would ride to success with 1978's *You Can Tune a Piano But You Can't Tuna Fish*. That album, Cronin reported, has sold almost two million copies to date, a figure he feels was limited by unexceptional sound. *Nine Lives*, which followed, had better sound but leaned more toward Richrath's rock than Cronin's pop. "What I learned from both those records," Cronin concluded, "is that we can't go too much one way or too much the other way. Because in order for our band to do well, both Gary and I have to feel real comfortable with what's going on. That in turn makes everybody in the whole band feel comfortable."

Comfortable indeed, since *Hi Infidelity* is well on its way to triple-platinum.

It's funny how certain specifics of sound can mark the difference between success and failure on the charts. Cheap Trick worked the same Midwestern circuit Styx and REO Speedwagon grew up in, and released three critically acclaimed albums that sold passably at best. What finally broke the group was a live album recorded in Japan, *Cheap Trick at Budokan*. The reason? Even though the songs on the earlier albums were very strong — *Budokan* boasted only two new numbers — the studio sound provided by producer Jack Douglas was too thin and ornate, whereas the live sound at the Budokan was fat and full of presence. Once Cheap Trick's Beatlesque pop was given some muscle, it sold like hot cakes.

Oddly enough, the band has yet to duplicate *Budokan*'s success. *Dream Police*, the follow-up album, was too overblown to pass for pop, and somewhat lacking in wallop. *All Shook Up*, on the other hand, had plenty of punch, but was short on hooks. Hopefully, Cheap Trick will realize that it isn't just the crunch but the proper combination of crunch and snappy pop that sells records.

Still, the wealth of sound available to rock bands in the studio today must be incredibly seductive. Why else would bands fritter away whole albums on grandiose displays of

EBET ROBERTS

Tom Scholz of Boston distilled the essence of screamingly loud live sound to fit into the confines of tape.

aural embellishment? Toto, a band comprised of L.A. studio types with chops galore, made its debut with a stunning piece of ear-candy called *Toto*. With its tight vocal harmonies, lush cushion of synthesizers and mock-symphonic sense of scope, it had the ideal hard pop sound; better yet, it boasted a thoroughly digestible set of pop songs that quickly made it an AOR staple. But rather than follow this up with more of the same, Toto turned away from its pop base to concentrate on honing nuances of sound. No doubt the band members think there's art in there somewhere, but it's made for slim listening.

Yet when you consider the level on which these bands operate, it's no surprise that they occasionally get carried away by the mannerisms they pursue. Foreigner, for example, seems to have the idea that if its lyrics aren't completely sexist, nobody will buy the group's records. Sure, a lot of heavy metal and hard rock is misogynistic, but compared to Foreigner's Lou Gramm, Robert Plant is a lobbyist for the E.R.A. Carrying that particular aspect of hard rock to a cartoonish extreme is a shame, because it makes it all the more embarrassing to admit that Foreigner's music is imaginative and stimulating.

Lyrics are a funny case with this music anyway. While it's probably safe to say that nobody buys these records for the lyrics alone (sorry, but "Well I'm hot-blooded, check it and see/I got a fever of a hundred and three" won't be turning up in the next edition of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*), it isn't fair to say that the lyrics go completely unnoticed. Just as countless high school juniors puzzled over the imagery of "Stairway to Heaven," there are kids today who consider the poetic puddles of Rush and Styx to be quite deep indeed.

Part of the reason for this is that these lyrics carry the same self-conscious air of profundity as the music to which they're set. After all, one of the reasons a big sound is so essential to hard pop is that it carries with it a sense of importance, and that attitude is crucial to most teenagers, particularly when their own sense of importance is under constant strain.

Currently, Styx is touring behind its *Paradise Theatre*, and is eager to point out that underneath all the bad puns on "this is Paradise" is the message that America is falling apart, and will continue to do so unless the kids do something about it. If the members of Styx were part of Reagan's cabinet, they might well be inclined to see the album's double-platinum sales as a clear mandate for their message. The group may think that as it is, but give them the benefit of the doubt. Considering the traditional chauvinism of arena-rock audiences — during the hostage crisis, it was almost routine to see kids parading around during intermission with hand-painted "fuck Iran" banners, and not just at Ted Nugent shows, either — it makes sense to assume that the fans approve of this message.

But it's doubtful that they buy the records because they agree with the message more than the music. As Tommy Show of Styx admitted, "The people who have been Styx fans for years always understood [our message]. 'Cause if you sit down and look at it, it's not that hard to understand. But there's a whole bunch of new Styx fans who are just starting to discover us, just starting to read our lyrics."

In the end, it's always the music that retains primary importance. Which is why hard pop will be hard dying. Because it's a music that's built around details of sound more than details of style, it will continue to spread into other aspects of rock. If you listen to the Professionals, ex-Sex Pistols' Steve Cook and Paul Jones, you'll hear the same fat guitar sound as on the latest Rainbow album.

Further compromise? Hardly. It's just that musicians are forever vulnerable to the sort of aural flattery the hard pop sound delivers, so the mannerisms will continue to creep into all sorts of music, particularly as hard pop's box office potential becomes more widely appreciated. Already, a fortuitous change in approach has pulled Rainbow off the heavy metal scrap heap and taken REO Speedwagon's career out of cold storage, to say nothing of what this new direction has done for the rudderless journeymen in Journey.

In fact, Journey's success seems to be striking an unlikely resonance among its progenitors. You may have noticed by now that Santana, which Greg Rolie and Neil Schon left to form Journey, has a new single out called "Winning," and that it sounds an awful lot like, uh, Journey. Whether or not this is the result of planning or coincidence is hard to say. On the one hand, Santana has flirted with this sort of material before (remember "Well Alright" from *Inner Secrets*?). On the other hand, the success of the hard pop sound could hardly have escaped the notice of someone with the commercial instincts of producer Bill Graham, and in any event, it seems unlikely that anyone in Santana is annoyed by the amount of airplay "Winning" has received.

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that Carlos Santana is no fan of recent Journey. "Once Steve Perry came in," he said, "I didn't listen to them as much. I like bits and pieces, but it's not anything that makes me listen, like Led Zeppelin...I do like Neil Schon, but I don't like Neil Schon just in that environment."

Santana understands Journey's willingness to cater to its audience, but doesn't consider that much of an excuse for music. "Maybe that's why Greg [Rolie] bailed out," he reflected. "Greg is a musician. There are musicians, and there are entertainers. And the entertainers, I see 'em when I go to the circus."

But there is a certain type of musician to whom this form of entertainment is the highest level of expression. Consider the case of the Jefferson Starship. Initially, guys like singer Mickey Thomas and guitarist Graig Chaquico were brought into the group as functionaries — to play or sing what they were given by the band's creative minds. But with the defections of the past few years, a natural-born sideman like Chaquico found himself with writing duties. So it's no surprise that he does the same thing as a writer that he did as a guitarist — put big fat powerchords in all the right places. Except now he gets to choose which key those chords fall in.

It may not be art, but it does sell records. The question is, is that really what every pop group wants? Considering the overly-defensive tone of Paul Kantner's "Stairway to Cleveland," maybe not. "People tell me everything I need to know about rock 'n' roll," he pouts, reciting a litany of bad reviews. "Fuck you, we do what we want."

Sure, Paul. You and Freddie Silverman. M

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NIGHTS AT THE KOOLATHON

Six eager writers racing down the aisles of the yearly Supermarket of Jazz, sampling name-brand caviar like Ornette, Max and Miles, some justifiably popular meat and potatoes, and some twofers in the avant-garde section.

Art Blakey at Carnegie; two choices: get moving or get steamrollered.

They don't even call it Newport anymore. The name was rich in associations: inch-high jazzmen viewed across a quarter-mile of landscape and haircuts, bands clocking in and out on or off schedule, torrential downpours during Herbie Mann's set that kept you wet right through John Coltrane's, long stretches of music you didn't especially want to hear, short stretches of music you couldn't hear — then the long drive home. I only went to one Newport Jazz Festival, in 1964 and decided early on that it was a silly way to hear music. Oh, there were compensations, like catching Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures* band just as I rolled in and realizing with a shock that a gifted but puzzling musician had found his way onto the ledge of genius, like watching Papa Jo Jones dazzling his way to the top of a drum battle with tapstep brushwork while Elvin Jones looked on grinning approval, or Lee Konitz trying to teach the audience to sing in tune so that he could play with them...afternoon events all. You could sit closer for less money in the afternoons, even make out a few onstage faces. The afternoon mood was less formal, but the most spectacular moment came at night. I'd never heard Duke Ellington's Orchestra live before, and when Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet trills on "The Bluebird of Delhi" roused me from my mid-festival torpor I blinked myself awake. Later, the band lifted me surprised from my seat into a dance of wild, unreasoning joy. Ellington was supernatural. No wonder they had riots.

All the same, Newport was a supermarket. I felt no itch to go back. When the town fathers chucked George Wein out and he took the show to New York it was a different kind of festival, featuring no marathon all-in-one events but a large number of separate concerts, some of them bewilderingly simultaneous, lots of promotion and ostensibly some overall vision of the music to be gleaned by those sufficiently eager or monied. I read about the fesitvals in the papers. Jazz was feted, Wein was teased for playing it safe, highlights dutifully recorded. The Newport name was retained as a buzzword to assure non-jazz unwashed that wandered in off the boulevards that they would get the real thing, not some godawful noisy alien angry *stuff*.

When Kool cigarettes took over exclusive sponsorship this year, Newport was just another mentholated competitor and that was that. *Incipit* the Kool Jazz Festival, New York. Only those who had to call it that did, and they either chuckled or flinched.

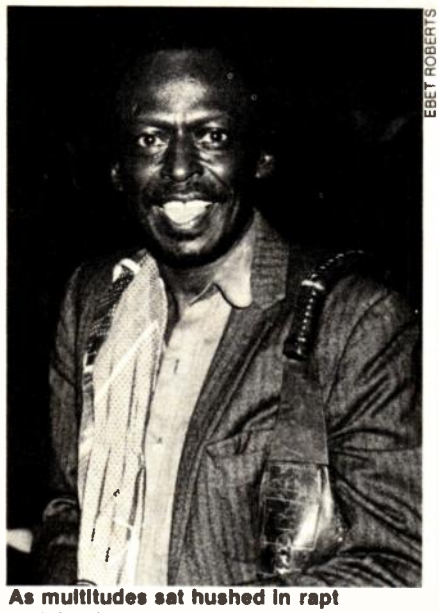
On paper, it looked like one of the best Menthol Jazz Festivals ever: tired of taking a yearly ribbing from the press, Wein hired a couple of the best of them to program an evening here and there. Gary Giddins was responsible for "The Art of Jazz Singing" and a "Portrait of Roy Eldridge;" Dan Morgenstern helped program an evening of Duets. Better still, Max Roach produced his own Grand Collaboration between M'boom and the World Saxophone Quartet as a benefit for the Leake & Watts Children's Home, and Billy Taylor co-produced a Tatum night. These were by no means the only interesting evenings on the ten-day schedule. There were tributes to Duke and Blakey, toasts to Chicago and showcases for new stars, and the festival would end with the return of Miles Davis. *Pas mal*, as they would say in Los Angeles. But still...As usual, the avant-garde got stiffed. Having the WSQ meet Max was a great idea, Roscoe Mitchell did after all find his eerie way onto the Chicago program, Air and Leroy Jenkins did a night at Town Hall and Arthur Blythe was Presented by CBS, but that was that. Oh, I know. Koolport has to sell out the big halls to retain its identity and stay solvent. It did better by the new music in its upstate programs and by printing Soundscape's after-hours festival in the official program, so there are no ultimate grounds for complaint. But even if the New York Jazz Festival had programmed the wisest concerts imaginable and otherwise acted in a manner suggesting corporate sainthood, the questions remain: for whom is it a festival, and what is a New York Jazz Festival for?

The city's full of music all the time. Does it really need a hoo-ha centerpiece every year? Are there real reasons for ceremonially celebrating the music, hauling out the old banners of "America's only original art form" (what

ever happened to sand-painting and totem poles?), laboring to pull in a few strays from the supperclub circuit, and selling us all on the questionable idea that the nation has a collective cultural life? Besides, it costs roughly $150-a-head for anyone to attend a schematically meaningful number of concerts. Throw in carfare, late food and drink, double the whole thing if you want to bring a friend, then try to name three people you know who can swing the cost. And I don't know about you, but the prospect of attending that many concerts in a week and a half is like to give me the fantods. It has almost nothing to do with the jazz life as I understand it, it's just one more edict in the reign of quantity: more art, more often, with the listener transformed into a kind of glorified sponge.

Of course, if you want to find more flies in the ointment just keep thinking about money. When you hock your firstborn and put your several hundred down in New York, ask yourself why you can attend Chicago's week-long festival free of charge. Inquire as well why a well-known (and therefore unnameable) bandleader, who might easily have sold out Town Hall with one of his groups, was offered a scandalous $550 ($250 for himself and $100 each for the band) to play an outdoor set at Purchase, New York, and although Miles Davis was able to command roughly $75,000 for two short shows at Avery Fisher, his orchestral friend Gil Evans was stiffed by CBS at Town Hall when he declined short money for a recording of his set ($25 a man for his ten-piece band, said the cruelest rumor): he was allowed a quick four tunes at the end of the program. Stories like these lead me to wonder if there is something rotten in the state of Menthol. Certainly the jazz biz has never lacked for tales of financial horror.

But let's not end on a sour note. The music was too good, and the festival was bracketed by the long-awaited return of Ornette Coleman and Miles Davis. Ornette and Prime Time, unaffiliated with Koolfest, appeared at the Public Theater on days one and two, Miles at Fisher on day ten. Let's hope the spectacle of Miles pulling 75 G's doesn't send Ornette back into the fourth dimension. Like all real artists Coleman is obsessed with money, and like most visionaries he doesn't understand the way the world works: he thinks he's supposed to get paid for being a great artist. If he had changed the shape of jazz to come in 1960 when he dropped the chord changes and took up the untempered scale where the blues had left it in another country, the harmolodic revolution is at its height in 1981 (and if you think the term refers simply to free-bomp, reflect that Ornette first used it in reference to a symphonic work). Coleman's opening night coincided with the Art Blakey tribute, the Max Roach-



EBET ROBERTS

As multitudes sat hushed in rapt anticipation, Miles ate hors d'oeuvres.

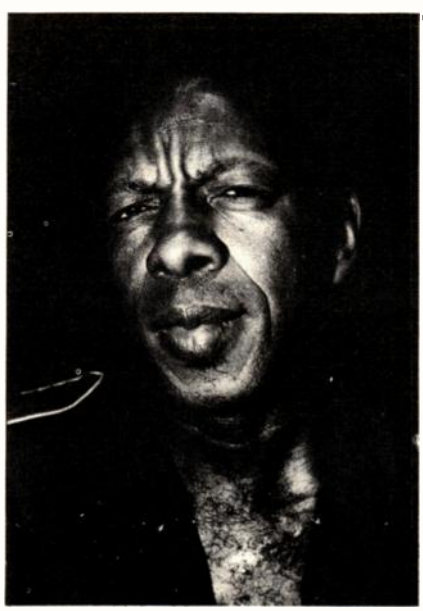
/World Saxophone Quartet collusion, and the "Art of the Jazz Vocal." Harmolodics indeed. Out of the many possible experiences of a festival nearly as crowded, here are a few. — *Rafi Zabor*

Max's M'Boom

o

By Cliff Tinder

Taking my seat just three rows from the jungle of percussion instruments and microphones, I have the feeling that this night will be indelible. There's Anthony Davis, Arthur Blythe, George Lewis and Leroy Jones settling into their seats, and everywhere around us, the awesome venue itself: the cavernous gothic monstrosity, the largest cathedral on the planet, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Everything about the impending event is breathtaking. But still, can Max mold his wealth of material



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

With the harmolodic revolution raging, Ornette called from the maelstrom.

— nine percussionists playing more than 100 instruments and the cream of the crop of the contemporary saxophone harvest — into something cohesive and coherent, something that can do battle with the gothic echo?

Max mounts his trap set, positioned directly in front of one of the choir boxes brimming with photographers. His initial attack sends shock waves reverberating around the sanctuary. Tindering his clean blue fire, Max sets the stage. In from the wings come the four young turks of Adolf Sax's pet creation, weaving their way onto the bandstand already blowing a funky, R&Bish riff. It's obvious that the World Sax Quartet compositions will be the usual collage of free bop, churning counterpoint, R&B grooves, down home blues, French classical and the avant-garde. But as the music unfolds, I realize that everything's been simplified, focused, toned down. Gone are the tedious masses of collective screaming that permeated their earlier work, in its place a deeper blues and a more constant spark of celebration. Julius Hemphill has grown as a composer. His compositions are mature, powerful, direct. And in a band of awesome improvisors, Murray has almost become the featured soloist — not that Oliver Lake, Hamiet Bluiett and Hemphill are napping. Murray plays with increased conviction; he speaks the history of the sax. Blazing to a climax with some extremely uptempo counterpoint, the WSQ caps their best performance I've yet heard. It certainly didn't hurt to have Max kicking their asses along the way either.

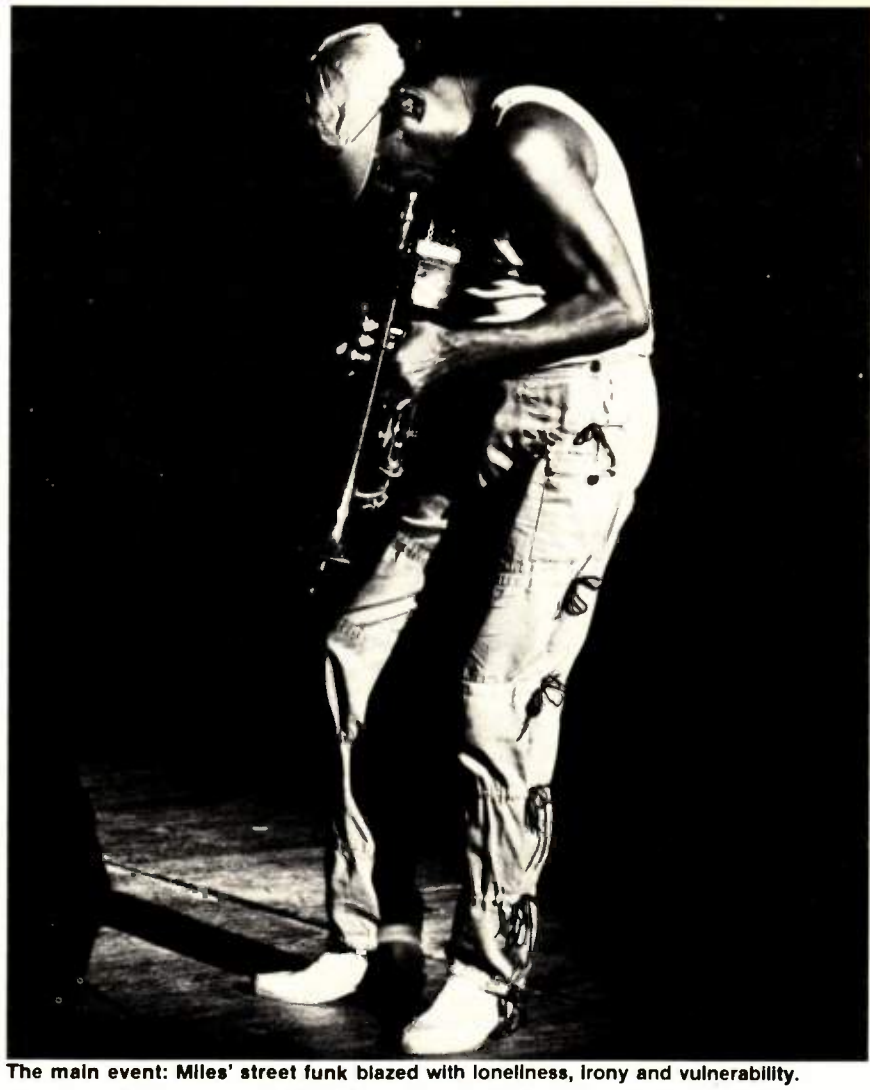
The white noise potential of nine percussionists in this cathedral is high, but Max, the grand conceptualist, would never stand for it. Working with a simple pentatonic melody, the ensemble sets out with a peaceful pensive mood. Even as the group swings into a multi-layered, poly-everything Latin groove, the music is so well organized, rehearsed and directed that the nine percussionists blend into one living, breathing entity pronounced, mmmBOOM. At the vibes, Joe Chambers arpeggiates the initial chords of Monk's "Evidence." With Max's marvelous orchestrations and Chambers' and Warren Smith's highly developed melodic sensibilities, "Evidence" dances a mysterious dance. The Grand Collaboration. The WSQ continues with its expansive new repertoire and expanded emotional horizons. Power, swing and swagger are still there, but now they play pieces that drip lush melodies, Latin/reggae numbers, as well as the usual swagger/collective-splat/swing configurations. And M'Boom is the ultimate rhythm section. The percussionists spin their way around the horns; complementing, embracing and lifting them. Even though Max isn't present onstage, he left the band with such sensitive and perfect arrangements of

the WSQ compositions, that his spirit is vividly present. When he does take the stage, he ascends the drums to direct his own creation. No credits were given, but from the sound of the piece, it had to be Max's. The intensity rises with Max at the helm, and M'Boom cooks behind the expanding and contracting tempos of the horn lines. The swing, of course, is relentless.

Back for an encore, the members of the M'Boom line up in front of a row of microphones and pound out the sounds of rain on their chests. One by one, they man their instruments until Max sits down at his set. Now the hurricane begins. For the first time, the ensemble unleashes its full thunder and lightning, filling the cathedral with a presence equal to the acoustic potential of the structure itself. Slowly, the hurricane passes and only the murmurs of a soft after-shower remain. Then, a minute of silence as the audience comes to grips with the power that was unleashed. Thunderous applause follows.

Max looks shocked as the WSQ walks out for an unexpected encore. "Do they think they can top us," I can almost hear him say. But instead of a power play, the four celebrate with music for the dance impulse. A grin spreads over Max's face, turning into a full-fledged smile as Hemphill, Murray, Bluiett and Lake swing their saxes back and forth like James Brown's horn section.

I've seen Max make music history when he met Cecil Taylor at Columbia. Now, only ten blocks away and a year later, I've seen and heard him do it again. The Grand Collaboration: he's only being modest.



DAVID REDFERN/RETNA LTD

The main event: Miles' street funk blazed with loneliness, irony and vulnerability.

Miles Blows

By David Breskin

Peck peck peck peck peck here comes Miles mute first out of the shell he's hid in the last six years and now here's the rest of his horn and his Willie Nelson cap and a week in Boston to warm up for his coming out party (a real debutante, that Miles) in N.Y.C. first at the obligatory press party at Xenon glutted with "friends," other well-known musicians trying to act kool and mind their own bizness (Blythe, Blood, etc., etc.) and a barrage of flashbulbs going off to the assaulting beat of overloud disco attached to photo madmen trying to steal his soul like they do with lost tribes of Africa. Oh yes, the party was a spectacle — oh! there he is walkin in the door *extremely* fashionably late, where's Cicely Tyson?, oh my god it could be, it might be, yes, it is Miles heading over to the hors d'oeuvre table. And...he's eating! Oh happy day!! He's eating real food, not drugs!! He's alive!! It's alive again!! It plays the trumpet!! Round up the women and children.

Gotta go man, gotta go hear his three alumni playing uptown Herbie Tony & Ron with new trumpet sensation (cough) Wynton Marsalis something. Wayne and Josef too, 48 hours later, all very nice those alumni at the same hall warming it up earlier in the week rolling out the red carpet. I wasn't lucky enough to cop a seat for Miles' first set but when I got there for the second young ladies were giving up their first born male children to get inside, some things never change, and anyway word was filtering down through the over-enthusiastic avery fisher air conditioning that the first set was short, dis-sa-point-ing, Miles a great but infrequent contributor but the band downright noxious and incompetent. Fine, thought I, remembering that Miles' last recording date Feb. 1. '75 in Tokyo, was marked by a mediocre (good, of course) first set that CBS gave us americans as *Agharta* and a positively ungodly, cosmic, joyously demonic meltdown of a second (*Pangaea*) which, I suppose to make up for events 30 years previous to the show, was given to the japanese, and so now costs many many dollar to buy in the states if you can even find it.

Roach led a superb percussion ensemble.

I got to sit in a row with a lot of CRITICS and Rafi got to sit closer but said actually later Miles is (physically) more mesmerizing from farther away and I admit I didn't take my eyes off him but once or twice during the whole 85 minute shindig 'cept to nip a little glance at the shrugging, nerdy *downbeat* editors to my left who were taking copious notes and giving a lot of sighing-type weary body language of dis-sa-point-ment you know that they didn't approve of the aural message being provided them

Miles Speaks

By Ernie Santosuosso

Six years ago, when we met just prior to his opening set at Paul's Mall in Boston, Miles Davis showed me an example of his notorious scorn for writers. When asked what he would play that evening, he snapped back like a nettled cobra, "Why don't you listen to the music, man?"

Chastened and chafing, I declined to reenter Davis' dressing room at the conclusion of his set despite the persistent cajoling of CBS promo man Sal Ingeme. While I waited in the hall, sulking appropriately, Davis kept watching me over Sal's shoulder; finally, he motioned me into the room. That first interview was one of the most satisfying I had ever conducted. The mercurial Miles was surprisingly warm and ingratiating — for Miles, that is.

He discussed at that time his need for musical change. ("I'd rather be dead than stay the same.") In 1975 he wasn't particularly enamored of jazz festivals. Dizzy Gillespie had explained that he had played the Newports, the Montreux and the Montereys in order to eat. "So why don't you open a supermarket?" countered Davis. What kind of music was Miles Davis playing at the moment? The trumpeter, indicating the pigment on his left hand, replied tersely: "This kind."

Six years later, Miles returned to Boston when former Paul's Mall-Jazz Workshop operator Freddie Taylor invited Miles to do four "warmup" concerts in late June at Kix Live, a musty basement of a well-known Commonwealth Avenue disco. It was, ironically, to be Kix's final presentation before its takeover by Boston University.

At the afternoon rehearsal of his new band, the trumpeter seemed relaxed and open as he cued the musicians on the piano and put his renowned lip through several test runs. The music was predominantly percussive, interrupted with mercifully melodic runs by the trumpeter. While his physical mobility was conspicuously limited on stage, the occasional thunderclaps of music rejuvenated him. And he *smiled*. Miles Davis smiled! He would jubilantly hug one of his musicians or promoter Taylor. Could it be true? Was Miles actually... mellowing?

Following the rehearsal, I watched, with fingers crossed, as the tumpeter's manager relayed my request for a brief meeting, hoping Davis might have remembered the graying *Globe* reporter of six years ago. Then Davis perfunctorily waved me into his cubicle. He fumbled around my shirt pocket in a futile search for a match for his cigarette. He settled for a Tic Tac instead.

He seemed to bridle when I suggested that the loss of self-confidence had caused his disappearance from the concert scene.

"The reason I stopped playing was my health," he said, indicating a long welt of scar tissue running down his left leg. "Look at this scar," a grisly souvenir of surgery for a blood ailment which he did not diagnose. "It's the finest operation — 56 stitches — it wasn't from the automobile accident [in October, 1972]. It's the black disease — the red corpuscles start to eat at the white ones. You got to stop it and they cut the poison out.

"Then I got pneumonia and was diabetic for about a week but it went away. I never lost my confidence. You just play. I didn't make any decision to return to performing. I just felt like playing."

During a concert at Kix, the trumpeter, spotting a handicapped person in the audience, left the stage and, standing in front of the fan, blew a personal, muted solo to him and when the young man clung to his left arm, Davis cheerfully accommodated him by playing one-handed.

"A lot of people think my confidence is arrogance," said Davis.

The intimidating facade that he and Richard Pryor wear was mentioned. "Well, that's what you get. Richard is a very nice person. Like he crawls into my dressing room. I tell him 'get off your knees and come in,' because he remembers years ago when he didn't have a coat and I gave him my best coat. He will mention it to me and I tell him 'you'd have done the same thing, Richard.' I suppose it's the image that people project on both of us."

"I never lost my confidence. You just play. I didn't make any decision to return to performing. I just felt like playing."

Then, with faintly disguised pride, Davis shifted his attention to a gold St. Christopher's medal around his neck. "Santana gave me this," said Davis. "He put it on me and I'll never take it off. 'The only reason I'll take it,' I told him, 'will be if you put it on my neck.' Those are diamonds and rubies. To real people that doesn't mean anything. I give things according to the way I like. If Santana would say, 'I like your car,' I'd give it to him. Possessions aren't that important. Santana says the reason he's playing is because of me. I can always get another car. I have two Ferraris."

Davis sees no point in hiding his age. "I'm 55," he said, mischievously darting back at me: "You look like you're about 80."

Cryptic as ever when discussing what he's playing now, Davis characteristically suggested that listeners "call it what you want. I can't tell you what I'm thinking because you'd be picking my brains and my brains are worth a lot of money." He did acknowledge the difference in the new album, *The Man With the Horn*. "I always like to play between the beat and Al [Foster] knows that. He's my favorite drummer. I showed him everything he knows. I showed him different rhythms that I learned from Max Roach, Art Blakey and all kinds of playing, you know." Why did he pick Boston to give his band a pre-Newport shakedown cruise? "I just happen to have a thing with Boston," he said. "Every time I have a new band and a good band, I just come to Boston Also, I wouldn't do it for anybody else but Freddie Taylor. I like Boston people. It isn't a question of how many jazz clubs you have here. It's the attitude of the students. The students are thinking, you know what I mean? They are not afraid to look beyond today's music or anything else. The heavy college community you've got here means they're thinking.

"Their minds are wild."

Ernie Santosuosso is a music critic for the Boston Globe.

(free of charge) from the stage. As like before his disappearance, Miles re-emerged with big canvas ideas (that means long *songs* to you folk who think like that, or as an editor of a competing music rag said to me later, "I heard he only played one song!") as a matter of fact it pretty much was one piece of music with a lot of staggered starts and stops and applause which would have come anyway if Miles had decided to blow his nose instead of his horn and Davis quotes from stuff like *Filles de Kilimanjaro* and "My Man Done Split." You clamor for a description? Okay: spacey heavy metal afro-minimal-funk big on booming then gentle riffing bass by Marcus Miller, cartoon "hard-rock" guitar solos by a guy who looks like some overweight frat bro from Athens, GA., Mike Stern, completely unintelligible paddling-against-the-wind-on-a-huge-lake saxophone solos by Bill Evans (this born-again phenomenon has gotten out of hand), steady thumping by groovalistic backbeater Al Foster and long conga solos by an orally fixated (oooohhh-aaaahhhh went the wet skins) percussionist. A rag-tag outfit, Foster excepted, but So What? Miles gave 'em solo space, 'cause that's the kind of guy he is.

His playing and the way he dresses is what we came for and we were not disappointed by either. Not only was his military fatigue-look with cap and shades just the *right thing* as we head for World War III (shades are gonna be standard equipment, it's gonna be a very very bright war), but his horn playing still spoke of a solitude, an inner fire banked by the injustice absurdity racism and petty insanity of society (classic 20th century artists' posture, only more intimate with Miles) spoke with a loneliness and *spirit* (never heavy handed as in the manner of the political saxophonists and those "Art" ensembles) and with a vulnerability I for one have always found more tragic (therefore deeper) than touching. Miles is an open wound, muted by fine art, limping from one side of the stage to another on that bad hip and if he takes our applause for salt rubbed into it (like any post-dada artist might justifiably) then I'm not gonna be offended. Why launch another tour of discomfort in front of the loyal masses? Vanity, love of art I guess, the man has nothing to prove to anyone but himself. You know he came back at the Newport Festival in 1954 after smack had reduced him.

No electric mouthpiece these days, justa mic at the end of the horn and a battery pack, which allowed him to play the horn bent over straight to the ground or curled up like a hurt kid or fetus, fantastic. For whole stretches of the music,

this is what happened:

You got it, nothing. No *Pangaea* tonight. But I found the lulling mural of prosaic funk made his solos, his work, all the more — not less — compelling. (*Of course* a band of equals would be better — how 'bout Charlie Parker on sax?) Whispers shouts, I'm not gonna get literal about the magnetic pull of his horn, or his phrasing, which has the ability to put a 15,000 foot mountain in front of you one beat after he's conjured up a little valley, maybe a stream or the quiet elegance of Stockholm. You hear it or you don't. He's playing street funk at 57, after a lot of grief, and no one's gonna make you buy the record, but if Ornette and Cecil are suns, and Sonny is the man for all seasons, then Miles came back and proved he still has the night.

Ornette Alone

By Brian Cullman

Ornette Coleman's done a fair bit of traveling. No one's ever accused him of staying in one place too long. He shifts perspective while maintaining the same center of gravity; he changes focus, he digs deeper into his own roots and finds global connective tissue, from Texas blues to the Berber music of Jajouka.

With his new Prime Time Band he seems more vital and fresh than avant-garde, as if he'd traded in the shock of the new for the shock of recognition. He's always borrowed from odd sources — sometimes shamelessly, always exuberantly — and his new music encompasses country blues, bebop, African music (the rhythm and main motif of *Dancing in Your Head* is lifted directly from an early sixties recording of traditional music of Tchad on Ocora), funk (Sly, Larry Graham, George Clinton), and the outer fringe of rock (the loopy rhythms of Captain Beefheart and recent Talking Heads figure prominently in *Fashion Face*, or whatever he's now calling his still-unreleased new album). What's exciting is how *right* everything feels, how seamless. If the rhythms and the ideas are complex (and they often are), they feel naturally complex — there is no sense of obfuscation or mystification; if anything, I felt Ornette reaching out toward the audience (more than toward the band). He tries to explain: there is *this* beat, and there is *this* time, and there is *this* tonality; this is what happens when they meet.

At the first show at the Public, the band sauntered onstage, all casually attired except for Ornette, who wore an iridescent green suit, the kind favored by retired golfers and Sun Ra. The fact that he looked like a slim green maraschino cherry was forgotten once his picked up his horn.

The evening started ponderously with "Night Worker," an introduction to the band in which each member took an extended unaccompanied solo. This is most definitely not a band of soloists but a tight ensemble that functions wonderfully behind Ornette's alto, and only bass players Albert McDowell and Jamaaladeen Tacuma played solos of real depth and interest. From there on in, with Ornette smack dab in the middle, the evening was pure joy: the guitars lightly echoing the sax lines, the drums buoying each other, and the basses leading the party.

DAVID REDFERN/RETNA LTD

Chick Corea twisted his familiar, rigorous prettiness around newer, more perverse harmonies and rhythms.

Ornette basically has two bands — two drummers, two bass players and two guitarists — with himself at the center of the two. This was probably a practice learned in Texas, where every good blues player kept a spare drummer or bass player handy in case one got sick or uppity. But they rarely used them all at once. Here they're used for interlocking, spiralling rhythms, with Ornette the only soloist, the one voice crying out from the center of the maelstrom. It throws the melodic burden on him, and he is eminently capable of carrying it, even if he 's not always challenged. It's like watching Ron Guidry pitch for both the Yankees and the Red Sox in the same game. Yes, he's amazing and tireless and awesome, but every once in a while I'd long for Don Cherry to step in and blow the whole shebang clear into orbit.

That's just wishing though. What there was was better than good, and there were moments that were small miracles. In between the roar of the band, Ornette played with the sort of sweetness and sadness that you hear in Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis and Billie Holiday and maybe Ray Charles, the sort that stops time and stops your breath, that brings you back to yourself and lets you remember that the most unlikely people suffer and that everyone who suffers is the same age. Always.

Blakey's Legacy

By Jon Pareles

Talk about tourist traps: with all of New York City to stomp in, during jazz-festival week I always feel like I'm stuck on a cruise ship. It's not just seeing the music-writer ratpack every night — a swell bunch, tasteful as all getout — but noticing the same pair of hyper-attentive Japanese, the loud lost Frenchman, the business-suited man and his tolerant wife. Where do I know them from? The Art Blakey tribute? The Herbie Hancock concert? Some of the recurring faces may be jazz-label execs reconnoitering talent and setting up quickie sessions before the musicians leave town; more are just plain fans helping themselves to a yearly dose of syncopation. They all look familiar. Sooner or later, every jazz-hound alive will have jostled all the others in Carnegie's hallways, and we'll all have stifled the impulse to yell nasties about the sound systems when George Wein — beaming like the social director of the *Queen Elizabeth* — appears every night to run down the activities checklist. After all, that checklist is why we're here.

On the festival's first two nights at Carnegie Hall, the musicians probably had similar reactions as they collided with cronies from all over. Both "The Blakey Legacy" and "Goin' to Chicago" were encyclopedic jam sessions, shuffling personnel every 25 minutes or so. Blakey burned, Chicago sputtered, the names kept coming.

"The Blakey Legacy" — a Jazz Messengers alumni convention that included bassists Jymie Merritt and Victor Sproles, pianists Cedar Walton and Walter Davis, saxophonists Johnny Griffin and Jackie McLean, trombonist Curtis Fuller, and trumpeters Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard and Bill Hardman, not to mention the current Messengers — had the makings of intricate psychological drama.

Q: How did grown men, leaders now themselves, react to rejoining the man who gave them a big break years ago? A: Mostly Blakey kept them honest, booting harder and harder as the night wore on and the fame quotient increased. Of course, the Blakey drive offers two choices: get moving or get steamrollered. Jackie McLean played bright piercing alto, going as far outside as anyone dared; Cedar Walton, fresh from a solo recital that afternoon, quietly reaffirmed the quality of his Blakey-era compositions, like "Ugetsu" (there are rumors of an all-originals Walton solo album in the works); Hardman and Byrd chased Clifford Brown's ghost in the middle and upper registers. Only Freddie Hubbard took the crowd's cheers as a license to grandstand; otherwise, Blakey chaired a serious cutting contest.

continued on next page

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Q: How did the latest Messengers feel as they faced the legacy incarnate? A: A little daunted, for the duration of the opener. Then, as they played "Moanin'," each of them found his legs, particularly tenorist Billy Pierce, whose solo strutted and, well, moaned, and trumpeter Wallace Robie, whose terseness and silences were either stiffness or (more likely) neatly timed enigmas. Blakey took it easy on them; he won't have to for long.

Q: How did returned fusioneers Donald Byrd and Freddie Hubbard feel as they confronted their equally talented, less prosperous colleagues? A: We'll never know, despite some eloquent body language. I sure wish I had a hidden microphone backstage. Only at festivals can so many musicians enjoy (or suffer) public reunions — yet it still takes a strongman like Blakey to make them earn their accolades.

"Goin' to Chicago," like the Blakey show, was a triumph of logistics. The mis-title was forgivable; since the program included a goodly share of Windy City stalwarts who rarely play the Apple — tenorist Von Freeman, trumpeter and reedman Ira Sullivan, pianists Art Hodes and John Young, singer Estelle "Mama" Yancey — maybe it should've been called "Comin' from Chicago." Any transplanted Midwesterners at Carnegie must have enjoyed a Proustian buzz as Joe Williams' narration listed generations of players and clubs. The problem was that instead of one focus like Blakey, "Goin' to Chicago" had eight: 30s swingsters, the AACM, the Roosevelt College Jazz Showcase, the blues, students of DuSable High School's Walter Dyett, 20s white Dixielanders, and Williams himself.

For all its failings, "Goin' to Chicago" did note the existence of new jazz. While Wein whined that the weird stuff doesn't break even — and proved it with a pitiful turnout for a Town Hall double bill of Air and Leroy Jenkins' Mixed Quintet — Ornette Coleman sold out four non-festival-affiliated shows at the Public Theater, and Ronald Shannon Jackson played SRO at Soundscape (which had listings in the program, but sold tickets separately). Go figure it.

As the festival neared the home-stretch, Miles Davis became the topic of conversation. Although he was added after the festival was first announced, it seemed that the final days' programs were designed to crescendo up to his reappearance, with concerts by Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Weather Report, Milesians all. Wein hadn't made much room for new jazz, but he did book Corea and Hancock on their most progressive behavior: Corea with Gary Peacock on bass, Joe Henderson on tenor, and Roy Haynes on drums; Hancock with VSOPers Tony Williams on drums and Ron Carter on bass, plus trumpet prodigy Wynton Marsalis.

The Corea concert was an exercise in rigorous prettiness. For once, a festival double-billing didn't imply audience gang-wars; opening for the quartet was the Red Norvo trio with Tal Farlow on guitar and Steve Novosel on bass. Wein left the house P.A. off, so the audience strained forward to hear the three-way counterpoint, which was predicably elliptical and witty and brilliant, the jazz equivalent of a night at the Algonquin. Farlow and Norvo interlock in a way that makes both Norvo's vibraphone and Farlow's guitar seem more emotive than either does alone. Corea, for once, didn't get cute. The new compositions he played — all of them fairly long — pull a trick I hadn't expected: they used all of the cliches of Corea's scientological-communication era as toeholds, while twisting themselves around harmonies and rhythms perverse enough for Carla Bley. The quartet's an odd mix — three 60s modernists plus a 40s modernist — that may take a little more time for full synching. Haynes seemed a little uncomfortable with Corea's pseudo-flamencos, and Henderson was constraining himself so as not to honk away the rest of the band. Yet I'm glad Corea hasn't chosen perfectly polite players; his new tunes are spiky enough to deserve some harder blowing.

Hancock's band roared from the start, in a set of Blue-Note-style abstracts that was even more abstruse than VSOP's output. Apparently Hancock has his brain compartmentalized so that when he plays with an electric band, he futzes around with the simplest ideas he can think of — and when he plays a grand piano, he lets his imagination run wild. While Tony Williams constructed terraces of white noise (which the sound system whipped up into high-frequency overkill) and Carter sculpted the time into sensuous asymmetries, Hancock pulled diatonic harmonies inside-out. He has a unique way of switching from a major key into whole-tone harmonies that never fails to pull me through the looking-glass. Wynton Marsalis, who is all of 19 years old, was undaunted by his superstar company. His playing combines the bluster of Freddie Hubbard with the every-which-way note-bending of Miles himself. Was it misplaced modesty that led him to end his solos with decrescendos — or has he already discovered subtlety?

And then there was Miles. I was impressed by his own playing, which is always pushier live than I expect it to be. I was also reminded that nobody can make a band play like a Miles band — to circle around the beat like a python preparing to strike, to create a tension without release. After Ornette's revolution in structure(s), Miles' string-of-solos set seemed conservative, particularly when his soloists stumbled, yet it hardly mattered because you could always listen to the band. Does jazz always need strongmen? Does jazz always need to be up-to-date? I hope the answer to both questions is No.

Nights of Picasso

By Rafi Zabor

I had anticipated the Ornette Coleman concert at the Public Theatre more keenly than any in the actual festival. The opening Denardo Coleman tune with its roundelay of unaccompanied solos may not have been a success in itself but it gave us a chance to hear the individual people in the band. Jamaaladeen Tacuma might be the greatest electric bassist I've heard, and Ornette's own heart-piercing phrase or two was worth the wait. Once the harmolodics got rolling, the band made a wonderful indiscriminate noise and Ornette took all the solos. It was like *Dancing in Your Head* only faster and more intense. From a critic's notebook: *Compared to Ornette, every one else makes music from the outside. Conceivably the one living artist in any genre who can be artistically responsible for the entirety of his age. He sums up the hideous and beautiful possibilities of our time because he's never been distracted by anything less. You can drag out all the frames of reference from Africa to the Delta to pan-ethnic this 'n' that — it doesn't mean s___. Bless Sid Bernstein (current management) or anyone else who can get him to play for people again.* It was all there in the music: Ornette playing into the teeth of the band's wall of noise like the last soul alive in a city, like a man at once overwhelmed by the world and utterly innocent of its effects. Incidentally, a collaboration with Cecil Taylor is threatened again — the pianist is to appear with this same electric Prime Time Band. I hope they will do it at the Public, which provided the only decent sound system of any concert hall that week.

The other adequate sound came in the chintzy pre-Vegas splendor of Roseland, where Panama Francis and the Savoy Sultans, a smallish and thoroughly excellent swing band, filled the giant floorspace with dancers. Then Mercer Ellington with the Duke Ellington Orchestra filled the floorspace with people hugging the bandstand so that there was no room to dance. You'd better believe I hugged it with them. The band is not the great rainbow beast it once was — the reed and brass sections are *sections* now, not rough-hewn concords of individual voices, and the band in full no longer resembles Duke Ellington's speaking voice (how could it) — but I listened to it with a greater happiness than anything else at the festival would inspire. The band still has the world's greatest charts in its favor and presents a rare opportunity to study the Duke's science of sound, as Mingus put it, his sound of love. Soloists step forth to be

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buoyed by the ensemble and then return to it in an interplay as rich as in Ornette's band but infinitely more ordered and luscious: a paradise lost. The repertoire was unadventurous, Mercer Ellington presented it flawlessly, Norris Turney and Britt Woodman were still in the band and, Jimmy Hamilton, out of uniform, guested on clarinet.

Quick quick this is a record date get Arthur Blythe set up no time to lose... Blythe came out with the guitar-tuba-cello band which I'm sure CBS would love him to drop, and played a short set in which there was no time for the group to mesh. Weird sound problems too, no audible cello then a screech, tiny tuba then a whale — not the musicians' fault. Blythe himself always sounds good, better than you remember, better than you expect, and the compositions — one fast tune sounded like a George M. Cohan number, sorta — were good enough to be taped again before a record goes out. Quick quick rush rush no time, get Blythe offstage so In the Tradition can be set up, hasty hasty, we're not recording Evans tonight so let's go. Art Davis substituted for Fred Hopkins on bass and was typically cavernous, John Hicks overcomped and McCall was impeccable. Blythe, who had looked angry ever since emcee Ed Williams talked over the end of one of his tunes, was joined by D'Rivera and Phil Woods and an odd bebop alto battle was on, Woods sounding far better than he had with his own band a month back at the Bottom Line, D'Rivera finding his wings, and an obviously unsettled Blythe — more bitterly than is his usual wont, with lots of high-note effects and "outside" squonks. Each altoist took a ballad turn, Woods a fine "You Leave Me Breathless," D'Rivera a "Lover Man" that will be worth the price of the record when and if it comes out (lots of fluent Parker, Paquito passion, and some hi-note barbs at Blythe), and Blythe a stately and finessed "Lush Life." Quick quick jam to climax, clock's ticking play some bebop then get the hell off and everybody applaud.

If Evans had been shafted he didn't appear to care, came out in raggedy denim shorts and ran his star-studded band through four tunes before a quick exit. Hannibal Marvin Peterson blew the roof off a rolling blues assemblage, George Lewis did his slippery-fish thing on trombone, a tremendous drummer who may have been Buddy Williams (unannounced) powered things like a master, and the band had just begun to mesh on a rock-rhythm do of Charlie Parker's "Cheryl" when it was all over. Evans' oblique charts were filled with little eccentric illuminations, the big shape of tunes vanishing in thickets of orchestral detail.

The night before Miles, Weather Report played at Avery Fisher Hall, which looks like the set for *Let's Make A Deal*, a big joke on the City, which deserves it. They played a few tunes from the latest album, fighting the hall and the sound system all the way, the Big Boom. You could tell that Wayne Shorter was taking tremendous tenor solos, that Zawinul was the ultimate synth-wiz, that Pastorius was ingenious and Peter Erskine was not a sleek futurist like the rest of them (what would WR sound like with DeJohnette?); all the elements were fine, certainly including Bobby Thomas, but they didn't quite come together as they might have. The new material ("Night Passage," "Madagascar" and "Three Views of a Secret") has all the lush and glacial appeal of earlier WR triumphs even if it's less memorable melodically. Pastorius took a solo interlude in which he tried out a variety of virtuoso gambits, played along with a tape of Alan Hovhannes' "Mysterious Mountain," and finished by tape-looping his way through "Purple Haze" and our national anthem. So? The evening reached its high point in an unaccompanied Shorter soprano solo — and I don't mean to write one of those loved-Shorter-hated-the-band screeds, that's not what I mean — which Zawinul later joined and turned into, of all things, "Sophisticated Lady." That may have cleared the air, because in a set-closing (crowd roars) "Birdland" the band came together as it hadn't earlier. "The "Badia" encore, finally, showed off all the classic virtues of the ensemble. Possibly the only problem all along had been the room acoustics, which the Shorter switch to soprano unmuddied. Obviously a great band for all my reservations.

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Weather Report finally jelled as Major Wayne Shorter took tremendous tenor solos, climaxed by an acapella delight.

Miles. There was a palpable electricity in the air, such as attends weddings and executions. I was supposed to cover the first show, which featured Miles tuning his band like a radio, trying this station and that until he found something he felt like playing along with, then pointing his trumpet at the floor as if dowsing for underground streams and beginning to play. There were flashes of brilliance, musicmaking of a thrillingly high order, and long stretches of nothing much during which the loud rock guitarist Mike Stern failed to fill in. Saxophonist Bill Evans looked edgy, bassist Marcus Miller sounded fine, Al Foster sounded great. Miles cued the riff-changes with stray fingers on the Fender Rhodes. Sitting well back in the boomy house I couldn't take my eyes off him. No one could. His stances seemed hieroglyphic, the letters of a new alphabet, every move you ask, "What's it mean?" even though you know the question's idiotic. Charisma of the Miles/Dylan/Brando level is something you don't fight.

The blasts of brilliance left me frustrated at the end of the short set. I thought of hiding out and sneaking in for the second show, but ran into someone I knew from the Koolticket office, gave her $25 and was in again. David Breskin has the music nailed in his review, so I'll just add marginalia. Everything that was tentative in Show One flowered in Two (Miles' long blossoming lines on the slow walk of "My Man's Gone" were literally breathtaking). When I sat up closer not only was the sound better but the charisma gone. Miles was a musician going about his business, doing what he had to do to get the music out. (As a friend remarked, the new record should be named *The Man* in *the Horn*.) So, interesting thought, the mystique is created by distance. Much of the crowd left grumbling at the short set (Blood Ulmer was supposed to open and Miles nixed it) but with the luxury of two shows under my belt I thought how something timeless can't be short. Later, Breskin and I had a sage and beery discussion about Miles and Ornette, the festival's two towering presences. Funny, we said, how Miles uses a band to underline his solitude, while Ornette has the great vision of musical collectivity but takes all the solos. We also noted that a major jazz musician can no longer hire a great band — the apprentice system is shot; everyone's a leader — which is why the great bands of the 70s have all been collectives like the Art Ensemble and Weather Report or conceptual triumphs like Prime Time. Then Breskin said why Miles was our Picasso (summed up art in our time, epitomized the modern artist, his *duende*), and I said why Ornette was our Picasso (even his quickest sketches seem like fundamental assaults on our habits of perception, wildly divergent areas of experience are undifferentiated in him). An old rheumy-eyed dog apparently asleep in the corner of the room got up, yawned, said "I thought Picasso wuz our Picasso," and left the room muttering about "intellekshuls." The festival was over. It was time to go home.

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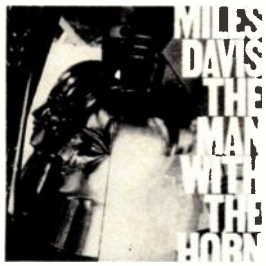

Anyone remember the Miles Davis Wind-Up Doll, you wind it up and it turns its back on the audience? Since that joke was coined in the 50s, Miles has found more ways of turning his back than anyone would have dreamed possible then. A Miles Davis rock 'n' roll band, really...you jest. Turning your back on the house is one way of hearing your band better. Turning your back on the past is one way of staying loose for the future.

If Miles' return to active playing after five years of almost lethal health has not provided us do-nothings with a brand new idiom to consume in the 80s, it has at least reestablished him as the greatest trumpeter in jazz with the usual room to spare. Oddly enough, he also seems the foremost avant-gardist on his instrument, the originator of a tense, high-pressure style that alternates fugitive lyricism, sudden piercing blasts, bleared rapid runs and silence. You can hear it more clearly now that he's ditched the meow pedals, though its most complete incarnation is still to be found on 1975's nightmarish *Pangaea* (go to Japan and buy a copy, or offer a freshly killed lamb to CBS).

Miles has almost always cleared himself a large space to play in, cutting away at the conventions he used until there was as little left of them as possible; *then* he was free to move. His recent nearly featureless riff-a-thons have cleared a space for a Miles Davis style stripped of everything — most of its phrasing, half its ingenuity and effects — but its unmodulated emotional intensity. What convolutions of passion, defense and pain that intensity has had to come through, what blood and fire I won't inquire. Miles has always been able to do more with one note than any trumpeter since Armstrong. Thing is, now one note is sometimes all he feels like letting out. It comes out very strong.

Given his current priorities, he seems to care less than ever what his bands sound like — odd for a man who's led some great ones — as long as they give him something he feels like playing along with. This by way of introduction to *The Man With the Horn*, which disappointed me same as everyone the first few times around. You won't listen to anyone on it but Miles with too much gratification, except maybe when soprano saxophonist Bill Evans makes one of his high note entrances that fool you into thinking he's Miles on open horn. Oh, I forgot Al Foster. He's real good. Nor is the album uniformly terrific even when Miles is playing: he spends a lot of time looking for an entrance, the head of "Shout" raises the ominous possibility of future collaborations with Bob James or Dave Grusin, and the title tune...well, the title tune. I'm amazed that Miles would lend himself to such a project. It's a vocal and it's about Miles, "the man with the horn," "a man so rare" and on like that, a Miles Davis commercial (thanks, Jon), a theme song for a Miles private-eye movie; I dunno. Neither do I know whether he let himself be sung about that way from perversity, humor, the failure to give a shit or the old urge to turn his back. One thing he hasn't done is "mellow with age" as the lyrics say. It's pretty funny — leave it at that.

As for the rest of the album, the cuts that work best for me at this stage of my listening are "Aida" (klaxon head, then funk with blasts) and "Ursula" (a walking four with Miles playing pretty, excellent bass playing from Marcus Miller and fine cymbal shading from Foster). There are audible splices throughout both of them. I resisted most of Miles' 70s work. Nothing like a few years of absence to relish his presence most any way it comes. A nervous-nellie CBS is running around recording Miles' live gigs so they'll have new stuff to release if the man with the horn takes the money and runs. I felt bothered that Miles wanted to work in indifferent idioms when he's always used the very best. Now I'm kind of thrilled by the beauty and terror if it: a devastated landscape, a single upraised sword. Welcome back. — *Rafi Zabor*

Jim Messina
Messina (Warner Bros.)

A songwriting relationship is like a love relationship; when it's working, sparks fly and tall buildings are leapt in single bounds. When it breaks up, there is bitterness to overcome and the loss of a creative energy system. The first song on Jim Messina's new solo album is, in essence, his "How Do You Sleep?" directed to former partner Kenny Loggins. "How does it feel to be on the wheel and running in the race/I bet that you would like to rest but you're afraid to lose your place/Oh long ago someone said to me, 'I'll never work like you,'/Well ain't it strange how money can change a man and his point of view." Messina's "Money Alone," however, lacks Lennon's acidity as it lacks Lennon's insight into the connection between taking risks in one's music and taking risks in one's life. Messina's music is unfortunately no less commercially safe and (therefore) dull than Loggins' recent work. It is more verbally aware, showing concern for "the madness," but the music itself winds placidly, studio-saccharine sweetly, through wellworn Messina idioms and riffs literally lifted from the old albums. It must be nice to be able to steal from yourself, but it is also unsatisfying and stale.

In the early 70s, Loggins and Messina brought finesse and unique orchestrations to a sound derived from CSN&Y. With all of their sophistication, they never lost that cutting edge of honesty in the music, the backbone of rhythm and blues. Well, almost never. The tendency towards late 70s pablum showed in some of Loggins' political satire and penchant for long, climaxing instrumentals, featuring horns and mandolin in the rock 'n' roll framework constructed by his 60s-style guitar leads.

Some of the songs on *Messina*, (e.g., "Whispering Waters") hint at instrumentals as patiently exploratory as those on L&M's *Mother Lode*; but they are cut

short, made token gestures to a formula that required the specific ingredients of Loggins, Messina AND Al Garth, Jon Clarke and Larry Sims on multiple horns and bass. The small instrumental breaks throughout the album are invariably cute — building no tension, supplying no release.

Messina still has that personal plucking guitar sound going for him, as well as the intricate mandolin background that has been his trademark. With roots planted in Buffalo Springfield and the old Poco, Messina has always maintained a style of his own that now struggles to breathe through the layers of California slickness. Like that of Dire Straits or Little Feat, Messina's sound seeks to occupy its own place, transcending the categories country, rock, jazz, rockabilly, fusion, etc. What Jimmy seems to need is another equal partner in creativity, in horn arranging or even in writing, to make his work more than a technical effort. (Even the names of guitars and "guitar technicians" are listed on the sleeve.) His production shows taste and professionalism, but these talents need to be applied to more raw, more powerful material. — *Pat Rose*

The Psychedelic Furs

Talk, Talk, Talk (Columbia)

Talk, Talk, Talk is an appropriately sarcastic title for an album that comes on like one long sneer. Echoing the early punk bands, The Psychedelic Furs have always painted just about everything pitch black. But on this second album, with its much condensed, crueler music, there's more reason to buy some of the extremes of the band's kvetchy stance. This time there's a real *middle* to the sound, inhabited by lots of biting guitar, blaring sax and glorious echo. On the Furs' likeably crude first album it was mostly Richard Butler's great Son-Of-Johnny-Rotten snarling vocals up front and a firm backbeat kicking in from behind. The guitars were often smeared in between like some vague, ambient drone. Here everything is faster and tighter, with some new steel reinforced guitar work. (Check out the rousing riffs in "Pretty In Pink.") The Furs' drone chants now have more punch and they haven't sacrificed subtleties — like the Death-In-Venice shadings to Duncan Kilburn's sax and their haunting minor melodies. The Sex Pistols meet Roxy Music.

Richard Butler's lyrics, delivered with his unrelentingly accusatory vocals, have been upgraded as well. He's more specific and personal this time around. (Last time he used the word "stupid"

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PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

New Reggae: Peter Tosh and Black Uhuru

By Crispin Cloe

Both Peter Tosh, with his *Wanted Dread & Alive* on Rolling Stones/EMI, and Black Uhuru, with *Red* on Island Mango, offer some excellent new grist for the reggae-pop mill. Both these albums by seasoned artists feature the Sly Dunbar-/Robbie Shakespeare-led rhythm section that's become the dominant sonic force in Jamaican and reggae-influenced music today. Oddly, both LPs signal shifts in direction for the artists involved; not so strange, however, is the fact that the same rhythm section holds both projects together, deftly mixing Jah music with enough studio subtlety and driving grooves to satisfy loyal fans and probably snag some new ones.

Black Uhuru is a vocal trio that includes Michael Rose, Puma Jones and Derrick Simpson a.k.a. Ducky. Ms. Jones is an American from South Carolina who graduated from Columbia University with an MA in Social Work and went to Jamaica in 1977 to work in that field. There she met Rose and Simpson, veterans of the island's hotel club gig circuit and local recording scene. She had already done some back-up singing for Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus, so when the trio formed, it was ready to record immediately. Enter Sly and Robbie as producers, and a string of singles introduced Black Uhuru to the Jamaican and English markets. The group's first album in '79, the euphorically-titled *Sinsemilla*, combined your basic modified dub rhythm track — thick slabs of reverb on the drums and sound effects thrown in whenever things start to sag — with some genuinely haunting melodies and lyrics. On this second LP, *Red*, the producers have toned down much of the reverb and tightened up the grooves, emphasizing rather than camouflaging the repetitiousness of the music by sinking harder into the backbeat. Meanwhile, the trio's vocals have been raised in the mix so that the dreamy chant-melodies ride on the music rather than swim underneath it; these are droning melodies, to be sure, that draw on European and African folk sources, each song pitched inexorably in a minor mode. But Black Uhuru's lyrics — printed this time on the LP's posterior — are not so repetitive, and manage, as Rose banters back and forth with Puma and Ducky, to be grim and zany at the same time. On "Sponji Reggae," Rose uses his euphonious squawk to great advantage on lines like: "Some say I am nuts zooky crazy/Want I to leave the music alone/They say go and look work I and I are lazy/But I think for a while and say to myself/It's a time for every style..." And for every utterance from Rose, the band supplies a running commentary. On "Journey," for instance, the chorus "burn brimstone burn" gets goosed along by Mikey Chung's maniacally funky guitar riff that sounds like the midday Caribbean summer sun beating down, with Sticky Thompson's sporadic percussion blasts simulating stones clattering on a dusty road. *Red* is minimalist reggae at its funky best, and the album's meticulous production values greatly enhance and sustain Black Uhuru's somber naturalistic scenarios.

Peter Tosh has been playing with the Dunbar/Shakespeare rhythm axis for years; they were founding members of his original back-up band after Tosh left Marley and the Wailers. These players may have recently produced and played on such funk-nouveau exotica as Grace Jones' *Nightclubbing*, but behind Tosh they give the Bush Doctor exactly what he wants. Tosh co-produces himself with his band, and what he wants on his new album, *Wanted Dread & Alive*, is a more laid back, traditionally soul-based sound than the pop-reggae he's developed over the last three years. The songs here are like mellower updates of late 60s soul hits ("The Poor Feel It" features a chorus bass line patterned after the Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing," for example), and despite the "wanted man," outlaw image on the album cover, most of the LP is really

continued on next page

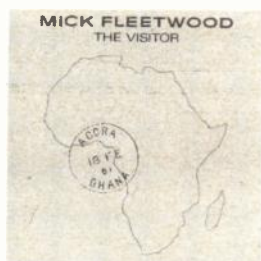
quite soothing, in the manner of Toots and the Maytals' soul-reggae fusion. "Nothing But Love" is a love ballad that Tosh sings in a near-tenor voiced duet with Gwen Guthrie, and the songs's gentle lilt reinforces the links that reggae first had to such American R&B greats as Curtis Mayfield. On "Reggae-Mylitis," which is built around a basic dominant-subdominant chord progression that's been at the heart of gospel, soul and country for eons, Robbie Shakespeare ingeniously refines and reworks his bass line without once losing the song's slow funk pulse. On *Wanted Dread & Alive*, Peter Tosh breaks it back down to the original, sweet, sun-drenched grooves that he, Marley and Bunny Wailer first fashioned out of the American pop radio R&B that drifted down from the Gulf Coast. And while Tosh pauses to reflect on his roots and Black Uhuru forges into new territory, Sly "Drumbar" and Robbie "Basspeare" (as they list themselves on *Red*) and their confederates in skanking funk further the notion that Jamaican sounds will continue to cross-pollinate with pop music the world over, including these here United States.

continued from previous page

some 13 times and "useless" no less than 14, sometimes overstepping the bounds of purposeful disgust, stumbling into the realm of easy-bake nihilism.) Here he concentrates on relationships. The only problem is he's so busy attacking the conventions, institutions and misuses of love that he makes the assault seem more important than the real problem of finding or even feeling love itself. Only in one song does he seem to really *care* about a lover — in "All Of This Or Nothing," which is about a broken relationship. The rest is mostly distancing put-downs, like "She Is Mine" where his contempt for other people's idea of love seems to abort his own search.

Ultimately, though, Butler's viciousness (which at times borders on anti-sexuality) comes across as charmingly, if obnoxiously, adolescent. In a word — punky. It's broad to be sure, but that's the same angle that helped make the first album so likeable. Now with the more powerfully angry music here, the effect is doubled. Some of the band's talk may still seem rote or shallow. But in their action there's a certain truth. — *Jim Farber*

Mick Fleetwood
The Visitor (RCA)
Edikanfo
The Pace Setter (ECM)



Mick Fleetwood & Brian Eno virtually crossed paths at the Ghana International Airport last winter in the course of making these two albums; as Fleetwood and entourage arrived in January for a six-week stay to make a solo album, Eno was on his way back to the States, having completed a spell of woodshedding by producing the local group Edikanfo. While their output certainly merits comparison — the Ghanaian musical scene is cohesive and even intimate — these two Englishmen-living-in-America had very different aims.

Eno has declared [*Musician* No. 32] that, "The complexity of so-called 'primitive' and ethnic tribal peoples' music stands as a symbol of the richness of their societies," and that he wants to get such music heard. Edikanfo — the name means "The Pace Setters" — are less tribal musicians than modern urbanites who play a vibrant mix of various "highlife" styles with elements of samba, blues, buena nove, etc. Edikanfo's music, as led by trumpeter Osei Tutu, is indeed intricate and intelligent, without losing its funk or getting too crowded for individual players to step out. But, hey — guitarist Kwefi Ooran has been a DJ and axeman for an ensemble known as King Bruce & the Barbeques, so let's not get overly anthropological here.

Edikanfo is perfectly pleasurable pop, but I find that Fleetwood's *The Visitor*, superficially the more Westernized album, has more moments of spine-tingling stuff from its Ghanaian contributors than the Edikanfo LP. I was present doing a feature story, as Fleetwood's

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final sessions with local musicians were in progress. With the aid of his core team of producer Richard Dashut, guitarist Todd Sharp, and bassist/singer George Hawkins, Fleetwood seemed determined to make a solid pop record without patronizing his hosts; we sat in the studio and heard a procession of groups from all regions of the country. It's a tribute to the fecundity and sometimes startling beauty of Ghana's indigenous music that four of ten tracks bear the copyrights of Ghanaian composers.

The blending of styles is bound to cause confusion for the more politicized critics back home. Just today I read a *Voice* review calling the record "tame" and hinting at its "chauvinism" — compared to say, Nigerian Fela Anikulapo Kuti's radical hellfire preachings. But Nigeria is a prosperous, oppressive hate-ridden African state; Ghana is a financially floundering democracy with a musical tradition, which, like its amiable and progressive citizenry, keeps an eye always on the eternal verities. If it took Fleetwood's big-money Westernism to get Nii Amartey's lovely "Amelle (Come on show me your heart)" on record — as he meanwhile provided a formidable infusion of hope and hard dollars into a local scene that was crying for both — then I can swallow the song with a little "chauvinism." *The Visitor* is the most melody-rich record I've heard this year. It also finds Fleetwood in percussionist's heaven and shows that Hawkins, until now a relatively obscure sideman for Kenny Loggins, deserves to be at least a cult star on the strength of his singing and arranging. A pop record, yes — but one made with wit, respect and a clear conscience. — *Fred Schruers*

Yoko Ono

Season of Glass (Geffen Records)

The Season of Glass is the season of seeing life without illusions; of remembering one's innate honesty by constant reinterpretation. On *Season of Glass* Yoko's struggle to reinterpret and express every facet of the confusion brought on by a sorrow and an anger is difficult to listen to. And yet it's beautiful for its shamelessness, (like the cover of *Two Virgins*), for the touches of the incredible Ono humor, and, with exceptions, for the music itself.

Side one is a clear, sad-existential melody line — immediately familiar and gently playful. Yoko sings "Goodbye Sadness" in that completely disarming 1940s chanteuse style that she epitomized with "I'm Your Angel" on *Double Fantasy*. The next song, "Mindweaver," is Yoko at her uncanny, routed, universal best. She answers the phone and gives us a glimpse of what we all want to know: how she lives day to day. She answers warm, forgiving, to the point, and then is suddenly taken far away — inevitably reminded of some small Lennonism. The rest of side one is equally graceful, "Dogtown" has the curl-of-the-lip ironic undertone of a good Bogart film, and "Silver Horse," at the end of the side, is like a fable or lullaby. All of which makes the shock of side two even greater. The first three songs rail against the inexplicable loss. The sudden, angry chaos that was wreaked upon her life is flashed back at us in music that is literally frightening. In "Extension 33," she sings of having made the "right" choices in her life because now she still has her "pride and freedom." She sings "freedom" over and over again, until it is almost sarcastic, as the echoed near-disonant harmonies turn "freedom and pride" into a lonely prison: the shattered vocal seems to run along the bars, looking for escape. And then there are the four shots and Yoko's scream opening "No No No" in which she even questions the way she and John understood their life together. "I don't remember what we promised but I know we didn't keep it." Cutting ruthlessly to the truth, Yoko shows that she is still not afraid to be afraid.

The last song on *Season of Glass* is a spiritul, but because it's sung from need and not from fullness, it is strangely unconvincing and unsatisfying. Ulti-

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mately, however, "Mother of the Universe" is honest. The disappointment in its inconclusiveness comes from wanting Yoko to comfort us again, but who is comforting Yoko? We want her to to tell us that she understands even this darkening of half the sky. Instead, she has given us the chance to better understand the utterly personal/universal nature of what she, and what we, have lost. Chapman's message to John, to Yoko, and to the world was, "See, you're just like the rest of us." *Season of Glass* is Yoko's reply to Mark, to the world, and for John: that neither of them ever felt otherwise. — *Patricia Rose*

George Harrison

Somewhere In England (Dark Horse)

The title alone says that for all the cataclysmic events of the past year, the music continues to emanate from a vague, perhaps even hidden place. As opposed to, say, the corner of 72nd Street and Central Park West.

Somewhere in England, in the case of George Harrison's music, has generally been a murky region of the imagination between tantric pop and dull-witted whimsy. And the new album does nothing to clarify the boundaries of his artistic intent. Though it ostensibly carries the familiar save-the-world-and-pass-the-karma baggage, *Somewhere in England* is almost defiant in its insignificance. By comparison to some of this material, "Crackerbox Palace" is Kafka's *Castle*.

Nevertheless — perhaps for the very reasons stated above — *Somewhere in England* is Harrison's most consistently entertaining LP in years. For a change, Harrison doesn't weigh down flimsy material with muddled mysticism or drollery until it sags like an overdecorated Christmas tree. In fact, the tunes that would seem to have the most potential for heavy-heartedness and empty-headedness are among the most infectious ("That Which I Have Lost," "All Those Years Ago"). Moving even further afield, Harrison displays a flair for the AM pop arrangement a la Wings (Teardrops," "Unconsciousness Rules"). Lyrics like "He is fighting the forces of darkness are Rocky Raccoon rather than Dante, more Mickey Mouse than Maharishi.

With Harrison's restrained guitar work and vocals the constants, a group of veteran pop sessionmen, including Tom Scott, Denny Laine and Ringo, are shuffled in and out to good effect. The Scott horn solo on "Unconsciousness Rules," for example, is light pop but helps rescue the song from Captain & Tennillism.

Finally, as homage to old friend and mentor John Lennon, Harrison has written a bouncy pop ditty that doesn't belabor the point. It's a much more effective tack than rewriting "Give Peace a Chance," and it's emblematic of Harrison's approach to what could have been a difficult album project. *Somewhere in England* knows its place. — *Mark Mehler*

Van Halen

Fair Warning (Warner Brothers)

The generally accepted notion of guitar heroics holds that heavy metal is a *lead* guitarist's forum. Practice and history, however, suggest another conclusion. Despite the preponderance of solos in heavy metal music, the guitar's principal function is as a rhythm instrument, setting up and repeating the basic riff or riffs around which a song is constructed. The rhythm guitar provides both the body of the sound and the basic harmonic direction, while the vocals supply the melodic interest. Guitar solos and fills are essentially secondary to the stylistic requirements of heavy metal, which perhaps explains the current popularity of HM bands that either limit or exclude guitar solos.

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Which brings us to Van Halen's *Fair Warning*. From the opening flash of distortion-charged harmonics, guitarist Eddie Van Halen clearly dominates the album. This is pretty much true to form, as is the fact that, with occasional exceptions, all his playing is devoted to rhythm work. But what makes *Fair Warning* more than just another way for 16-year-olds to waste their money is that Eddie Van Halen approaches his rhythm work with an intensity and invention that's usually reserved for lead work.

The structure of most heavy metal songs is predictably rigid. Riffs are deployed in maddening symmetry, verse chorus form is adhered to as if sacramental, and once tonic has been established it is stuck to like glue (unless the last verse is modulated up a key for flash). Much of *Fair Warning*, however, boasts a surprising fluidity in its structural ideas. Once Van Halen (the group) has established a riff, Van Halen (the guitarist) often as not will move on to another idea. More significantly, the instrumental tracks generally seem to lead, with David Lee Roth's vocals added on almost as commentary. Where the song structure is most conservative, on "So This Is Love?" and "Push Comes to Shove," the results are fairly predictable; but where guitar and vocals take almost independent directions, as on "Mean Street," "Unchained," and the remarkable "Dirty Movies," the effect is devastating.

Term-paper talk aside, the main thing Van Halen has to offer is energy — the "why" behind all of heavy metal's "what" and "how." But where previous albums offered brawn at the expense of brain, *Fair Warning* turns in an impressive combination of melodic savvy and sonic excess. Needless to say, the general tone tends to run along the lines of loud and obnoxious, just as surely as David Lee Roth continues to cultivate his tough-asshole persona.

But so what? If what you want is progressive gentility, pour yourself a cup of tea and listen to Genesis. If, on the other hand, you want to listen to some hard rock that assumes the listener is smarter than the average lap dog, this is the album for you. — *J.D. Considine*

Woody Shaw

United (Columbia)
The Iron Men with **Anthony Braxton** (Muse)

Woody Shaw must be even more sick of the music press than I am by now. He spent years on the Muse label, putting out fine albums and trying to take hard-bop trumpet another notch beyond Freddie Hubbard, kept to the straight-and-narrow while Freddie fattened himself, then got signed to Columbia, at which point everyone ritually pronounced him a star and began putting his new records down. Shaw's Columbia outings were certainly slicker and a few degrees cooler than his best Muse albums — he didn't seem to be storming the gates anymore, perhaps because he felt he was inside them — but they certainly maintained a high standard. New Freddies sure get treated a lot like old Freddies these days, when the need for a new hard bop trumpet hero seems less pressing than it used to and people like Lester Bowie and Olu Dara are turning corners hard bop never heard of. It'll be interesting to see what will hapen with Wynton Marsalis, also recently signed to CBS, and that new guy, Miles Davis.

Any Shaw album presupposes a high level of musicianship. *United* demonstrates that he has been able to put together a new band without departing from the high standard of his previous one; drummer Tony Reedus seems a particularly lucky find in place of the excellent Victor Lewis. The front line is reedless now, with trombonist Steve Turre Shaw's only partner; Gary Bartz augments it with alto on two cuts. It's a good album, resembles Shaw's earlier Columbias, doesn't shake the earth, is flawlessly executed. The rest is politics.

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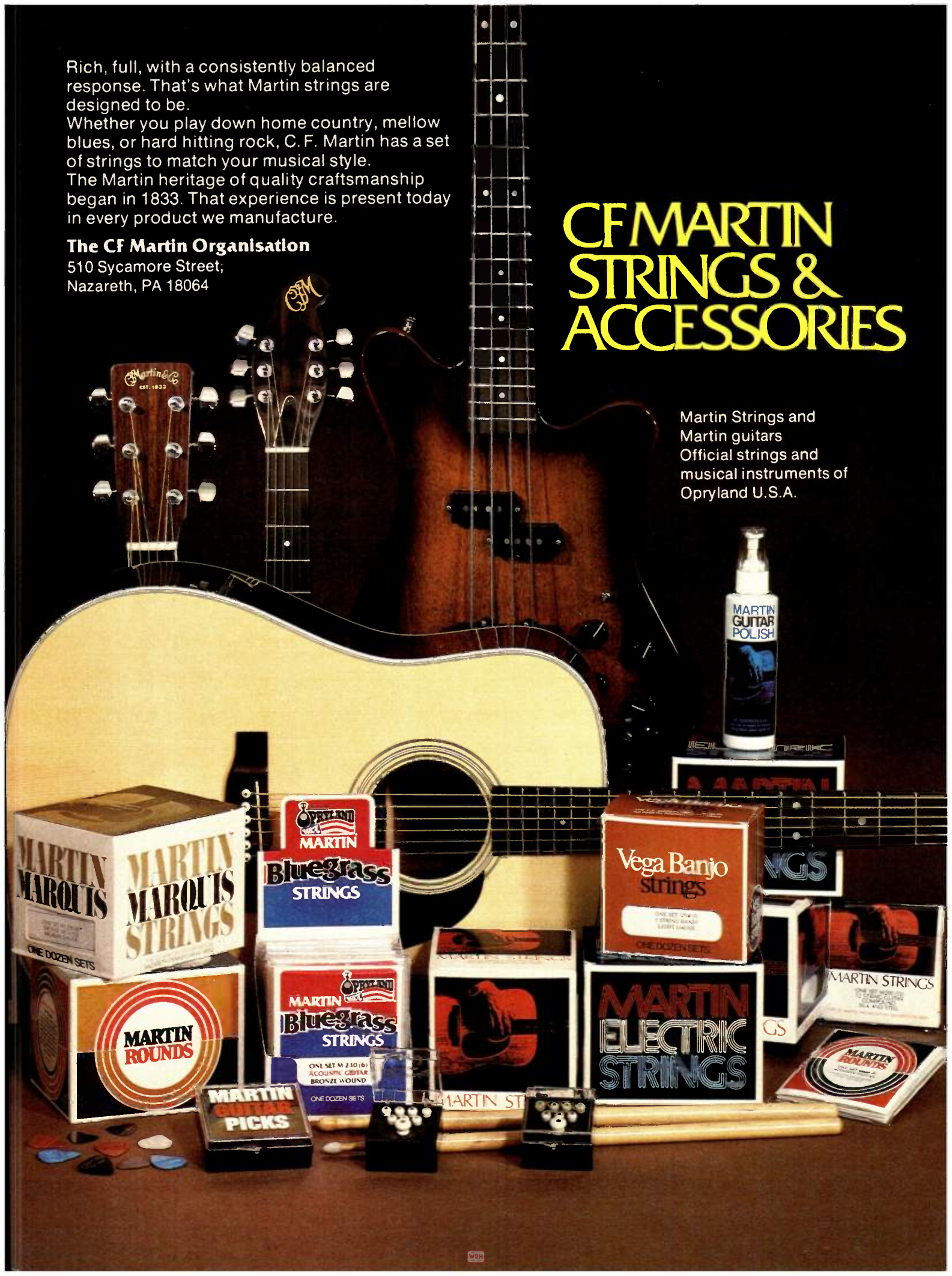

The Iron Men, recorded in '77 and shelved till now, is more "interesting," less flawless and reminds us that we first heard Shaw on Eric Dolphy's *Iron Man*, even before he came to town with Horace Silver. The music is more intense and bitter than anything on *United*. Dolphy's "Iron Man" opens it and Arthur Blythe (speaking of maintaining high levels of performance) comes out of the gate with probably the hottest solo on the record, followed by tart, discontinuous Shaw. The rhythm section of Muhal Richard Abrams, Cecil McBee and Joe Chambers is fine. Braxton appears on the next two cuts, an engaging, comic and somewhat anomalous presence flitting briefly on clarinet through "Jitterbug Waltz," and contributing a characteristic analytical-duck solo on alto to Andrew Hill's intriguing "Symmetry," a tune most notable here for the head and for Abrams' turbulent piano solo. Except for Abrams' work in general, the album does not represent the meeting of the ways that a Shaw/Braxton nexus might suggest. Everybody does their usual stuff. It seems a shame that Braxton did not contribute to the two brief freely-improvised Shaw/Abrams/McBee cuts on side two; they're fine as they are but it would have been interesting to see their quirk quotient raised another 50 percent or so. Neither *The Iron Men* nor *United* is a perfect Woody Shaw album, whatever that might be, and you can take your pick depending on what you're after, polish or adventure. I look forward to Shaw putting both of them together in the future. — *U.K. Gurtmanian*

The Neville Bros.
Fiyo on the Bayou (A&M)

What the hell is a music that thinks of itself in a perpetual present tense going to do with a rapidly accumulating history? Performers like Gary Numan decide to ignore the question and slap together a thoughtless pastiche of stolen goods. Archivists like Robert Gordon obviously fell to their knees at the shrine of the forefathers and haven't gotten up yet. But a band like the Neville Brothers, they know what to do with their yesterdays. In synch with the New Orleans legacy they so accurately delineate on their new LP, the Nevilles have been esteemed musical eclectics and ecologists for too many years to bother counting. *Fiyo on the Bayou* has traditional New Orleans keyard styles, funk bass guitar, Caribbean-derived rhythms, Stax-Motown melodies and percussive horn arrangements — all that and more working together like

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MARCIA MAGLIONE

Carla Bley's Social Studies

By Bob Blumenthal

Carla Bley lays her skillful compositional and arranging talents onto two new discs, Nick Mason's *Fictitious Sports* on Columbia and her own *Social Studies* on Watt/ECM, and the results are, not surprisingly, gratifying. Bley appears as instrumentalist, composer (lyricist on *Sports*), and producer (Pink Floyd drummer Mason co-produced *Sports*) on both albums; taken together, they document much of the material that Bley has developed for her band since their 1978 *Musique Mecanique* sessions.

Among the major treats of recent Bley performances have been the slightly loony song sagas that she has written for various sidemen. *Sports* collects eight of them, as performed by a scaled-down version of the Bley band populated by several art-rock ringers (Mason, Chris Spedding, Terry Adams, Robert Wyatt). These are not tunes you walk away humming, being either harmonically convoluted ballads or simple repetitive phrases; "Siam" and "I'm a Mineralist" seem to be two versions of the same riff. Bley's usual melodic ingenuity has been jettisoned for the most part in favor of hooks and the words turn sophomoric on the audience-baiting "Boo to You Too," which in any event is best heard in person. Still, Bley can be literate, clever, and quietly bizarre, and she has written several very funny tunes.

"I'm A Mineralist" is a prime example — the confession of someone with an uncommon attraction to minerals, it is full of puns (the narrator hopes in time to become jaded) and ominous ensembles that lead to an instrumental homage to Philip Glass, "mineralist to the extreme." "Can't Get My Motor to Start," despite its promise to automotive double entendre in the "Terraplane Blues" tradition, is actually a harrowing vignette of an innocent, mechanically inept female driver at the mercy of a loutish mob of repairmen; the Texas Chainsaw Massacre performed on a Volvo.

Complaints can be lodged about Robert Wyatt's too-proper reading of the lyrics (I miss the zanier attack of the various band members who sing these songs with Bley) and the one-dimensional drumming of titular leader Mason, but the only serious problem is a lack of contrast. The album reminds me of my last live encounter with Bley, where the performance sequence was determined by randomly drawing cards and all of the vocal numbers ended up being heard one after another. They simply sound better when mixed among Bley's instrumentals.

Which is not to suggest that *Social Studies* needs a few vocals to punch it up, for it is perhaps the most well-balanced and satisfying collection of what Bley refers to as her "serious" pieces. Bley is too much the jokester to remain deadly serious, so she tucks in a few laughs along the way (the orchestral quotes in the second part of "Reactionary Tango" would make Dexter Gordon blush) without destroying the less boisterous emotions that most of the pieces evoke.

There are beautiful melodies in abundance here, played with well-tempered passion by the nine-piece Bley band. Among the most memorable are the ballad "Utviklingssang;" "Copyright Royalties," a reworking of "Mood Indigo" (I think) poised on liquid clarinet and trombone lines; and the three-part bolero "Reactionary Tango," a personal sketch of Spain that allows Bley to reinvestigate the folk music sources she employed for Charlie Haden's *Liberation Music Orchestra* and the repetition elements of "Musique Mecanique." This last piece, with its shifting voicings of the main melody, best demonstrates how Bley has expanded upon her nonet by creating what is in effect a section of bass-clef instruments containing Joe Daley's euphonium, Earl McIntyre's tuba, and Steve Swallow's electric bass. Each man is an extremely mobile instrumentalist, capable of playing long, flowing lines without grandstanding; and this

continued on next page

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continued from previous page
allows Bley to pass the traditional bass lines among them, to employ them as a unit or split them apart for pairing with the reeds or higher brass, or even to put full melodic responsibilities on their shoulders.

I don't know how Carla feels about the word "jazz," but she strikes me as one of our best jazz composers — i.e., as someone who conceives her music with specific players in mind, who gives those players room to add and inextricably link themselves to the compositions. There is something truly democratic about *Social Studies*, where each of the nine players gets a chance to contribute and no one is particularly dominant. Bley, heard on piano and organ, and her husband, trumpeter Michael Mantler, remain writers first and soloists out of economic necessity, and the fine drummer D. Sharpe sounds surprisingly under wraps (due, perhaps, to the restricted recording facilities at Bley and Mantler's Grog Kill Studio, which forces the rhythm section and the horns to lay down separate tracks). The others are superb, particularly the featured soloists. Carlos Ward, on soprano and alto, is both sweet and torrid on the tango. Gary Valente, also heard on *Sports*, is one of the best-kept secrets among contemporary trombonists and a natural heir to the rambunctious Roswell Rudd tradition. Tony Dagradi, one of the newest members of the band, is a tradition-minded soloist on both clarinet and tenor (his soulful "Utviklingssang" spot carries the blue-edged grit of Stanley Turrentine, an unexpected yet thoroughly compatible touch). Best of all is Steve Swallow, whose electric bass work on the tango and "Floater" is nothing short of breathtaking. There are a lot of Fender thumpers out there, and there is Jaco Pastorius (the only other player I can think of who might have cut these parts), but no one else has been able to humanize the electric bass the way Swallow does here. These are perhaps the finest performances in his criminally underrated career.

— *Bob Blumenthal*

continued from previous page
sweethearts brought together by destiny.

The record's release in the summer of '81 is another move by fate. Not that the inevitable stylistic decentralization of popular music has turned specialties like island sounds or R&B into triple platinum, but it has opened some ears. And the burgeoning interest in bravura soul vocalizing (from the past or the present) should certainly help a disc that has soul singing in its heart and Caribbean rhythms in its feet. Disco got us used to chilly, utilitarian singing as mere embellishment of the groove; the Nevilles pour hot carmel on every note, even though the actual phrasing is often staccato (particularly on dance floor magnets like "Hey Pocky Way" and "Sweet Honey Dripper"). The timeless peaks of crooners like Al Green and Sam Cooke are equalled or even surpassed by tenor Aaron Neville's readings of "The Ten Commandments of Love" and Nat King Cole's "Mona Lisa." Only strings accompany the voice, with a strange abundance of mournful cellos moving through legato phrases, answering Aaron's inconsolable waver. When he finally sings a whole passage on one breath — well, history can take a bow, and so can the here and now. *Fiyo on the Bayou* sends a benevolent I-told-you-so to all those folks who are either phobic about the past or trapped by it. The past is a gift. Maybe some people misplace it, that's all. — *Laura Fissinger*

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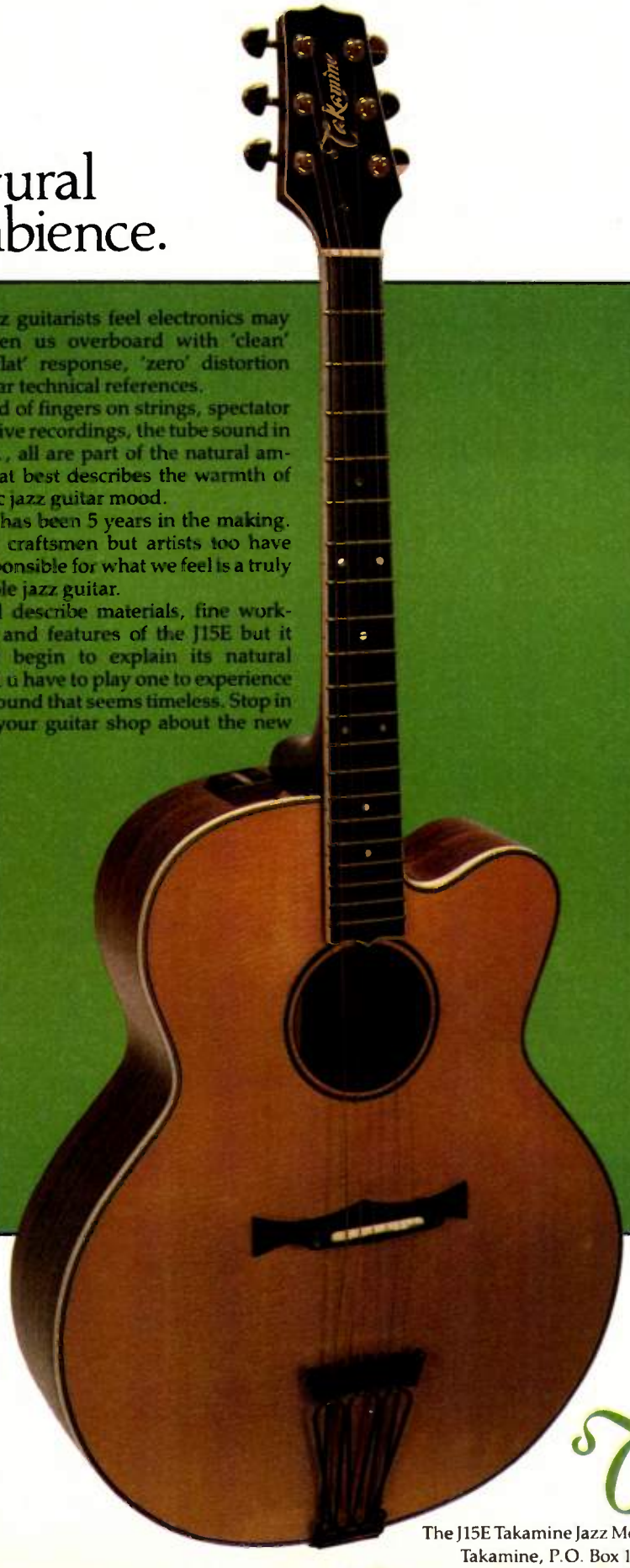

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Lydia Lunch and Mr. James Chance while the world passes by unawares. Or, better yet, if you're brave enough, slap one of these cassette-only releases into yer big black box and go public. Guaranteed to clear out a midtown sidewalk at rush hour quicker'n you can say, "Hot soup!!"

Yessirree, cassette-only releases promise to be all the craze, though, so far only Malcolm McLaren's brilliant Bow-Wow-Wow ode to home taping piracy, *C-30-C-60-C-90*, really made sense as a conceptual package. Otherwise, the cassette-only releases seem the industry's pathetic gimmick to try to co-opt the blank tape market.

On the other hand, the James Chance and 8-Eyed Spy items we have before us probably had no chance of existing in any other form, what with the various legal entanglements stymieing both artists' recording careers (coincidentally involving ZE Records). Neil Cooper, a highly likable chap who used to run a club in New York called the 80s, is the man behind the idea, which is generally a very good one. Take the hottest recent live recordings of these generally undocumented groups — past and present — and release them as limited edition cassettes.

Cooper's choices for his first two projects are impeccable. *Live in New York* captures the Milwaukee-born funkmeister with his all-black back-up band which includes Ornette Coleman guitarist Bern Nix, Tomas Doncker, Colin Wade, Richard Harrison and, on two tracks, trombonist Joe Bowie. The recording quality is adequate, the performance — as always with Chance — wildly erratic. The set includes a harrowing medley — the self-penned "Sophisticated Cancer" followed by a chilling reading of James Brown's "King Heroin" — that captures the slender, pompadoured alto saxophonist at his creepy-crawly best: all goose-bump trills and squawking sax, gurgling, lurching and chortling like a man gone insane. Keep a straight face listening to this on your headphones riding home from work on the LIRR. I dare you...

8-Eyed Spy *Live* is a bit more problematic. This raucous quintet, fronted by the notorious 20-year-old she-demon Lydia Lunch, burnt a hole right through the local N.Y. club scene for a period of about eight months in 1980. The late bassist George Scott, as well as John Cale and the instrumental Raybeats) powered this unit like a runaway locomotive, with multi-instrumentalist Pat Irwin, yeoman drummer Jim Sclavunos and guitarist Michael Paumgardhen forming a dense undertow of twisting, spiralling, demented rockabilly rhythms rent out of shape by Ms. Lunch's caterwauling lamentations and explicit lyrics. That said, at first I thought the production on this 8-Eyed Spy tape was unfor-

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givably amateur, but, like the band itself, with repeated listenings in different environments, the unadulterated energy of this outfit comes through the wobbly transmission. When the lovely Lydia warbles the John Fogerty classic, "You bettah run through the jungle," believe me, you don't walk, man. Unless you wanna get bit by a panther...

Neil Cooper's upcoming releases include live recordings of the Dictators, Suicide, and the New York Dolls (with the late Billy Murcia on drums). They are available from Reachout International Records, Inc., 611 Broadway, Suite 214, New York, NY 10012. — *Roy Trakin*

Gang of Four

Solid Gold (Warner Bros.)

Jon King sings like he just left a funeral. Add to that the cold, grating noise of guitar, bass & drums as cheery as the Atlanta City hospital and you've got rock 'n' roll with all the joy of an Ingmar Bergman film.

For the Gang of Four, rock is a medium to be exploited toward their own subversive ends: trumpeting anti-sexist, anti-capitalist, anti-materialist, anti-fascist messages at the people. Rock, as the Gang of Four have remade it on their first LP, *Entertainment!*, and now on *Solid Gold*, becomes a medium at one with its message. This dark, jarring sound pummels with the force of a jackhammer into cement. Bassist Dave Allen and drummer Hugh Burnham forge the rumbling rhythm and guitarist Andy Gill steers the songs with a Frankenstein monster guitar sound as ominous, yet funky, as anything else in contemporary rock 'n' roll.

The Gang of Four's triumph is their ability to make challenging, decidedly experimental rock that is as intellectually stimulating as it is danceable. Infused with the most unlikely hooks — like Pere Ubu, these guys could turn the sound of breaking glass into a hook you'd yearn to hear again and again — this stuff is addictive, it is scary. The relentless fury of the music gives the listener no quarter — just check out the opening track, "Paralysed," for instance. The only refuge is in the lyrics, which are always political, often dogmatically Marxist. As a matter of fact, lines like "He wants his wife to run and fetch/Order/He's obsessed with order/ORDER!" and "Why work for love/It shows no profit/You only earn emotional losses/There is only one condition/Stay in bed or in the kitchen" are just the thing to stimulate your next Marxist (or feminist) study group.

— *Michael Goldberg*

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NY Dolls *cont. from pg. 20*

company the size of RCA. You've got to have love *and* business. But, the longest journey starts with a single step.

"Nothing ever happened with the Dolls until shocking things took place. People love scandals. Like when Billy [Murcia, the Dolls' first drummer, who OD'd on quaaludes and alcohol during the group's first tour of England] died, all of a sudden the band was playing the bigger room in the Mercer Arts Center. Instead of the 150-person room, we were playing weekends for 500."

More than a harbinger of the future, the New York Dolls were really the last of the 60s-styled rock bands, bringing that decade to a hilariously bungling close. Never again could we view a rock band with the same innocence.

"That's right and lets keep it that way."

Was there any chance the Dolls could have stayed together?

"I don't think, after awhile, they even wanted to," says Syl. "We had done everything we wanted to do as a band. After that, it fell apart almost naturally. Sometimes, breakups like that can be good for the body and the spirit. You take all the things you learn from that and apply them.

"Everybody's always talking about the New York Dolls. If the Dolls were so great, how come they don't sell? There can't be that much interest out there or somebody would've re-released those old albums. If the new generation really wanted to hear the Dolls, there would be records available. If you did put out the New York Dolls records today, it wouldn't do anything again. That was only an interest in so many people's hearts. To your average Joe on the street, the Dolls weren't very important then and aren't very important now."

Irving Plaza. A humid summer night, 1981. Johnny Thunders is onstage, wailing away, as a bemused David Johansen looks on from the audience. It is one of those frustratingly rare nights when Thunders is in peak form — stunningly lucid, upright, effortlessly reeling off those distincive metallic whiz-bang riffs, like Chuck Berry on amphetamines, sounding for all the world like the best guitarist in the universe. His once-youthful features, though, have prematurely aged him into the stunning caricature of an old man, with the black liner around his deep-set eyes transforming Johnny's face into a skeletal death mask. What a great way for the story to end I thought, if David and Johnny could only get together to jam. Y'know, Dolls Re-dux and all that...But, no, it was not to be nor was I about to ask, and the highlight of the evening turned out to be a song that succinctly summed up the moral of the New York Dolls. A sad, mournful tune that appeared on Johnny's only solo album, *So Alone*, Thunders performed it with the aching fatalism of a man who's seen everything and lived to tell about it. "You can't put your arms around a memory...."

Baxter *cont. from pg. 56*

the road for three years. I put an alligator clip on it because the wiring is all weird — to maintain grounding integrity with the rest of the guitar, it grounds the bridge to the metal plate that holds all the controls. It has a maple neck that had died in the making, so I put it on a neck machine and planed it down, put a rosewood fingerboard on it. The pickup placement is real important on a guitar, and those are a little different — it's the way I like things to sound. I designed this guitar to be both a Fender and a Gibson, and it really did the job for me."

And at the bottom of Baxter's guitar closet: "I own a Siren 63 guitar, which from what I can tell was made in Bavaria. It was a pre-Framus Framus — with, like, 29 laminations in the neck, *chrome* f-holes, believe it or not, and the funniest set of tone and volume controls and switches I've ever seen. But it sounds like a real good Super 400 on the rhythm pickup. See, somebody spent some time with the real funny ones. My blue-sparkle Hagstrom with the clear plastic fingerboard, the whole pickup assembly just drops out and you can drop another one in — plugs in with a mini-plug. There's a place to put your pick on the back, a double truss rod, and tremolo system that was the best at the time. I mean, that guitar was *high tech*." M

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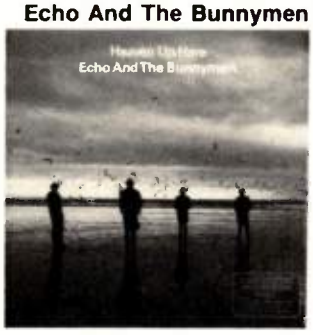
ROCK

By Fred Schruers

SHORT TAKES

Foreigner

Echo And The Bunnymen



Blackfoot

Holly and the Italians

Pat Benatar — *Precious Time* (Chrysalis) This girl really knows how to pummel the cliches — she's everything *Variety* sums up in the word they often use for female singers: "thrush." By putting her spitfire vocalizations over growling heavy metal band sounds, she's making modern, chic soap opera histrionics ("Your doctor's on vacation/So you took the medication/And wound up in the lost and found") safe for a whole new generation. She covers "Helter Skelter" and the Raiders' "Just Like Me" in the same frantically gruff style as her own material (e.g., the bathetic "Evil Genius") so her fans probably think she's got guts. It feels more like suburban chutzpah to me.

Foreigner — *4* (Atlantic) Aha...they've reached the level of sure-fire sales that lets them put out a totally blah album cover; the kids are gonna give them back their (chart) bullets come hell or high wattage. Within their forumla, this band is masterful — I like my refried Free as well as the next guy. Give me a hash pipe and a smokin' Trans Am with big speakers and I could listen to both sides in a row. This stuff is supposed to make you aggressively horny, right? Here's a verse that kept them up all night, I'm sure: "(Ooh yeah) I'm looking for some action/I gotta find my main attraction now/'Cause I need some satisfaction..." So watch them hiss and grunt all the way to the bank. Next year'll bring *Foreigner 5*, I guess...

Echo And The Bunnymen — *Heaven Up Here* (Sire) This Liverpool-spawned band's accomplished atmospherics fall just short of U2's epic sweeps; they're a tad more literate, but a tad less invocatory. Call them *old* romantics — slightly breathless, tinged with psychedelia, but direct in their playing: no irrelevant guitar noodlings, no glassy-eyed metronomic drumming. And Ian McCulloch's something-awful-is-about-to-happen vocal manner sounds like he means it.

Holly and the Italians — *The Right To Be Italian* (Epic) This band boasts the same producer, and the same brand of inspiredly arch amateurism, as Blondie's first album. Singer-guitarist Holly Vincent brims with offbeat charm; on a post-Ramones track like "Baby Gets It All," she makes her limits work for her. Guest Jerry Harrison's synthesizers underscore, rather than clutter. Any *artiste* who celebrates Channel 5 and cola slurpees knows she's dealing in junk food; the band's logo, an airline passenger clutching himself before a crash, shows she knows how dangerous junk-rocking can be.

Thelma Houston—*Never Gonna Be Another One* (RCA) With a cover of "96 Tears"! The tepid disco track saps the song, but Thelma's pliant vibrato elevates it — briefly. Arranger Mike Piccirillo's ham-fisted guitar fills do little for a second daunting standard, "Don't Make Me Over," but Thelma is in perfect, spirited control for at least the first verse. I don't see how a singer can sound so sterling, then so perfunctory, within the same few grooves — maybe the much-credited George Tobin production team half-wanted to make a dance record.

The Joe Perry Project — *I've Got The Rock 'n' Rolls Again* (Columbia) I was rooting for this 7,000th son of Chuck Berry when he slid off the Aerosmith dinosaur, and this LP really does get off the mark fast with "East Coast, West Coast." But then it's back to the well-thumbed riff catalog. Perry and his co-writers in the band try to beef things up with attitudinizing chaff like "No Substitute For Arrogance" and "Buzz Buzz," but, all too soon, silence looks like a damn good substitute for arrogance.

The Cramps — *Psychedelic Jungle* (I.R.S.) Of course, psychedelic rockabilly, why didn't somebody think of it sooner? (No, not Suicide — that's Elvis on a heart-lung machine). This record is nothing but fun, good for a mild party or when you want something slightly less smart-alecky than the B-52s. Singer Lux Interior's cultivated, lonely-werewolf treatment of "The Green Door" is as delicately sensual as a great watercress sandwich. Also check "Can't Find My Mind."

Robert Gordon — *Are You Gonna Be The One* (RCA) Guess Robert finally took that dump he's been waiting on. This record, without departing from the revival spirit, doesn't sound quite as stagey as the earlier paint-by-numbers efforts. His timbre is looser, more natural. Radio play has made it obvious that Marshall Crenshaw's "Someday, Someway" is a highly pleasurable cut, and it proves that Robert can occasionally put both feet in the real world, without relinquishing his good-old-buy fantasy.

The English Beat — *Wha 'ppen* (Sire) The things that might have gone sour on the English Beat — their potentially narrow ska genre, their message-mongering, their stake in a movement — have all been guarded against. Significantly, the back cover snapshots show the band goofing around in some sunny clime. Their music on this LP is linked to, not fettered by, ska, and their messages are delivered (again) with a degree of lightheartedness. Singers and players are darting and fluid, and this welcome effort thumbs its nose at sophomore slump.

The A's — *A Woman's Got The Power* (Arista) Dear lead singer of The A's: You

continued on pg. 116

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JAZZ

SHORT TAKES

By Jon Pareles

Let's start at the source — Africa — with *Savannah Rhythms: Music of Upper Volta* (Nonesuch), a set of wonderfully clean field recordings in which a bunch of nameless musicians shake out the proverbial roots. You might hear Ornette Coleman's Prime Time shuffles in the xylophone cross-rhythms of the Bobo-Dyula tribe's "Allah man dogo," or McCoy Tyner's six-against-four vamps in the chorus-and-calabash workout "Wenlega," from the Mossi tribe (and did you know that the calabash doubles as a cooking pot?). But you've probably never heard anything remotely like "Lemendi gyeba," a musical-bow solo that out-twangs anything in the Western Hemisphere. One odd side effect: after listening to such intensely cooperative music for a while, most American jazz sounds like ego trips.

Side one of *Echos from Africa* (Inner City), a duet album by South African pianist **Dollar Brand** (Abdullah Ibrahim) and bassist **Johnny Dyani**, has them vamping and singing a traditional tune, "Namhanje," for 17 minutes of pleasant, less than riveting listening. The three ballads on side two include a McCoy Tyner dedication that sounds more like a Satie tribute. Brand and Dyani seem effete or at least mellowed-out compared to **Prince Nico Mbarga** and **Rocafil Jazz**'s *Sweet Mother* (Rounder). The band plays, not jazz, but lilting highlife funk, unmistakably African although it uses electric guitars and bass. **Fela Anikulapo Kuti**'s *Black-President* (Arista-Jem) is darker and angrier, with a front line of saxes and horns. **Edikanfo**, a Ghanaian band whose *The Pace Setters* (Editions) was produced by Brian Eno, have obviously heard American disco, to their detriment, although their less imitative tunes approach Hugh Masekela's jazz-kwela mix. And then there's **James Brown**'s *Nonstop* (Polydor), a throwback to his late-60s productions: total funk with a lighter bottom than current dance fare. Back to jazz in a second — but better this than fusion.

Okay, what could be jazzier than *5 Birds and a Monk* (Galaxy), a six-saxophones-no-waiting bop collection. The saxmen (in order) are Johnny Griffin, John Klemmer, Joe Farrell, Art Pepper, Joe Henderson and Harold Land, backed by Roy Haynes on drums, Stanley Cowell on piano, and either Cecil McBee or John Heard on bass. Side one is bluesy and assured; side two has the blood and bone of Art Pepper's disturbingly opaque lines and Joe Henderson doing a daredevil no-piano romp. The object lesson, if needed, is the difference between Klemmer's arpeggiomad "'Round Midnight" and Pepper's laconic "Yardbird Suite:" Klemmer plays the changes, Pepper plays the music.

CBS contract in hand, **Max Roach** teases the world on *Chattahoochie Red* (Columbia). He put together a potentially dangerous young band — yet alloted them minimal blowing room, packing the album with two- and three-minute cuts (including "Giant Steps" and "'Round Midnight") which cry out for longer solos. A couple of tracks, for some reason, are Roach-free; one of them, "Wefe," makes you want to grab the volume control before it fades out. The expansive "It's Time" and the title tune are the exceptions, two whiffs of high-powered Mingus-style suite disharmony that make the rest of the LP all the more frustrating. Will it pay off in airplay?

Didn't think they had it in 'em, but **Gunter Hampel & His Galaxie Dream Band** have come up with a Mingus tribute that has the genuine spirit — i.e., it's a scream, and a moan, and a bellow, and a laugh. *All The Things You Could Be If Charles Mingus Was Your Daddy* (Birth) is mostly free sextet improvisation with a riff honked here and there, except for Jeanne Lee's spooky rendering of "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat." Lee is the salvation of Hampel's next LP, *A Place To Be With Us* (Birth), a quartet showcase for Hampel's latest batch of tunes. The contrast of her sinuous vocals with Hampel's prickly vibes keeps the tunes from seeming entirely bloodless.

The skeletal **String Trio of New York** — Billy Bang, violin; James Emery, guitar; John Lindberg, bass — faces the same problem: how to keep their tunes from sounding dry and abstract. On *Area Code 212* (Black Saint), their simple solution is to play the hell out of everything while paying close attention to texture. They're not afraid to play in unison, since they know they'll still swing, and Emery's guitar parts shift unself-consciously (but precisely) between chording and single note lines whenever things threaten to get stuck. Comparisons to the Hot Club quintets aren't out of order at times.

Even more skeletal, yet remarkably gutsy at the same time, is *The Arrow* (Music Unlimited), an album of duets by cellist **David Eyges** and reedman **Byard Lancaster**. Sometimes Eyges treats his cello as a mini-bass, sometimes he makes it moan like a stringed saxophone; mostly, he meshes with Lancaster so that you forget about their combined virtuosity entirely. Lancaster invokes Ornette Coleman's playfulness and the blues (no, they're not that far apart) and various gradations of threat and promise and bicycle horns, but he doesn't show off, either. A superb album, one that sounds so easy and natural I begin to fear for the employment prospects of rhythm sections everywhere.

Largamente.
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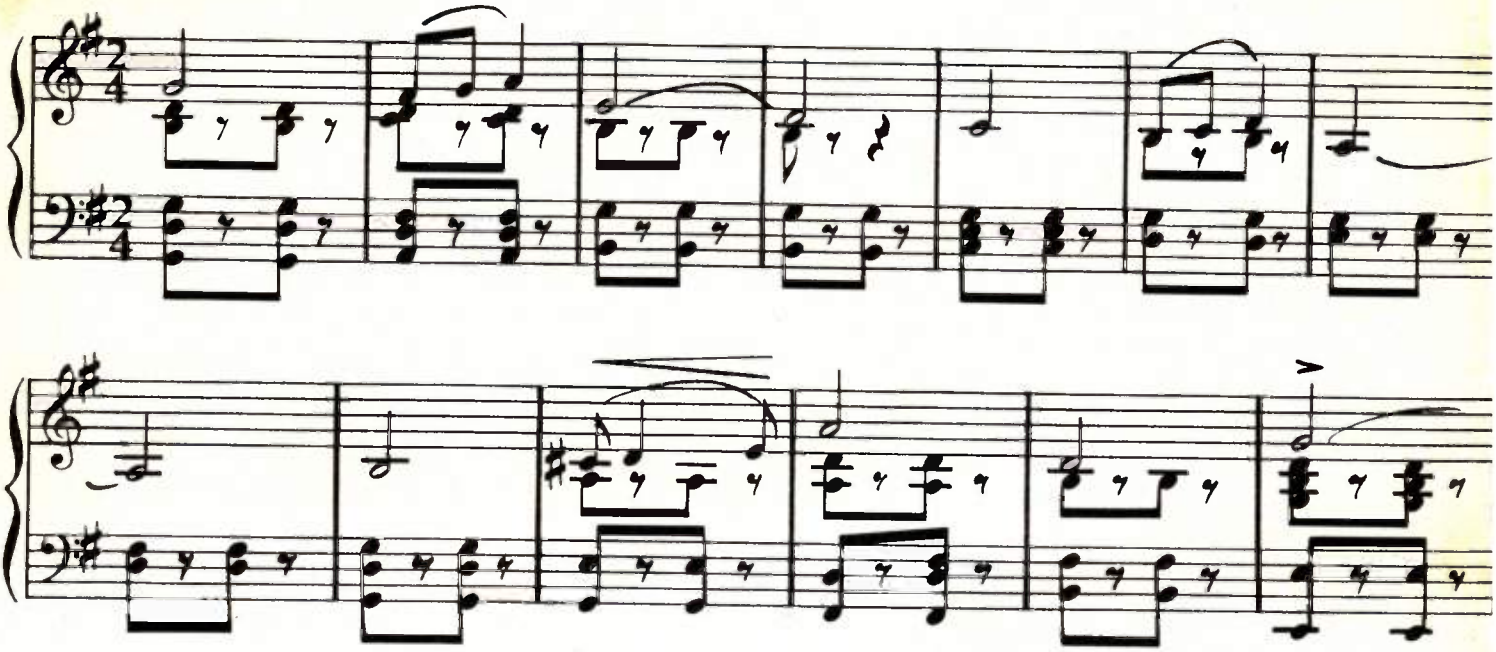

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Oliver Lake pays tribute to Eric Dolphy on *Prophet* (Black Saint), settling a major debt with a set of three Dolphy tunes and three Dolphyesque Lake originals, music twistoflexes all. Unlike Dolphy, Lake plays alto sax on all the tunes, yet it's a shock to realize how many of Lake's mannerisms came from Dolphy: the big squealing register leaps, the burlesque tone shifts in mid-phrase. It stands to reason that these tunes are the perfect context for Lake's turn-on-a-dime fluency and his sweet-and-pungent timbres. Pianist Donald Harris has to invent his own niche in the arrangements, since late Dolphy tended to dispense with piano; in "Hat and Beard," Harris comes up with a sprawling, Cecil-Taylorish solo that seems free yet preserves all the angles of the tune — a strategic gem.

The jumpingest blues debut in recent memory belongs to **Johnny Copeland**, a Houston veteran who, true to Texas tradition, sounds feisty through all sorts of tribulations. On *Copeland Special* (Rounder), his voice and plunky guitar stand right up to a horn section that includes Arthur Blythe, George Adams and Byard Lancaster, all of whom contribute solos they can be proud of. **Koko Taylor**, whose big *shtick* is a raspy growl — don't look for tenderness — adds some late-60s Memphis R&B on her usual B on *From The Heart Of A Woman* (Alligator), and suddenly her limited range pays off. Who says pop is all bad? **Buddy Guy**, who comes across onstage as the world's greatest blowhard (at least when he's playing for the white crowds I'm in) is convincingly deranged on *Stone Crazy!* (Alligator); even when he's playing cliches, his guitar tone has a jagged, paranoiac edge. At the other end of the spectrum, **Jimmy Witherspoon** was Mr. Suave on *Olympia Concert* (Inner City), recorded in Paris in 1961, abetted by elegant obligatos from Buck Clayton and a snowballing tenor hoot by Buddy Tate on "Roll 'Em Pete."

Tate's appearance on **Helen Hume**'s *Helen* (Muse MR) almost makes up for hearing her sing "Shake Your Booty" in the last verse of "There'll Be Some Changes Made."

On the reissue front, MCA (which bought ABC which owned Impulse) has put out new versions of Impulse's Reevaluations series as "Great Moments With," including stellar anthologies of **Keith Jarrett** and **Charles Mingus** at their peaks. Get 'em while they're still in print. M

Rock Shorts *cont. from pg. 112*

have the chops, kid, now run in there and smash all those David Bowie records that are ruling your phrasing and arrangements. Better sling the Boomtown Rats and Thin Lizzy on the pile while you're at it. Pick a notion that's a little less grandiloquently booshwah than "A Woman's Got The Power" — or at least don't illustrate it with a tit shot on the cover. Now go forth and prosper.

Janis Ian — *Restless Eyes* (Columbia) Despite the impeccable session men (Bill Payne, Lee Sklar, etc.) and the zillion perfectly engineered multi-tracked harmonies, this is a literary record, designed to cause shivers of delight in the sort of people who can read Robert Shelton's salivating liner notes without laughing. How can songs like "Bigger Than Real" act so knowing and feel so bogus? Produced with aching sincerity by Gary Klein for The Entertainment Company.

Blackfoot — *Marauder* (Atco) There's always a world of stuff happening on any given second of Blackfoot vinyl — chittering guitars, energetic bass, and gutsy vocals from Ricky Medlocke in the best redneck-rock tradition. "Fly Away" deserves to be the hit it is, but much of the rest of *Marauder* is the standard, whiskey-women-fightin' braggadoccio. These guys live in Holiday Inns, not in the canebrake, so why not get real and have some more songs about buildings and food?

Tubes — *The Completion Backward Principle* (Capitol) Call me old-fashioned, but I've never been able to tolerate recorded sarcasm for more than a minute — it all ends up sounding cute. Yes, they really can play — that's essential to the joke. There are yards of funny ink all over this album cover; they're parodying the American economy on its upscale, corporate side — a Devo for aging hippies. I'm sure they're still fun onstage, but listening to them self-righteously throw away their virtuosity on songs like "Sushi Girl" and "Power Tools" gets boring fast. M

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ALL-STAR GUITARS

A connoisseur and collector of fine guitars shows his own favorite instruments and explains why the great electric guitars of the 50s and 60s sound so fine.

Telecaster Les Paul ES-335 Stratocaster

By Larry DiMarzio

There's something special about a Les Paul. There's something special about a Stratocaster. There's something undeniably special about certain musical instruments. They have spirit, sensuality and presence.

By "spirit" I mean that part of the guitar which is alive; a quality imparted when it's manufactured and nurtured by those who possess it over the years. It's displaying a responsiveness to the will of a player while retaining a distinct personality of its own. That personality, in turn, inspires a player. It's the ability of certain guitars to communicate.

"Sensuality" refers to the shape of the neck, the feel of the frets and the finish, the touch of the controls, the weight and balance up against your body, etc. It's the phyiscal experience of the guitar.

"Presence" is that almost mystical quality which enables a guitar player to recognize an exceptional instrument practically before touching it. It's a faint tingling at the base of your neck or like something barely glimpsed from the corner of your eye. The guitar projects itself into your consciousness.

Since I collect guitars with the intention of playing them (as opposed to acquiring them only as investments or "art for art's sake"), my criteria for wanting to own an instrument are those of a musician. The three qualities I've mentioned (i.e. spirit, sensuality and presence) are my prime considerations when purchasing *any* guitar. However, they're particularly important when selecting vintage guitars such as the ones with which this article is concerned.

Telecaster

Although the Telecaster is not an all-around perfect guitar, I still like it. I've always liked Teles, and I've always owned them. A good Telecaster can sound acoustic at low volume, yet the bridge pickup has an unmistakable whine and purity when cranked. Because the notes don't linger very long, you've got to work for them. You can't fool a Telecaster. They're very straight-ahead. You really have to play all the notes.

This particular guitar is a 1951 (12/4/51) Telecaster (Serial No. 1120). It has extremely good single-note playing capabilities which isn't necessarily a typical characteristic of all vintage Telecasters.

Several years ago I discussed old Teles with Roy Buchanan, and had the opportunity to play two of his guitars. From then on, I looked for one that equaled their performance and I feel this one does. This guitar is fairly lightweight and completely original.

The Telecaster was the first solid body guitar to be mass-produced. Launched in the late forties, the "Broadcaster" (as it was then known) boasted such unique features as a micro-adjustable bridge, a three-position lever switch for timbre selection, as well as the convenience of a cutaway to make the upper frets more accessible.

My Tele has an ash body with a blond finish and a flatsawn maple neck (measuring 1⅝ inches at the ivory nut). This neck is fully-rounded rather than "v" shaped, and the fingerboard edges are rounded over.

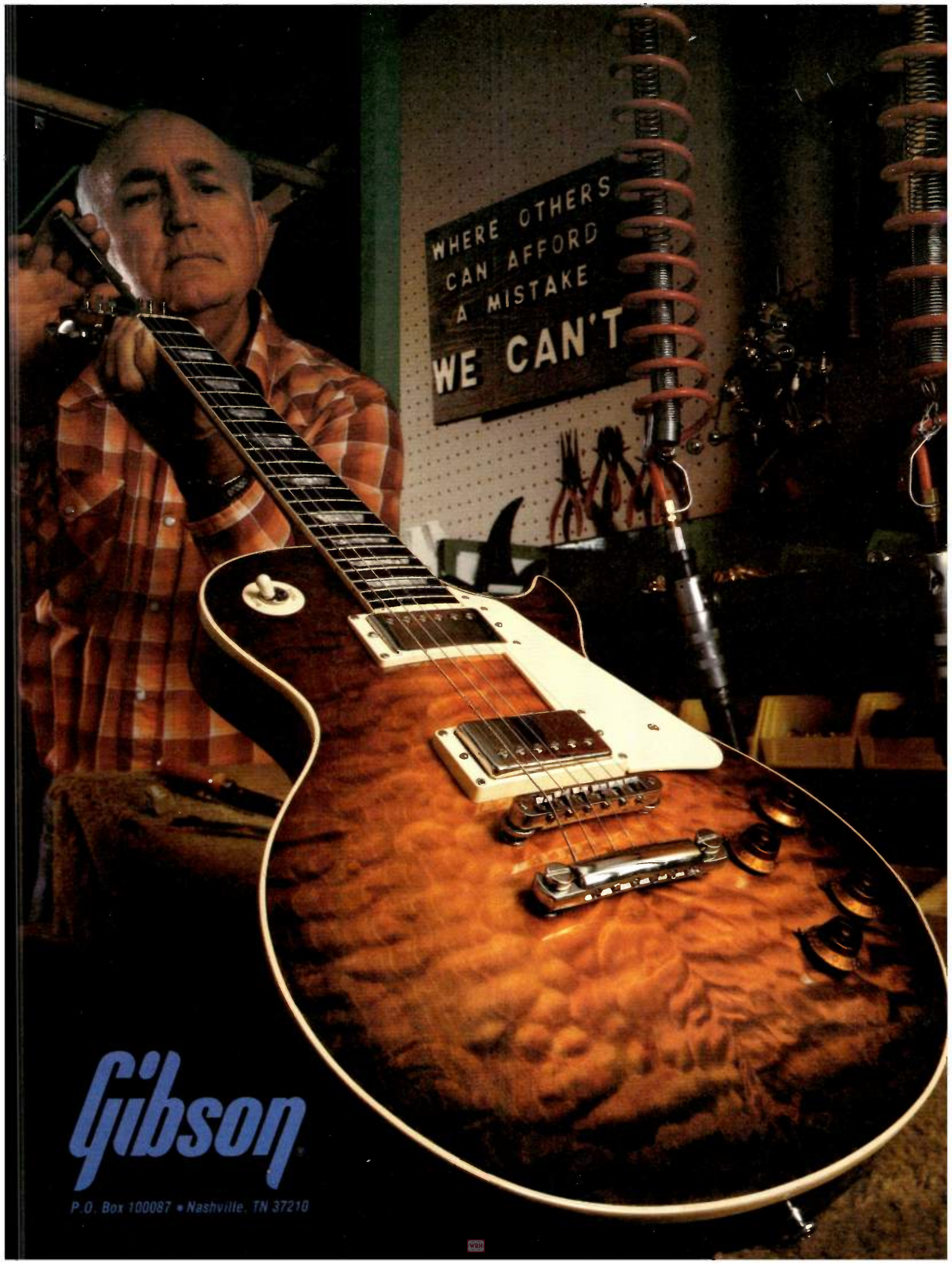
Stratocaster

No other guitar posses flexibility of sound like the Stratocaster. This is primarily due to the pickup type and placement. I also like the body shape which was an outgrowth of the Precision Bass design.

Introduced in the mid-fifties, Stratocasters feature a tighter, more compressed sound than Telecasters. In an attempt to create an instrument with maximum tonal flexibility, Fender transcended the then-prevailing imitation of acoustic sound and achieved a truly electric, and in this sense, innovative sound.

There's a lighthearted funkiness about rhythms played on a Stratocaster, and a bell-like clarity when pickups are

L5 D'Aquisto Switchmaster J-200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played in combination.

One of the unique improvements of the Stratocaster over the Telecaster was the patented vibrato bridge which allowed individual height and intonation adjustment for each string. (The vibrato bridge has always been optional on Stratocasters.)

Rosewood fingerboards on Strats were introduced in the late fifties. Since my guitar was made in 1960 (9/60, Serial No. 53266) it has a solid Brazilian rosewood fingerboard rather than the rosewood veneer ones which came later. Typical of its period, this Stratocaster also features a small headstock, a three-color sunburst finish and a mint green pickguard. Except for its vibrato arm and one tuning peg, this guitar is factory stock.

As with the Telecaster, necks on the Stratocasters were also highly variable, and in many instances this affects the instruments' playability. For example, with certain playing styles and techniques, the placement of the thumb behind the neck is relevant to the performance of the vibrato. A v-neck allows placement of the thumb closer to the top of the fingerboard which, because of the alignment of the hand, gives increased force on the fingerboard. This, in conjunction with the fingerboard's 7½-inch radius, presents a very workable angle for various vibrato and bending techniques.

Les Paul

The Les Paul has the strongest single-note playing capability of any guitar ever created. The reason for this is its unique combination of wood density and electronics. The Les Paul starts out as a mahogany body with a maple top; the top being arched, of course, in the Gibson tradition.

The sound of a Les Paul can be characterized as a lush warmth and roundness with dark, full-bodied overtones. Its sound reminds me of the flavor of a good Bordeaux wine.

The Les Paul was designed as a jazz guitar and, therefore, it has a delightfully smooth string balance. All strings possess the same playing strength. This balance also accounts for the guitar's popularity among rock musicians.

The "cherry sunburst" Les Paul was introduced in 1958. My guitar was made in 1959 (Serial No. 9-3196). It has double cream and black and cream pickups. Originally, the Gibson Company designed all pickups to be used with the cover (which is an electrostatic shield) and the coils were never intended to be exposed. When players began removing the covers, they found these cream-colored humbucking coils and a great mystique arose: that pickups in either black and cream or double cream were better than the standard black ones. This is not necessarily the case. However, they certainly are rarer. Black and cream or cream only pickups were only built from early 1959 to mid-1960.

This particular Les Paul has PAF pickups (denoted by a decal on the bottom). There are a number of differences between what's called a "patent applied for" pickup and the present (new) Gibson pickup. In general, from a design standpoint, the pickups are extremely similar. The subtleties lay in the number of turns, the strength of the magnet, the carbon content of the pole pieces and studs (similarly relevant to old Fenders) and the purity of the copper wire and the coating material. Again, as with Fender, these pickups are highly inconsistent, even on the same guitar. There was no real effort to maintain an extremely specific control over any of these parameters, as long as they worked.

The neck of the Les Paul is flatter than a Fender neck and "C"-shaped. The fingerboard (11" radius) is bound.

ES-335

The ES-335 is a semi-hollow body guitar, and probably one of the most beautiful electric guitars ever made. The most unique characteristic of the 335 is the way the pick feels on the guitar. Its sound is typically almost nasal or horn-like in nature.

The 335 feels more like an acoustic guitar than a solid-body guitar because of its sensitivity to the pick.

My ES-335 has a solid block of maple lengthwise through the center of its body, as is standard on 1958-1960 335s. This guitar was manufactured in 1959 (Serial No. A-35309). It has an unusual neck shape (flatter and thinner than normal) which makes you want to play it fast. This guitar has dots on the fingerboard rather than the block inlays which were introduced around 1960.

Arch-tops

The L-5, D'Aquisto and Switchmaster/ES-5 guitars are all representative of one stage of acoustic development at the Gibson Company in that they're single cutaway arch-top guitars.

I like the L-5 for its uniform sound, excellent playability up and down the keyboard and its warm sound. Of course, it's only really useful for home practice or low-volume performances. (The better the acoustic properties, the more prone the instrument is to feedback.)

The D'Aquisto is basically a custom-fitted L-5, and all of these are completely handmade. The only forms used in making this guitar are those used to shape the sides. All other assembly is done by hand including the top and back carving. Additionally, each neck is individually carved for the purchaser.

The Switchmaster is just the electric version of the L-5. It has three humbucking pickups and (to reduce feedback) a formed plywood top.

All three of these guitars look and play fairly similarly. The neck shapes on the Switchmaster and the L-5 are almost identical. The L-5 has the biggest, most

continued on pg. 126

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POST-PUNK GUITARISTS

After heroic rock guitar started coming out of everyone's ears, a new group of guitarists had nowhere to go but out, breaking rules and inventing a few new ones.

By J.C. Costa

LAURA LEVINE

Guitarists like The Edge of U-2 are breaking new ground with a unique minimalist sound that crosses between rhythm and lead.

What happens after too many years of Chuck Berry extrapolations, buzzsaw powerchords and interminable lead guitar solos resolving in all of the right places? What's left when all of the dynamic tension implicit in the proper manipulation of the pentatonic scale, the emotional juxtaposition of certain major chords (D,A,G) or even the perpetual motion John Lee Hooker boogie riff has been sucked dry due to overuse? Obviously if you're under seventeen years of age and heavily committed to a daily regimen of methaquaalone, you couldn't care less. But some of us are saturated to the power of ten, including many of the younger guitarists on both sides of the Atlantic. Rock 'n' roll guitar is starting to go *out*.

As defined here, "out" means all the right notes in the wrong places, odd intervals, unhealthy resolutions, diminished chords stuck in unfamiliar locations within seemingly familiar progressions. But since this installment is devoted to rock 'n' roll guitar, we are bypassing obvious avant-garde territory like punk-jazz and experimental music ("Blood" Ulmer, Fripp, Frith) and the high tech evolution from rock to jazz to future (Metheny, McLaughlin, Holdsworth, Scofield).

No, what we have here are rock 'n' roll *saboteurs*. Those players who, through rejection of conventional guitar icons (Clapton, Beck and Page) or a healthy antisocial attitude toward the instrument, are tinkering with standard guitar attitudes. This trend has flourished throughout punk/new wave/Blitz, but there are historical precedents: Hendrix, Captain Beefheart, James Williamson with the Stooges, Slick/Alomar on Bowie's *Station to Station* and subsequent LPs and, more recently, Adrian Bellew on Talking Heads' *Remain in Light*. You can even hear it on the chart-topping Police LP, *Zenyatta Mondata*. Andy Summers is one very clever fella who knows to embroider hit tunes with suspended chords, partials, discrete echo and berserko solo excursions buried deep in the mix. His mastery of reggae/ska in tandem with Sting and Stewart Copeland opens up the rhythmic possibilities, and a return to rhythm as the axiomatic function of the guitar is a large part of what this new thinking is about.

Newer players are more song-oriented (hence more rhythm, less lead), listen to a lot of dub and/or funk and tend to interact more closely with bass and drums. Composition is a function of rhythmic interplay, or as Andy Gill, whose spikey, metallic guitar provides the perfect signature for Gang of Four's bracing brand of didacta-funk, puts it: "We've often started with the bare bones and we'd think, 'What makes up a song?' You've got drums, you've got guitar and whatever you choose, to make a noise. If you see the thing as a succession of independent noises making some sort of logic or pattern, if you see the thing from that angle, you're going to invariably end up with something that comes over strongly rhythmic. We'll often start with some sort of worked-out rhythm which won't be a 4/4 thing but it'll have some kind of syncopation or internal structure. Other parts often fit in or around the beat, between the beat, or off the beat."

LAURA LEVINE

John Ashton of the Psychedelic Furs.

John Ashton, creator of the hypnotic counterpoint guitar riffs that motor much of Psychedelic Furs' music, concurs: "I look for a beat and then I look for a riff, the 'sound.' I usually look for something that's repetitive in some way although I've been gettin' away from that a bit more recently (*Talk, Talk, Talk* versus *Psychedelic Furs*). We'll work out riffs together with a sort of interplay kind of thing." With the guitar placed back in the rhythm section, the sound becomes the next major consideration. Again, there are few concessions to established idols in this area, with the possible exception of Jimi Hendrix. Andy Gill owns up to it with characteristic bluntness: "I was extremely keen on Hendrix. I was thirteen or fourteen at the time and I was completely obsessed with him. Quite a lot of people were. But he's the only gutiarist I've ever been interested in as a 'guitarist.' " Hendrix mattered, not for what notes he played but for the total universe of sound he created by force-feeding the razor-edged squeal of the Fender Stratocaster through hundreds

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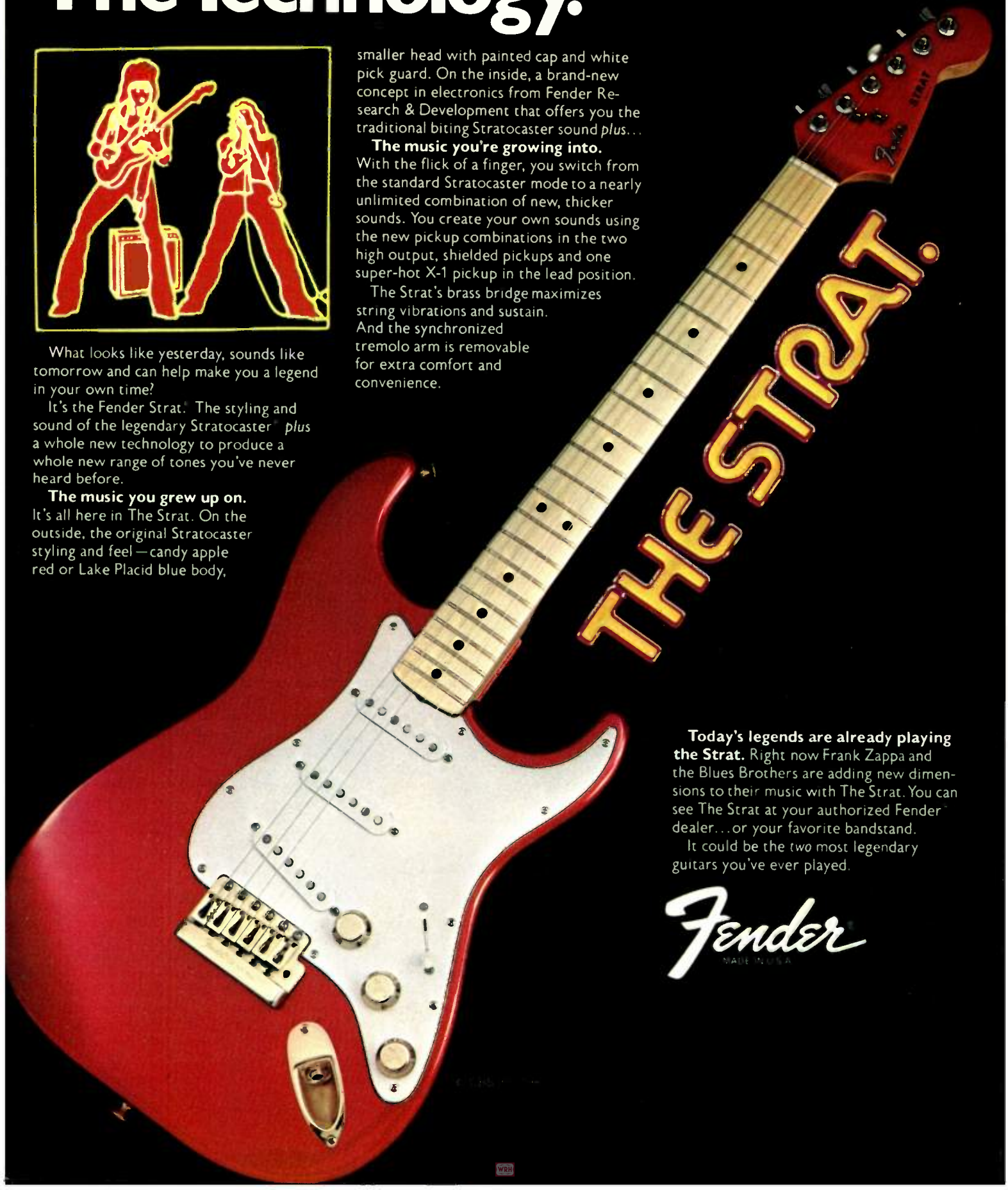

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of watts of Marshall amplification and reaping raw, vibrant, screaming electric sound as pure matter to be shaped into whatever he wanted. Jimi's technical mastery of the guitar is of less interest to these new guitarists than his sound, since it is easier to come by.

The Sex Pistols and Ramones played a crucial role in democratizing rock 'n' roll. Technical proficiency was expressly rejected in favor of the pure joy of picking up an instrument and *going* for it. John Ashton provides an apt case in point: "The turning point for me was probably hearin' the Sex Pistols and listenin' to that sound which in a way was a good heavy metal sound. But applied to a 'sound' — one guitar, one bass — and that was when I decided to take up the guitar and *play*. A couple of years later I joined the Furs. By that time I was still sort of lookin' for that sound. I think I got it when we went in to do the album. I realized what I could do with things like guitar synthesizers. Rhythmically, I wasn't too hot but I've been working on that more and more to get a good balance between a *sound* and a *rhythm* and now I can let it go a little bit, I can be free-form and to do that means there's still a lot of work to be done. When I hear people like The Edge (U-2) or Andy Gill I think, 'that's really unique.' There's something more there than just pure inventiveness or just runnin' away with yourself. It's something that has very much to do with the band. It's like a signature. That's where I'm goin'."

Creating a distinctive signature sound within the fundamental minimalist tenets of rock 'n' roll has become the basic credo for many young guitarists. Gill uses a scratchy metallic sound through a solid state amp with boosted highs and lows and no midrange to better define the angular guitar fragments or "bits" layered into Gang of Four's Anglican funk. Ashton plays a variety of solid bodies through a distortion device ("The Rat") and a Roland Bolt amplifier for a fatter guitar timbre that marks somewhat of a departure from the traditionally hard-edge metallic (single coil pickups) new wave sound. He explains: "I play a lot of single notes, that's why I go for a more distorted sound. I have two distinct Sounds. One is the overloaded chorusey kind of swimming, swirling sound ('India,' 'Imitation of Christ') and I have a more chunky kind of sound that I use on 'Pulse.'" U-2's center attraction is guitarist The Edge, unusual in the newer order where there are no heroes per se, because his brilliant rhythm work and propulsive guitar figures loom large in the band's overall impact, especially during live performances. These guys are in the forefront but there are new primal wackos coming up every second with yet another version of how to take the electric guitar into the ozone.

This fact was recently confirmed to me on a recent edition of the "Uncle Floyd" show. A cult favorite on cable TV in the New York-New Jersey area, this "talk show" places heavy emphasis on state-of-the-art moron humor with instants of pure mutant genius. Genial host Uncle Floyd Vivino presides over this barely contained chaos and every day the show offers up another local band touting some murky, homemade single already consigned to musical oblivion. Lately, I've noticed that the guitarists with these bands are departing more and more from the accepted norm. Just last night this guy was playing a new modified Fender Telecaster with a slide and he was happy to lay down these banshee propeller shrieks that had absolutely *nothing* to do with the tune at hand. It didn't sound bad either.

The new guitarist's approach to the tools of the trade is just as refreshing as much of the playing. Historically trendy faves like the '59 Gibson Les Paul Standard or the '54 Fender Strat go in the dumper. They're too damned expensive and status means less than nothing to these people. Again, sound is a prerequisite. The more trashy or abrasive, the better. Playability can be a factor but as Andy Gill notes, choosing a guitar occasionally comes off as a barely conscious process, not something to be lingered over: "Ah...a tricky one, that. I don't know how to answer that. The only example I can give is the last guitar I bought since the Ibanez and this [a Fender copy] is a Burns guitar, a 'one off' that he'd made. It's fairly cheap. I've been through lots of guitars, Strats, Music Mans, ones with positive eq, but I still like the rather brittle sound of the Burns, really." Ashton echoes this understated approach to a topic which can occupy too much of a gutarist's time: "I started off playing a John Birch guitar on the first album. It was £200, cheap enough for me to afford, with a thin, long scale neck. A typical sort of lead guitar. I've used SGs and Les Pauls on occasion. I mainly use a Music Man [Sabre II] guitar right now. It's quite a clean guitar but it's got overdrive and treble boost on it." Simple and to the point. You don't buy a guitar because you want to sound like Jimmy Page. You find one that'll give you a sound all your own and you take it from there.

It's not that the best and the brightest of the current crop are radically changing the face of rock 'n' roll guitar by doing something that can be exactly targeted as *different*. They've just gone back to the rock primer, carefully resifting and re-evaluating the basics to stretch the guitar's unseen boundaries just a *tad*. Just enough to accomplish the miracle of making this overworked cliché of an instrument vital and interesting again when, by all rights, it should've by now been consigned to the unholy pit of terminal boredom. M

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Star Guitars *cont. from pg. 120*

acoustic sound of the three. This one has an ivory bridge. (Date made: 1959, Serial No. A-33812.) The D'Aquisto has a more balanced and better focused sound than the L-5. (This one was made in 1964. Serial No. 1004.) The Switchmaster is the most compressed sounding of the three. (This guitar was made in 1959, Serial No. A-31559.) The Switchmaster offers optional pickup combinations not normally found in arch-top or electric guitars. Its scale length and overall characteristics are the same as the L-5. An unusual electrical offering in this instrument is the option of having all its pickups on simultaneously.

J-200

If it's good enough for Elvis, it's certainly good enough for me. Called the "King of the Flat Top guitars" by Gibson, the J-200 really was, in most instances, a flat top L-5. This made for an easy transition, for most jazz guitar players, from electric guitar to the J-200. The sound from the J-200 (Serial No. A-32948) is big, warm, and a little mushy. Again, certainly not what you'd expect from a vintage Martin. My reason for owning this J-200 has been that it plays like an arch-top guitar, and therefore it is much more comfortable for my playing style. This model J-200, "the mustache bridge," refers to the bridge shape and is actually a popular nickname rather than a product name. The neck shape on this instrument is very similar to that of arch-top guitars. Its most outstanding feature is its beauty, its especially curly maple back and sides, and its ornate pickguard.

Collectability

There are many excellent old guitars that are not completely original, but if your major concern is buying an instrument for playing pleasure then mint condition is not essential, as it would be if the instrument were to be displayed. Personally, I have owned some of the ugliest Teles, Strats and Les Pauls in existence — but, boy, could they play.

When purchasing a vintage instrument it is wise to remember that classics generally maintain their value, but one should beware of faddish instruments which may not. Specifically, here are some of the things to watch for when purchasing a vintage guitar. Always try to get a guitar that is as close to original as possible. Although some alterations are acceptable, it is foolish to accept any guitar which could not be returned to its original state. Keep a keen eye out for original hardware, tail pieces, tuning pegs, saddles, etc. I don't mind peg changes on Gibsons, but I won't accept any pegs other than the original on a Fender guitar (this head stock is negatively affected by weight). If the pickups have been replaced then the original pickup should be supplied. Try to get instruments with original frets. When

continued on pg. 132

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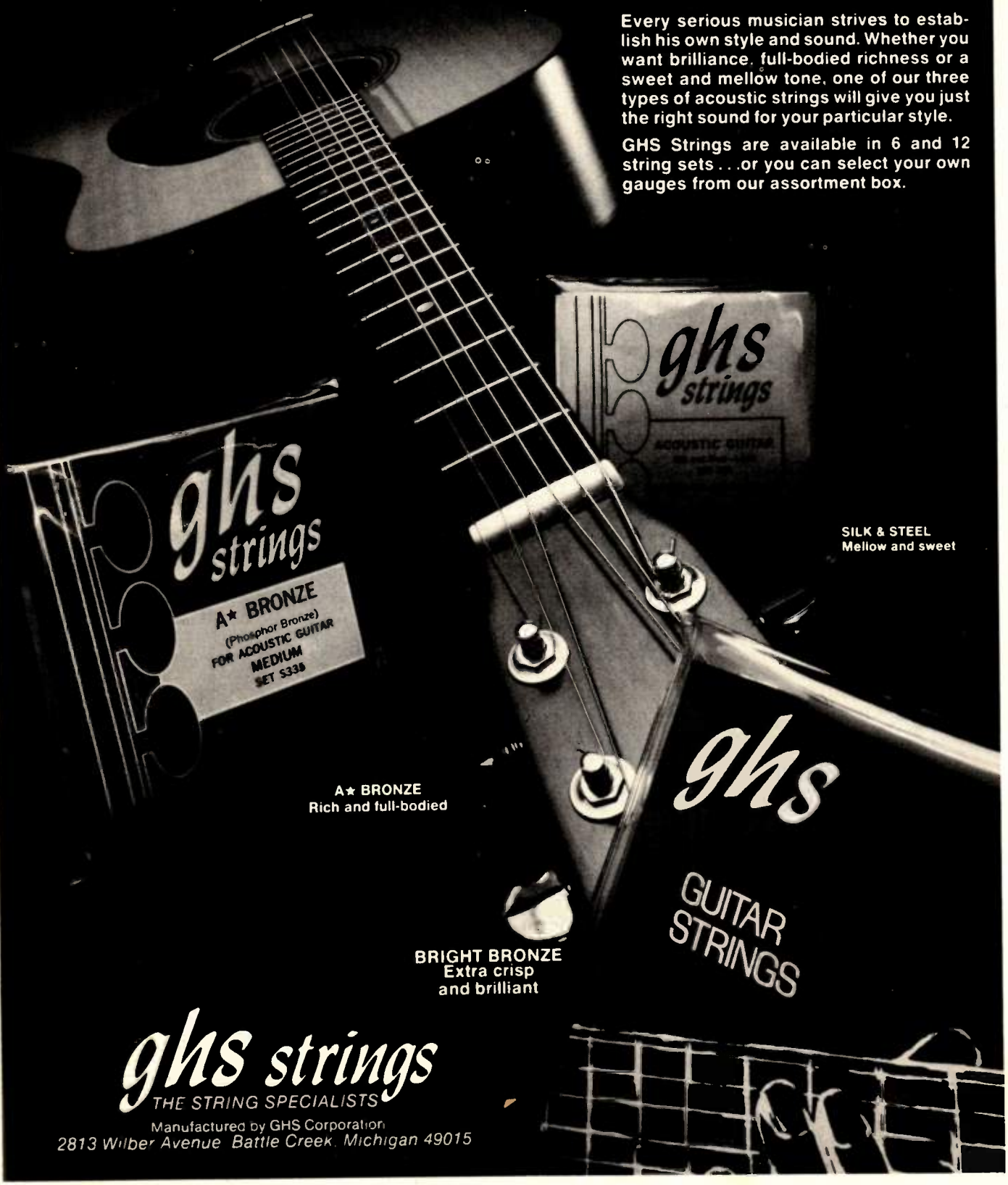

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SOUND AT THE SAVOY

With a new concept reinforcement system custom designed for a renovated Big Apple theatre, such names as Northwest Sound, Yamaha and U.S. Pioneer are updating the sound of stompin' at the Savoy.

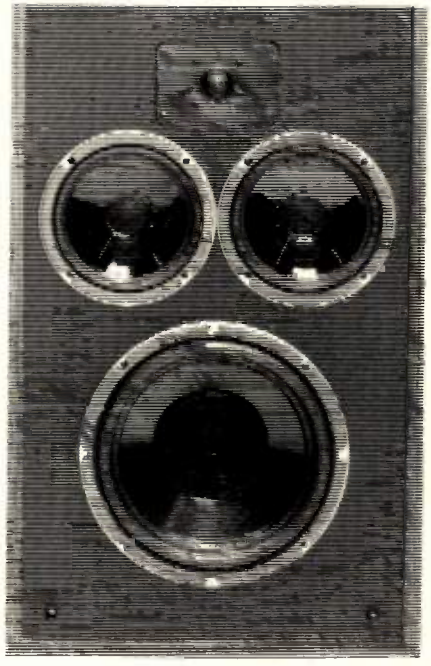
By Marc Silag

Everytime a new venue opens in New York touting itself as the next great full production facility on the club/theatre circuit, the local "techies" swarm the place, frequency spectrum analyzers dangling like LED mood jewelry from their necks, hoping to be the first to discover a pocket of standing waves or a glitch in the P.A. when someone drops some change into the cigarette machine.

The Savoy, new jewel of the already glittering New York music scene, leaves most of them begging. Ron Delsener, the most prominent and consistent promoter of contemporary music since Bill Graham left town, has refurbished an elegant old Broadway theatre that had been dormant for years and has made the already hotly competitive Big Apple circuit burn. Delsener's new venture is elegant, sleek. It is not, as one local technician puts it, "young, fast and scientific" as so many of the new places are. Duke Ellington would have loved the Savoy. Lots of marble and hard waxed black floors. Big chandeliers. Plush black drapes separate the bar in the foyer from the listening area. The flowers overflowing from the prominently placed urns are real. We wanted to see what the new place in town had to offer apart from its elegant atmosphere. And we left our spectrum analyzer at home because we didn't need it.

Kudos for this excellent P.A. installation go to Northwest Sound of Portland, Oregon. Contracted by Delsener with a liberal budget and an endorsement agreement with an equipment manufacturer, their approach to the design and installation of the system coupled with Delsener's propensity for quality production has taken the time-worn phrase "state of the art" one step further.

For the most part, only two equipment manufacturers are represented here; Yamaha, known in pro P.A. circles for the roadworthy PM 1000 Series Mixing Console, and U.S. Pioneer, heretofore relatively quiet on the pro sound front. A spin-off of the consumer audio giant, Pioneer's Technical Audio Division or "TAD" will most likely turn this silence into a clear resonant murmur within the industry. Bob Stern of Northwest who supervised the design and installation with partner Chris Strom, told us that Delsener's concern for prudent spending was matched by his willingness to go with the best, as long as costs were justified. Stern secured an endorsement from U.S. Pioneer which pared down the



cost and the U.S. Pioneer banner appears in Savoy print advertising. The TAD components don't come cheap, but with this kind of an endorsement, Northwest's six figure budget allowed them to put together a formidable *two*-way P.A. system of exceptional quality. Whereas most sound companies are carrying three-, four- and even five-way systems, this one borders on the radical.

Simply put, the system is comprised of the following: All speaker cabinets are of Northwest design and utilize one or two 15" speakers manufactured by TAD. Each cabinet is also equipped with a Northwest horn fitted with a special beryllium driver manufactured by TAD that covers not only the mid-range, but the higher frequencies as well. One might suppose that some frequency loss would be audible with this design. Not so.

We stood on stage during a sound check by Earl Klugh and his band before opening night of a recent two-day run at the Savoy, listening to the quality of the monitor mix coming from a wedge floor cabinet employing two of the 15" speakers and the requisite hybrid horn. Moe Slotin, the Savoy's house monitor mixer, agreed with our appraisal of the sound as "hi-fi, very good hi-fi!" Slotin is a veteran of stage and roadwork and he took the time to lead us through the monitor system's signal path, explaining that there were no fancy electronics accountable for the clean sound being produced, at a relatively high volume without distortion or system noise. Skeptical nonetheless, we scrutinized the Yamaha PM 2000 Series 32 input/8 output mixing console for signs of "hotrodding" or modification. But it was as clean as the Yamaha one-third octave equalizer on *each* output and the assorted Yamaha power amps and crossovers mounted in a mobile rack for storage. Stock equipment throughout. The as-yet-unverified count of 1,012 knobs, buttons and faders of the PM 2000 and the 27 bands of Eq shaping on each monitor/send provide nothing so complicated that any normal, ambidextrous centipede couldn't operate it. Each monitor output serves as an individual mix for the performers on stage, enough to satisfy the most dour-faced monitor mixer who's been struggling to placate his or her band with the two or three monitor mixes standard with most in-house installation. But the Savoy can not be considered a "standard" installation. More a theatre than a club, the sound system and the lighting must meet the production needs of a varied cross section of performing artists, from Santana and Leon Redbone to James Taylor and Patti Lupone.

Slotin mentions one drawback. There are a number of bands requiring the use of all eight monitor/sends but not all require eight separate mixes. The engineer is faced with the somewhat tedious and taxing replication of the same mix on more than one output. Moe mixes monitors for about 60% of the artists who perform at the Savoy and is philosophical in his approach to mixing two or three acts "blind" in a single night, often for only one show. "Part of being able to adapt so quickly to so many bands is the flexibility of the board. It's logically arranged and it seems impossible to overload the thing. In a situation like the Savoy it's 20% technology and 80% psychology. This monitor system is a given. I'm trying to find a way to get the bands coming in to turn down!" The master volume control for Moe's monitor is labelled "EAR DEATH CONTROL."

Ron Lorman is the chief engineer at the Savoy and a veteran of world tours with Frank Zappa, Jack Bruce and Nina Hagen. He's also well-versed on most of the house systems in New York. He pointed out the four identical cabinets that hang to within eight feet of each side of the stage, the rigging and wiring descending through neatly-cut holes in the bas relief of the proscenium arch. Each cabinet contains the same components as the described monitor wedge, though their rectangular cabinets can be

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angled up or down slightly to provide ample coverage for the plushly upholstered theatre seats in the two balconies, as well as the more typical nightclub seating on the orchestra floor. During the refurbishment, hard reflective surfaces were removed where necessary and the room acoustics are now well-balanced and rich.

Three levels above the stage, the power amps, crossovers and "outboard" equipment for the main system are housed in a rack installed in a temperature controlled room — 58° works as well for power amps as it does for wine. Integral to the rack is switching circuitry that allows Lorman to isolate the input stage of each system component while listening to the signal via a small Northwest-designed speaker. For the first time we noticed some equipment without the Yamaha logo, specifically a Lexicon Prime Time DDL which provides the delay for two speakers under the first balcony and dbx 160 Limiters to protect the mains. Maintenance was designed into the system and, speaking from Portland, Bob Stern explained that a major consideration in the selection of Yamaha equipment was their network of service centers.

Installed neatly in the first balcony is a Yamaha PM 2000 console identical to the monitor mixer, mute testimony to the unit's flexibility. Lorman's aerie is sparsely equipped with only a tape deck for playback, a pair of dbx Limiters and one-third octave equalization. Reverb is provided by a Northwest speaker and an AKG 414 microphone in the sub-basement.

Both Lorman and Slotin agree that their gig is easier due to the amount of headroom the sytem offers and the fact that a lot of cumbersome maintenance has been removed by virtue of Northwest's design is icing on the cake. We listened to soundchecks and performances by Muddy Waters, whose growling electric blues sawed through the system out front. On a subsequent evening, Earl Klugh's mellifluous acoustic guitar work shimmered throughout the house. The system presents a balanced frequency spectrum and the P.A. is transparent as all P.A.'s *should* be, allowing listeners to hear the band on stage, not the P.A., even at the highest point in the upper balcony. The technical staff of the house is excellent, led by stage manager John Ackerman. Mention must be made of the superb lighting system designed and installed by Michael Callihan, one of New York's most accomplished lighting mavens. Callihan also worked with Northwest in the electrical distribution of the stage, and ground loops are rare at the Savoy. No doubt, the aforementioned "techies" will have a hard time swallowing all of this. Tell them to bring their Sound Pressure Level meters and a pair of well-scrubbed ears. They'll be amazed at how clean *loud* can sound. M

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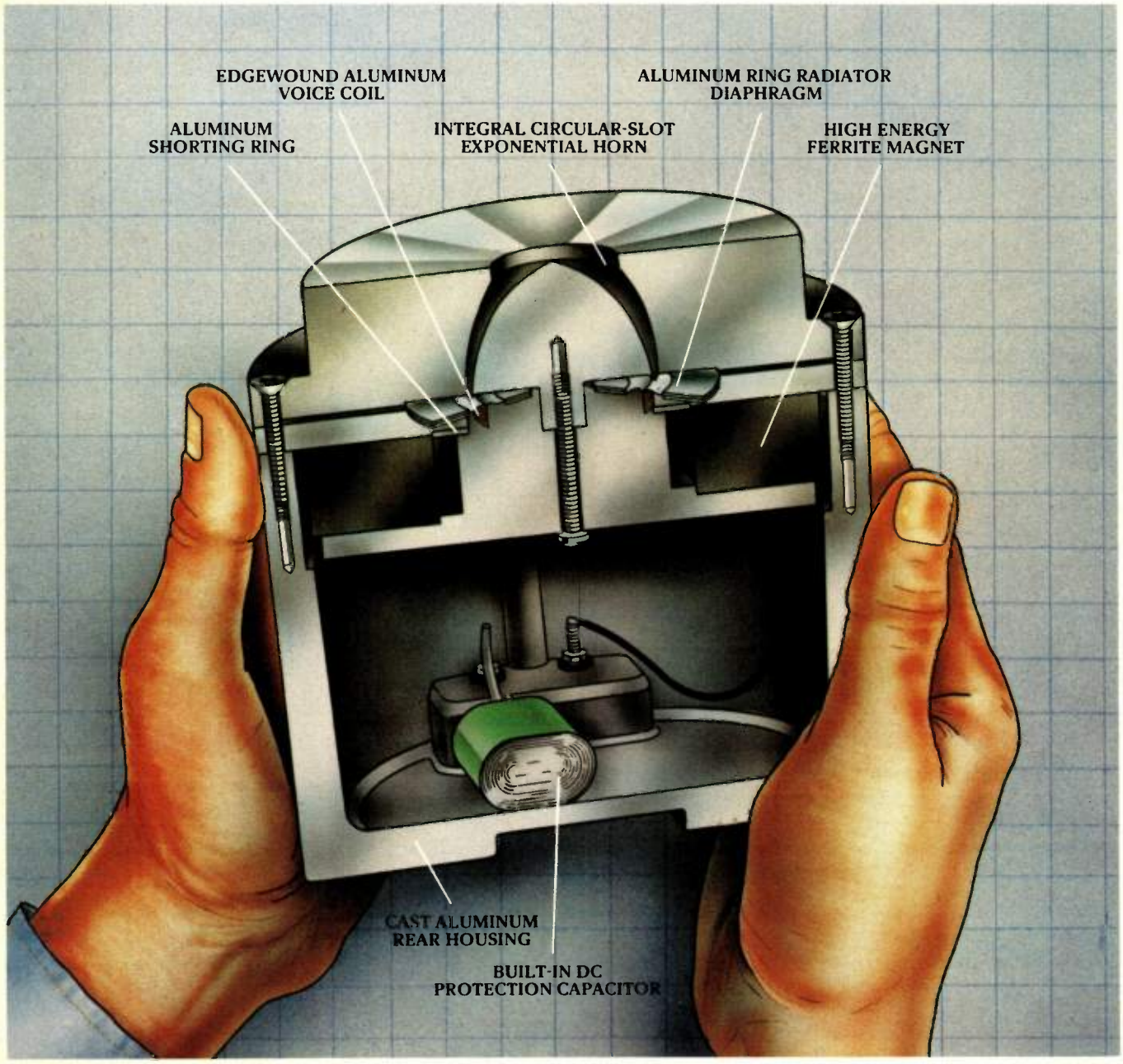

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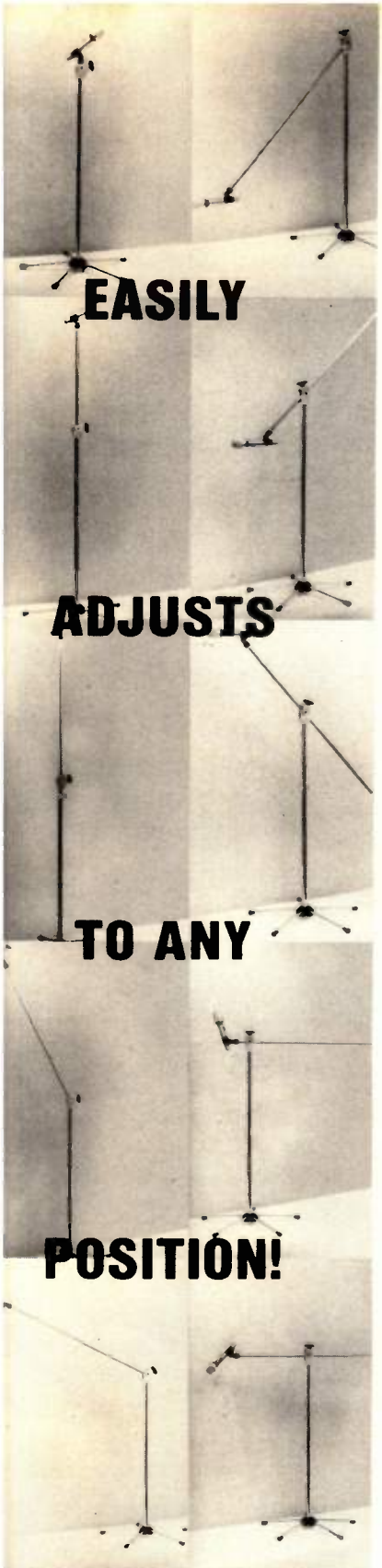
YAMAHA

Star Guitars *cont. from pg. 126*
buying vintage Fenders examine the neck closely. Make sure the fingerboard radius has not been changed because this will devalue the guitar. I have never been one to insist upon mint condition finishes; however, refinishing does devalue the instrument.

Expect prices to vary. Generally you're better off purchasing a guitar from a reputable dealer, but don't let that stop you from "treasure hunting" since there are a great number of fine instruments in private hands. With luck and perseverance you may just find a truly special guitar. M

Hill/Freeman *cont. from pg. 44*
it's as if he had anticipated the avant-garde years ago.) It's a tone that may take some getting used to, but which somehow fits in with the more classic variety — as Freeman's collaboration with the meaty Willis Jackson, coming up this summer on Muse Records, demonstrates.

That Von Freeman and Buck Hill are at last capturing some limelight is more, I think, than a minor repudiation of Coastal Capital-ism — it's a bona fide bonanza for those still hungering after jazz's unique mandate to surprise. And their joint emergence in the late 70s struck me as a fortuitous coincidence. The revenge of the unheralded? I jokingly suggested as much when I asked Chuck Nessa (of Nessa Records) when the Freeman/Hill collaboration would be in the stores. To Nessa though, it was neither a joke nor a new thought. "We're recording it in a few months," he said, catching me off guard. Then again, catching people off guard is what Von Freeman and Buck Hill are all about. M



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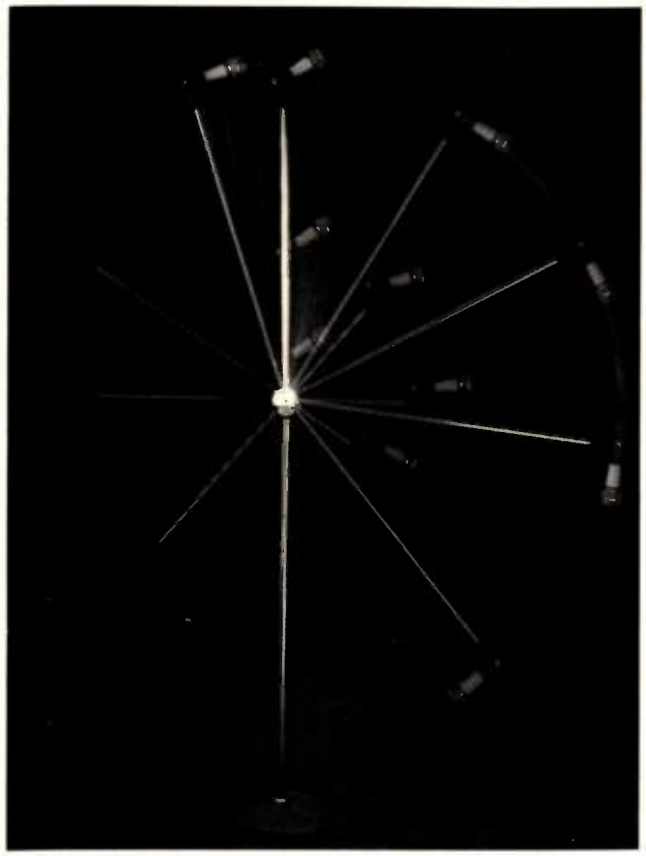

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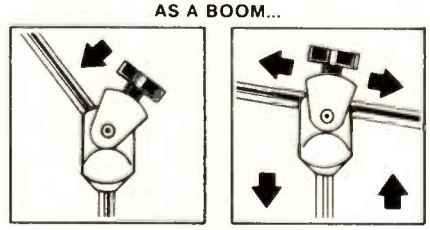

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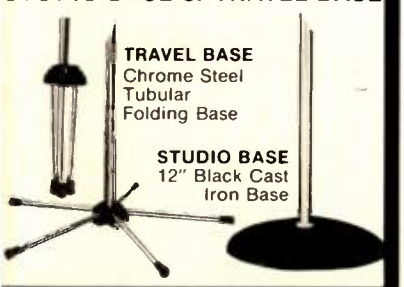

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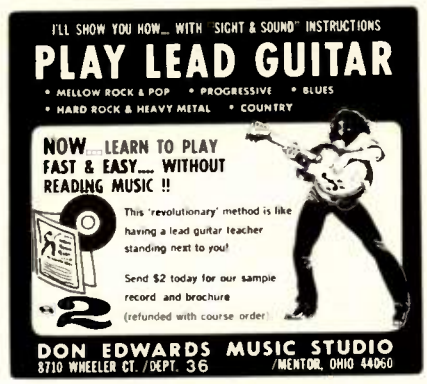

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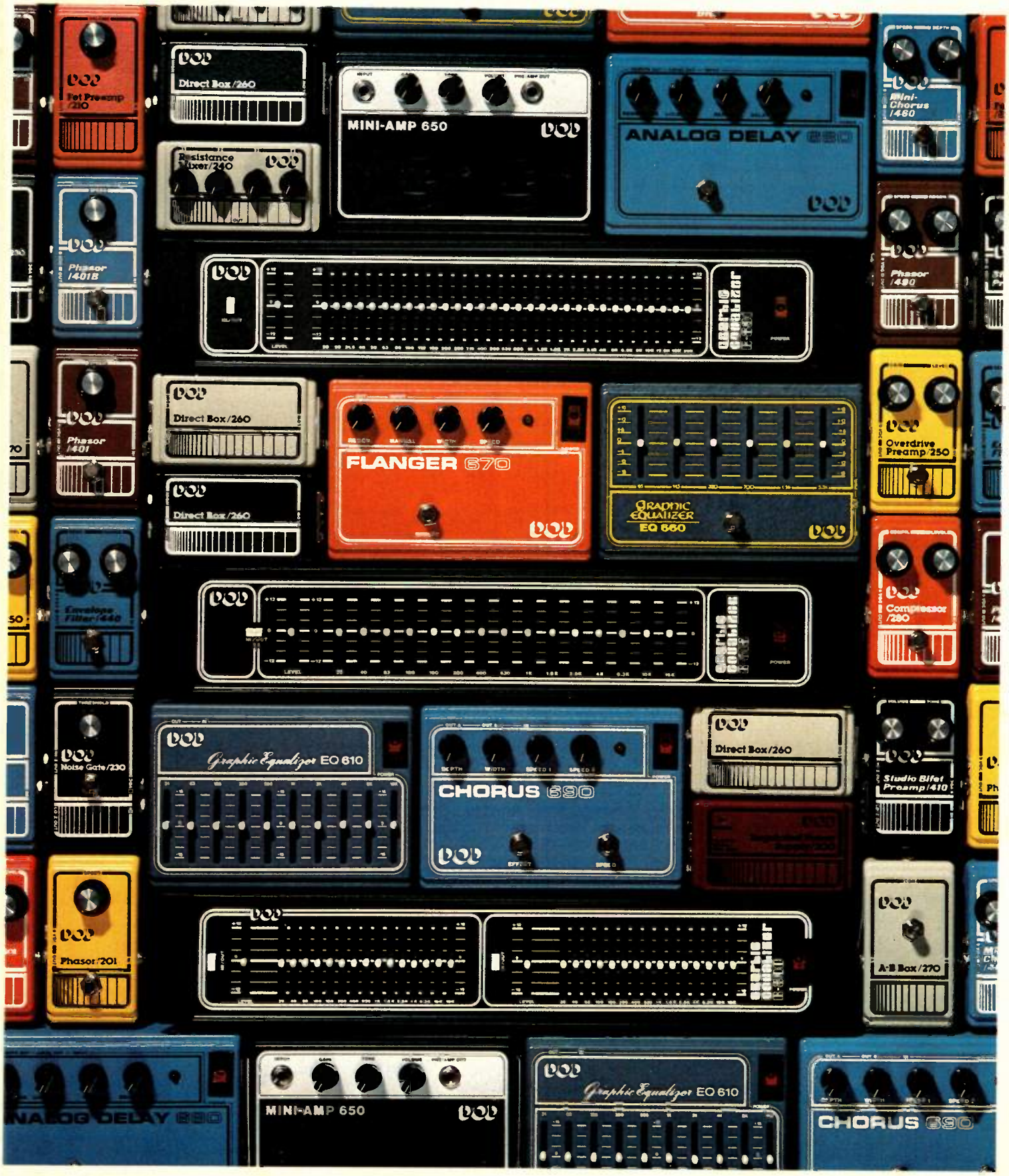

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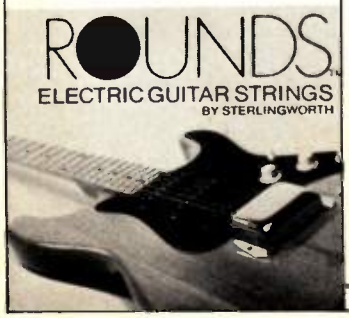
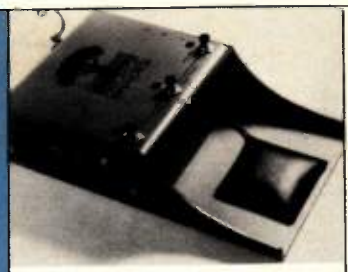
Rounds, a new line of roundwound strings for acoustic, electric and electric bass guitars, has been introduced by **Sterlingworth Music**. Rounds, created for the player who requires the powerful, big sound of roundwounds, offer the beginner or professional exceptional brilliance, dynamic harmonics, punch and intonation. Available for acoustic guitars in 80/20 Bronze or Phosphorus Bronze, for electric guitars in nickel-plated steel and for electric bass in stainless steel. Sterlingworth Music, Inc., 2025 Factory Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49001.



Electro-Harmonix introduces their new Digital Delay with Magna Storage™. Newly developed circuit techniques have made possible virtually noise- and distortion-free performance from this compact unit at up to two seconds of delay with a high frequency bandwidth of up to 12 kHz. An exclusive feature allows you to record up to two seconds of music in digital memory and keep it continuously playing back while you play along with it. Chorus, vibrato, status indicator LED and silent electronic switching are all standard features. Electro-Harmonix, 27 West 23rd St., NYC, NY 10010.

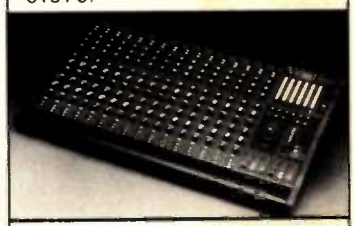
New Pro-Grip picks from **D'Andrea Manufacturing** feature a newly developed surface which prevents the pick from slipping out of your grasp — the harder you play, the more it grabs. Picks are available in standard gauges; flexibility and response are equal to other popular celluloid picks. Pro-Grip picks are packed in a convenient drawstring pouch. D'Andrea Manufacturing Co., Inc., 141 Eileen Way, Syosset, NY 11791.



"Patch of Shades" from **Stick Enterprises** is a new kind of effect for electric instruments. The musician presses his toe on the pad to gradually shade from his normal direct sound into the bass end of a smooth and noiseless wah, and shifts his weight to move through all of the wah frequencies. The pressure pad simultaneously operates a volume output for shading in echo, flange, or old effects into a second amplifier or channel. A detailed brochure can be obtained free from Stick Enterprises, Inc., 8320 Yucca Trail, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

Roland is proud to release the new MC-4 MicroComposer, a powerful computer specially designed for writing and performing musical compositions. Up to four pairs of voices can be programmed from a synthesizer keyboard or the MC-4's own calculator style keyboard. Performances can include programmed pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo and much more. Many advanced functions are available including syncing to tape for building multi-track performances with absolute precision. The composition data in the MC-4 memory can be stored for later use with the self-contained tape memory interface or through the optional MTR-100 Digital Data Cassette recorder, which includes automated search for specific data tracks and exceptionally fast, reliable data storage and retrieval. Roland, 2401 Saybrook, L.A., CA 90040.

A new monitor mixing console with six separate output mixes for onstage monitor mixing, sound reinforcement, and recording applications is being introduced by **Audy Instruments**. Standard features include: input and output channel patching; EQ in/out switch for each input mix control; individual channel muting; talkback; 6 auxiliary inputs; headphone monitoring with solo priority system; high resolution, 20-segment LED bargraph meters; phantom power; work lamp socket; and flight case. Audy Instruments, Inc., P.O. Box 2054, Salem, MA 01970.



Unicord announces the introduction of the Jim Marshall Signature Series Amplifiers. The new Signature Series, dubbed JCM800 will incorporate the basic Marshall 50 and 100 watt lead amplifiers. New additions are the models 2000 and 2001; 200 watt lead and 300 watt bass units. Both new models utilize a two-channel design with channel switching facilities. Special effects send and return accessories are provided for all channels. The 2001 bass model offers an incorporated compression circuit in the power amp section. Both rear panels include XLR speaker connections as well as standard speaker connectors and an XLR 600-ohm direct out signal for connection to mixing desks. Unicord, 89 Frost Street, Westbury, NY 11590.

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Two Orchestral Stupidities

By Frank Zappa

Several years ago...five maybe...the people who promote our rock shows in Vienna (*Stimmung Der Welt*) approached me with the idea of doing a concert in Vienna with the Vienna Symphony. I said okay. After two or three years of pooting around with the mechanics of the deal, work began on the final preparations. The concert was to be funded by the City of Vienna, the Austrian Radio, the Austrian Television, and a substantial investment from me (the cost of preparing the scores and parts).

At the point when the official announcement was made that the concert would take place (I think it was in June or July), there was no written contract with any of the governmental agencies listed above. As it turned out, the person from the Austrian TV who pledged $300,000 toward the budget (which was to cover three weeks of rehearsal, shipping of our band equipment, air fares and housing for band members, and band and crew salaries...I was not getting paid for any of this) did not really have the authority to do so and was informed by his boss that that amount had already been committed to other TV projects. This created a situation wherein the remaining sponsors still had their funds available, and wished to proceed, but somebody had to round up the missing $300,000 from another source.

At this point Bennett Glotzer, my manager, got on a plane to Europe and spent the best part of a month thrashing around the continent trying to raise the missing bucks. No luck. Between his travel, food, hotels and intercontinental phone calls and my investment in copyist fees to prepare the music (not to mention the two or three years I had spent writing it), the total amount I had spent in cash at the time the concert was cancelled came to around $125,000...this is not funny unless you're Nelson Bunker Hunt.

That was orchestral stupidity #1...the second one goes like this: last year in Amsterdam, the head of The Holland Festival came to my hotel and said they wanted to do a special performance of my orchestral music with The Residentie Orchestra (from The Hague), as well as performances of certain other smaller pieces by The Nederlands Wind Ensemble, all of these performances to take place during one whole week of the festival. I told him that I had received several offers in the past (including one from the Oslo Philharmonic where they thought they might be able to squeeze in two days of rehearsal), and described the whole Vienna business in glowing terms. I told him that it would be nice to have the music performed, but, since there was a lot of it, and it was difficult stuff, there was no way I would discuss it any further without the guarantee of a minimum of three weeks rehearsal, and in no way was I interested in spending any more of my own money on projects such as this.

He assured me that they were committed to doing the project, and that the rehearsal schedule could be arranged, and not only that...they were willing to pay for the WHOLE THING. The Holland Festival put up the equivalent of $500,000 for the event. Deals were then made with CBS to record and release the music, more copyists were hired, musicians from the U.S. who were going to play the amplified parts of the score were hired, road crew people who would handle the P.A. equipment (as the concert was to be held in an 8,000 seat hall) were hired, and a rock tour of Europe was booked (to help pay the cost of shipping the equipment and the salaries of the U.S. people involved...again, I was not getting paid), all in preparation for another summer orchestral concert that was doomed like the other one.

What happened? Well, first, let's understand the economics of a project like this. It involves a lot of musicians and they all like to get paid (this is a mild way of putting it). Also, since it was to be an amplified concert, there is the problem of special equipment to make the sound as clear as possible in the hall (it was called "THE AHOY"...a charming sort of Dutch indoor bicycle racing arena with a concrete floor and a banked wooden track all around the room). Also there was going to be a recording of the music, necessitating the expenditure of even more money for the rental of the equipment, engineer's salary, travel expense, etc., etc.

After making a deal with CBS to cover expenses that the Dutch government wouldn't, a new problem arose that became insurmountable — the needs of the U.S. musicians. Despite earnings of $15,000 for 17 weeks in Europe, all expenses paid, a few of these musicians called our office shortly before the start of U.S. rehearsals and tried to make secret deals to get their salaries raised and *"Don't tell the other guys...."*

When I heard of this, I cancelled the usage of the electric group with the orchestra, saving myself a lot of time and trouble rehearsing them, and a lot of money moving them around. Plans remained in effect for the orchestral concerts to continue as acoustic events in smaller halls. The recording plans remained the same also...five days of recording following the live performances.

About a week or so after the attempted hijack by the U.S. musicians, our office received a letter from the head of the Residentie Orchestra. Among other things, it mentioned that the orchestra committee (a group of players that represents the orchestra members in discussions with the orchestra management) had hired a lawyer and were ready to begin negotiations to determine how much of a royalty *they* would get for making a record. Since I had already raised the funds from CBS to pay them the necessary recording scale for doing this work, such a demand seemed to be totally out of line with reality, as I had never heard of a situation wherein an orchestra demanded that the composer pay them royalties for their performance of works he had written, nor did I feel it would have been advisable to set a dangerous precedent that might affect the livelihood of other composers by acceding to the wishes of this greedy bunch of mechanics.

A short time after that, the orchestra manager and the guy we originally talked to from the Holland Festival flew to Los Angeles for a meeting to go over final details. They arrived at my house about midnight. By about 1:30 AM, I had told them that I never wished to see their mercenary little ensemble and that permission to perform any of my works would not be granted to them under any circumstances. They left soon after that.

It was determined shortly thereafter that the cost of going through all of this inter-continental hoo-hah had brought my *"serious music investment"* to about $250,000, and I still hadn't heard a note of it.

There you have it, folks...two orchestral stupidities: a conceptual double concerto for inaudible instruments on two continents, perfectly performed by some of the most exceptional musicians of our time. M

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