

THE FIRM: JIMMY PAGE AND PAUL RODGERS INTERVIEW

# MUSICIAN

\$2.25 NO. 78, APRIL 1985

# Mick

*Musically*

JACGER ON THE MAKING OF  
HIS ALL-STAR SOLO LP

BY BILL FLANAGAN

# FELIX CAVALIERE

A SOUL SURVIVOR TELLS  
THE RASCALS' UNTOLD STORY



THE BLASTERS GO STEREO • EDDIE GOMEZ STEPS OUT  
REPLACEMENTS STAY ROWDY • PLUS: PLAYERS' PICKS



# Only the Korg DW 6000 gives you the power of digital sound with the simplicity of analog control



## KORG DW 6000

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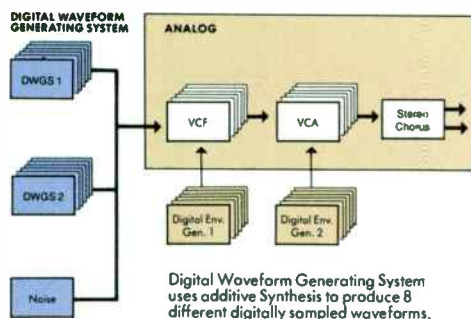
mento, pitch bend and key assign mode are programmable.

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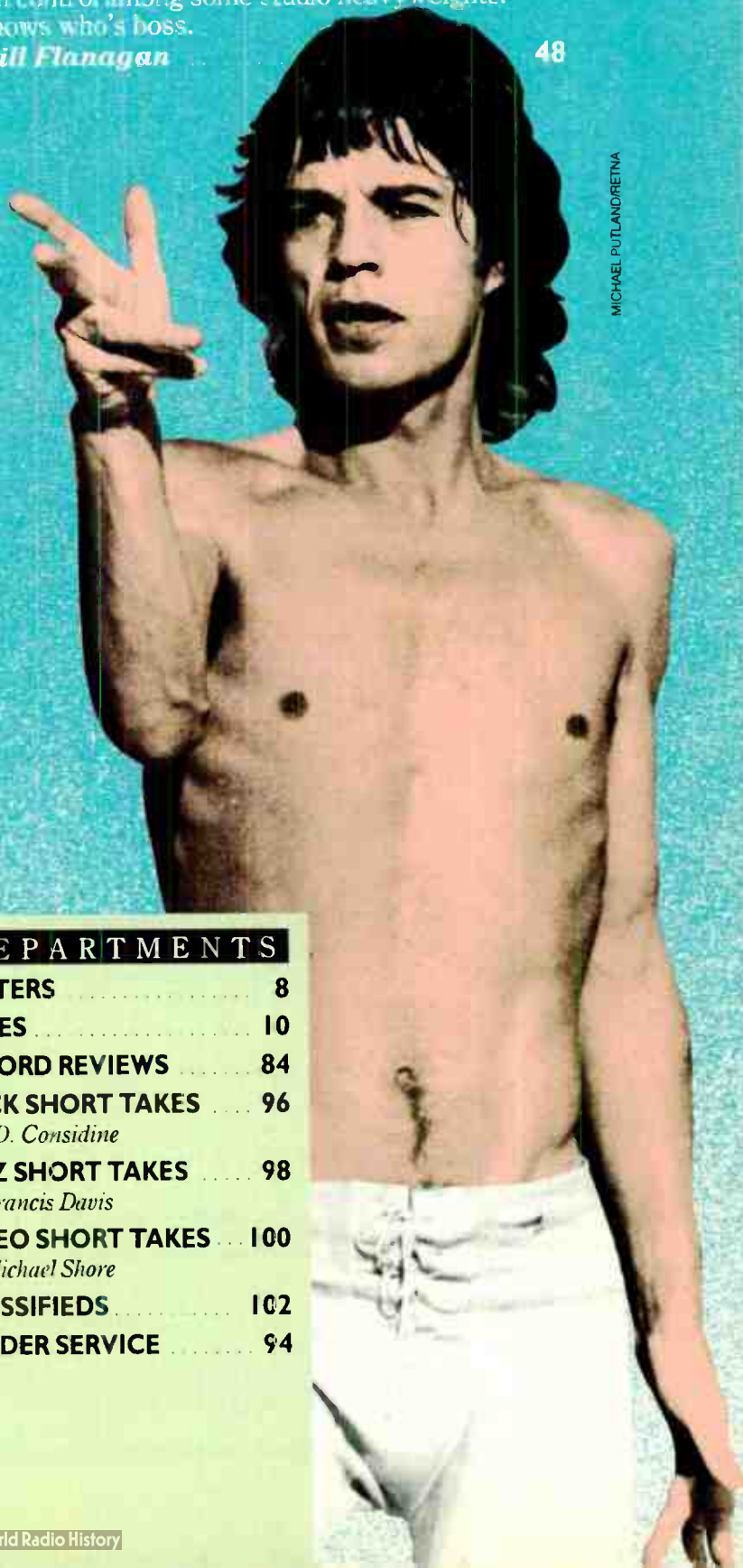
## MICK JAGGER

There's always a first time, even for old rubber-lips. *She's The Boss*, Mick's debut solo album, finds him well in control among some studio heavyweights.

*He knows who's boss.*

*By Bill Flanagan*

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**MICK JAGGER.**  
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### Waking Up with the Press on Fire

How dare Culture Club's Boy George dismiss Keith Richards, the world's foremost rock guitarist, as a "dinosaur and reject from the 'Thriller' video."

Take away the Boy's drag and you have a classic Holiday Inn lounge act. This is typical of the media discovering a new shtick and boosting its talent to support their interesting new discovery. Strip away the exterior and Culture Club's saccharine swill would receive the deserved ink butchering of any Barry Manilow review.

When Culture Club survives twenty years, millions of record sales and spawns hundreds of imitators, then I'll be the first to give them their due. But I have a feeling the fickle press will tire of their gimmick when something more outrageous comes along.

Jonn al-Nazhan  
Great Falls, MI

I would like to tell you how much I enjoyed your recent article on Culture Club. You revealed that the group has a personality the majority of musicians seriously lack. As for the rest of the magazine, I was very impressed. I only wish I had learned of your top-quality publication earlier (before I subscribed to *Rolling Stone*). Keep it up.

Frederick W. Lynch, Jr.  
Bonita, CA

I'm hesitant to buy any magazine professing a new look at Boy George's make-up. But I must say that with your excellent article showing that there is more to the music than make-up in Culture Club, you've proven to me that your magazine is more interested in good journalism than selling itself. Good job.

Ann J. Swanson  
Port Orchard, WA

### Van's Man

Van Morrison is a throwback to the days When an artist took his work and the public's reaction to it seriously, on a level higher than units sold. Today image and fashion are the expedient words to live by. I get the distinct feeling from many rock stars' comments that they privately have a very condescending attitude towards the intelligence of the people who go to their concerts and buy their records.

The impermanence of so much of today's music is frightening. It's refreshing to hear what a true artist of Van Morrison's calibre has to say about it all.

Gary Kimber  
Downsview, Ont.

Bill Flanagan's interview with Van Morrison was by far the finest Van has given to anyone. I'll be renewing my subscription again, and find *Musician* answering my questions and filling in the gaps about my fellow musicians and the tools of their trade.

Denis Geoghegan  
Floral Park, NY



### The Unforgettable Fire

As I finished Bill Flanagan's U2 in the January issue, I discovered a band that truly transcends the musical experience. This is where the true fire burns.

Matthew Byars  
Lexington, KY

It's so refreshing to hear a couple of musicians speak so positively not only about their music and fans, but also about each other.

Donna Jagla  
Chicago, IL

By putting U2 on your cover, you obviously know class! Thank you once again for a truly enjoyable issue.

Thomas P. Ward  
St. Louis, MO

Thanks for an overdue article on an incredible band.

Jackie Galloway  
Dunwoody, GA

### Branca Bombs

Glenn Branca says he "wants to hear new sounds, that's all." Considering the infinite textural and dynamic possibilities of a "guitar orchestra," I don't think he's even scratching the surface. In his recent Boston show, all his arm-waving (conducting?) couldn't conceal the one-dimensional nature of his "symphonies." "Elongated sonic epiphanies"? Try "waves of sludge." A definite case of the emperor's clothes. After all, it must be Art, right?

Bill Flanagan's pieces on U2 and Van Morrison were right on the mark, and your January issue up to your generally high standards. Thanks.

Claude Fixler  
Boston, MA

### Great Sound-System

Herbie Hancock was great with Miles, great with the 70s groups, V.S.O.P., with Wynton, Bill Laswell. Hey, Herbie is great! And if you don't like *Sound-System*, there's something wrong with you. Long live Herbie Hancock! And *Musician*!

Tom Prior  
Haiku, HI

### Look Before You Leap

A toast to Alan diPerna, Freff, Daniel Sofer and John Amaral. Your article "Great Leap Forward" was great! I hope *Musician* continues these articles for musicians facing sales floor hype.

Robert R. Schramm  
Celina, OH

### Rock Bottom Shorts

I must admit that any number of J.D. Considine's seemingly random likes and dislikes have left me leering in the past, which is why I wasn't entirely surprised with his appraisal of General Public. But after reading his likewise denunciation of the Beat, I can now rest comfortable with the knowledge that I will never again require his personal confirmation to feel comfortable with my own judgment.

Francis Hare  
Birmingham, AL

### Erratica

Thanks for mentioning "SynthArts" in the Developments section of your February issue. There was one serious error that I must call attention to. Your article states that the "SynthArts" synthesizer instruction videos "feature artists like Zappa, Stevie, Paich, Porcaro explaining synthesizer fundamentals and performing techniques." The above artists do not appear on our tapes, but Steve DeFuria, who has played and programmed for them all, does. We hope your readers are not too disappointed.

Bob Owsinski  
Ferro Productions  
Belleville, NJ

We were mortally abashed not to credit Lisa Haun for the Heaven 17 photo on page 64 of the January issue, woefully discomfited not to credit Laura Levine for the smashing snap of Boy George on the contents page, and meanfully shamed not to credit Waring Abbott for the Rickie Lee Jones cover shot in February. Mercy!



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## DAVID LEE ROTH

### *Alone and Under the Covers*

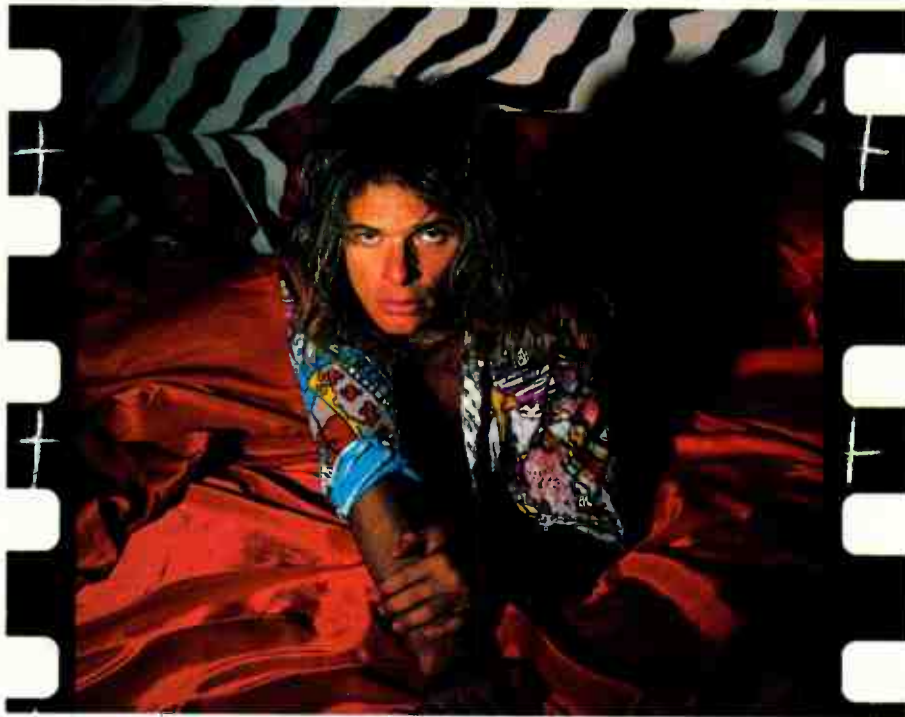
**I**dleness, you may recall from Sunday school, is an unhealthy situation leading to indolence, carnality and other questionable pursuits. Now, **David Lee Roth** would doubtless strike the casual observer as yet another topic in a tour of moral turpitude, but when it comes to idleness, he stands with the righteous. Last fall, when other rock idols would have

held back. There are a whole lot of opportunities for me in Van Halen, and to go outside of the Van Halen realm it would have to be something very different from what I was already doing."

Consequently, *Crazy From The Heat* is about as far from Van Halen as you can get without hiring Julio Iglesias. The sound eschews guitar heroics for a brassy, synth-fattened studio gloss. The biggest surprise, though, is the song selection: Roth chose the Beach Boys' "California Girls," Louis Prima's "Just A Gigolo," the

our first audition at Gazzari's on the Strip playing 'Free Ride' and another song, 'Hangin' Around.' 'Easy Street' was one tune we could never do, because of the brass, and also it's not exactly a dance song. Well, it is if you're taking your clothes off for someone, but that's not really dancing...."

"Just A Gigolo," on the other hand, is a song Van Halen could have done, but didn't. "We were talking about doing it for the 1984 album. But with so much original material, and Edward just writing and writing,



THEO WESTENBERGER/SYGMA

been whiling away the hours investigating new uses for Jello fruit salad, Roth was cutting a solo EP in New York.

"I'm not much for wasting time," he explains. "I sing and I dance for a living, so I sang four new tunes, and I danced one." Roth notes that bandmate Edward Van Halen has kept busy with extracurricular soundtrack and session work. "I always

Edgar Winter Group's "Easy Street" and the Lovin' Spoonful's "Coconut Grove."

Not exactly obvious choices, but they made sense to Roth. "Easy Street," for instance, harks back to Van Halen's club-circuit days. "We were just starting to eat regularly, and, man, we played four, five, six different tunes by the Edgar Winter Group. In fact, we got

there's no room for cover tunes now. So we hung it up for a while.

"The whole idea behind making the EP was to try something that was essentially absurd, and hope to achieve the impossible." Given the unexpected success of the "California Girls" single, could it be that David Lee Roth isn't so crazy after all? — J.D. Considine

### *A Muddied Tribute*

**Muddy Waters** died on April 30, 1983, but his contributions to blues and rock 'n' roll were assured long before that. Two years later, a Chicago concert will commemorate what would have been Waters' seventieth birthday on April 4, and provide revenue for the not-for-profit Blues Heaven Foundation.

The line-up for the show should do justice to Waters' influence. Those likely to appear (as of press time) include **Eric Clapton**, **John Lee Hooker**, **George Thorogood**, **Levon Helm** and **Johnny Winter**—all of them honorary board members of Blues Heaven Foundation, Inc. Another member, **Dan Aykroyd**, will emcee. And the show's planners are working to get more—such as the **Rolling Stones**, who only named themselves after Waters' first hit. A July show in London is also scheduled, and audio and video recordings are likely spin-offs.

Two people Blues Heaven founder **Willie Dixon** won't be inviting are **Jimmy Page** and **Robert Plant**. On January 11 Dixon filed a complaint against their former group Led Zeppelin for copyright infringement. The charge is based on the similarity between Dixon's 1962 song "You Need Love," recorded by Waters, and Zep's 1969 hit "Whole Lotta Love." Dixon discovered the resemblance when his daughter pointed it out to him two years ago.



LINDA MATLOW/PIX INT'L





TERRY SESVOLD/PIX INT'L

## Sting Unchained!

In 1985 the only song you're likely to hear from the Police is "It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That **Sting**." The charismatic bassist has put the group on (terminal?) hold while he goes solo. To make sure his own project isn't confused with the Police, Sting will front a band of crack jazz musicians: saxophonist **Branford Marsalis**, Wynton Marsalis' keyboard player **Kenny Kirkland**, Miles Davis bassist **Darryl Jones** and Weather Report drummer **Omar Hakim**. Sting himself plays rhythm guitar. An album recorded in Barbados for June release ranges from funk to ballads with orchestral backing. In May the band plans to go to Paris to star in a documentary film, including concert footage.

Sting is serious enough about his new combo that he intends to tour with them in the fall and release a subsequent live album. Who assembled this all-star aggregation? None other than *Musician's* very own executive editor, **Vic Garbarini**, who has promised to spill his gut about the blond warrior-god if we set him up on the Riviera for life. Will *Musician* give in to this arrant blackmail? Subscribe and find out!

JOHN C. MEYERS



## COMMODORES

### Working That "Nightshift"—And Closing Ranks

**L**et's face facts," William King is saying. "I'm not gonna sit here and say, 'Yeah, it's okay.' Nobody wants to start from the beginning if they don't have to."

King's band, the **Commodores**, has to. Well, maybe not from the very beginning—at least they have a name, a name that has appeared on a small truckload of gold and platinum albums and singles since 1974. Problem is, most people associate those records with the man who, until just a few years ago, was the band's lead singer and chief writer: Lionel Richie.

It's no secret that the Commodores have mined neither gold nor platinum since Richie struck out for a lucrative solo career. After his departure the band released an ill-timed greatest hits package and then a surprisingly sturdy studio effort, 13. Neither was a commercial success. To make matters worse, lead guitarist Thomas McClary recently pulled up stakes.

The Commodores have responded by recruiting an Englishman named J.D. Nicholas as lead singer. (Nicholas pulled similar duty a few years back when Heatwave's Johnny Wilder was incapacitated in an auto accident.) They are pinning their hopes now on "Nightshift," the title track from their new album. And a strange comeback single it is. You'd expect the band to come out blazing with every bit of snap, crackle and technopop it could muster, in hopes of riding the current wave of hook-heavy, street-influenced pop. "Nightshift," though, is a laid-back number with a breezy Caribbean feel; the hook is buried deep and isn't particularly strong at that. King admits he battled Motown for a month over the company's decision to make "Nightshift" the album's lead single.

"We felt we had other material on the album that was so uptempo and so strong and knock-down," King describes "Nightshift," though, as a sleeper that works slowly but surely. Indeed, the tune—which pays homage to Jackie Wilson and Marvin Gaye—does sneak up and grab you. And

Motown's decision has been validated by strong early radio play.

Ask most fans what put the Commodores on the mat, hitwise, and they'll say Lionel Richie's departure. King agrees that Richie's loss hurt, but he adds that the abrupt death of discoverer/manager/mentor Benny Ashburn really laid them low. King dismisses McClary's defection as minimally important, but Ashburn, he says, "was the glue. Benny was our father. See, the thing about us is that we were honest-to-goodness spoiled. Benny handled everything. It was good not to have to deal with all that b.s., but it was bad because it didn't let us grow up. And then, when Benny was gone, it was all dumped on us. And there we were."

With the growing-up process presumably complete—or at least well under way—what now? "The thing now," says King, "is that this is brand new. There's five of us now, and that's the way it's always been. We're not shutting out the past. But we are just getting our heads together to know that from here on it's us."

— Leonard Pitts, Jr.

# LONNIE MACK

## *The Texas Mutual Admiration Society*

**W**hen ten-year-old Stevie Ray Vaughan heard **Lonnie Mack's** "Wham!" on Dallas radio, he just had to gather his allowance together and buy it for his first-ever 45. Some years and many hours behind the fretboard later, he's repaying the favor: Mack is cutting one bad-ass guitar album at Aus-

tin's Cedar Creek Studios, and Vaughan is producing it.

The project's been in the works for some time. "I first saw Stevie back in '78 or '79," Mack says, "when I was in Austin looking for pickers for my band. I saw Stevie and said, 'Well, we need to produce an album on him.'" Alligator Records' Bruce Iglauer, meanwhile, was apprised of Mack's vitality by a mutual friend in Cincinnati; after a roadhouse set in Hamilton, Ohio, that the guitarist calls "the worst gig I ever played," they shook hands on a promise to cut an



album for Alligator. Iglauer was going to produce, until he "found out Stevie Ray was interested."

"Interested" isn't the word. In the studio, Vaughan whoops and hollers as Mack rips off stinging lead after lead, ably supported by a band including bassist Tim Drummond and pianist Stan Szelest, both long-time Neil Young supporters. With further guitar backing by Lonnie's brother Billy and Vaughan himself, the project

is a labor of love.

Mack is fully recovered from a mysterious ailment that took him out of commission for most of 1984 and left him 70 pounds lighter after nearly killing him. He's also real content with Vaughan.

"A good producer is like not having a producer," Mack says, "and this feels good. We both know it. Yeah." He picks up his trademark Flying V, the same one with which he cut those seminal records twenty-two years ago. "This is gonna be the best one since the first one." — *Ed Ward*

## JULIE BROWN

### *The Homecoming Queen's Got a Hit—and a Gripe.*

**N**ovelty songs are usually fun, at least the first time around. Los Angeles-based comedienne **Julie Brown** aspires

to greater longevity with her debut mini-album, *Goddess In Progress*. "How many times can you listen to 'Eat It'?" she asks. "I tried to have a lot of ideas going on in each song."

Brown, something of a San Fernando Valley version of Tracey Ullman, managed



to pull it off. She and her husband, co-writer and co-producer Terrence McNally, pressed a thousand copies of "The Homecoming Queen's Got A Gun" and "I Like 'Em Big And Stupid," and sent them to radio stations around the country.

The single took off. Twenty thousand units later, Brown recorded three more songs for a mini-album and signed with Rhino Records. Reportedly nearing 60,000 in sales, *Goddess In Progress* is one of Rhino's biggest sellers.

The video for "Homecoming Queen" has provoked some controversy. Though directed with cartoonish humor—gunblasts send innocent bystanders cartwheeling out of the frame—MTV has yet to show it, fearful of the violence. But Rhino's

Rich Schmidt isn't buying that one: "After viewing the Rolling Stones' 'Too Much Blood' on MTV exclusively, I don't believe violence is the issue." What is the issue, Schmidt believes, is Rhino's lack of clout.

"That has nothing to do with it," counters Dorene Lauer, MTV's manager of press relations. "We welcome independent labels here." Lauer says MTV's playlist is ten percent indie, and Brown's clip is under "executive review."

"I can't understand how it could be considered violent," Brown herself says, "especially in comparison to some of the heavy metal bands' videos. Does this mean that it's *not violent* to walk a woman on a leather leash?" — *Margy Rochlin*

## *Zaentz Wiolds Lanz*

Most people listening to **John Fogerty's** hit comeback album, *Centerfield*, will find its final track, "Zanz Kant Danz," a puzzling fable about "Little Billy" and his "little pig Zanz." Others familiar with Fogerty's history might be tempted to link the song with **Saul Zaentz** (rhymes with Zanz), formerly the president and currently chairman of Fantasy Records, for whom Fogerty recorded with Creedence Clearwater Revival. There's no love lost between Fogerty and Zaentz, as last month's *Musician* Fogerty interview attests.

Not too surprisingly, Zaentz has taken objection to the song with the chorus "Zanz can't dance but he'll steal your money/ Watch him or he'll rob you blind." He had his lawyer **Norman Rudman** fire off a letter to Warner

Bros. Records, Fogerty's current label, charging a "malicious besmirching of Mr. Zaentz's reputation" in an "odious characterization not at all disguised" audibly.

The record company has persuaded Fogerty to alter the tune to "Vanz Kant Danz" in future pressings of the album. But half a million copies of "Zanz" are already in circulation. "I don't think they can unring the bell," Rudman says, discounting a "cosmetic change" to a "defamatory lyric." In February Rudman filed a complaint toward a multi-million dollar defamation lawsuit against Fogerty and Warner Bros.

What does the author himself have to say about the controversial cut? "I wrote a song about a pig," Fogerty replies, and pauses. "The concept of millions of people around the world singing about a pig named Zanz—that concept is just mind-boggling, isn't it?"



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# REPLACEMENTS

LAURA LEVINE



*Paul Westerberg, Bob Stinson, Chris Mars and Tommy Stinson discuss politics: Who buys the beer?*

## JOHN LELAND

### THE BIGGEST AMATEUR BAND IN THE WORLD GROWS UP—A LITTLE

**I**n terms of music and attitude, you'd have to go a long way to find guys as stupid as us." Coming from Paul Westerberg, singer, guitarist and songwriter of the Replacements, these words are not self-deprecatory. They reflect pride in his band's unregenerate amateurism.

That means a willingness to fuck up: The Replacements are, somewhat anachronistically, America's foremost exponents of disorderly, rowdy rock. They simply don't do what they're supposed to do. None of the band members finished high school. None is really proficient on his instrument. They're legen-

dary (perhaps undeservedly so) for their binges, benders and drunken miscreance. They wear make-up in burgs where they think it'll stir up the locals. Their records have songs about erections and the bedspins. As Westerberg puts it, "We straddle the line between bad taste and a bad joke."

Live, the band is wildly, willfully erratic. On any given night they can without warning dedicate an entire set to hapless renditions of covers they haven't learned. On the next night, execution be damned, they can be the most exciting band in creation—a joyous celebration of power, attitude, humor and audience rapport.

"We don't like to feel that people have us pegged," says the twenty-four-year-old Westerberg. "We have fun at all costs. We definitely have lapses into childlike behavior, probably more than most people. It hurts us sometimes. We don't put on a great show every night. It's probably the long way around the barn as far as success in big terms. But I'm not sure that we're actually after that. If we had a choice, we'd like to be the biggest amateur band in the world. We

all agree there's nothing duller than a professional musician."

So far, amateur status has been good for the 'mats, as the Minneapolis quartet calls itself. Through three albums and an EP, they've blossomed from an infectiously obnoxious quasi-punk act to an honestly compelling rock 'n' roll band capable of pathos as well as bracing crudity.

The Replacements' sordid past begins in 1979. On his way home from work as a janitor at the local high school, Westerberg used to hide in the bushes outside drummer Chris Mars' house, listening to Mars and brothers Bob and Tommy Stinson rudely violating Yes songs and the like. Shy by nature, he screwed up his nerve and, never having sung before, told them he was a singer.

"You want to know the truth?" he asks, still a little incredulous after all these years. "They seemed dumb enough to buy it. They weren't musicians. They were just three beer-drinking hoods playing loud music. I said, 'Damn it, these are my kind of boys.'"

Westerberg emerged as leader, but there has never been what you'd call

homogeneity within the band. A little hipper and a little smarter than the other Replacements, Westerberg is more prone to quiet suffering and self-destruction than hell-raising. "I'm a misfit and a loner," he admits. "I was the type to sit by myself, play guitar and dream of being in a band. They were the type of guys that went out and started fires and got thrown in jail."

Bassist Tommy Stinson shows all the unhealthy signs of having spent his formative years playing punky music in sleazy bars. Now eighteen, he's been in the band since he was twelve. Despite constantly hanging out with older people, he isn't precocious. He's enamored of the metal/kitsch culture that afflicts most 1980s youth. Onstage he favors leaping scissor kicks and rock star moves.

Chris Mars, blossoming as a self-taught artist, is also emerging as the anchor of the Replacements' live antics. His roots are in Aerosmith. But the spiritual and emotional vortex of the band is twenty-four-year-old Bob Stinson. He'll play in a dress, in diapers, in his undershorts—he'll stop at nothing.

"He has a Mr. Hyde that comes out every now and then," Westerberg says. "It's a bleak sight. Bob and I are headed for an asylum one of these days." The

elder Stinson's metallic licks fuel the band's rocking numbers; they're just as likely to smother the quieter songs. He's probably the most musically conservative member of the band.

"Each time we go into a recording studio it's always a little of a battle," Westerberg says. "If something isn't catchy, Tommy doesn't like it. If it doesn't rock, Bob doesn't like it. And if it isn't simple, Chris doesn't like it."

So Westerberg works out a happy medium of insistence and compromise. "I know the guys' personalities well enough to know that if you let them do what they want a little bit and also lay down the law a little bit, it works much better than if you just dictate what you want to do. 'Cause then you'll have three guys that hate your guts, and they're not going to buy any beer at practice."

It's not a smooth situation, but the resulting roughness is part of the Replacements' personality. It keeps them from getting slick, and assures that the attitude behind the music will always be as important as the music itself. And it keeps everybody honest and happy. "We're kind of stuck with each other," the singer says. "We're all weird little fuck-ups and we all stumbled together. I think we would have a hard time playing in other bands, because we're not

really musicians. Through our spirit and humor we've grown strong together."

*Hootenanny* (1983), LP number two, was a landmark in the Replacements' development. Westerberg and company eased off the speedrock, and played up elements lurking on the peripheries of *Sorry Ma, Forgot To Take*  
continued on page 106

#### IRREPLACEABLE EQUIPMENT

Many bands have striven for the Replacements' brand of inspired sloppiness, and missed the magic ingredient that distinguishes rock 'n' roll geniuses from other rowdy assholes. The secret may be the equipment. **Paul Westerberg** creates his unmistakable rhythm buzz on nothing else but a "gray guitar." **Bob Stinson's** metal sparks come from a "heavy black one," and for special occasions he's been known to break out his "blue Mr. Hyde special." **Tommy Stinson**, the youngest and naturally most brand-conscious of the 'mats, won't leave home without his "partly orange Rickenbacker bass." **Chris Mars**, eschewing the sheepish trend toward Linns and Simmons SDS7's, works out his frustrations on an acoustic set by "Slingerland or something." Although these craftsmen reluctantly spilled the above secrets, they staunchly refused to name the designer who created their flannel shirts. Some mysteries have to remain intact.

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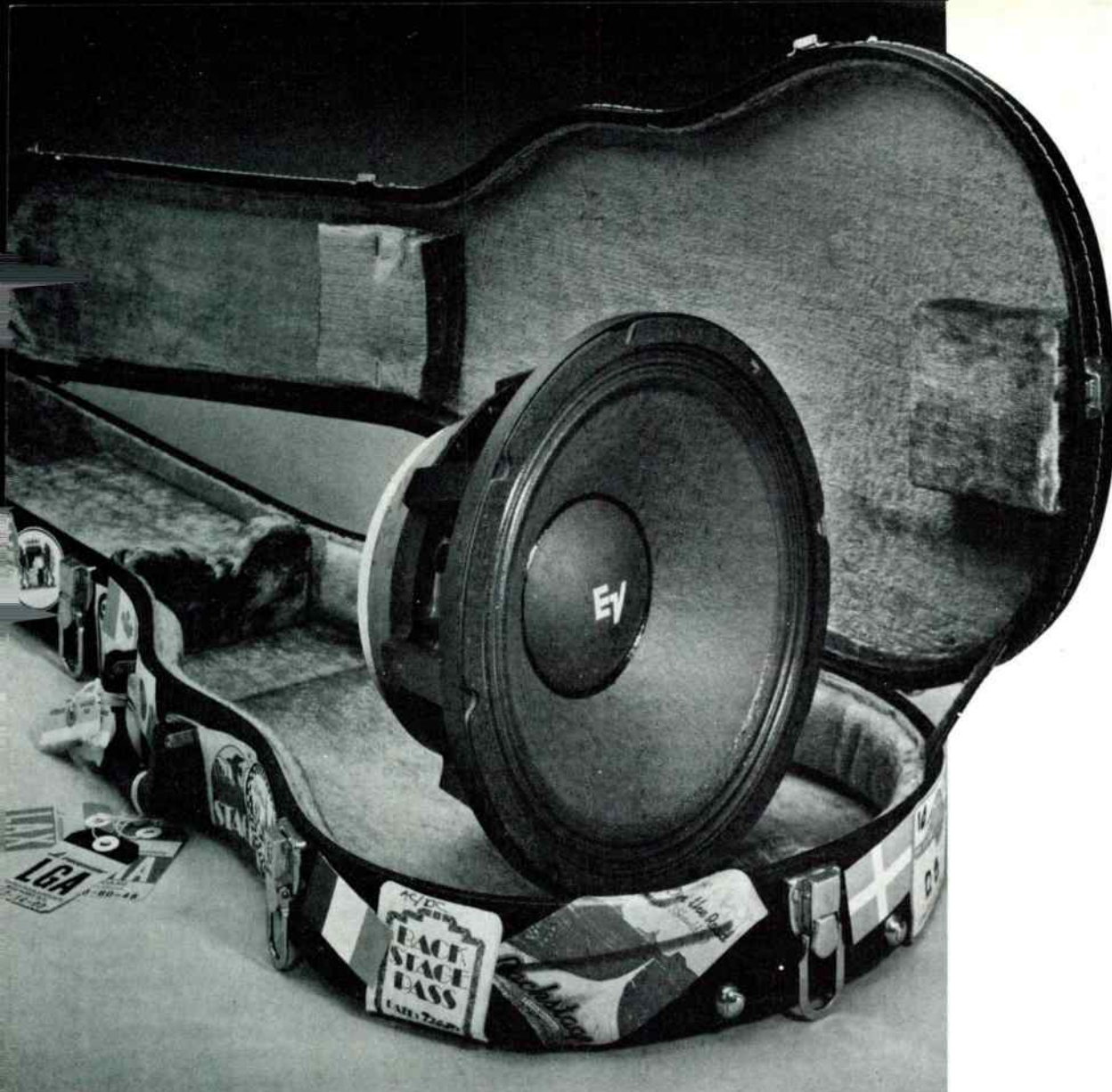
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# EDDIE GOMEZ



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## JEROME REESE

### BILL EVANS' LAST BASS SIDEKICK STEPS AHEAD & STAYS HUNGRY

**W**atching Eddie Gomez perform provides a vivid illustration of the meaning of "dialectic"—what you see is not what you get. From his disheveled mop of hair on down, Gomez cuts an extremely unprepossessing figure; on-stage he'll wear a tie with a baseball jacket, plucking poignant melodies or driving, straightforward rhythmic figures

as the ashes from an ever-present cigarette dust his shirt cuffs.

Gomez has long been a musician's musician, a fluent if occasionally verbose master at improvisation—perhaps the result of playing eleven years in the trio of the great Bill Evans. Offstage, however, his mien is taciturn, even laconic—perhaps the result of spending the last twenty years on the road. Approach him for an interview and he'll shrug like a true New Yorker and say, "Whattya need, twenty minutes?" He's not kidding either.

So an ambush was devised at the home of a mutual friend and fervid Evans admirer, who'd compiled several rare films of Gomez in concert with the late pianist. First we watched a 1967 New York club date. Caught completely off guard, with no recollection of the event, Gomez was visibly moved. "I gotta have a copy of this to show my

wife and son!" he exclaimed. He reminisced more easily after that....

Eddie Gomez grew up on 110th Street, the outskirts of Harlem, and attended the nearby High School of Music and Art; his classmates included drummer Billy Cobham and flutist Jeremy Steig, with whom Gomez would later record several fine duet albums. His music teacher picked his instrument—"He told me my hands were good for the bass," Gomez recalled with a laugh, "and my hands were minute! It was a good con job. He needed a bass player."

He got one. First influenced by Paul Chambers, Gomez studied three years of classical repertoire at Juilliard (Itzhak Perlman played in the same orchestra) before deciding to pursue a career in jazz, where he envisioned a better opportunity "to express myself. It's hard to express yourself in a double bass section playing Schubert."

So Gomez left school to tour with Gary McFarland, later played with Jim Hall and with Paul Bley. He was working the Village Vanguard one night in 1966 with Gerry Mulligan when Bill Evans, whose trio shared the bill (those were the days) invited Gomez to sit in. He declined—"I was too scared"—but several weeks later Evans asked him to join the group anyway. Despite a parallel offer from the Miles Davis quintet, Gomez jumped at the chance.

By this time the Bill Evans Trios had for several years coalesced into settings for some remarkable jazz chamber explorations, notably with the legendary bassist Scott LaFaro. Indeed, before LaFaro died in a car crash in 1961, he and Evans had developed a form of simultaneous improvisation that expertly blended elements of the emerging avant-garde (Ornette Coleman also employed LaFaro on some of his pivotal "Free Jazz" sessions) with those of traditional popular song. Evans' sophisticated use of harmony and space derived from Debussy and Ravel as well as Bud Powell, and allowed room for simultaneous discourse from bass and drums. But Gomez was the first bassist in the trio since LaFaro to possess equal facility in jazz and classical musics, and over the course of their eleven-year partnership achieved with Evans a degree of musical empathy to rival such pairings as Count Basie and Freddie Green, or Ron Carter and Tony Williams, resulting in some of the most lyrical and downright gorgeous jazz ever recorded. Their final LP, *You Must Believe In Spring*, is, for my money, one of the jazz masterpieces of

the past ten years.

After leaving Evans, Gomez went on to co-found Steps (now Steps Ahead) with Mike Manieri, Michael Brecker and Steve Gadd, a group originally conceived as a refuge for studio pros to play "pure" jazz that has since moved, following Gomez's departure last year, in a considerably more commercial direction. Gomez, meanwhile, finally garnered enough confidence to assert his prerogatives as a leader, recording his first album under his own name (*Gomez*, on the Japanese import label Interface), with the impressive backing of Chick Corea, Steve Gadd and the luminous guitarist Kazumi Watanabe. At age thirty-nine, Eddie Gomez is finally

ready to step ahead on his own.

**MUSICIAN:** *Why did you wait until 1984 to make your first album?*

**GOMEZ:** I never felt ready. Really, I'm just a procrastinator. After all these years of playing I finally feel like I have an inkling of how to make music. Of course I like some of the things I've done in the past, but now I have a focus, as a musician and a bassist. Not that I've reached the ultimate, but I have some command. It might have been there before, but I didn't feel it.

**MUSICIAN:** *More self-confidence?*

**GOMEZ:** I think so. When I left Bill it was an important break; it was time to move on, and I had to prove to myself that I

wasn't just a trio bassist. For a time before leaving Bill I wondered if I would be able to cut it. I felt typecast. It was a wonderful typecast, of course! But in the past five years I've played in all sorts of situations, and now I'm ready to be a soloist. I have a hunger. I'm thirty-nine and no youngster, but I feel like it's a new day.

**MUSICIAN:** *Watching those early films, I was surprised how much of your present style was already apparent by 1967.*

**GOMEZ:** Me too! There was some roughness and immaturity, but I was surprised at the good things. I was settling in, I felt like I finally belonged, instead of just being the shadow of Scott LaFaro and Gary Peacock. I'd been scared to death for a while. It had been a dream since high school to play with Bill. For most of the first year, I played out of the book, hiding behind it like a security blanket. We were all dedicated to the trio, even when we weren't playing our best. Bill would play the same repertoire quite a while, so there was always a challenge to make those same tunes sound different. When you're forced to come up with stuff, it keeps you moving.

**MUSICIAN:** *Bill Evans once said, "I don't go to the edges of what I do and spread it out that way. I try to go through the middle, to extend the essential quality. Consequently a lot of listeners might not hear any development for a long period of time, but there is an inner development going on."*

**GOMEZ:** Yeah. A lot of growth occurred because we were always digging for nuances and subtleties, like performing in the same play night after night. It's the same in classical music. I like it when strong musicians try new things in that context, even if they miss. I like the humanity in music.

**MUSICIAN:** *A criticism of Evans' playing was its "perfection."*

**GOMEZ:** It's deceptive. It does have a gloss to it. It sounds very worked out, but as you can see from the films, there's roughness too. At a glance many things seem one way, but really are not. It's the same in any art.

**MUSICIAN:** *But why did a man with a complex musical mind like Evans always play other people's music over and over? It's very peculiar.*

**GOMEZ:** Bill was Bill. His music was never ugly. He always played with a lot of feeling. He couldn't help it. But how could someone play with "too much" feeling? People said Bill had "too much sensitivity." How is that possible? It's what made Bill Bill.

**MUSICIAN:** *Just as he was attacked for playing "white" music.*

**GOMEZ:** Well, he had a Puerto Rican bassist, me! His trio approach was a strain of several musics, and playing with Bill demanded a quietly dynamic

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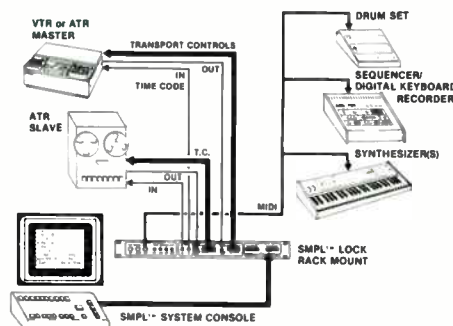
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approach. But it's dead wrong to call it black or white. What about *Live At Montreux* in 1968 with Jack DeJohnette? Jack was my favorite drummer in the trio. Elvin Jones sat in. Tony Williams played with us on occasion. All these people changed the music—they had to.

**MUSICIAN:** You first heard Scott LaFaro in high school?

**GOMEZ:** Yeah, through Bill. I saw Scott as a definite breakthrough on bass, but the trio itself was also a new vision. A small ensemble is one of the rare pleasures for classical double bass. Last year I did a concert with Tashi, which was wonderful. We did Beethoven's septet and a little jazz. I now do concerts with clarinetist Richard Stolzman as well—we play Monk at the end of his solo classical recital. But I always saw jazz and classical music as two different languages. Bill wasn't classical to me—he was influenced by European harmony, as well as Russian folk music. His background was Russian and Welsh. And of course a lot of classical music derived from folk music.

**MUSICIAN:** The early 60s was an innovative era for bass, and for jazz in general. Charles Mingus had been leading a group for a while. Charlie Haden, then Steve Swallow, Gary Peacock and Ron Carter did....

**GOMEZ:** Mingus was very important. He transcended the role of just being the bassist in a group, because he was a wonderful composer. People underestimated how powerful a bassist he was—just a monumental figure. But there's an art to accompaniment and it's underestimated. Peacock's *Trio 64* with Bill is one of my favorite albums, and I love what he did with Albert Ayler. Ron comes out of the Detroit school of Paul Chambers—he gets a great sound. I listened a lot to Swallow and Haden. They didn't play a lot of notes, and you gotta love that. People want to see an elephant dance. I love it when you don't hear the chops. Haden and Swallow play direct, deep, dark, beautiful music. It goes to the heart. I love it on any instrument when it's direct and heartfelt—John Coltrane, Jim Hall....

I learn from electric bassists as well. I love Jaco Pastorius and Marcus Miller. I think Sting is great too. But you know, I learned a lot from piano and from horns. I always tell young bassists to just listen to as much different music as possible. Listen to how music is put together, how it works.

**MUSICIAN:** Miles has always said he liked to hire young musicians who were eager to play and who weren't yet set in their ways.

**GOMEZ:** That's the name of the game. You want hungry musicians who have that desire to play. When Miles called me in 1965, I caught a plane and went right to Chicago. Shorter and Hancock and Williams were already in the band. [The audition] was difficult—I wasn't amplified and couldn't hear a note of what I was playing. Miles and the band were playing very hard at the time, they were just killing. They were already there! But they must have liked something I did because they asked me to join the band. So I had to make a choice between Miles and Bill, and with Bill I could learn how to play solos. With Bill I learned how to make a statement—how to begin a sentence and how to end a paragraph. Where to put the punctuation. Clarity. And I knew I wouldn't get many solos with Miles; he would throw me a bone once in a while. Not that solos are everything, but it's what I wanted. What all the bassists did with Miles is monumental.

**MUSICIAN:** You have a pianistic approach to bass playing. But one criticism of your style is that you play too many high notes. It's changed a bit since you formed Steps.

**GOMEZ:** It's a valid criticism. That's how I heard the bass. Now I use the whole in-

continued on page 34

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# THE BLASTERS

CHRIS MORRIS

## L.A.'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST ROOTS ROCKERS ENTER THE STEREO ERA

When we were cutting our first two albums, we actually sat there with ghetto blasters and a tape of 'Shake, Rattle And Roll,' seeing if the mix of our songs matched up to 'Shake, Rattle And Roll.'"

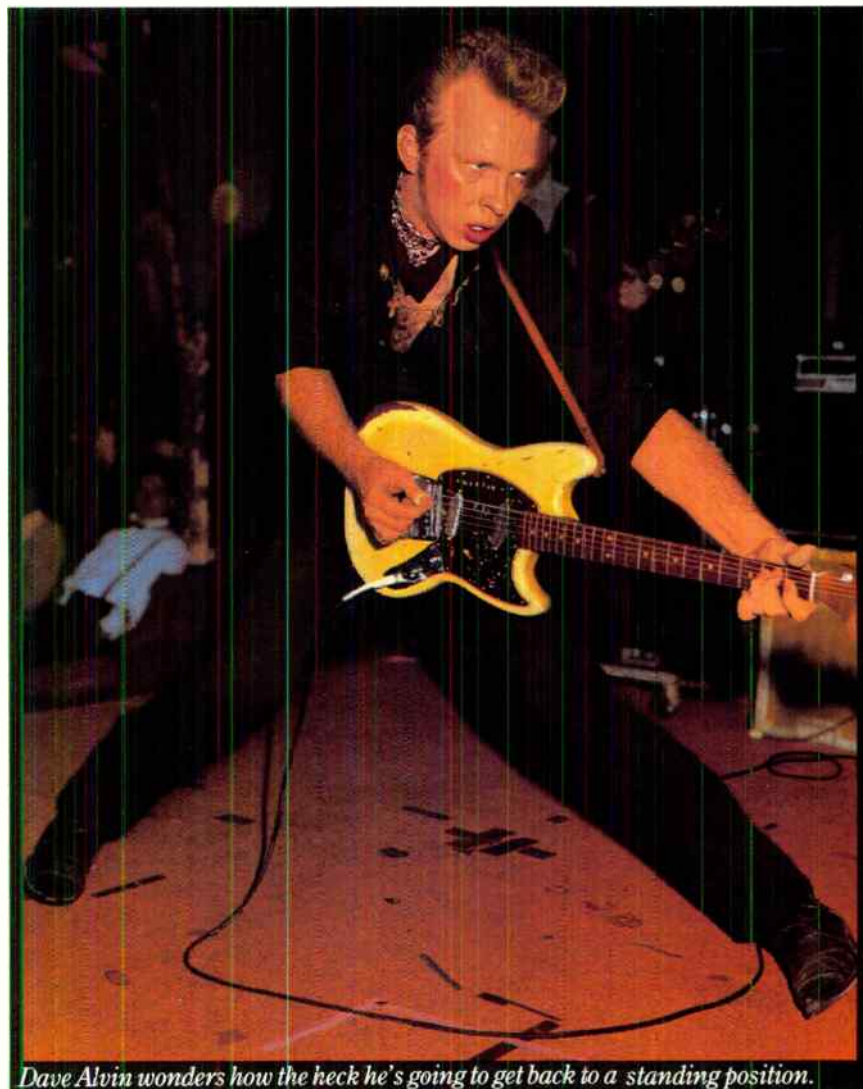
This is the kind of confession one would expect from a purist, and Dave Alvin is making it. The lead guitarist and songwriter for the Blasters slumps his lean body in a nondescript chair in a back room at Rumbo Records in the Los Angeles suburb of Canoga Park. A playback echoes in the background. Running a hand through his slightly ruffled pompadour, puffing on an omnipresent Kool, and slugging from an equally ubiquitous Budweiser, he continues, as lantern-jawed Blasters drummer Bill Bateman looks on with amusement.

"Everything was being done in mono. Put on *Non Fiction*—it's mono. Put on our first Slash album—*mono*. It's true. Maybe there's a little glint of stereo. On this new album, you put on side one, first song. There's the Jordanares, and then, out of the *other speaker*, comes a guitar. That's *news*."

Alvin and Bateman guffaw loudly.

This particular truth has a sting in its tail. It's early October of 1984, and four of the five Blasters—Alvin, his brother Phil, Bateman and bassist John Bazz—are in the studio again, for the seventh and final time, cutting the last track for their third Slash/Warner Bros. album, *Hard Line*. The recording process took ten months from start to finish. The task of making what Alvin refers to jocularly as "our first stereo album" has not been taken lightly.

The Blasters needed far longer than the better part of a year to make their tardy *rapprochement* with modern technology. When the L.A.-based band



Dave Alvin wonders how the heck he's going to get back to a standing position.

arrived on the scene in 1980 with a crude (and now alluringly out-of-print) LP, *American Music*, they were immediately celebrated as spokesmen for a new breed of American roots music advocates, including neo-country rockers Rank & File, Latino group Los Lobos, and, to a lesser extent, seminal punk band X.

To date, the Blasters' recording career has been critically lauded but hit-free. Some changes plainly had to be made for the group to find a wider audience for their electrifying roots rock 'n' roll, so thrilling in their barrelling live shows. Quick-and-dirty recording methods, by which they whipped out an album in a few fast sessions, had to go. So did their habit of producing themselves. A pugnacious lot on the best of days, the Blasters often allowed their recording sessions to degenerate into argumentative near-chaos. Dave Alvin enjoys telling how he looked up from re-

cording a guitar solo for *Non Fiction* to discover Bateman and pianist Gene Taylor spitting beer at each other in the control room.

Taylor himself explains the band's change in attitude: "To be a pop band, to sell records to a pop world, you've got to make certain compromises. We're trying to make reasonable compromises to modern technology, modern production values, modern rock 'n' roll aesthetics. We're trying to make compromises we can live with in order to lure some of the people that aren't sure about our band—that think, 'Hell, this is just an oldies-but-goodies act.'"

*Hard Line* goes a long way in defusing some of the old objections. No less than three producers refereed the proceedings: Jeff Eyrich, noted for his work with L.A. locals the Plimsouls, the Gun Club, and T-Bone Burnett; Don Gehman, John Cougar Mellencamp's associate, who recorded two newly-

ROCKY WIDNER/RETNA

written Dave Alvin tunes and participated in remixes; and Mellencamp himself, who contributed the song "Colored Lights" and served as "executive producer" on the (later re-recorded) track.

More importantly, the Blasters no longer rely on archetypal material. The up-to-date "Colored Lights" and "Just Another Sunday" replaced a version of Elmore James' driving blues "Cry For Me" and Dave Alvin's own "Jungle Soldier," a blatant cop of Huey "Piano" Smith's "Don't You Just Know It."

"When we handed Warner Bros. the album as it originally stood," Dave Alvin explains, "they said, 'You've got some great shit on here, you've got some stuff you've never done before, but then

you've got some shit that's—well, you know, you've done it before.' At first we were really pissed at 'em. We said, 'You guys are crazy. We're great, anything we do is great.' But we grew up in the past two years. Finally you realize you have to listen to other people, and other people's input is good."

It's been difficult for the Blasters to shake off a certain intransigence about their cherished American music—perhaps because the band's knowledge and understanding of that music was so hard-won in the first place.

The five members of the band have been playing together, on and off, for fifteen years. Their saga begins in Downey, California, a bedroom community


southeast of Los Angeles. Young Phil and Dave Alvin's musical tastes cohered around R&B and rock 'n' roll 45s they inherited from a hip female cousin. John Bazz grew up across the street from the Alvins; the three attended parochial school together. Bateman attended a nearby public school. Taylor, from neighboring Norwalk, met the Alvins and Bazz in their teens. (Taylor's father provided a musical education by smuggling his son into area piano lounges.) They joined a rotating group of high school bands who used the Alvin house, still affectionately known as "The Flop," as a gathering place for jam sessions and record parties.

By the late 60s, the young "Downey-onyans" were playing in a succession of white blues bands and venturing down to Watts to listen to, and sometimes play with, L.A.-based blues legends. Their first manager, a black woman named Mary Franklin, took the teenagers under her wing and introduced them to a number of black musicians who would serve as informal professors: T-Bone Walker, the influential blues guitar stylist; Lee Allen, the great tenor saxophonist who played with Little Richard, Fats Domino and later the Blasters themselves; and, perhaps most significantly, multi-instrumentalist/arranger Marcus Johnson, a veteran of the Muddy Waters and Jimmy Reed bands.

"Marcus' big thing was, 'You're not playing the blues, you're screwing with the blues,'" Gene Taylor says. "He was calling you on it. That works for kids, 'cause they don't know no better. It was good, though, because Marcus wasn't bullshitting. Everything he told us was the *truth*. He was trying to instill good musical habits in us."

This loose schooling lasted through the early 70s; then the Downey crowd dispersed to school, day jobs, and musical careers. By the mid-70s, Phil Alvin was teaching mathematics at a Long Beach college, while Gene Taylor played piano with white blues champions Canned Heat. It wasn't until Phil Alvin and James Harman (now leading an outstanding blues-oriented band in the Los Angeles area) inherited a Sunday night gig at a Long Beach biker hangout from the peripatetic Taylor that the old friends began to regroup and the Blasters organized in earnest.

A performance at a Long Beach wedding on St. Patrick's Day, 1979 is commonly designated as the first Blasters date. The band consisted of Phil Alvin, Bateman (a regular attendee of the Sunday night jams) and Dave Alvin, dragged from a short-lived band called the Murderers. Phil Alvin, gaunt and hollow-eyed from a nocturnal lifestyle, takes up the history: "That night, we said, 'Well, let's make a band, just get




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**Blasters** from previous page  
And Roll Will Stand," that encompasses  
the greatest hopes and fears of anyone  
who's ever strapped on a Telecaster. It  
concludes:

*There's a little night spot on the out-  
skirts of town  
Another short drop on the long way  
down  
There's a man onstage who never  
knew when to quit  
Telling everybody he almost had a hit  
Now he's got a day job, working with  
his hands  
Everybody knows Rock and Roll Will  
Stand*

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"It's something that faces you every  
day," Alvin says of the song, which he  
calls his favorite on the album. "I don't  
really have any other skills. I couldn't  
start a band, and I can't sing. I don't  
know what I'd do; I'd be pumping gas or  
something. That's what gnaws at every-  
body. That's why musicians have to take  
drugs, or try to become actors. Or write  
songs like 'Rock and Roll Will Stand.'"

Despite Alvin's apprehension, and  
despite the Blasters' urgent 1984 siege  
of record-making, the group inevitably  
gives the feeling of understanding and  
loving their mission. Bateman, ordinarily  
the most laconic Blaster, neatly encaps-  
ulates that task.

"The Blasters can give people a com-  
bination of what they've learned in the  
80s, combined with their knowledge of  
the 20s and 30s," Bateman says. "Take  
country blues and play it with electric  
guitars and drums, different than  
Muddy Waters did, way different than  
Creedence Clearwater or Canned Heat.  
That's what the Blasters can show the  
world. I think we got it in us." ■

**Gomez** from page 26

strument much more. But I do feel more  
melodic clarity up from about the E  
string up in the thumb position. In the  
early days I did pretty much play the G  
string all the time.

**MUSICIAN:** You've incorporated African  
rhythms into your solos in recent years.

**GOMEZ:** I do on occasion listen to Afri-  
can music, but it comes more from play-  
ing in duo situations where there are no  
drums. I've played duets with Jeremy  
Steig for twenty years. The bass has all  
these extraneous sounds, like wood  
sounds; part of me is a drum, and part  
of me is a piano. Part of me is a violin.  
The bass is close to the cello. It has a  
vocal quality—the singing aspect—and  
it can provide a solid bottom.

**MUSICIAN:** You were an original mem-  
ber of Steps Ahead (when it was just  
Steps). Studio musicians aren't really  
respected by the press or even known  
by the public. And the Steps Ahead rep-  
ertoire has changed recently. It's less  
hard-core jazz than before.

**GOMEZ:** Studio musicians are almost  
asking for it if they stay in the studios too  
long. The studio musicians who are real  
artists are few and far between, I hate to  
say. Someone like Steve Gadd is an art-  
ist. I was proud to have him on my  
album. There's knowledge and crafts-  
manship in a studio situation, but it's a  
different kind of dedication, aimed at a  
market. I prefer music with a lot of  
thought, which isn't aimed at anything in  
particular. [Shortly following this inter-  
view, Gomez quit Steps Ahead to join  
Randy Brecker's Quartet with Adam  
Nussbaum and Eliane Elias.]

**MUSICIAN:** Some bassists have an al-  
most incestuous relationship with their  
instrument. It's a big curvaceous thing.  
Some musicians are literally obsessed  
with their bass.

**GOMEZ:** Like Charlie Haden. Well, if it's  
gonna be a person it should be a  
woman, right? I don't know what I think  
about it. I play a bass I've had since I  
was fifteen years old. It's an amazingly  
resilient instrument, not that I kick it or  
anything. The bass I play defies all  
logic. I feel that it can almost defend it-  
self. I'm not crazy and fussy over the in-  
strument because I have other things to  
be crazy over, like my body. I see the  
bass as the means to an end. But it has  
its own life. It's something that's alive,  
that I love very much. ■

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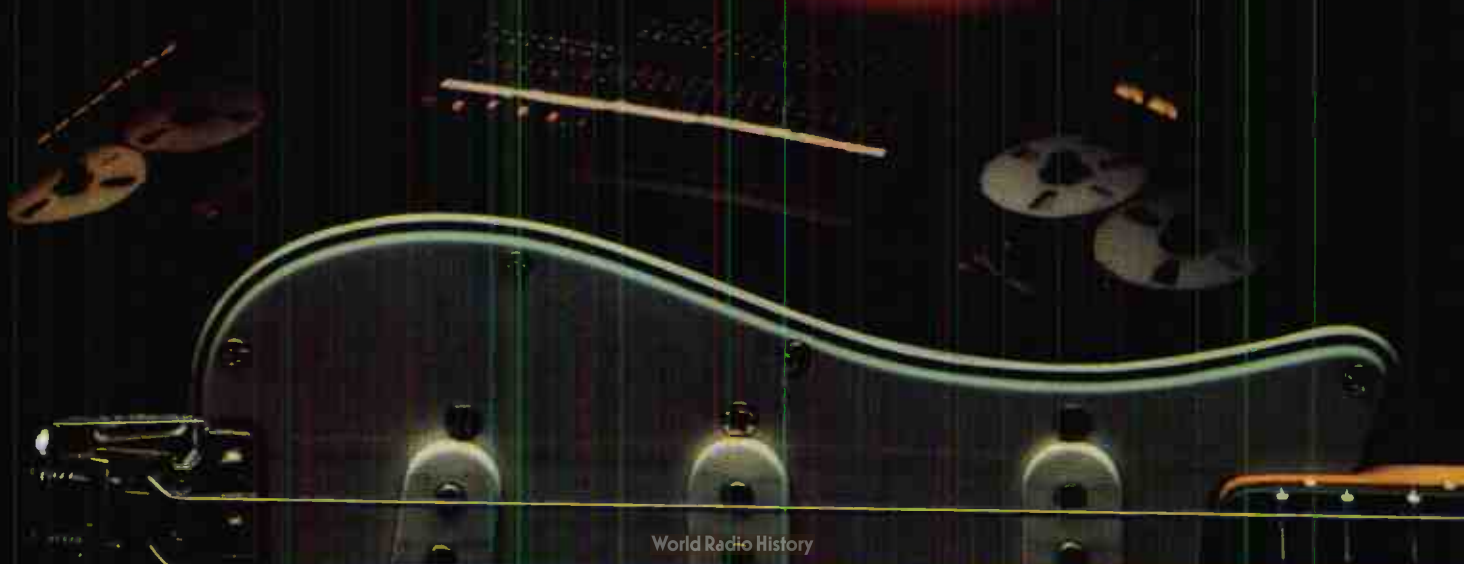
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**OTARI**



# JIMMY PAGE AND PAUL RODGERS STAND

Who says persistence doesn't pay? Veteran British journalist Max Kay spent nearly four years and two hundred phone calls trying to get an interview with the notoriously elusive Jimmy Page. His patience was doubly rewarded at the end of January, '85: he had two extended conversations with Page and singer/guitarist Paul Rodgers, now senior partners in the newly formed Firm. This eagerly anticipated merger of two proven champions of 70s heavy guitar rock adds a bit more polish to their much-imitated canon and tosses in a little 80s atmosphere. But plenty of rough edges remain, as evidenced by their fine U.S. single, "Radioactive." The Firm is rounded out by the spiky, Brit-funk-seasoned rhythm pair of drummer Chris Slade, a terrifying Brainiac look-alike who's worked with Manfred Mann, Frankie Miller and Terra Nova, and bassist Tony Franklin, by a mile the trendiest of the lot. At the time of Kay's interview, the band had just returned from a well-received German tour and was gearing up for a late February assault on Texas, U.S.A. To prepare the colonists for their arrival, Page and Rodgers were chatting before MTV cameras when Kay arrived at their rehearsal studio. He observed with amusement as the rebellious Page did his best to complicate the interview.





BY MAX KAY



**"The worst thing for me was sitting at home and just worrying like mad, wanting to play because that's the only thing I can do in life, and I didn't know how to do it, how to go about it."**

Page, who's wearing a blue blazer and his ever-present white trousers and smoking a Marlboro, is in no mood to be pissed about by anybody during the recording. He seems to take delight in imposing his will on the MTV crew and continually refusing to take direction. Off-camera he slugs conservatively from a half bottle of Bell's finest whiskey; on-camera he goes for the mineral water. Most rockers would have done it the other way around if only for image's sake, but then Page isn't too concerned by his image or the way in which the press would care to manipulate it, especially given his well-publicized entanglements in recent years with British drug laws.

The track-suited Paul Rodgers sits in the far corner of the room correcting the interviewer whenever the latter misquotes him (which is often according to Rodgers). When the filming is wrapped up, Rodgers, Page and I retire to the rehearsal room. Possibly overanxious at the amount of time it's taken me to get this interview, I've misplaced my list of 250 questions, and to cap it all off my tape recorder refuses to operate. "Testing one-two-three...."

"Get on with it for fuck's sake!" Page screams in a fit of impatience with my incompetence. Clearly, Page, who at forty still has the ability to encourage more bad press in a week than most bands see in a lifetime, has not mellowed with

was such an inspiration to be in. I played some good stuff with that band. During the three years I wasn't playing at all, that affected me the wrong way. I was just *terrified* to go out and play purely because I thought if I played badly they'd think that's it.

"During my three years in the wilderness there were so many good guitarists around. That's intimidating if you haven't played in a long time, because people are expecting so much from you and yet there's these other guys who are absolutely amazing. Eventually I came to terms with the fact that people know and appreciate you purely for what you do, and what you can do.

(Jimmy Page hasn't exactly spent the last four years with his head stuck in the ground, but it did amuse this writer two years ago when I asked him what he thought of Eddie Van Halen and discovered that Page had never even heard of the guy, let alone his music.)

"After we lost John Bonham from Zeppelin I just didn't wanna know," Page continues. "I couldn't think of playing with any other drummer at that point. I didn't touch a guitar for about nine months and when I did pick one up I could hardly change chords, but I pushed myself back into it. From there I got together in the studio for a few weeks with Chris Squire and Alan White of Yes, but then at that point the *Deathwish II* soundtrack came up, then I mixed Zeppelin's last album, *Coda*, so I was in the studio all the time. Finally the A.R.M.S. gig came up, and that was the thing that got me back, got my head into some sort of reasonable perspective.

"From the guitar aspect it's really important for me to be in front of an audience again. There's no way you can stand onstage and play safe in front of an audience with all that energy coming back at you. Believe me, it really keeps you on your toes."

Did joining the Firm further restore Page's confidence? "Oh, absolutely, absolutely. But being self-critical is not really a yes/no question. People might read this and think, 'He must be a real untogether bloke,' but it's not quite like that. It's like a pendulum, and it can go this way or that."

But does Page still have days when he wakes up feeling that his playing is terrible? "Oh, of course.... I still don't know whether I play well or not but I always give all I've got at that particular point in time; there's no half measures—I never play like that. You have to be a gambler, you've got to throw yourself into something with conviction, believing you're doing the right thing. I know in the past I've felt a lot of my heroes had mellowed. I think it's down to enthusiasm, and I don't think I'll ever lose that."

Speaking of raw enthusiasm, how does Page regard the recent profusion of heavy metal thrash, for which he must surely be attributed some of the blame? "I do like the new heavy metal bands, because they're not polite," Jimmy sniggers. "It's just not polite; it's good! It's like 'Fuck you.' I used to go to a club in town called the Funny Farm and they played heavy metal music all the time like Rush, who are extremely good." Page is equally generous in his praise of the new wave and punk before it. "I thought the Sex Pistols were fantastic. Brilliant."

Paul Rodgers, who's been described as the most imitated vocalist of his generation and who



EBET ROBERTS

age. Perhaps that's why he still has the status of rock 'n' roll demi-god four and a half years after the demise of Led Zeppelin, which almost single-handedly invented a whole new generation of hooligan music now known as heavy metal. Is being a living legend difficult for Page to handle?

"Yes, it is difficult," he replies. "You've been exposed to a particular elevated height so to speak, and you have a reputation, people have followed you and been touched by whatever you do. That comes from the part I played in Zeppelin, which





*Paul Rodgers holds court in front of fellow Firmers Chris Slade, Tony Franklin and Jimmy Page.*

fronted the long-lamented Free in the late 60s/early 70s before helping to found Bad Company, now is lured into the conversation. How do Page and Rodgers see themselves fitting in with the current British music trends, which on a bad week could be called a fashion parade? Have they got what it takes to be the flavor of the month? "I don't think anybody fits in," Rodgers counters. "I think you have to carve a niche for yourself. Before Boy George there wasn't such a thing. He created that whole thing and now there exists a demand for it. There was no demand for him before he existed."

Still, isn't an element of the Firm's appeal based on nostalgia? While Page merely says "No," vocalist Rodgers thinks for a minute. "No, and I think that could be one of the reasons why one avoids doing the round of one's old hits; we don't want to arouse a purely nostalgic feeling in people, we want to be considered as fresh and contemporary. I think it would be very narrow-minded to say we will never do past hits because that's rather a silly attitude. We did discuss this and decided that we would like to establish this band as a new entity so that there wasn't any question of its being a nostalgia trip. It will stand, or fall, on its own merits."

Page agrees. "It would have been an easy way out for two people like us amalgamating, but it wouldn't really have been what we were all about. I'm not saying that I'm not nostalgic, it's just that it would be awful to be judged on the merits of past work rather than what we might be capable of in the future. Fortunately, people don't think that way so much as they used to in the 70s."

"The thing is," continues Page, pointing at Rodgers, "he's bound to sound like Paul Rodgers because Paul Rodgers has been established for many years within Free and within Bad Company. It's the same as me playing guitar with Led Zep-

pelin, I can only do so much on guitar and it's obvious that I might be playing my style afterwards, after Zeppelin. It doesn't mean to say that I'm trying to ape anything that I did in the past, it's my identity. Paul and I are trying to push ourselves ever onwards."

"I think we have something to live up to in terms of music," Rodgers acknowledges. "It's not like we can go on and play a load of old cobbles and people will accept it, I don't think that's ever been the case. You do have a certain amount to live up to in your past musical standards and the idea I suppose is to keep on, hopefully improving. A reputation helps on the one hand in the sense that you get people coming out to your concerts with an air of expectancy, but on the other hand you do have to deliver the goods. On the whole, I think it's a good thing."

"So far putting the group together has been as big a challenge as climbing Mount Everest, because we started from absolute scratch. When we got together we were conscious that there would be a certain... something good would be expected from us, there was a certain amount we had to live up to."

"Let alone what the two of us expected of ourselves," chimes in Page. "You are your own worst critic. I agree with Paul, the greatest reward is for us to play a set where there's only one number—'You've Lost That Loving Feeling'—that the majority of the audience may have heard, and still be so well received."

"Have we been spoiled in the past?" replies Rodgers, who's not in a mood to dodge issues today. "I think yes, success can spoil people, y'know, but I don't think it's spoiled us because we're still here, and the people that it spoils don't last. I don't think you can last too long if you believe what's written about you, good or bad. If people write a lot of good things it can destroy a

**"We decided to establish this band as a new entity so that there wouldn't be any question of its being a nostalgia trip. It will stand or fall on its own merits."**

**"It's important for me to play in front of an audience again. There's no way you can stand onstage and play it safe with all that energy coming back at you."**

person just as much as people writing a lot of bad things, if the person believes it. Success does make it all worthwhile though, because we have to graft, it doesn't come that easy all the time."

There is the high expectation factor, especially from Page's old nemesis, the press. "Sure, obviously, it's one of the main things you're concerned with," Page parries, "but I don't quite know what people expect of me. The media I don't give a shit about, it's the people more than anything else, but I know what you expect from yourself is the main thing. What the media do here in England is build you up as God one minute, and shit the next. As far as we're concerned, the media is going to knock us, period. It's all

down to what we're playing, and it's got nothing to do with the media any more...."

The Firm have taken extreme steps to avoid some of the predictable media myopia: the press were barred from their initial performances, which naturally had the effect of creating even more interest in the band's activities. Having recently witnessed the Firm turn in possibly the finest heavy rock concert (at Hammersmith Odeon) that I've seen since the demise of Zeppelin, their reasons for the pervading paranoias seem unfounded, but Page still feels the ban was useful:

"The thing is, we've got a band together, it's two people that have got reputations that are spearheading it, so consequently the press are going to come along, and usually they come to the first gig of the tour. They've got no idea what's gone into it and they've got no part of it at this point...maybe at a later stage. They'll pick up on any shaky point and make that the whole review or whatever. How can they possibly put some of the magic parts of our concerts, or anybody's concerts, into words?" Page says, finding it difficult to control his anger. "It's an emotional feeling, and you can't. I think it's actually the individuals in this band who slag themselves off most if they think they haven't played well. The music papers work on a week-to-week basis here in England, they only see and hear things on a week-to-week basis and they don't understand that something may have taken three months, three years, thirty years, or whatever to get together... I mean, if these journalists play guitar or wanna be singers they should jolly well go ahead and do it!"

One Firm criticism that will probably be leveled is that the relative affluence of Page and Rodgers will keep them removed from the street. I ask Rodgers if stars of their magnitude can ever be streetwise? "We don't know anything about the street, we've been cosseted and closeted from the street for such a long time now." Suddenly Rodgers unleashes his renowned fiery temper in my direction. I can see the man is feeling delicate but not too delicate to biff me one.

"I don't know what all this crap and fuckin' bullshit is about 'the street man,' Fuck me, there isn't a fuckin' person in the fucking goddam world who's stuck down there on the street as it were who doesn't wanna get off the street. All these interviewers and all these people, none of these assholes are on the street, y'know?"

"What are *they* talking about? And yet they can come up with all this stuff and say, 'Hey man, are you streetwise?' It's bollocks, the street is not some kind of altar that we've all got to bow down to and be on. We are living life as it is, as we see it, and that's what we're expressing."

But surely that's as good as admitting that you're part of the establishment? "No, I don't agree. I think I've always been a rebel in my own mind and I'm still surviving in the same context as far as I'm concerned."

So what are you rebelling against? "Oh God... this is not *Rebel Without A Cause* is it? All right, rebel... an individual, a survivor within the contexts of society as it is. Y'know, I can't say that I work in any field or form of the establishment. I'm not a policeman, I don't work in a bank, and although I've got nothing against these people, I



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**"You do have a certain amount to live up to in your past musical standards and the idea is to hopefully keep improving. You have to deliver the goods."**

feel myself outside of that particular kind of society. I drifted into this business as a way out of working-class Middlesbrough which is where I come from. At that time there wasn't really a way of getting off 'the street' if you like. In my line you were either a fitter's apprentice or you found something else. There weren't a lot of outlets, but music was one for me. I wouldn't say it was quite that cynical because it was also something I really enjoyed and also a way out if you like."

Despite their economic advantages, Page and Rodgers remain unenamored of the business side of music. "It's very shallow indeed, like any other business but it has to be dealt with," Rodgers opines. "It's a big grinding machine that'll eat you up and spit you out."

"It's something you have to contend with," Page insists, drawing on his cigarette. "Otherwise you have to play in your front room or your local pub. But the question you've just asked about the business is totally irrelevant to people like us," he says, "and I'll tell you why. What other way do you get it across? Look, I'm tired...too tired to be able to get into this, but it's using the facilities that are accepted within the system. There's no point in sending a demo to a radio station and hoping they'll play it. Whether one likes the politics of record companies and big business, personally I don't and I don't think Paul does, but all you can do is try and safeguard yourself."

Are the Firm hoping to chart with their first album release? Page chuckles. "Obviously, if you make a record, it's not because you want it to be

deleted in the second week.... Silly question, Max!"

Says Rodgers, "We just didn't sit around slapping each other's backs saying, 'I think we've got a real loser here, lads....' Funnily enough, a lot of bands nowadays have their career mapped out for the next two or three years, but we haven't. There was no long term plan for the Firm to go to Europe, we just upped anchor and went, and the same with America...."

James Patrick Page, to give him his full name (his friends call him Jim), has never held down a regular job in his entire life. True, he did once apply for the position of laboratory assistant, and fortunately for him he was turned down. In reality, Jimmy Page isn't qualified to do anything other than hang onto the talent and skills he's acquired over the years, that have brought him the kinds of rewards in life most of us only dream about.

"The worst thing for me," says Page, confiding in me in a barely audible whisper, "was sitting at home and just worrying like mad, wanting to play because that's the only thing I can do in life, and not knowing how to do it...how to go about it!"

"It's been great that Paul did get together with me because it's helped the two of us. I'm enthusiastic about this band, and I respect the people in it...."

"We're not thinking in terms of failure at this point," adds a determined Rodgers. ■

*Tune in next month for more conversation with Jimmy Page on his guitars, his technique and the Led Zeppelin years.*

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# PERSPECTIVES

FIVE DIVERGENT VIEWS ON THE STATE OF MUSIC

## STEWART COPELAND

### The Year's Best

**Bands:** Stevie Ray Vaughan, Torch Song, Franco (that's a Zairian band), the Strawberry Switchblade and Matt Bianco

**Albums:** *Learning To Crawl* – Pretenders

**Songs:** "Take Me With You" – Prince

**Rookie of the Year:** Nik Kershaw

**Producer:** Trevor Horn

### State of the Industry

**Most Pleasant Surprise:** In spite of the hype Prince turns out to be pretty damn good after all.

**Most Exciting Trend:** Rediscovery of heavy metal. After all, punk was only heavy metal in different clothes. Special kudos to *Spinal Tap* for rehipping people to heavy metal. Favorite heavy metal band at the moment: Motorhead. Another exciting trend: music and computer technology. I also really liked soda pop gigs or milk bar gigs where bands play for kids under eighteen in nonalcoholic venues.

**Most Disturbing Trend:** Fewer clubs hiring live bands, thus the drying up of live venues.

**Quality of the Music Press:** In the U.K. the quality of the music press has disappeared altogether.

**Reflections on Music Video:** Nothing wrong with MTV a few good videos wouldn't fix. The heavy metal ones are my favorites, because you can see these guys playing. There's nothing more boring than a couple of guys prancing around in front of some dry ice, you know, walking backwards through doorways and breaking glasses in slow motion.

### How Was Your 1984?

**Professional High Point:** Figuring out the *msi buki* music of the Giriama tribe of the coastal regions of eastern Kenya (in every fourteenth bar there's a funny hiccup where you completely lose your place but wind up back where you belong on the sixteenth bar). It took me ages to figure out this particular thing (called the Giriama fulcrum twist).

**Regrets:** Not being able to figure out the fulcrum twist of the Sambiro tribe.

**Best Live Performance:** The last Police gig in Melbourne, Australia

**Best Recorded Performance:** Didn't record any this year.

**New Year's Resolutions:** To earn a living



GOVERT DE ROOS/RETNA



# MIKE PETERS

## The Year's Best

**Bands:** E Street Band, U2  
**Solo Artists:** Bruce Springsteen  
**Albums:** *Grain Rain* — Echo & the Bunnymen; *Mezzanine* — Long Ryders; *Hallowed Ground* — Violent Femmes; *Born in the U.S.A.* — Bruce Springsteen; *Reckoning* — R.E.M.  
**Songs:** "Strange Days Indeed" — John Lennon; "Two Trains" — Frankie Goes to Hollywood  
**Rookie of the Year:** Ian Wilson  
**Producers:** Alan Shacklock  
**Record Label:** White Cross

## State of the Industry

**Most Pleasant Surprise:** Guided by Voices  
**Biggest Disappointment:** The lack of exciting new groups  
**Most Exciting Trend:** There wasn't one  
**Most Disturbing Trend:** The Fairlight and record-company-produced music  
**Quality of the Music Press:** U.S.A. — excellent; U.K. — poor  
**Reflections on Music Video:** In the same way TV stopped people conversing, video stops people really listening and imagining songs

## How Was Your 1984?

**Professional High Point:** *Alarm* show, Lyceum Ballroom, May 15, 1984, writing "The Dawn Chorus (No Return)"  
**Regrets:** Not enough time  
**Best Live Performance:** As above  
**Best Recorded Performance:** As above (bootleg)  
**New Year's Resolutions:** To beat that Lyceum show at every concert we do next year

# JOHN MELLENCAMP

## The Year's Best

**Bands:** Pretenders, U2, R.E.M.  
**Solo Artists:** Rickie Lee Jones, Bruce Springsteen  
**Albums:** *Magazine* — Rickie Lee Jones; *Born in the U.S.A.* — Bruce Springsteen  
**Songs:** "Juke Box Fury" — Rickie Lee Jones; "Shut Out the Light" — Bruce Springsteen  
**Record Label:** CBS

## State of the Industry

**Most Pleasant Surprise:** Lou Reed's dancing ability on video  
**Biggest Disappointment:** PolyGram-WCI merger not going through  
**Most Exciting Trend:** Music videos  
**Quality of the Music Press:** Depends on which publication—some are making a difference, some aren't  
**Reflections on Music Video:** Very disturbing—i.e. sex, cost, confusion of the song—but is very challenging to make the videos and song work together.

## How Was Your 1984?

**Professional High Point:** New York, Indy, L.A.—live shows '84  
**Regrets:** I had a very crummy summer  
**New Year's Resolutions:** Be happy (at least try to be positive), live in the present



# DEE SNIDER

## The Year's Best

**Bands:** Wasp, Queensryche, Iron Maiden

**Solo Artists:** Ronnie Dio, Bryan Adams

**Albums:** *Wasp* – Wasp; *Power Slave* – Iron Maiden; *Last In Line* – Dio; *No Remorse* – Motorhead; *In Rock We Trust* – Y & T

**Songs:** "Looks That Kill" – Motley Crue; "Round And Round" – Ratt; "Gimme All Your Lovin'" – ZZ Top

**Rookie of the Year:** Wasp

**Producer:** Mutt Lange

**Record Label:** Atlantic

## State of the Industry

**Most Pleasant Surprise:** Metal resurgence (recognition is a more appropriate word)

**Biggest Disappointment:** Metal backlash

**Most Exciting Trend:** Movement toward a more hard-rock feel in music

**Most Disturbing Trend:** Continuation of computerized crap

**Quality of the Music Press:** They've been good to us! Let's leave it at that.

**Reflections on Music Video:** It's nice to see the fun coming back to rock video, and the resignation of artists who should never even have tried video (hello, Joe Jackson).

## How Was Your 1984?

**Professional High Point:** Double platinum album and final recognition

**Regrets:** None

**Best Live Performance:** N.Y. Pier, Nassau Coliseum

**Best Recorded Performance:** Live at Hammersmith, London

**New Year's Resolutions:** To release a devastating follow-up to *Stay Hungry*



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

# BRANFORD MARSALIS

## The Year's Best

**Bands:** Old and New Dreams, Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers, Midnight Star, Prince & the Revolution, Talking Heads, Wynton Marsalis Quintet

**Solo Artists:** Pat Metheny, Chaka Khan, Glenn Jones, Jeffrey Osborne, Marvin Gaye, Kevin Eubanks, Luther Vandross

**Albums:** *Stop Making Sense* – Talking Heads; *Hot House Flowers* – Wynton Marsalis Quintet; *Portrait Of Kir Te Kanawa* – Kir Te Kanawa; *Feets Don't Fail Me Now* – Dirty Dozen Brass Band; *Rejoicing* – Pat Metheny

**Songs:** "My Love Is Alive" – Chaka Khan; "Last Dance" – George Clinton; "What's Love Got To Do With It" – Tina Turner; "Weakness" – Stevie Wonder

**Rookie of the Year:** Glenn Jones

**Producer:** Arif Mardin

**Record Label:** CBS

## State of the Industry

**Most Pleasant Surprise:** CBS decides to *really* promote Wynton, and Capitol decides to reactivate the Blue Note label

**Biggest Disappointment:** Record companies' continued disdain toward jazz artists in general

**Most Exciting Trend:** Absolutely none

**Most Disturbing Trend:** Ambiguity of music; the general trend of black music

**Quality of the Music Press:** Moribund, mute and uneducated; we need more writers like Stanley Crouch and Rafi Zabor

**Reflections on Music Video:** The shit that they're doing is so completely uninteresting that they might as well just stand there and play

## How Was Your 1984?

**Professional High Point:** Witnessing Wynton's speech on the Grammys

**Regrets:** Reagan's re-election

**Best Live Performance:** With the Wynton Marsalis Quintet

**Best Recorded Performance:** *Scenes In The City*

**New Year's Resolutions:** To keep practicing, keep studying, and keep trying to make better music







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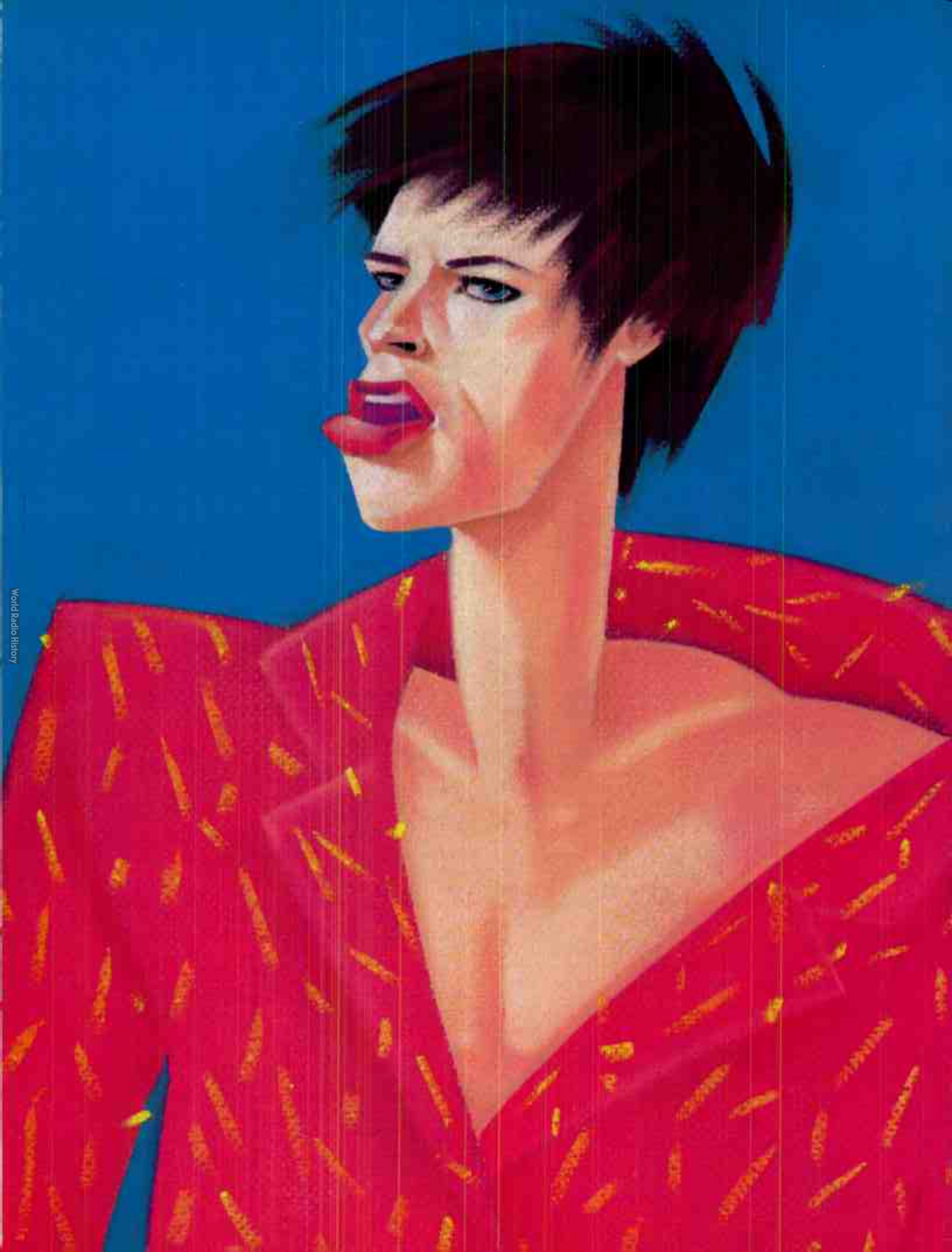
The elevator door was closing when the French woman called out to **Mick Jagger**.

“Meek! You have a phone call! Ees Charlie!”

Jagger bounced out of the lift and across CBS’ Paris office. A few minutes later he was back with new plans for the evening.

“Bill Laswell’s doing a Miles Davis session tonight,” Jagger announced. “I’m going to pick up Charlie and go.” **by Bill Flanagan**





Five minutes later we're in Jagger's car, tearing around the Arc de Triomphe on the way to the hotel where Charlie Watts and the other Rolling Stones are staying. Herbie Hancock, whom Jagger ran into at CBS, will be at the Miles session. Hancock also played on *She's The Boss*, Jagger's new solo album. Laswell helped produce it. Small world.

Years ago Rahsaan Roland Kirk told audiences that he'd still be playing music when *Mick Jagger* was sitting in some office. The attitude among jazz snobs then was that these young English rockers were musical dilettantes who'd make their millions and quit.

Rahsaan was wrong.

After more than twenty years and many millions, Mick Jagger's lost no enthusiasm for playing. This January in Paris Jagger was spending his days overseeing the imminent release of *She's The Boss*, his nights recording a new Stones

"But what's great is, they want to please, more than on another session. That enthusiasm was great. Jeff Beck said to a friend of mine, 'Did he use any of my stuff?'" Jagger chuckles at the implication that he might not. "A great comment! English understatement!"

"More and more these days, popular music is recorded in layers," Jagger explains. "My album isn't really like that." For *She's The Boss*, Mick went into the studio with a drummer, bassist, one or two guitarists, and maybe a keyboard player. He'd sing and play guitar, leading them through the songs. Later on, other parts would be overdubbed while some basics (including Jagger's own guitar parts) would be wiped. The idea was to get a finished product as sonically sharp as possible while keeping a live bottom and a live feel. "The album's done in layers," Jagger goes on, "but not as many. It's not like starting with a drum program and adding a computer program. With programs you can do it all yourself, you can avoid any communication. This is more or less a live record, done with a small group and then added to. You've got to communicate with that small group. You don't have to *talk*, but gestures are very important. It's like in dancing. That's always been my thing."

"I was born in 1940," Herbie Hancock explains. "Because of my age and my orientation Miles Davis or John Coltrane would be *my* Mick Jagger. When the Stones and the Beatles were making their headway into the market, I wasn't into rock 'n' roll at all. I didn't pay any attention to it. It wasn't of interest to me. So I didn't have that awe that another musician might have for Mick Jagger."

When Hancock came in to overdub keyboards on *She's The Boss*, he "didn't know what to expect, but I didn't expect it to be as *open* as what came out. I didn't realize that Mick had such an amazing sense of poetry in his conception of music. He gets you to bring out what he wants from the music with gestures or sounds or facial expressions. I'm used to that from jazz players. When there's no way to describe it in terms of notes, if it has to do with a certain kind of *feeling*, I'm accustomed to hearing jazz players describe music in terms of something visual, or a gesture or movement they'll make right in front of your face. Mick has the same kind of creative openness. It's from exactly the same place.

"If he wanted a certain mood, the way he might describe it to me is to lift up his shoulders and *tip-toe*. If he wanted the sound to open up like 'ooOOWAHHH!' he'd make that sound with his mouth and a facial gesture. Wayne Shorter does that. Wayne has that poetic, creative way of describing music. You have to use your creative sense in order to follow it. Mick reminded me of that."

Jagger's ability to articulate through movement was tested when the Stones recruited Sonny Rollins to play on "Waiting For A Friend."

"I had a lot of trepidation about working with Sonny Rollins," the singer admits. "This guy's a giant of the saxophone. Charlie said, 'He's never going to want to play on a Rolling Stones record!' I said, 'Yes he is going to want to.' And he did and he was wonderful.

"I said, 'Would you like me to stay out here in the studio?' He said, 'Yeah, you tell me where you want me to play and *dance* the part out.' So I did that. And that's very important: communication in hand, dance, whatever. You don't have to do a whole ballet, but sometimes that movement of the shoulder tells the guy to kick in on the beat."

Jagger says he feels no intimidation about working with jazz heavyweights like Rollins and Hancock. "I think of them as possibly intimidating figures," he explains, "but if they agree to do something they tend to be very easy to work with. They're very cooperative and very hardworking. Honestly. And very *quick*. You can change! The thing about rock musicians sometimes is they don't have as many styles. They have

"Sonny Rollins said,  
'Tell me where you  
want me to play and  
dance the part out.'  
You don't have to talk."

album, and any spare moments checking out other people's music. Mick Jagger ain't in it for weekends. Mick Jagger's a lifetime musician.

In Paris, working two jobs, Jagger was talkative, charming, and filled with energy. What must it be like, at forty-one, to have to continually answer for comments made when you were nineteen or twenty? How must it feel to watch old films of yourself acting out the aspirations and excesses of a wild generation? Do you say, "Boy, was I cool!" or "Boy, was I silly"?

"You're both silly *and* cool," Jagger laughs. He often speaks of himself in the second person, a common British device when self-analysis threatens privacy. "I mean, that's life. Being quoted down the years is really hard. Especially when a lot of it was meant as a joke." He pauses, and then adds slyly, "Half a joke, anyway."

Stardom isn't just in the mind of the public. Making an album without the Rolling Stones, Jagger was reminded that even other rock musicians (maybe especially other rock musicians) are intimidated by his myth.

"There are, funnily enough, players who are intimidated," Jagger admits. "Mostly younger ones. I try to diffuse that by not being intimidating. I mean, I could be...." He scowls and casts his eyes on the floor. "I could not speak, or not go in the studio and sing with them. I've noticed that a lot of artists do that! They show up to see how it's going, *leave*, and come back later to do the vocal. I talk to people, have a drink with them before we work, so they can get over that initial shyness or prejudice. If they find it difficult, you just baby them along a little, until they get over it.





one or two defined styles that they can't jump out of. Whereas if you say to a musician like Herbie, 'That lick's no good,' he's not going to be crushed. He can come up with a hundred more. If a rock musician has learned a lick and you change it, he's not gonna like that so much. Because maybe he doesn't have that facility.

"Musicians are not all known for their great verbalization," Jagger deadpans. "They communicate in musical terms. A lot of *grunting* goes on. The thing about being with a band for twenty years is that you know a lot about them. You know how

"I just write things as I see them. Sometimes one hates the human race and sometimes one doesn't."

they're going to react to certain things. You don't have to have total verbal communication. You know what a guy can do and what his limits are."

Chuck Leavell, who played some keyboards on Jagger's album, has also toured and recorded with the Stones. He says, "There was much more *discussion* in Mick's solo project than in the Stones, where you establish a groove and play. The way the Stones play is just amazing. There's really not all that much talk. They just play—and it works. That's how the magic happens with that band."

"I was surprised Mick was as *deliberate* as he was," drummer Anton Fig recalls. "I don't know if the Stones work the same way he worked with us, but the Stones sound as if they've just gone in and smashed away. This was a lot more deliberate. It took a lot of creative work. It wasn't just sit down and play. Although it was all fun, there was a certain amount of cerebral intensity as well as emotional playing."

Jagger, however, denies his approach was different from the Stones'. "I'm *always* pretty meticulous," he maintains. "If anything I'm *too* meticulous. I've been known to remix too much and lose a groove."

"I didn't find I had to verbalize that much more. I mean, the Rolling Stones are musicians too. I still have to verbalize with them. I still have to explain that this song has this mood. As a singer and a writer, or co-writer, I find that it's often my responsibility to say, 'Look, this song is very aggressive' or 'This is a touching sequence.' They don't want to know what the words are, but they want to know what the *mood* is."

"It's a very old-fashioned kind of musical terminology. You can write it all down if you want to, but you don't have to. I think those attitudes, moods, are very important in popular music. The writer or singer has to communicate that. Otherwise you're just talking about notes and lines and licks. Yeah, you can play like that. But I think if musicians have the sensitivity they should have they'll understand if you say, 'Look, you can't play that. Not because I don't like it or it isn't any good,

but because the mood of the song isn't that.' If everyone understands that, you're off to a good start."

"With the Rolling Stones or with any group of musicians I think it's my job—if I write the material, interpret it, produce it—to communicate that. Then you can let people play around that."

Of course, Jagger's own perspective can go awry. *She's The Boss* has its share of unusual touches—for example, "Running Out Of Luck"'s acoustic guitar lead and the Fairlight sampling of Jagger's voice. Perhaps the weirdest option is Jagger's vocal approach to "Hard Woman," the LP's Big Ballad. From the rising strings to the lyric about a guy in love with a woman who can't be pleased, the song demands an emotionally direct, even plaintive, reading. Linda Ronstadt would really jerk some tears with this one. Yet Jagger's vocal, all quick jumps and black mannerisms, keeps the lyric at arm's length. It's an impressive vocal performance, but it rubs against the song.

## Jagged Edges: Mick's Vocal Technique

**MUSICIAN:** How do you keep your voice in shape?

**JAGGER:** I do exercises, scales, sing a lot. There's not really a lot of substitution for singing hard rock. It's hard to do at home—two hours of screaming your head off. So it tends to take a long time to work up to the right point if you're not on the road. Even if you are, you've got to interpret old songs in new ways. On the road you can make everything *too* hard. It takes time. If you're not working on the road you should do exercises to keep your voice in shape, the same as the rest of your body.

**MUSICIAN:** Have you ever taken singing lessons?

**JAGGER:** No. Michael Jackson was telling me he started recently. I think you can learn a lot from lessons, but it takes the discipline to be in one place. I move around so much. It's the same with dancers and dance routines: You find one and by the time you've done two weeks you're off and have to try to find a dance teacher in Paris. But there's certainly no harm in it. You might as well learn the basics.

I'm lucky. I can go on singing for a long time. There's a lot of guys in bands I know who can't sing for very long. Half an hour, even quarter of an hour and that's it, they're gone.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you try to vary your vocal approach from take to take?

**JAGGER:** If you want to do a vocal over, you want to try to do it differently. But sometimes the difference is quite fine. On this record I was being asked by both Nile and Bill to go hard. I can go hard, but there's a point where it gets too hard.

The other thing is doing back-ups and doubles and all that. I'm not a very good harmony singer, but if someone points me in the right direction I'm usually okay. I enjoy doing layers and things. On some of the stuff I sing one voice, but you do need some layers. And that can be fun. You try lots of different ways. I try to be excessive because when you do the mix you can always take it off, just use one little part.

**MUSICIAN:** People think of you as having a real gritty, bluesy vocal style, but you've recorded lots of falsetto: "Tops," "Fool To Cry," "Emotional Rescue." Did that come out of trying things different ways in the studio?

**JAGGER:** That comes out in the studio. I can't sing falsetto onstage. I lose it. Falsetto's hard to capture. I create a lot of melodies in falsetto—licks that I find more difficult to get around in my regular voice. But I didn't use falsetto much on this record. In fact only one line, and some backing stuff, is done in falsetto. I thought I'd done it enough.

**MUSICIAN:** Is there any important question you've never been asked?

**JAGGER:** Oh God! Not that one again!



"Maybe I was having too much fun," Jagger allows. "I don't know. Maybe on that one I added a bit of lightheartedness. But I think that's permissible. The first time I sang 'Hard Woman' I did it very white and straight, without any inflections. Then I decided to take a slightly more hard or soulful approach. I thought, 'Why am I doing this so straight? This should have more inflections in it.' Then I started to get off on them. But I quite like it." He shrugs. "Maybe it's not perfect."

If "Hard Woman"'s not perfect, it does illustrate the solo album's surprising perspective. Here is Mick "I Can't Get No" Jagger singing about how tough it is for *him* to satisfy his honey. All the songs on *She's The Boss* are about romantic relationships, and most find Jagger taking the perspective of a guy crazy about, devoted to, even domesticated by a woman. Only once, on "Secrets," does the infamous Stones macho (some call it sexism) pop up. On the title cut he's a sexual Stepin Fetchit, "yo' de boss"-ing with all the backbone of Rochester in a graveyard.

"Women love that tune," Jagger laughs. "it's funny 'cause I made up the lyrics in the studio—like 'Too Much Blood.' It's almost all the live vocal. I'm trading licks with Jeff Beck on that. I always sing with the band, but technically the rough vocals don't always stand up because you get so much break-through. Fortunately on 'She's The Boss' the band was playing quiet enough that I could use some of the original vocal."

Jagger denies that the new album's viewpoint represents either a break from the past or a *mea culpa* for past sins. I just write things as I see them," he shrugs. "If some girl's kicked me around I'll write a song about it. And if I've been treated well I'll write a song about that. Life is not always being treated well or being treated badly. Sometimes one hates the whole human race and sometimes one doesn't. I don't like to be too conscious about those kinds of social attitudes. It gets me into trouble. I've been in trouble with women, black people and whatever else."

Come to think of it, Jagger's old adversary Jesse Jackson recently ran for President and no one mentioned his failed crusade to get "Some Girls" banned and destroyed for the line about black girls enjoying sex. "I haven't seen him since," Jagger chuckles. "That's an example of an ad lib getting you into a lot of trouble. No *Italians* complained. There's a line about *French* girls. I don't know if anyone was really upset apart from him."

But Jagger turns serious on the subject of creative responsibility: "Though I don't want to offend anyone, if you're an honest person you tend to offend some people sometimes. It's unfortunate if I've offended people, but that's the way I felt at the time. It doesn't mean it's my *creed*."

"'Under My Thumb'—which is the one they always quote—is about a girl who's been really pushy. People don't bother to listen. It's about a girl 'who once had me down.' So it's not quite the misogynist view. English people don't take life quite so seriously; they always have the tongue in cheek."

"There can be stuff that you think will be taken in the wrong way or is too heavy. But I'm a great believer in trying to put out all the stuff you do that's any good. That's the thing about rock 'n' roll. People understand writing about personal relationships, cars and food; but once you start to tread heavier water they question it. You have to make it all work. And if it doesn't work, maybe approach the subject in another way."

The relative humor and horror of *Undercover*, the last Stones album, is still being debated. Maybe the record was Jagger's exploration of the violent side of the human psyche and the internal rot of our political structures. Or maybe it was a camp aural chop-up movie, a *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* of the airwaves. Either way, *Undercover* sure was full of blood and guts. With its boy/girl themes, *She's The Boss* makes a decided U-turn.

"You have certain things inside," Jagger says. "ideas. You get them out on an album like *Undercover*. They were expunged. Subconsciously I probably thought, 'I've done that. Now I'll go back to doing songs about personal relationships.' But it's not quite conscious. Songwriting is a strange thing because you don't know what you're going to write. You sit there with a guitar and what comes out comes out. Now you don't have to use what comes out. You can have twenty songs and use the ten that are about personal relationships."

Speaking of songwriting, *She's The Boss* represents the first time Jagger's taken sole songwriting credit. Until now, all songs written by either Jagger or Keith Richards have been co-credited. At first they did collaborate: Jagger generally handled lyrics (exceptions: "Ruby Tuesday," "Before They Make Me Run," "All About You"), Richards the music, and each had veto power over the other. Now, however, the two often write separately, though they still make suggestions on



LAURA LEVINE

## Boss Tones

On the sessions for *She's The Boss*, **Mick Jagger** says, "I played Ronnie Wood's Fender Strat a lot. I played an ESP with a new neck. And I played a Gibson SG—the red one with the little horn shape. At home I play a little Roland Juno synthesizer, a Yamaha electric piano, and a *regular* piano. I write most of my songs on a Gibson Hummingbird. I've had it for years and years. It's been broken and repaired many times. I also have a little baby Martin—a ladies' model, I think. It's good 'cause you can take it on a plane, it's hand luggage. I sometimes work with an Ovation onstage. I've got a DMX drum machine at home. Also a Roland drum machine."



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each other's tunes.

"Usually Keith gives me a start with the lyrics for his tunes," Jagger says. "It's rare he gives me a melody with no indication—though if I come up with something better we'll change it. But usually he gives me an attitude or a phrase, like 'beast of burden,' to pick up on. Obviously there are some lyrics I write all by myself. But sometimes Keith helps me just by saying which is the best verse. I might write five verses and we only need three. Keith will say, 'Oh, that's a great line, let's combine it with this.'

"I started writing on piano, which is easy: just put your fingers down. I think the first song I wrote melodically was 'Yesterday's Papers.' Then 'Jigsaw Puzzle.' As a singer I would impose my melodies over the chord structures. So even though I wasn't a player, I would help shape the melody. But it's true to say our roles were much more divided in the beginning, and now they're melded together."

The catalyst for the change was Jagger's development as a guitarist. He's played onstage since 1975; with *Some Girls* (1978) Jagger's role as a *musician* in the Rolling Stones became prominent.

"I learned to play about three chords on the guitar when I was twelve, but I left it behind. I really didn't think I was talented in that direction. There were so many people playing guitar. I just became a singer.

"But then later on, when I picked it up, Keith was really quite encouraging. He taught me lots of stuff. I don't really have a facility for playing lead guitar lines, but I have a sort of facility for rhythm playing."

Eddie Martinez, along with Jeff Beck, Pete Townshend and G.E. Smith, plays guitar on *She's The Boss*. "Just from hearing Mick play," Martinez says, "you can tell he's been with Keith so much. You can hear Keith's influence in the way he'll voice certain chords or the way he feels things. You have to think about the way Mick is feeling to really lock in with him. Mick would play along a rhythm pattern; the way he would lock in and swing with it was an important thing about the sessions.

"The tracks really had to swing. It might have been perfectly in time as far as the tempo, but that's not the same as a track being in time and *swinging*. Mick was able to communicate with the guitar by showing us rhythmically what he was hearing. He's a pro, man. He's something else."

"Hey," Jagger says, "I'm not that great a player but I have a rhythmic sense to impart. It's back to communication. You play with the band and put them in the right groove. That's really my job. What was needed sometimes when I was running a song down in the studio was for me to stand up there and yell and scream and play guitar. It really gets 'em at it. Rather than going off to the restaurant and saying, 'Okay, Nile, I'll be back.'"

Nile Rodgers produced David Bowie's *Let's Dance*, Madonna's *Like A Virgin* and half the rest of the hit parade. He co-produced (with Jagger) three tracks for *She's The Boss*. A guitarist himself, Rodgers was surprised that Jagger erased his own playing from the final mixes.

"He played on all the tracks we did," Rodgers remembers. "I really liked a lot of Mick's guitar playing and wanted to keep it, but Mick's not all hung up like that."

"They weren't needed," Jagger shrugs. "There was enough guitar on there. Once I've got the band in the right groove and you've got two guitar players, you don't need three. If there's only one other guitar player, I'll play—but I can always get someone to come in later, play my part over and get a much cleaner, better sound. I don't mind. There was one part I almost left, on '1/2 A Loaf.' It would have been nice, but it wasn't really needed. It was cluttering it up a little bit. It would have been just an ego trip on my part to hang my name on there as a guitar player."

Rodgers remembers one frequent guitar hazard. "It was

hard to hear Jagger's voice and not copy Keith Richards' guitar sound," the producer laughs. "When Mick starts singing you immediately want to go... (he hums the riff to "Start Me Up"). When Mick would hear us doing that he would say, 'Hey, come on guys! If I wanted it to be like that I could do a Stones record!' And he was absolutely right.

"Another thing Mick understood was that everybody worked better when I was in the control room *producing*. When I was in the studio it was like I was part of the band. I wasn't paying enough attention to what other people were doing. I was trying to groove with the guys. So Mick asked me

## Producing the First Solo Mick

"Keith and I have been producing our stuff for a long time. I felt strongly that I couldn't be a solo artist and also have the responsibility of producing the record. I thought I'd like to use outside producers, and just for fun maybe more than one. In the last couple of years it's gotten fashionable to use more than one producer. Artists like to be perfectionists; it's not unknown to spend six months making a record. A lot of producers want to work on other stuff, and who can blame them? I thought it would be very good to try it with two very different people: Bill Laswell and Nile Rodgers.

"I don't know if anyone could actually tell, blindfolded. If I played you the record and said, 'Which ones did Nile produce?' I don't think you'd know. I wouldn't know, coming off the street. People love to say, 'Ah! Nile produced this!' 'No, actually that was Bill.' People always get it the other way around.

"The Rolling Stones will probably use a producer again at some point, but to produce a band like the Stones isn't easy. There's not that many guys who can really do a good job. A lot of guys who call themselves producers are really engineers. A producer, to me, is someone who has the authority to change an arrangement, a tempo. A lot of these guys are really just engineers who want to be called producers on the label. They don't have the authority to turn around and say, 'Hey, Mick, that's a bunch of shit,' like Nile or Bill would. If they say it's great, you know they think it's great.

"Bill Laswell said somewhere that he didn't produce one of the tracks, the ballad 'Hard Woman,' very much. But as far as I'm concerned he did the job. He hadn't any experience with a song like that, but while I was in the studio singing live with the band, he was in the booth. That track has a lot of tempo changes, a lot of... whatever they call it in Italian. It goes slowly, speeds up a little bit and comes back down. The producer's job is to make sure that everyone's playing the right notes, and also that the tempo's just perfect. I was out there trying to sing and get the emotive thing going with the musicians, to make sure they were in the right groove, the right attitude. I didn't want to have to listen to whether the tempo was wandering a little bit or this guy wasn't playing a perfect note. That's a production job.

"When I said, 'I'm going to do the strings,' Bill left that to me, because I'm very familiar with making that kind of record. I wrote the string parts with Paul Buckmaster. He'd suggest something and I'd say great or no. I'd hum, 'Maybe like this.' Bill was really busy so I just did that on my own.

"There's a certain kind of tension at the beginning of any recording session, even if it's the Stones. 'How's it going to work out?' Until you get something under your belt you're a bit nervous. But the demos were pretty good. I like having good demos. It makes the band say, 'Fuck that—we can do better than that garbage!' Even though the players on the demos might have been really good. You don't always tell the band who they are. 'That sounds really good, Mick! Who's that?' 'Oh...just some guy'—when it's really some star drummer who dropped by."





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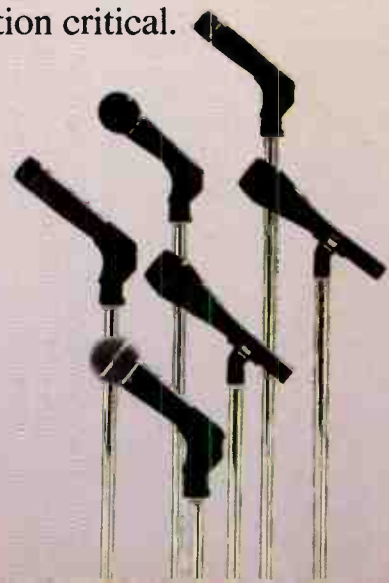
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to go in the booth and produce and govern the record. I felt badly because I wanted to play! But he was right, it changed the whole record. Once he did that, we moved right through it."


Herbie Hancock remembers this about working with Jagger: "Mick knows much more about certain areas of black music than I do. He picked up the harmonica and played some things. He said, 'I'm not a harmonica player.' He's thinking about Little Walter and all the great harmonica players—and he's *playing* that stuff. Okay, maybe he doesn't have the chops, but he's got a lot of feeling. Even if he played one little thing and it was kind of raggedy, the *feeling* was there. That's what impressed me more than anything about Mick."

## Making the "She's The Boss" mini-movie

"I didn't want to wait until the album was completely finished and then start looking at the videos. I didn't want to do the videos track by track—do one and then a month later do another one. Instead of just doing it bit by bit we took the album as a whole. The album doesn't really have a concept, but it has some themes running through the lyrics, it has a feel. We wrote a story around it and made a sixty-minute film in South America. I had a lot of fun doing it. Of course, it's fraught with danger 'cause you don't know what the single's going to be."

"I got involved with Julien Temple, the director who worked with the Stones on *Undercover*. When I was halfway through the record I played him the stuff. Some of it was finished, some was still in demo form. I wanted him to get the feel of the record quite a while before we would do the videos. We decided to do the whole thing. The video, if you want to define it, is the clip we cut for MTV, which we put a lot of images into."

"I guess I'm just old fashioned," Jagger says. It's a cool night in Paris. All the lights are coming on. "But I also have it in my *feet*. That's the whole thing to me. It's *dancing*, you know? If it doesn't actually make me want to get up, there's something wrong. My guitar and me feet to me are all part of the same thing. Lots of musicians don't really think about things like that. I'm a dancer more than a guitar player. I get up and I'm dancing with the guitar, slapping it. I try to get the feeling to go *from* my feet *into* the guitar and out into the band."

He darts across the Champs-Élysées, long scarf trailing as he cuts through the headlights of startled motorists. And he's dancing. 

"But we weren't going to do that all the time. We wanted a story, we wanted to hang it on a hook. How were we going to do that? What was it going to be about? What were the themes of the record that *he* picked up on as a filmmaker? Then we interpreted it, wrote the script."

"We kicked around ideas and listened to the record a lot. We wrote a simple story about a rock musician. He's not a very serious rock musician like *ME*. He wouldn't be interviewed in *Musician*. He goes to Brazil to make this glam video, with all the video clichés in it. He has a row with his wife. He gets beaten up. He goes into the interior of Brazil and has a series of adventures. We link the songs together. The first is '1/2 A Loaf'; we do that as a pastiche of videos, dancers and all that shit. The next one is 'Running Out Of Luck,' as he starts to go down. Then 'She's The Boss'—he's working on a plantation. The last one is 'Just Another Night.'

"All the songs are used as either background music or with different sequences. It was the hardest work I'd done for a long time. It was a heavy schedule, but worth it."

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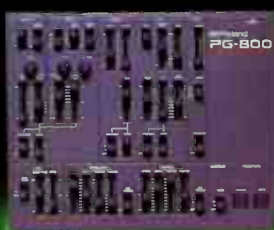
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# ANY MAJOR DUDE WILL TELL YOU FELIX CAVALIERE

## THE SOULFUL SAGA OF THE RASCALS-AND BEYOND

BY JOCK BAIRD

**F**elix Cavaliere, singer, keyboardist, songwriter and one of the architects of 60s rock, is sitting in his Danbury, Connecticut kitchen talking about the mysterious, misunderstood, strangely neglected legacy of the Young Rascals. "The point is, at one time we were keeping pace with all the guys who are now legends," he says in a quintessentially New York dialect. "When the Stones came out with a record, when the Beatles came out with a record, when the Beach Boys came out with a record, the Rascals were right there with 'em, every step of the way. Yet those groups are what they are today, and we're legends only in the eyes of people who were around then or happen to be music buffs. And that's what we lost. I feel the Rascals *were* pretty much ignored as far as getting credit for the things we started.

"But it's all coming around. One thing I'm so proud of is that our music is still being played after all these years. It's fantastic, because, believe me, there is no one actively pursuing that. It makes you feel like that's what you were supposed to be doing in the first place. Being brought up the way I was, with classical music training, I had to compete with the greatest. They're a couple of hundred years old and we're still playing their music. That's the level I was trying for. That was *it* to me. So I got a long way to go," Cavaliere laughs wheezily. "It's only twenty years. But that's what I was *trying* to do, to be part of the history.

"But I also like being part of the present, and that's something that I'm very frustrated about. I'm hoping that the new things I'm doing will be heard. That's all, just *hear* 'em. You can keep all that top ten stuff. Those people live in a vicious, brutal high-stakes world. They can have that. But with a hundred numbers on a chart, there's got to be one for me...

PHOTO BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD







number sixty-two—*permanently!*” Felix laughs again, delighted with the proposal. “I feel I deserve it. I earned it, you know!”

He has. Felix Cavaliere's claim of leading the only American band besides the Beach Boys to successfully slug it out with the British Invasion is easily verified. In just over two astonishing years, the Young Rascals shot nine hits into the top twenty, with another four or five songs that became major East Coast/Midwest anthems. They were one of the most consistently exciting live bands of the 60s, and perhaps the most intuitive and satisfying fusion of black and white rock ever recorded. Felix Cavaliere's absolutely classic voice and seminal songwriting abilities remain carved in radio granite—we're talking about the singer and writer (or co-writer) of “Groovin’,” “People Got To Be Free,” “It's A Beautiful Morning,” “A Girl Like You,” “Lonely Too Long,” “You Better Run....”

The full story of the rise and decline of the original Young Rascals (later just the Rascals) remains untold exactly twenty years after the band began playing its first gigs. How did they leap from the Jersey club scene and a Westhampton night-

wasn't allowed to hear rock 'n' roll; the first I remember was Ray Charles: he just blew me away.”

Cavaliere's transitional status between 50s R&B and early-Beatles rock is underscored by his high school work with a vocal group called the Stereos. How did he come to be the only white person in the ensemble? “They were the only guys I could find who could sing! They came from New Rochelle, and one of them was transferred to our school. We didn't really make any money, but we had a good time and I learned how to be a singer. We used to win these talent shows in high school, playing Drifters tunes with strings—I got a few violinists from the music class. Rock with strings—that talent show was *ours*.”

“We almost got a record deal with the Stereos, and instead, what we got was a good beating! Yeah, we got taken. From those talent shows someone saw us and introduced us to people in the music business—now we're talking late 50s—and I was brought into the city to meet people like Neil Diamond, Carole King.... As a matter of fact I still have a demo of a song Carole wrote for us called “Growing Pains.” It's not a bad song. But we never got off the ground, 'cause the people doing the business were really crooks. I remember someone asking me to borrow a friend's tape recorder 'cause they needed to rehearse—and they *hocked it!*”

“Around that time I first heard a Hammond organ at this black club in New Rochelle called the Three Fours. There was an organ trio there, the Mighty Cravers: a Hammond, a drummer and a sax. Oh man, it took me to another plane of existence! This was phenomenal. All the music coming out of that box! I went there as many times as they'd let me in. Back then, those babies were expensive—still are. The only way I could get my hands on one was at Macy's—I used to take the train into Manhattan. The salesman knew what I was doing—after the third or fourth day, he said, ‘You're not gonna buy that thing, are you?’ But he let me stay there and fool around with it.”

“I went to Syracuse for a couple of years, going pre-med, really at my parents' behest. But I found as soon as I got there that there was no way you could be pre-med and a musician on the weekends. You just had to give one of them up, and it was an easy choice. There was no time to study! So I took a band from college and went to the Catskills to work, and then begged for a leave of absence after my sophomore year.”

Cavaliere led his college chums, now named the Escorts, into the sweaty dance dominions of New Jersey. “And that was where I met Eddie (Brigati, Rascals vocalist/percussionist), at this Jersey bar called the Choo Choo. Eddie was underage, but he was related in some way to the entire state of New Jersey, and he would come strolling in late Saturday night every time there was a new band, and he would somehow be asked to sing. He would go up onstage and literally *bury* whoever it was singing. Bury 'em. Fortunately with me in there, there was a little bit of a contest. It was a good night! All I remember was, he was very little, had the foulest mouth I had ever heard in my life, and he definitely could sing!

Around then I also met Dino (Danelli, drummer). He was from New Jersey, he had played with Lionel Hampton and all these R&B guys, and he came up from New Orleans with a group called Ronnie Speakes & the Elrods—they were a bit like the Band. He just blew me away! He's got a gift. He has no knowledge of whatever he's doing, I'm convinced, but he has a natural talent that is so exciting to play with.

“It was rough working in the clubs, even then, sustaining a living. I was literally going back to college when I got scouted by the Joey Dee organization.” Dee, riding high with “The Peppermint Twist,” asked Young Felix to replace his departing organist in the Starlighters. Cue culture shock.

“One of the first things I did with Joey Dee was his 1962 European tour—we opened for the Beatles. There I was, about nineteen, and all of a sudden here are the first people with long hair I'd ever seen, kids going absolutely bananas, doing things I don't know if your readers are ready for...what



Rascals '65: Dino Danelli, Felix, Eddie Brigati & Gene Cornish.

club called the Barge into the thick of chart battle? What were the bewildering factors that lost the Rascals their audience and ultimately their unity? Was it really true that the moment they decided not to be Young anymore, their audience went elsewhere? And most importantly, who was the musical dynamo that made so much of this happen, and has his later work been fully heard or evaluated?

Felix Cavaliere has in fact made six albums since the original Rascals split up, the last one only three years ago. His present activity can't really be called a comeback, since he's never dropped out of playing and writing, only out of the politics of getting it heard. Is Felix a viable commodity in 1985? Well, his original Rascals vision of a real marriage of white and black music—of all kinds, not just pop—is still miles ahead of the very limited, compromised thing that today we call “crossover.” As a solo artist, Cavaliere has also served as a window on the future—a statistically significant number of musical ideas in 70s and 80s R&B, from Tower of Power big band charge to Average White Band funk to heavy guitar-R&B—even disco—appear before their time in Cavaliere's work. “The story of my life....,” he laughs ruefully but not boastfully.

Felix Cavaliere was born in 1942 and grew up in an upper middle-class home in Pelham, New York, a suburb of New York City. “My father was—is—a dentist, my mother was a pharmacist. My mother wanted me to be a classical pianist and so I had three lessons a week from the time I was six. That's a little heavy for a young kid! She passed away when I was fourteen, and that's when I literally stopped. Before that I



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*Gordon Baird, Publisher, Musician Magazine*

is still valid today. Their philosophy is based on jazz: yeah, it's okay to put layers of overdubs on, but first you gotta make it happen in that room. They always had a live feeling in that studio. You get the guys together and play, let the vocalist sing to inspire them, and you get that magic take. Then you carefully add to it without subtracting anything. I still do it that way."

The Young Rascals' first single appeared in late 1965, Eddie's pouty rendition of a song Atlantic suggested, "I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore." It was an East Coast megahit and scraped the low fifties nationwide. Their

**"It was like being freed from the ties that bind. We decided to really stretch out, but probably went too far."**

eponymous debut album was unleashed at the beginning of 1966, a swirling, thundering assault of (mostly) inspired cover songs and motion plays. Felix's hyper-soul makeover of the Olympics' "Good Lovin'" went to #1 in a walk, and the big time had arrived. But for Atlantic, the group's own songwriting abilities remained unproven.

"We started to write, did two or three songs, and had limited success, even though those songs are some of my favorites: 'Come On Up,' 'You Better Run'.... 'Lonely Too Long' was the savior, because at this point the record company was saying, 'Well that's three you didn't hit top ten with.' If we had continued another fourth or fifth, we probably would've never been able to write, but at least we had three shots. I don't think they give kids today that many." The band's second LP *Collections* incorporated these now-classic originals into a pastiche of R&B covers and lounge chestnuts.

Though Felix had penned these early tunes alone, "I never really felt I was a good lyricist, so I asked Eddie to try and he came through. This is a lot like a fairy tale, a guy who all of a sudden became a lyricist. I would write the choruses and the music and give him the parameters—and I was pretty strict with the parameters. It was tough, like a crossword puzzle."

By 1967, Felix had had his coveted B-3 for two years and had wrung it dry. He soon de-emphasized it, using more acoustic piano, and even began writing on acoustic guitar to simplify his songs. He was also bouncing more arrangements off people like Arif Mardin. "The beauty of a man like Arif is that there is *no* music this man does not know. If you had an idea from Hindu raga, he could adapt it for you like *that*. I always used Arif for my sounding board—that was the producing team, he and I. Gene also contributed on production. And that team, that working together, is what really allowed a lot of things to happen. Arif was the Magic Razor." (A few years into the partnership, Cavaliere and Mardin actually started a production company called Mevlana, producing Laura Nyro's *Christmas And The Beads Of Sweat* album before Mardin was offered an Atlantic vice-presidency, swiftly ending the enterprise.)

Felix's relaxed, mature new direction was epitomized by the flawless pop gem, "Groovin'." "That song was the result of a romantic situation I was involved with. Normal people work Monday through Friday, and us musicians work the weekends. So the only time to be together with your loved one is Sunday afternoon." The song held the #1 spot for a month in May, 1967, with "How Can I Be Sure?" and "A Girl Like You" securing the album's cachet as one of the decade's pop masterpieces. But the decidedly experimental character of much

of *Groovin'* made Atlantic nervous.

"As we would do different things that took us away from what we'd had success with, the company would say, 'If you do that, you're going to lose all that audience. You're an R&B-based rock band—why are you going to do this ballad, why are you taking the drums out?' We had congas and no drum on 'Groovin'.' Nobody did that. But it was important to us to explore, to try and find something."

The band now embarked on an ambitious thematic album, *Once Upon A Dream*, inspired by *Sgt. Pepper's*. Laden with a full orchestra, the LP managed some solid tunes, but bogged down in its overblown theme and stylistic smorgasbord. Much of the LP was sung (or narrated) by Eddie Brigati, and it represented the high water mark of his contribution. *Once Upon A Dream* was debuted with full orchestra at Madison Square Garden, and Cavaliere sensed they had possibly gone too far. "It was a little bit of a departure, and the audience...it was a gold album, but it didn't get that tremendous acceptance the rock stuff did. The audience can't help it, because they want to hear what they think you are. There were rumblings going on: 'Hey, what happened to these guys, they're using strings, they're using horns.'"

The band restored their commercial credibility with "It's A Beautiful Morning" in early 1968, but subtle forces were beginning to split the Rascals asunder. One of these was their frantic pace: they'd done four albums in two years, toured constantly, and the band was getting tired. "We worked hard. We went in there and did it and did it and did it, and finally a couple of us said, 'Hey, hold it a second here. I thought they outlawed this stuff.' Plus I had a little run-in with the IRS: I couldn't *believe* that those suckers were taking almost eighty percent of the money I was earning. After all, we were in the 60s, and we were entitled to be what we were...so me and a couple of friends took off and went to Mexico for a few months. I said, 'See ya later, rock 'n' roll business, 'cause this wasn't the reason I got into it.'"

"I was becoming very interested in yoga. You have to make a decision in your life: What's important? I had enough money at that time—I thought—to live the rest of my life, and I wanted to do something very spiritual. I decided to get off the boat, and to make sure I got my health and spiritual life organized because I suddenly saw there was nobody around there giving a damn about me after my last record was sold!" With Cavaliere on the lam, the remaining Rascals undertook a little-known enterprise: they attempted to record an album without him (possibly indignant at Sid Bernstein's perceptible panic): "I'd rather not go into that, because that gets embarrassing, but I know they tried. Sort of like when the cat's away, the mice will play. And they came up dry. It was not good for their egos, not good for the team. I think that caused a lot of trouble."

Cavaliere nonetheless returned to work and found himself playing in Jamaica when he heard about Robert Kennedy's assassination. "I was involved with Bobby Kennedy, we were helping him with his campaign. That was a blow, a big blow, both that and Martin Luther King's assassination. So I wrote 'People Got To Be Free,' one of the first songs I got totally involved with the lyrics. And the record company went crazy: 'Don't put this out—it'll start a lot of trouble. You're stepping into territory you shouldn't!' That was #1, and it was #1 in a lot of very interesting places: Hong Kong, with the Chinese right around the corner, West Berlin... very interesting." The song became the centerpiece of the two-record *Freedom Suite*, marked by more solo Felix Cavaliere song credits. He was now moving through Caribbean and Latin rhythms, old gospel and a much more rootsy R&B style—his classic "Heaven" clearly anticipates Van Morrison. Felix was also assuming the mantle of preacher, leading his flock to the promised land. But the main body of the 60s audience was by this time rallying to a different religion, the cult of heavy guitar.

"We had a big deficiency; guitar was starting to play a big role, and we just did not have a Jimmy Page, a Clapton or a





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World Radio History

Hendrix. I remember them coming in—a lot of those groups were on Atlantic. You could see, you didn't have to be any kind of a genius to see we needed someone like that. Didn't happen. What was Gene thinking about all this? He *wasn't* thinking, that was the problem. He was a star, he bought a Rolls Royce, hanging around with models, dropping that money down on the bars at night. But those first couple of years are crucial, because when you put that guitar down, you're dead. He wasn't playing, or even practicing. In the beginning he was not a bad guitarist, but after he became a star the music just went to pot. He *blew* it. Guys like Leslie West who were kids in those days, who Gene showed how to tune a guitar, were now laughing at him!

"And Eddie was now beginning to get a bit shaky. He was having very big problems in life, having trouble coping with who he was and what we were. And he was also getting frustrated with his own reduced contribution. But there were other, trivial things that came into play: For example, he was deathly afraid of flying. We had logged so many thousands of miles that it finally came to a point where he couldn't take any more—he said the odds were going down and he was going to die. Things like that were entering his brain—it would take someone with a degree to really explain it.

"As for myself, I had found something—yoga—that I felt was more important, even than the music. It caused a lot of problems, 'cause now I'm really in outer space; as far as the material world, it wasn't even there anymore. I was also getting more recognition than the other guys and jealousy was causing problems. We were going through tremendous internal trauma.

"The only guy I have to say didn't cause us any problems at all was Dino. He'd just say, 'Give me my sticks, tell me what time to be there and we'll work and stop all this nonsense with the gods and the drugs and the egos,' 'cause all he wanted to do was play. Over the years he'd become a brilliant artist, a

painter and a sculptor. He was in charge of our album covers. He was the least trouble of any of us, no doubt about it."

"We were just not being steered properly by our management. We would go back and play the same places we'd worked year after year, Minnesota, Wisconsin.... God, we *did* that already, let's do something else. And the audiences then and now want to hear the hits. It was tough to experiment in front of them—most of our experimentation was done in the studio. Boy, I tell you, when a band is not getting along, it doesn't take more than two songs before an audience knows it. Especially with a four-piece band; it was just so intimate.

"We caused a lot of trouble on our tours, hurt our attendance because I wanted to have black people come to our shows. I passed an edict that said the Rascals would not work unless there's a black act on the bill. Oh my God.... Again, another business blunder! Down South that didn't go over too well. We lost a lot of money—and did something that I'm proud of.

"Our manager couldn't control us. Literally, he didn't know what was going on, he didn't know how to cope with the fame, the success. He was an agent who brought the Beatles over and he loved to eat. All of a sudden he had this gigantic rock 'n' roll band on his hands, and he didn't know what to do. He didn't want to get us *mad* at him! See, I can laugh about that. I'm still friends with Sid, had dinner with him the other night. But some of the other guys would like to KILL him. There is a tragedy to the Rascals, and it is the business and management. What do you do with a band that has hit after hit after hit? Do you just keep 'em out on the circuit and traveling? All Sid knew how to do was book us. We never got to the next level, the TV specials, the films.

"Now the intelligent thing to do at that point would've been for someone to say, 'Hey, hold it! You guys are about to break up and ruin everything. Let's take a six-month hiatus. Don't

*continued on page 92*

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## JOHN SCOFIELD: DETOURS &amp; DECOYS

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By Josef Woodard

**D**on't expect strict parochial punctuation out of John Scofield. If guitar solos were essays, his would be peppered with rebel grammar and stray footnotes, tinged by a poetic essence that resists having periods and commas in their proper place. And it is Scofield's innate feel for the oblique statement that has helped put him at the forefront of modern jazz guitar. His best solos are secret passageways that undercut your expectations, like the films of Martin Scorsese or the music of Miles Davis, Scofield's current musical supervisor. He's a guitar hero who understands that the most rewarding route between two points is not a straight line at all—it's the detour.

And that sense of serendipitous detouring colors Scofield's life, from the syncopated rhythm of his career to the nuts and bolts nature of his musical ideas. Just listen to his fervent playing on Miles' *Decoy*, or, to a more compositional end, his Gramavision debut, *Electric Outlet*, or the warped "straight-ahead" stuff on his duet with John Abercrombie, *Solar*, on Palo Alto Jazz—three views of Scofield circa 1984. He has a distinct way of nudging and kneading, rather than lashing, the notes out of his Ibanez Artist guitar. His phrasing tends to slither rather than stalk or stomp; his riffs wrap their tentacles around the musical organism with a sly, subtle logic.

Scofield's is a thoroughly modern style—at once introspective and biting, progressive in tone while paying due respect to the motherlode of the blues. Though steeped in the lessons of rock 'n' roll, soul, and even a dose of country, Scofield knows full well from whence he comes: "The blues, yeah, that's the greatest invention in the twentieth century, I think."

Recognition, accordingly, has come behind the beat for Scofield. Although he is only now firmly entrenched in the jazz recording world, predictions of his artistic significance date back a decade, when he first gained national visibility playing in the Billy Cobham/



*The art of process: Scofield ponders an immaculate conception.*

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

George Duke band. Proclamations in print and on the street suggested that Scofield was a "new kid in town," a guitarist to watch. In the meantime though, John dodged the easy fusion groove that would have insured him greater exposure at the time. "Even though Billy Cobham's band was really a big headlining rock 'n' roll act, I sorta didn't want to do that kind of music," he recalls, nursing an iced coffee at a noontime interview. "I really wanted to be in New York playing with the guys here. The cats."

Scofield circulated among the upper echelon of Gotham jazz greats, doing work with Charles Mingus, Lee Konitz, Tony Williams, Ron Carter and other brief stints before forming a sort of lyrical post-bop trio with bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Adam Nussbaum—a sensation in Europe, with two Enja records and an Arista/Novus release to document the group. But

Scofield got his big break over two years ago when the main cat happened to see him playing at the 7th Avenue South with Dave Liebman. Miles, ever the nighthawk looking for fresh talent, felt musical simpatia and brought Scofield in to fill the guitar chair.

Ironically, the *new kid in town* tag came rushing back; Scofield was suddenly guitar's Great White Hope yet again. In music, there is such a thing as second childhood.

He couldn't have asked for a better scenario. Miles has always been one of Scofield's favorite musicians, "Maybe my favorite, at the moment anyway," he grins. "I've played in so many bands that try to copy Miles. His concept is really one that's been picked up on around the world—his way of just letting a passage or an idea create itself, letting it evolve until he feels it's peaked and then he makes it go somewhere else. When he has a piece it can be a



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Street." But on television, he was seeing the multiple guitar hoedown of *Hoote-nanny*, and the likes of Ricky Nelson and the Kingston Trio. Then, he didn't know Wes Montgomery from Adam. In 1963, the Beatles hit the states, and a star-struck eleven-year-old Scofield got his first guitar.

Jazz entered Scofield's musical purview through his teacher, Alan Dean, who bequeathed on his pupil reading ability and a bebop obsession. "We would come into New York sometimes and hear Jim Hall and Wes in the mid-60s. I had another friend who was a jazz fan too. It seemed we were the only jazz fans in Connecticut," he laughs. Scofield feels he got a well-rounded initia-

tion into the jazz/blues/rock dialect he deals with by virtue of having open ears at a ripe point in history. "I think when Jim Hall started playing, he was probably listening to Duke Ellington and Count Basie and George Barnes and Les Paul when he was really little—not so much the blues thing," Scofield ventures. "But when I started out I was listening to Chuck Berry and B.B. King, and that led to jazz and later McLaughlin and Coryell. I just hopped in there."

After honing his technique at Berklee in Boston, Scofield began gigging in New York, frequently picking up on work behind increasingly active fellow Connecticutian John Abercrombie. When Abercrombie left his post with Cobham,

Scofield was the shoe-in. Although he never quite earned honors as a bonafide guitar *wunderkind* during the two-year stint in the mid-70s, Scofield—even then—was doing Lester Young-inspired, serpentine phrasing.

Scofield has always tuned his ear to horn players to escape guitaristic myopia. "I try to think compositionally as far as the sound goes, as opposed to just jamming. I always listen to horn players, to just *music*. You can't just stay on your instrument, you know. All the good players cop from other instruments. Maybe that was a conscious thing, but also I mean as far as great music goes, there certainly is a lot more than just the guitar." Scofield now has the exalted privilege of sharing the stage with the Man With the Horn, whose records the guitarist has pored over. "I think Gil Evans was telling me—Miles knows how to play a lot of notes. He'll use that sometimes and that makes it all the more powerful when he does. But with Miles, the swing in his playing is always there, the swing feel—whatever the hell it is—feels good, you know. You hear this thing in rock 'n' roll too. When you listen to the Meters or James Brown, there's a lot of swing in that. It's really inseparable from what basically makes for great music."

Despite the fact that Scofield is now firmly planted on the scene and has a stylistic voice in full swing, he feels the pangs of a late bloomer, though plenty of listeners would beg to differ. "I feel like I'm a slow developer to a certain extent," he confides. "Other players sort of arrived fully constructed. Pat Metheny arrived with a concept; he played like he does now when I knew him in Boston. Ralph Towner—although Ralph was a lot older when he showed up—was really *there*. When I was playing with Billy (Cobham) and up until a few years ago I really felt like I was *searching*, but now I feel like I've got a thing. Whatever it's worth, at least it's there."

"Which is the whole thing, like Chet Baker said, 'If you don't have a conception, you have a misconception.' I think that's a great little rhyme. That's what instrumental music and improvisation need: conceptions." Conceptions and a flair for artful detours. ☐

#### PROCESS SERVERS

John Scofield plays an Ibanez Artist Series axe, occasionally supplemented by a Strat-copy Roadstar. He prefers to rent his amps on tour, using two to get stereo; Roland JC-120s, Music Mans and Yamahas are what he looks for. At home he plays through PolyTones. His effects are mostly Ibanez: a stereo chorus, Tube Screamer, HD-1000 harmonizer/delay and a compressor. He also uses a Boss digital delay pedal and an Octaver. His strings are Ernie Ball, D'Angelico and Gibson; favored gauges are .011, .013, .017, .026, .036 and .046.

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# J.R. ROBINSON'S FAST BREAK



*"Hmmm...Michael Jackson at noon, Kenny Loggins at two, Streisand at five. Can I make time for Lionel?"*

## From Rags to Rufus to West Coast Session Riches

By David Levine

**T**hey say that life sometimes imitates art. But John Robinson is one artist whose life imitates sport. At the same time he was learning the skills that would ultimately make him one of the busiest drummers in Los Angeles, John was putting in plenty of time on the basketball courts in his hometown of Creston, Iowa. For a while he even seriously considered pursuing a basketball career, and even though he did pick music, there's plenty of dribble drive in his drumming. John's an in-your-face kind of player who'd never take an easy lay-up when he can slam. He's an admitted hot dog who can hit from anywhere on the floor, yet his infec-

tiously pulsating, perfectly placed back beat on numerous gold records has proven that he's also a team player who knows when to pass. The Boston-to-L.A. fastbreak he executed probably owes more to those pick-up games at the park than the solitary hours spent in the practice room.

Once the decision to stick to drumming had been made John checked into Boston's Berklee School of Music, where his teachers were Ed Soph, Alan Dawson and Gary Chaffee; his classmates included Steve Smith and Vinnie Colaiuta. After spending four years in school and a few more in the Boston area John joined a top forty band called Shelter. In 1978 the band was booked for a month at The Rare Cherry in Cleveland.

"One night Rufus and Chaka Khan came into the club," recalls John. "I was really excited but I tried to relax, not overplay, be myself. At the end of the second show Hawk (David Wolinski, keyboards) and Bobby Watson (bass) came up and invited me to their soundcheck the next day to audition for the

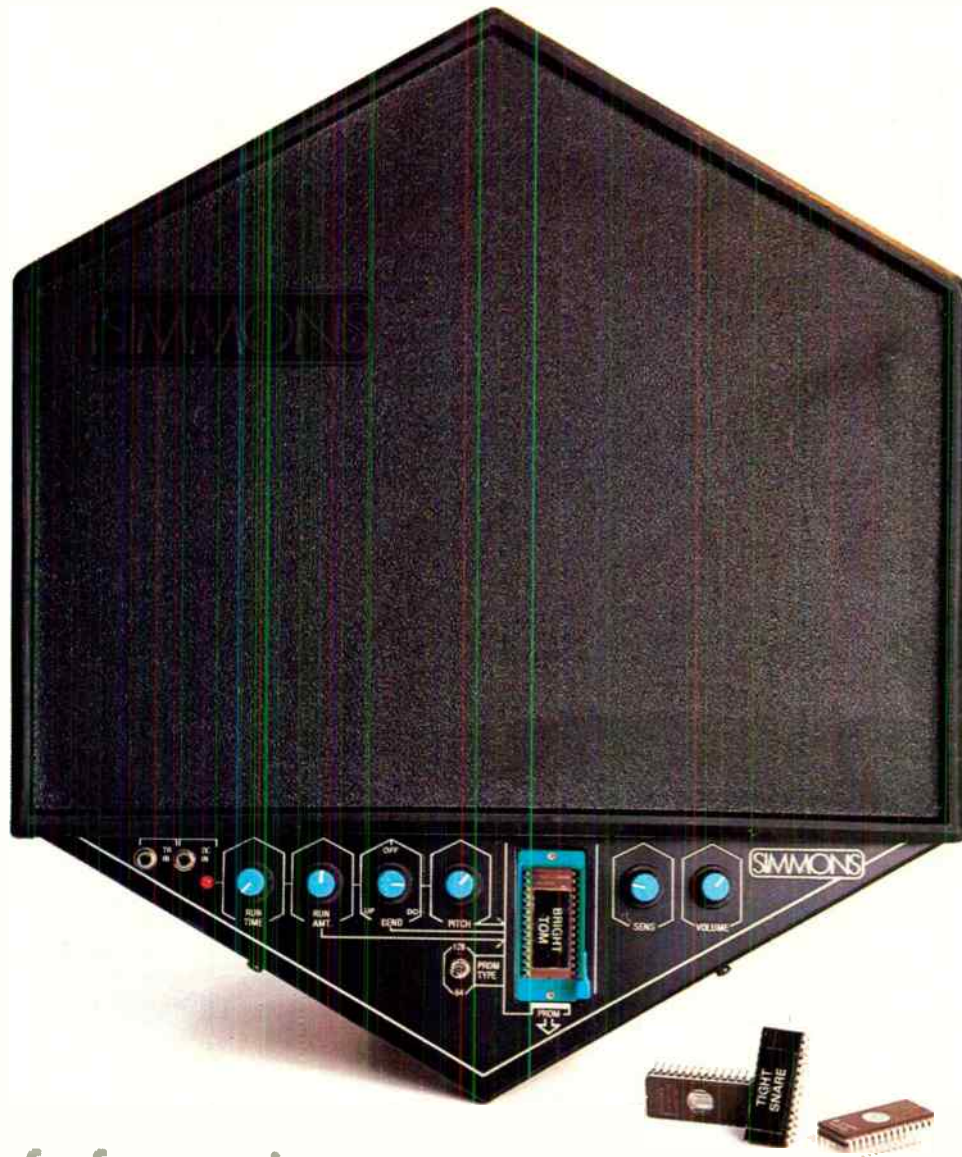
band." John not only got the gig, but within a month he and his wife had moved from Boston to L.A. where Rufus, Chaka and Quincy Jones were to begin work on *Masterjam*. The break was on.

"I remember I first met John Robinson in 1979 when I was getting ready to produce an album with Rufus and Chaka Khan," says Quincy Jones. "The managers of the act told me that a new drummer had just come into the band but if I was inclined to use someone else it would be okay. Wanting to give a young musician the benefit of the doubt, I asked for a copy of a tape with John's playing on it. My response was that he sounded pretty good—bring him into the studio. To embellish the old statement, 'One look was all it took,' one sound and I was turned around."

"It was Quincy who started calling me JR," John says, also remembering the initial Rufus dates. "Then, one night after we were done recording, Quincy said, 'Hey, JR, do you do sessions?' Without thinking I said, 'Sure!' He hired me to do some overdubs on a couple of tunes for the Michael Jackson record he



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was working on and I nailed them. Quincy then asked me if I was busy the following week. That's when we did 'Don't Stop Till You Get Enough,' 'Rock With You' and 'Off The Wall.' From there it just kept on."

The amazing fast break completed, John kept right on runnin' and gunnin'—hitting on shots like "A Penny For Your Thoughts" (Tavares), "Give Me The Night" (George Benson), "Just Once" (James Ingram), "Slow Hand" (The Pointer Sisters), "Never Gonna Let You Go" (Sergio Mendes) and "Spice Of Life" (Manhattan Transfer). In the past few months he's worked on potential hit tracks for Kenny Rogers, Kenny Loggins, Neil Diamond and Barbra

Streisand. It's just as well that this year's Rufus/Chaka Khan tour never materialized: due to his demanding recording schedule John had already turned down offers to go out with Simon & Garfunkel, George Benson, Stanley Clarke/George Duke and Lionel Richie.

In many ways the reasons for JR's success are not dissimilar from those that have enabled other drummers to buy expensive hillside Los Angeles real estate. John has the comfortable time feel of a Jeff Porcaro, the unique sense of style of a Jim Keltner, the impeccable taste of a Harvey Mason and the certified hit mentality and lyrical empathy of a Hal Blaine. Yet, in addition to these attributes, John has a distinctive sound

and a concept of drumming that always understates a self-designed, incredibly funky groove.

"Lionel Richie is usually pretty deliberate," John says. "But, for 'All Night Long' he didn't say anything about drum patterns or grooves. I just came up with those patterns myself after two days of rehearsals. Quincy Jones is another producer who lets me do my own thing. If I get too busy all Quincy will say is, 'JR, you're dancin' too much.' It's always seemed like I've been able to get away with being busier than what you'd think I should be."

In Jermaine Jackson's "Tell Me I'm Not Dreaming" the "mideastern rock" groove was suggested by producer Michael Omartian but the sixteenth-note anticipation of the downbeat is characteristic of John's playing. It's the kind of thing that could easily kill a groove but in this case it fits right in the pocket. As a matter of fact, sometimes John hears drum parts that are so busy that they have to be pieced together track by track; much like a single string player would record an entire four-voice string section. This orchestrated, percussion section approach to laying down a drum track has met with mixed response from JR's contemporaries.

"Sometimes drummers will put me down for cheating. It's not cheating. Just playing bass drum, snare drum and high-hat all the time is bullshit. In the studio you can play it any way you want to play it. You can do whatever you want to do; whatever you can imagine. On 'Ai No Corrida' there were six or seven different drum parts including an intricate cymbal pattern between the ride, two crashes and a swish. On 'Ain't Nobody' (Rufus' 1979 Grammy winner) I recorded the snare and bass drum groove pattern first and then I over-dubbed a drum machine-like high-hat pattern. On one of the new Commodores tunes we used the high-hat from a Roland 808 with acoustic snare and toms added to it. The bottom line is to play the music. That's what matters."

John admits, however, that no matter how busy the part is, no matter how complicated the pattern ends up, it all starts with the simple backbeat/downbeat, snare drum/bass drum, formula. To create what he considers to be his trademark, John uses a 24-inch Yamaha bass drum, coated Ambassadors and a square, wood Promark beater on his Caroline/ASBA pedal along with a custom-made 9-inch deep Yamaha snare with a coated Ambassador on top, which is played dead center; "I don't play rimshots."

The rest of John's equipment includes 12-, 13-, 16- or 12-, 14-, 16-inch standard depth Yamaha toms (also with coated Ambassadors) or three Sim-

*continued on page 92*

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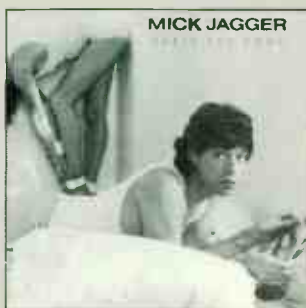
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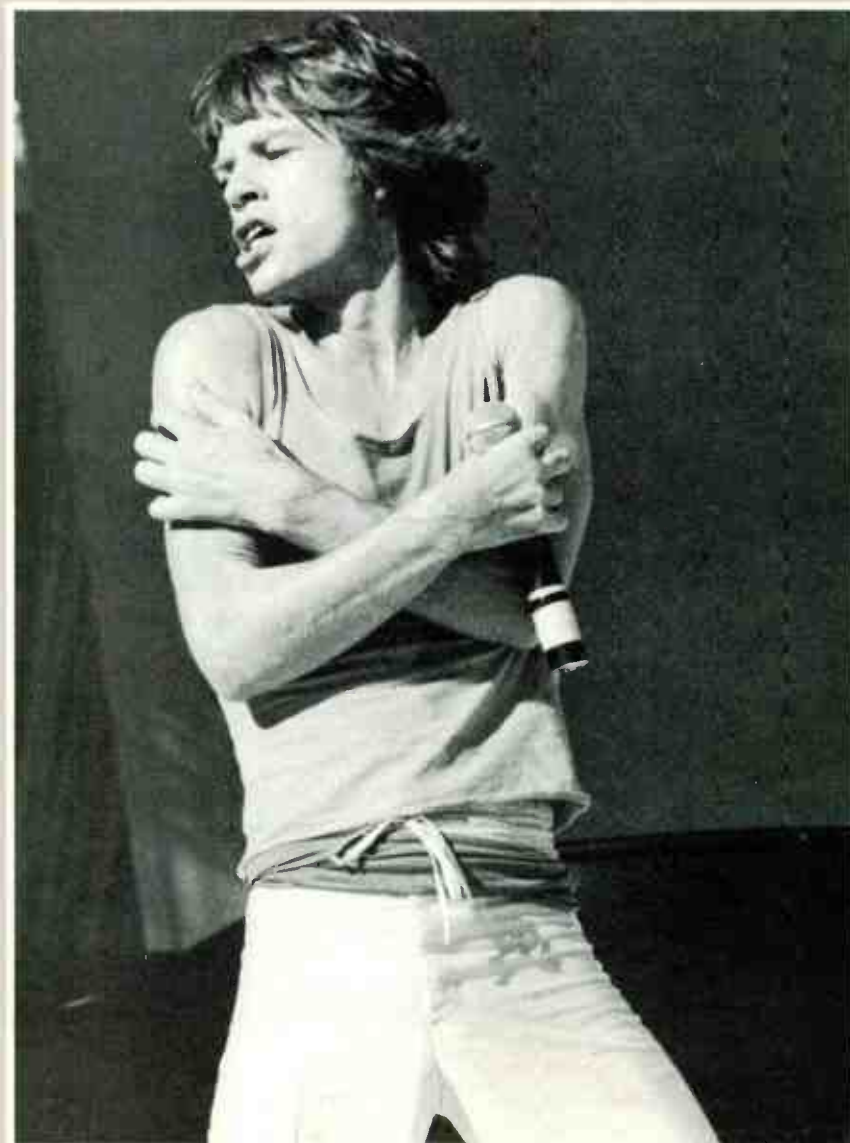


MICK JAGGER

*She's The Boss*  
(Columbia)

**I**t's hard to imagine a record which better highlights the singular contributions of one Rolling Stone—too bad it's Keith Richards. Without his alter ego's crunching chord patterns, Berryish rhythmic swing and in-your-face four bar hooks, Mick Jagger's *She's The Boss* remains a blues-rock LP, but one whose overall conception often seems as unfocused as the shot of middle-aged Mick on the album's cover.

The problem is not one of commitment: though Jagger's voice does occasionally sound reedy and less suited to urban funk riffs than, say, Peter Wolf's on *Lights Out*, Jagger recoups with a grab bag full of vocal tricks and subtle inflections: on the otherwise forgettable "Turn The Girl Loose," for instance, he prances from a falsetto to a guttural blues croak to a swaggering street rap. Indeed, Mick sounds far more involved



LARRY HULST/RETNA

with his material here than on any Stones album since *Some Girls*, though its themes, typically devoted to his foibles with women, are hardly more profound.

Nor does Jagger sound dated; with inherent shrewdness he's divided production chores between reigning groovemeister Nile Rodgers and funk-tech architect Bill Laswell. Both have created flashy, state-of-the-art artifices which either show off their own strengths (Rodgers' lean, silky grooves) or that of hot shot sessioneers like Herbie Hancock, Sly and Robbie, and particularly Jeff Beck, whose acoustic solo on "Just Another Night" and biting electric fills on the title track and "Lucky In Love" pretty much steal away the show.

No way should Jagger have to match these guys chop for chop, and yet, lacking songs with any real melodic fiber and/or provocative lyricism (cf. "Memo From Turner," the masterpiece from his quasi-solo effort *Performance*), Jagger has little choice but to try. High points include the title track, which plays off Mick's stud persona with some refreshing humor, and "Running Out Of Luck," a Roxyish vamp with a nice shuffling vocal and a bluesy harmonica solo. The low point is easily Mick's nasal ballad "Hard Women," awash with enough strings to gag Mantovani. Finally, give *She's The Boss* an extra point for sincerity of purpose—despite the title, Jerry Hall doesn't play keyboards. — **Mark Rowland**





## JULIUS ARTHUR HEMPHILL & THE JAH BAND

*Georgia Blue*  
(Minor Music)

**T**hey say the river banks used to flood this time of year, making fertile the alluvial shore. No more. Been dammed upstream or so I hear, now the waters only come when they let go the sluice. Does any memory linger, of a time before digital bits, production trips, drum machines and man-made streams? Lost tribes of Israel, Dogon cliff dwellers, Viking explorers, nowhere left to sail... but I'll go backwards please Mr. Postman, tell Madonna the news, to that deep blue backwoods pool the river first knew when life began.

Tall, swaggering and bemused, with the wry humor of a marked card in a stacked deck, saxophonist Julius Arthur Hemphill had left his scent on the trail with the grandly raved (and lightly paid) World Saxophone Quartet. Yet while his fellow outlaws succeeded in their own group forays Hemphill's ensembles were oftentimes group gropes. Feeling around for the right chemistry and personnel, vigor supplanted elegant aqua-tinted dynamics; a frenetic uneasiness marked his own undeniably powerful, original alto flights as if, spotting a fine espresso-tinted filly in Sweetwaters, the mac man decided to forego foreplay and throw down right there in the hat check room without even removing her mink. No sixty-minute man he.

Ah, but here Hemphill has wrangled the diamond-hard discipline, calculated restraint and teasing tenderness to saddle his all-Texas virtuosity and probing, inquisitive writing.

*Georgia Blue* is "the boldest, most cinematic chiaroscuro of jazz, blues, electronics and the third world since Miles first ran the voodoo down" (Chip Stern, *Musician*). But Hemphill adds a genuine funk/bebop feeling without aligning himself to any stylistic genre. Buoyed by the power of his Teutonic Famous Flames (drummer Alex Cline, brother Niels Cline on guitar and bass guitarist Stuart Lebig) and ex-Hendrix/*Bitches Brew* collaborator Jumma San-

tos on congas and percussion, Hemphill reprises requested rifferamas ("The Hard Blues" and "Dogon A.D."), but where once sons of slaves and hunters roamed, now their descendants lurk amidst neon glitter and fusion shopping malls.

Like a good counterpuncher, Hemphill steps inside time and harmony with inverse syncopations and tongue-twisting polytonalities, mocking his own designs, licking his weight in saliva, launching Cat Anderson dog-whistle cries at the moon, bellowing into bottom land and marsh with Rollinsesque fervor. Alex Cline's handling of "Dogon"'s treacherous 11/16 funk is a revelation (probably the first rhythm section ever to play it right, and with such greasy swing), the rhythms circling and dancing around each other like a couple of wary yard dogs on their good foot, while Bobby "Blue" Bland manicures his nails on "The Hard Blues" watchin' Charlie Parker and Jimmy Reed lap up the dregs of busted gin bottles offa the roadhouse floor.

Off the dance floor and into the salon, the title tune is a velvety, boppish ballad, a song-without-words—adult contemporary in some better world—yet never condescending or bathetic. "Testament #5" is a darker, more apocalyptic study of the yearnings and gnawings of the humanistic soul, portrayed first as crisis, then acceptance, but with the bittersweet grace.

*Georgia Blue* is the real deal, a syncretistic breakthrough—no double-crossover this. Yahweh to go guys. JAH is good. (New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012.) — **Chip Stern**



## JOAN ARMATRADING

*Secret Secrets*  
(A&M)

**O**n her past few albums (*Me Myself I*, *Walk Under Ladders*), Joan Armatrading made tentative steps toward the pop radio mainstream. *Secret Secrets* completes this potentially disastrous journey with largely successful results. The synthesizer textures are as modern as the

latest New Order 12-inch, but with an emotional immediacy true to Armatrading's singer/songwriter roots.

The balance is at the heart of *Secret Secrets*. "I've had enough indifference!" Armatrading cries through a wall of synths in "Thinking Man"; even on these modern-sounding tracks, the arrangements revolve around her acoustic guitar. From the almost punky urgency of the title track to the smooth soul of "One Night," Armatrading and producer Mike Howlett use electronics as a fertile context for her tight, traditional songwriting.

The material justifies most qualms about Armatrading's embracing the new technology. Exhilarating music even offsets an occasional lapse into lyrical cliché. The most fully realized track, however, is "Love By You," in which Armatrading is accompanied only by Joe Jackson's soft piano. Lines like "Who on earth ever held me like you/ I'd like to see someone try" lend a simultaneously jarring and enchanting ambiguity to a superficially straightforward declaration of love.

A sellout? Hardly. *Secret Secrets* proves Armatrading can have it both ways. Now let's see if anyone buys it. — **Jimmy Guterman**



## THE BLUEBELLS

*Sisters*  
(Sire)

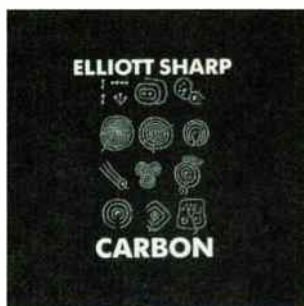
**S**cotland's Bluebells are adorable teddy bears with a winning quality missing from most British pop: naturalness. Where big brothers Elvis Costello and Difford & Tilbrook self-consciously wear influences like a heavy overcoat, Robert Hodgkins and crew bound through their music with the fervor of young colts. They've certainly got a sense of history, but it's irrelevant that "Cath" echoes "Maggie May," or "Will She Always Be Waiting" suggests Chad & Jeremy. This kind of spirit could make the want ads sound vital.

On paper, *Sisters* might seem to be a rudderless craft. Although the pleasingly callow vocals of Hodgkins and Kenneth McCluskey recall such harmony masters as the Hollies and Bee

Gees, the band doesn't have a sound per se. In the hands of producers Colin Fairley and Bob Andrews, the quintet ranges from the sunny urban cowboy strains of "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" (not the Connie Francis classic) to the anthemic roar of "South Atlantic Way." That leaves a lot of space—and no focus—in between.

The Bluebells don't care. After all, worrying about stylistic cohesion is what turned their elders into stiff. Instead, these bonny boys get straight to the guts of the surprisingly articulate material, skipping artsy oblique lyrics and pretentious arrangements. "South Atlantic Way" meets the militarist mentality head-on: "I was a raw recruit full of hope...When they said you're a hired killer now/ I thought my God, my God." On a more pleasant note, the confessional "Young At Heart" talks about learning to love your parents. It's enough to make a person blush!

The Bluebells are at that magic point where innocence and intelligence fuse. Whether they grow up and lose their glow, or find a way to stay forever young, *Sisters* is an album to cherish. — **Jon Young**



## ELLIOTT SHARP

*Carbon*  
(Zoar)

## BENJAMIN LEW & STEVEN BROWN

*Twelfth Day: Speech, Adornment, Love*  
(Original Music)

I get suspicious when artists go primitive—it always seems like slumming, or vacuousness. But borrowing, that's another matter; if the works aren't mimicry, then it's fine by me.

Elliott Sharp, a composer from New York's gutted Lower East Side, borrows. Not that it's possible to nail down any of his sources: as far as I know there isn't a specific tribe, or part of the delta, or whatever, where Sharp lifts the musical nuts and bolts of his compositions. What he's taken is much less tangible: Using tangles of saxophones, raw, overdriven guitars, and dense percussion overlays, he hints at the ritualistic power behind his primitive music.

There's an air of function to his compositions, as if they're more than just a backdrop to buying Wheaties, dancing, or driving around town.

"Geometry" opens *Carbon*, Sharp's newest record, with a clanging, industrial sounding guitar figure, soon joined by low-pitched drums repeating a complex, danceable rhythmic pattern. Sharp tunes his guitar to different mathematical formulas, and his solos, which can clank like radiators clubbed by pissed-off plumbers, have the randomness of a machine gone nuts. Sharp also plays saxophone, and on "Iso-," overdubbed saxophones stutter a short unaccompanied lick, then get bounced around by a drumchoir. The saxophones step into gutbucket World Saxophone Quartet riffing; pushed along by repeated melodies and spiraling saxophone lines, the piece metamorphoses into a jubilant stomp.

Where Sharp's compositions have a bombed-out, urban urgency, the tunes on Benjamin Lew and Steven Brown's *Twelfth Day: Speech, Adornment, Love* sound surreally pastoral. They borrow too, a bit more literally than Sharp, but the borrowings—from Arab Africa, mostly—are sublimated to the composers' intentions. Lew is a Belgian filmmaker, and he composes mood pieces, each emotionally discrete, that could easily be part of a movie soundtrack. Synthesizers softly wash over radio broadcasts on one track, and on another, long, writhing lute lines top repeated, sparse percussion. When their synthesizers approximate primitive instruments, Lew and Brown become artists subtly manipulating everyday material.

(Both records available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012) — **Peter Watrous**



## GEORGE RUSSELL ORCHESTRA

*The African Game*  
(Manhattan)

The reissue of *Ezz-thetics* last year marked the first time in years George Russell's name had appeared on an American

new release; he'd become one of jazz's forgotten men. Which is one reason why *The African Game* seems so revelatory, for nobody in jazz today writes with Russell's scope, feel for ensemble structure, or intellectual reach. Nobody in jazz writes like this, period.

To begin with, there's *The African Game*'s sheer enormity. This isn't a series of sketches knitted into a "suite," but a large scale, unified structure boasting an almost narrative cohesiveness. The piece is obviously linked to the music of Africa, but it isn't particularly folkloric; instead, Russell has absorbed African approaches to rhythm and melody into his own musical vocabulary, developing them on a quasi-symphonic scale. It's a gamble, but one that pays off handsomely, especially when Russell plays an Olu Bata (an African percussion battery) off against his other time-keepers to create a densely layered carpet of rhythm whose development echoes his melodic themes. Masterpiece may be too modest an accolade.

Russell's ensemble of mostly unknowns handles his score with deft precision, warmly filling out the thick, lush harmonies and easily managing the shifts in dynamics and tempo. There isn't much room for great solo spots here, though tenor saxophonist George Garzone does pull off an impressively articulate bit of George Adams-style screaming. But such moments pale in comparison to the work's finale, in which overlapping themes and what sounds like massive collective improvisation coalesce with a roar, as if the entire ensemble had hit upon the answer with a shout of Eureka! It's hard not to share their sense of triumph. — **J.D. Considine**



## ALISON MOYET

*Alf*  
(Columbia)

It's not terribly surprising that Alison Moyet's first solo record sounds like a modern pop evocation of 60s soul—after all, that's what everyone else in England is doing. What's surprising is that it works. Moyet, best known for



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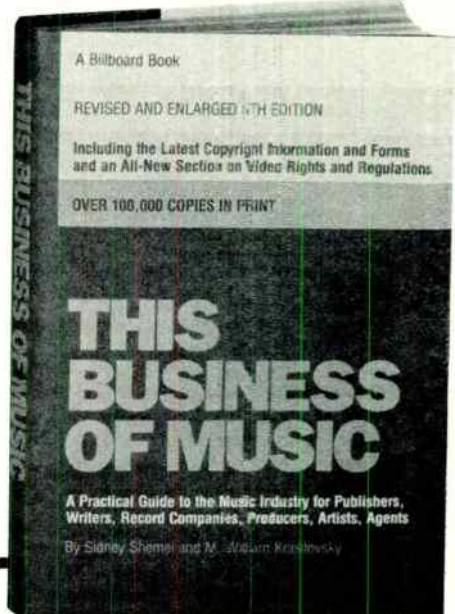
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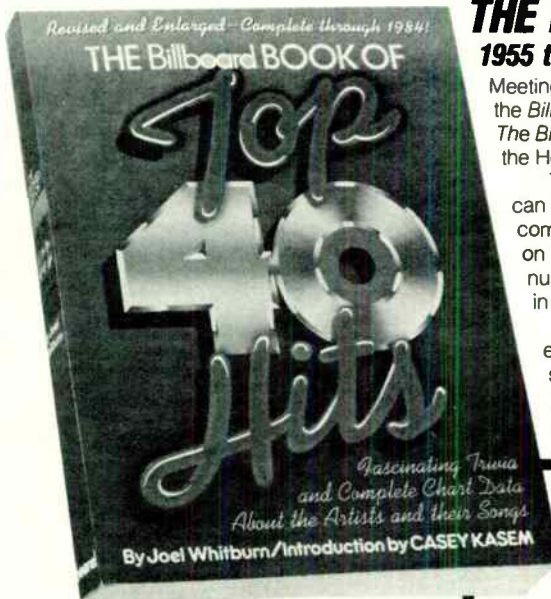
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fronting Vince Clark's spare, snakelike synthesizer configurations in Yazoo, here collaborates with the production team of Tony Swain and Steve Jolley, best known for *their* work with Spandau Ballet and Bananarama. The result is considerably more empathetic with her talents: Swain-Jolley's textures are warm and expansive, if occasionally rococo (a la Spandau) but the result is a rich, plush backdrop for Alison's earthy, frankly sensuous contralto.

Moyet's take on romance, evidently the *raison d'être* of all French singers, is also rooted in the soul tradition, which is to say at once terminally despondent and fiercely resilient. But she never exploits her powerful timbre or range unduly. A lover's lament like "Invisible" (written for her by Lamont Dozier) could easily be pumped into Vegasy bombast by a less discerning or disciplined singer; instead Moyet's constraint turns it into a ballad of heartbreaking poignance. "Love Resurrection" and "Honey For The Bees" are more up-tempo, a pair of sexual come-ons which build slowly and steadily before climaxing with rollicking vocal choruses, all the while infused with Moyet's underlying sense of romantic desperation.

Word has it Columbia is literally banking on Moyet's talent by investing large sums of moola into her career; this record is an impressive first dividend. —

**Mark Rowland**



## RUN-D.M.C.

*King Of Rock*  
(Profile)

A reporter once jokingly asked Muhammad Ali if his retirement would spell the end of boxing. Instead of turning the question into grist for his own humor mill, the original rapper seriously predicted that the sweet science would outlast its competition. "All boxing needs," Ali pointed out, "is two guys in an alley."

Rap will probably be here for a long time too, for exactly the same reason. When punkers tried to snatch rock back from middle-American complacency and return it to amateurs, they failed because the music still needed instru-

ments and sound systems. All rap requires is two guys in an alley.

But mastery breeds the desire for sophistication, and today's most popular rappers, like Whodini, Fat Boys and Run-D.M.C. are forced by their own success (and the album format) to come up with something other than mowin'-down-the-sucker-MCs-at-80-beats-per-minute. For Whodini it's slicker, comparatively ornate arrangements; for Fat Boys it's novelty tunes. Run-D.M.C. are the hardest-rocking of rappers because they recognize that AC/DC ain't nothin' but a throwdown.

The upshot is the preservation of rap's rawest elements. When the duo traded in stock synth fills for the screaming guitar of Eddie Martinez on last year's "Rock Box," they had the first rap 'n' roll record, one that celebrated the toaster tradition while breaking into the domain of heavy metal rockers. But "King Of Rock" is handicapped by Run-D.M.C.'s ability to codify serendipity: the rap's originality is undermined by the rhythmic familiarity of "You Talk Too Much" and "It's Not Funny," which owe much to earlier tunes "It's Like That" and "Thirty Days." An ambitious collaboration with Yellowman on "Roots, Rap, Reggae" falls flat because the separately recorded raps offer no interplay. And in these post-"Rockit" days the group's instrumental "Krush-Groove" signature sounds just plain rinky-dink.

All is forgiven though, since "Can You Rock It Like This" and the title track continue to dig the vein struck with "Rock Box," while the opening "Rock The House" is an anthemic call-to-arms on the order of Queen's "We Will Rock You." Run-D.M.C. may not play with the metal-heads in the suburbs, but they should. After all, they put the music where it belongs—back in the alley. —

**Fred Goodman**



## JESSE JOHNSON

*Jesse Johnson*  
(A&M)

When a guitarist makes his reputation in Minneapolis, proceeds to write the hottest tune on the most recent Time



LP ("Jungle Love"), plays his ass off on Sheila E.'s *The Glamorous Life*, and every instrument on his solo debut, you half-expect the result to sound like Prince. In that respect, Jesse Johnson does not disappoint. The best songs here, like "She Won't Let You Go" and "Just Too Much," meld chicken-scratch funk guitar, shimmying syn-drum dance beats and deftly percussive keyboard fills into a sound of decidedly purple patina. But Jesse, who also wrote the best tune on Janet Jackson's last record, sounds like he's lately been spending more time in L.A.; his airbrushed tenor glides over the music in a manner more suggestive of Ray Parker Jr. than Prince, and his lyrics are more parts love than lust. Johnson shows enough of a knack for catchy dance signatures to make you look forward to future efforts, but for all its craft this one never quite catches fire. Next time let's go crazy? — **Mark Rowland**

## HANK WILLIAMS

*Rare Takes And Radio Cuts*

## GEORGE JONES

*George Jones Salutes Hank Williams*  
(Mercury)

## HANK WILLIAMS

*Rare Takes And Radio Cuts*  
(Polydor)

In a peak performance George Jones is not only country's ultimate stylist, but also one of modern music's truly great vocalists. His reputation rests on both incredible techniques and eerie, intense emotionalism. He's a country correspondent from the Twilight Zone; perhaps no singer since Billie Holiday has so chillingly conveyed the lower depths of gloom, despair and torment.

The album at hand, however, finds Jones in an early stage of derivative development. Just as Ray Charles' early efforts were studious copies of Nat "King" Cole, here Jones is simply imitating Hank Williams. There are none of the whoops and hollers, sudden falsettos, throaty growls, or suspenseful phrasings which have since become Jones' trademarks. While "Howlin' At The Moon" and "Honky Tonkin" hint at greatness to come, most of the set is flat

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and stiff, with equally mechanical accompaniment. (Elvis Costello's gushing liner notes are misplaced here, though an apt tribute to Jones' music in general.) To hear Jones at full strength, check out such recent hits as "Still Doin' Time," "If Drinkin' Don't Kill Me" and "Yesterday's Wine" (Epic), or Rounder's haunting re-issue compilation, "Heartaches And Hangovers."

The Hank Williams set is far more enjoyable. The rare takes are alternate versions of hits such as "Honky Tonkin'," "Honky Tonk Blues" and "My Son Calls Another Man Daddy." MGM's original decision to not release them was valid, due to vocal flaws, but Williams' performance is consistently soulful. In addition to Don Helms' brilliant steel guitar work there are some interesting instrumental experiments: a western swing piano solo on "I'd Still Want You," and a jug-band-style string-bass break on "Honky Tonk Blues." Merle Haggard is the only current country star whose band stretches out comparably.

The radio cuts are even livelier, particularly a forceful "Mind Your Own Business" and a poignant reading of "Lovesick Blues." Williams' solo treatment of "The Little Paper Boy" recalls Woody Guthrie's "Dust Bowl Ballads." The broadcasts also feature some charming informal patter, as when Will-

iams agrees to play a request "if my tonsils don't backfire." Though nothing here equals such chilling classics as "Ramblin' Man" or "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," this worthwhile set's appeal is not limited to serious collectors.

— Ben Sandmel



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

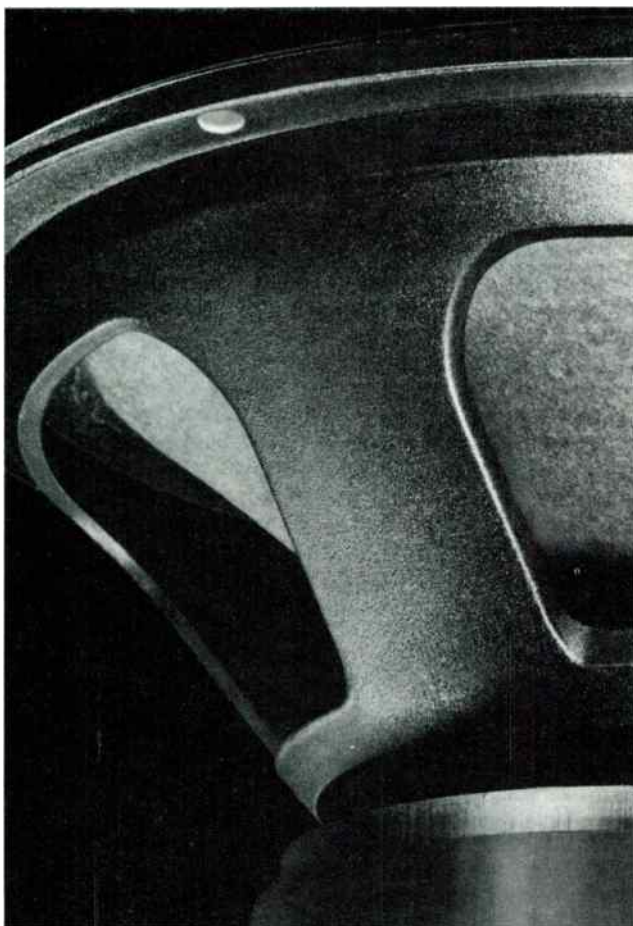
*Conjure: Music For The Texts  
Of Ishmael Reed*  
(American Clavé Records)

**J**azz is not a producer's idiom: the few exceptions bring their own compositions or concept to a session of personally selected players. Kip Hanrahan is such a producer, and although you have to look hard to find his name on *Conjure*, it is

very much his album.

Hanrahan's previous *Coup De Tete* and *Desire Develops An Edge* LPs brought together a wide range of players from Jack Bruce to Chico Freeman to Daniel Ponce, and managed to incorporate jazz, Latin and experimental styles into a seamless amalgam. On *Conjure: Music For The Texts Of Ishmael Reed*, Hanrahan has again handed over most of the compositional reins to players like Taj Mahal, Allen Toussaint, David Murray, Billy Hart and Steve Swallow. (Also contributing tracks are Lester Bowie, Carmen Moore and Carla Bley; additional performers include Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Jean-Paul Bourelly, Elysee Pyronneau, Milton Cardona, Andy Gonzalez and Arto Lindsay.) As with Hanrahan's previous albums, the diverse selection guarantees both a high caliber of musicianship and a group sound like no other.

The selection of Mahal as vocalist/guitarist sets the tone for the album, and the choice is perfect. His rich, muddy voice suits the black Southern inflection of Reed's words so well that on the two tracks where the author recites his own work, he sounds comparatively stiff. Similarly, the choice of New Orleans' Toussaint as session pianist imbues the music with the decidedly Southern roll of Crescent City funk. Equally natural is



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# ROCK

## S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



**Philip Bailey** — *The Wonders Of His Love* (Myrrh). If, like many rock fans, you think an album of Jesus songs is likely to be about as exciting as a lemonade toast, think again. True, the words may not be your cup of spiritual beliefs, but the melodies provide Bailey with more than enough material to exercise his inspired falsetto. And when those funk'n' for Christ behind him include George Duke, Paul Jackson, Paulinho DaCosta, James Jamerson, Jr. and a handful of Bailey's EW&F buddies, how can the results be anything but heavenly?

**John Hiatt** — *Warming Up To The Ice Age* (Geffen). Hiatt has honed his writing style to the point where it almost doesn't matter that he can't sing; the conversational contours of these songs fit his snarling and moaning to a T. Better still, Hiatt has assembled a band capable of matching his vocal viciousness with musical muscle that enforces the melody, whether working in a pub-rock country vein or in Hiatt's new-found favorite, funky metal. No hits, of course, but plenty of potential.

**George Thorogood & the Destroyers** — *Maverick* (EMI-America). You'd think the title refers to Thorogood's much-vaunted independence—and you'd be wrong, because what it really means is that Thorogood has covered the theme from the old James Garner TV series. Sounds ludicrous, but that's in keeping with the rest of the album. After all, what would you expect from a guy who'd rewrite "Willie And The Hand Jive" so that the last verse goes, "Baby got famous in the crib, you see/ From doin' the hand jive on MTV"?

**David Lee Roth** — *Crazy From The Heat* (Warner Bros.). Rather than try to challenge Edward Van Halen's abilities as a tunesmith, Roth did exactly what he's

best at—picked four songs that are about as far from the Van Halen way of making music as you could imagine, and made three of them his own. The one exception is "Coconut Grove," a ballad Roth can't quite carry, but from the campy excess of "Just A Gigolo" to the outrageous success of "California Girls," this EP shows that there's much more to David Lee Roth than snappy interview patter.

**RARE BLUES**: As if the reactivation of the Chess catalogue weren't enough, now we're blessed with great records we couldn't have found even in the old days. *Rare And Unissued*, a collection of **Muddy Waters** gems cut from 1947-60, isn't essential for neophytes, but it's a must for fans. From the raucous wit of "Mean Disposition" to the deep groove of "Born Lover," his style remains constant, while his abilities dazzle. Once that has whetted your appetite, move on to *Blues Rarities*, a double-album highlighted by such curiosities as **Howlin' Wolf's** nasty sequel, "New Crawlin' King Snake"; **Buddy Guy's** bouncing "Gully Hully"; **Hound Dog Taylor's** Jaggeresque "Watch Out"; and a handful of **B.B. King** attempts at 50s pop. All worth hearing.

**John Martyn** — *Sapphire* (Island). It's entirely true that Martyn's diction is so bad that at times he seems to be singing with his tongue cut out; it's equally true that he's over his head in "Over The Rainbow." But those two quibbles aside, this manages to be a remarkable release in which Martyn demonstrates the sort of soulful anguish Michael McDonald has sought for years. Moreover, Martyn has the better rhythm section.

**Sussman Lawrence** — *Pop City* (Orange cassette). Peter Himmelman sounds an awful lot like Elvis Costello, as doubtless he is aware. But he's managed to turn what might have been a hindrance into a positive boon, for the songs on *Pop City* suggest in the most delightful terms what might have happened had Costello followed the direction of *Armed Forces* into mainstream pop. Catchy, witty, and without gratuitous wordplay, Himmelman's songs are yet additional proof that Minneapolis turns out the most interesting bands in America. (P.O. Box 0316, Minneapolis, MN 55401)

**The Erkoze Brothers** — *Turgie: Musique Tzigane* (Ocora import). Middle-Eastern music is often considered hopelessly exotic by American listen-

ers, but there's a gutsy verve to these performances that transcends cultural barriers, making this Gypsy music seem as familiar as a Dixieland jam session, even if its actual style is closer to Greek bouzouki dances or the sounds of the Klezmerim. And, for the record, Barbaros Erkoze is a *monster* of a clarinet player. (Harmonia Mundi, P.O. Box 64503, Los Angeles, CA 90064)

**The Who** — *Who's Last* (MCA). D.O.A.

**M'Bilia Bel** — *Bameli Soy* (Shanachie). Aficionados may recall Bel from an earlier Shanachie release, Rochereau's *Tabu Ley*, and understandably jump at the chance to hear more. Novices need only know that Bel is the Zairian equivalent of Patti Labelle, although with an idiomatic style that's far more restrained, and that if "Nazali Mwasi" doesn't immediately steal your heart away, nothing being recorded in Africa today will. (Dalebrook Pk, Dept. A, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423)

**Brave Combo** — *World Dance Music* (Four Dots). Around the world in forty polkas? That seems to be the idea behind this collection of dance numbers, each tricked up to represent a different international style—say, "People Are Strange" as a hora, or "Sixteen Tons" as a cumbia. As a joke, it's pretty cute, but as music it gets rather tiresome, in large part because the Brave Combo can't always deliver on its premise. But if these guys want to be Devo for the Eighties, that's fine by me. (Box 233, Denton, TX 76201)

**Flipper** — *Gone Fishin'* (Subterranean). This band plays some of the best amelodic drones since the Velvet Underground learned how to tune up, which makes even their most abrasive numbers giddily exciting. At times, Will Shatter's mock-philosophizing seems to tumble off the deep end (really, now—"You Nought Me"?), but with these wisenheimers, it's hard to say whether that's a stumble or a pratfall. The cut-and-paste cover is a scream, though. (577 Valencia St., San Francisco, CA 94110)

**Parliament** — *Parliament's Greatest Hits* (Casablanca). Although the albums themselves argued to the contrary, George Clinton's greatest strength was always singles. Of the ten compiled here, at least six are essential to any collection, and thanks to PolyGram's mid-line price, you'll never get a better deal than this. So go out and get fucked.

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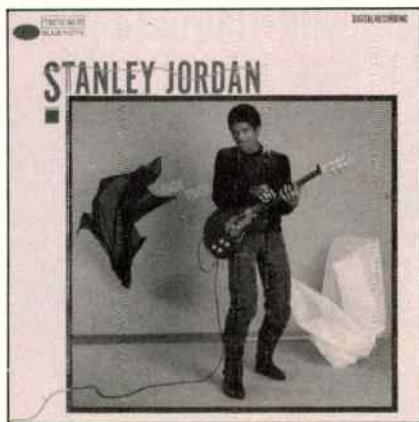
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# JAZZ

## S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



**Stanley Jordan** — *Magic Touch* (Blue Note). The major label debut of a twenty-five-year-old guitarist who has already attracted praise on the strength of an at once percussive and pianistic "tapping" technique that enables him to play bass lines, chords and linear melody simultaneously, this is something of a disappointment. For starters, whether interpreting jazz ("Round Midnight," Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born") or pop (the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Michael Jackson), Jordan's taste in material is distressingly mundane. As a solo improviser he often succumbs to the masturbatory impulse endemic to so many guitar virtuosos when they play alone. Most damaging, he doesn't swing, except on those tracks on which bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Peter Erskine show him the way. To his credit, Jordan has already perfected a sound uniquely his own—but at this point it's a sound searching for a conception. Still, if this were 1957 or even '63 and "Blue Note" meant what it used to mean, we'd have had ample opportunity to hear him as a sideman before passing judgment—and I have a feeling his playing would strike me as delightful in a setting where his solos had to pull their own weight, rather than support an entire LP. So in all fairness, the jury is still out.

**George Adams & Don Pullen** — *Decisions* (Timeless/Zebra). The highlights this time out include Adams' good-humored warbling on a blues of his own devising, his tenor eruption on drummer Danny Richmond's "Time Over Time," Pullen's kaleidoscopic choruses on "Trees And Grass And Thangs," and a glowing Adams-Pullen duet on the old

spiritual "His Eye Is On The Sparrow." In other words, more of the same. But it just goes to show you a successful formula needn't sound formulaic. The longer this quartet (also featuring bassist Cameron Brown) plays together, the more cohesive, freewheeling, and satisfying its music becomes—the mark of a classic band.

**James Newton** — *Echo Canyon* (Celestial Harmonies/N.M.D.S.). All that saves this album of flute solos recorded under the stars in a "natural amphitheater" high in the mountains of north central New Mexico from pantheistic slumber is the indefatigable hubris of Newton's formidable technique and the dogged structural sense he brings even to a cappella improvisation. It would be a pity if this enormously talented musician were to become yet another casualty of the New Age, but that's where this album seems to be pointing.

**Thad Jones** — *Three Plus One*; **Horace Parlan** — *Glad I Found You* (both SteepleChase). Between channeling his energies into a big band for ten years beginning in the mid-60s and leading the expatriate's life in Denmark thereafter, Jones hasn't made a record showing off his abilities as a cornetist in quite some time. *Three Plus One* is a loose and engaging quartet date from Europe that fills in the gap quite nicely, and the Parlan LP—which teams the tart cornetist with another intriguing and too rarely heard soloist in tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris—is even better.

**Dick Katz** — *In High Profile* (BeeHive). The unexpected (and completely arresting) combination of whimsy and recititude this veteran pianist displays on the four tracks with just bass and drum accompaniment makes his first LP in ages well worth investigating, even if the remaining four tracks adding saxophonist and flutist Frank Wess and trombonist Jimmy Knepper never quite fulfill their potential.

**Khan Jamal** — *Dark Warrior* (SteepleChase). This Philadelphia vibraphonist's solos are noteworthy for their finesse and their stark, ringing insistence; and his writing is at once playful and abstract. With drummer Leroy Lowe, the gutty South African bassist Johnny Dyani, and the ever-inventive alto and baritone saxophonist Charles Tyler.

**James Williams** — *Alter Ego* (Sunnyside/

N.M.D.S.); **Bob Magnusson** — *Song For Janet Lee* (Discovery). Pianist Williams' best LP so far places the emphasis on his clean, lucid writing (reminiscent of *Speak Like A Child*-period Herbie Hancock in its restive linear motion and its modest sense of scale), though the soloists (Williams, guitarist Kevin Eubanks, and versatile reed players Bill Pierce and Bill Easley) warrant mention as well. Bassist Magnusson's small group writing is even more praiseworthy than Williams'—too bad his soloists let him down (with the exception of guitarist Peter Sprague, who has never sounded this accomplished on his own LPs).

**Maxine Sullivan** — *The Great Songs From The Cotton Club By Harold Arlen And Ted Koehler* (Stash). One of the all-time great interpretive singers on the merit of her shapely and effortless phrasing alone (something age cannot touch), the seventy-three-year-old Sullivan has rarely sung better than she does here; and no singer could ask for better material than the melodies of Harold Arlen, the pop tunesmith most successful at catching the bounce and sass of jazz. The result of this inspired pairing is an almost perfect recital boasting fifteen Arlen-Koehler numbers in all, including a few never previously recorded in addition to such perennials as "Ill Wind," "As Long As I Live," and "Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea." (And speaking of Arlen, wouldn't *The Cotton Club*'s laboriously parallel plot lines have stood a better chance of eventually converging if Richard Gere had played a Jewish songwriter instead of an Irish trumpeter?)

**Stephen Montague** — *Slow Dance On A Burial Ground* (Lovely/N.M.D.S.). A long tape piece conflating folk instruments and computer-generated sounds, plus quick graphs for solo piano and muted piano and trombone from a composer "attracted to the Oriental feeling for musical time and space and their wonderful use of repetitive figures," but guided by "the feeling of expectation, growth, climax, and denouement" characteristic of European concert music of the late nineteenth century. The best of both worlds, in other words, and it's an irresistible combination, euphorically free of the missionary's breast-beating and the convert's navel gazing such cross-cultural expeditions usually yield.



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# VIDEO

## S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



No doubt many of you question video's validity, but hey, face facts: it's here. And not only is it here, it's growing—fast. There were already loads of music videocassettes and video discs before MTV raised America's slumbering music-video consciousness. Now that the stock of feature films to be licensed is diminishing—and now that adult films, how-to's and kid's programs are no longer the leading genres of the industry—everyone's looking to music video as the Next Big Thing for home entertainment. So expect an ever-richer selection of music programs for sale or rent. This column hopes to separate the wheat from the chaff.

**David Bowie** — *Jazzin' For Blue Jean* (Sony Video EP). I always thought I was alone in adoring *Just A Gigolo*, the film in which Bowie delivered his only intentionally comic performance till this (unless you count the hysterical vidclip "Look Back In Anger"). But director Julien Temple, bless him, must've felt the same way. He's brought Bowie's slight but affecting look at the absurdities of the star-fan relationship to delightfully funny life. The singer leads two lives in this twenty-minute mini-movie: As the ludicrously affected rock star Screaming Lord Byron, Bowie mocks his own past outrages. As the pathetic nerd Vic, who tries desperately to impress a date with his faked intimacy with Byron,

Bowie attempts to identify with Us Normals. The "Blue Jean" song segment easily stands on its own, though it does work better in context. Despite critical consensus, I find "Blue Jean" to be a marvelous little piece of radio rock, which gets me boogieing before my TV set. And that doesn't happen often.

**Rolling Stones** — *Video Rewind* (Vestron). Temple strikes again. Here, the idea is that Bill Wyman plays a museum guard surreptitiously entering the "Withdrawn Exhibits" room. He finds encased skinheads, mohawked punks, a teddy boy—and Mick Jagger, frozen in classic rooster-on-acid pose. Wyman unlocks Mick, they reminisce and play back Stones videos of the 70s—that is, the ones the Stones own. Besides "It's Only Rock 'N' Roll," "Angie," "Emotional Rescue" and a black-and-white on-stage "Brown Sugar," there are shticks like Keith Richards' withering retorts to an unhip interviewer. Just as with Bowie in *Jazzin'*, Temple draws a marvelously self-mocking performance from Jagger. A screamingly funny coda depicts an idiotic backstage interviewer thrilled at being snubbed by the mighty Mick.

**Yoko Ono** — *Then And Now* (Media Home Entertainment). *Then* consists of happenings and bag art performances; *Now* is interview material from journalist and *Musician* contributor Barbara Graustark. The result is an intelligent, enlightening and absorbing documentary. With the Lennon references reined in, *Then And Now* eloquently states the case for accepting Yoko on her own terms.

**U2** — *Live At Red Rocks* (MCA Home Video). A stunningly urgent performance by a splendid band before a responsive throng, shot in Denver's dramatic Red Rocks Amphitheater. You shoulda been there, and now you can. No glossy pre- or post-production needed, and (blessedly) none used.

**Rock 'n' Roll: The Early Years** (RCA/Columbia). Another rockumentary winner from Patrick Montgomery's Archive Film Productions, who also brought you *The Compleat Beatles*. *Rock 'n' Roll: The Early Years* has oodles of fantastic archival clips: gray-flannel 50s adults trying to decipher rock's jungle-telegraph message to their kids; middle-aged newsmen bemused and befuddled by teenaged hepsters; proto-Falwell denunciations of the devil's music by terrifyingly square-looking authorities; and

of course spine-tingling performance clips pulled from feature films and kinescopes. Even more impressive than the source material is the way it's put together—not only in entertaining and informative fashion, but with underplayed wit and a social conscience. One point the tape makes, for example, is the white establishment's constant cooptation of black R&B hits with innocuous teen-idol covers. You haven't really retched till you've seen Pat Boone, loosened tie signaling "naughtiness," putting "Tutti Frutti" to sleep.

**The San Francisco Blues Festival** (Sony Video LP). Clifton Chenier, John Littlejohn, John Hammond, Robert Cray, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, show-stealing Albert Collins and others deliver a few solid tunes apiece in this fine no-frills performance documentary. It is a bit disconcerting to see the blues performed in bright sunlight with palm trees bordering the stage. Authoritative performances outweigh the incongruity, and we also get off-the-cuff comments from fans and players. If you dig the blues, or want to know where all that rock stuff comes from, check this one out.

**Happy Birthday Elvis**: Elvis Presley would have turned fifty in January, and various commercial concerns are going to make sure you don't forget it. Media Home Entertainment has reissued *The 1968 Comeback Special*, possibly the single best Presley performance caught by the TV cameras after his initial mid-50s nova-bursts (which are also available on several poorly produced compilations). Malcolm Leo and Andrew Solt's superb docu *This Is Elvis* (MGM/UA) runs 45 minutes longer on videotape than it did on movie screens. MGM/UA also has tapes of seven Presley films, including the classic *Jailhouse Rock*.

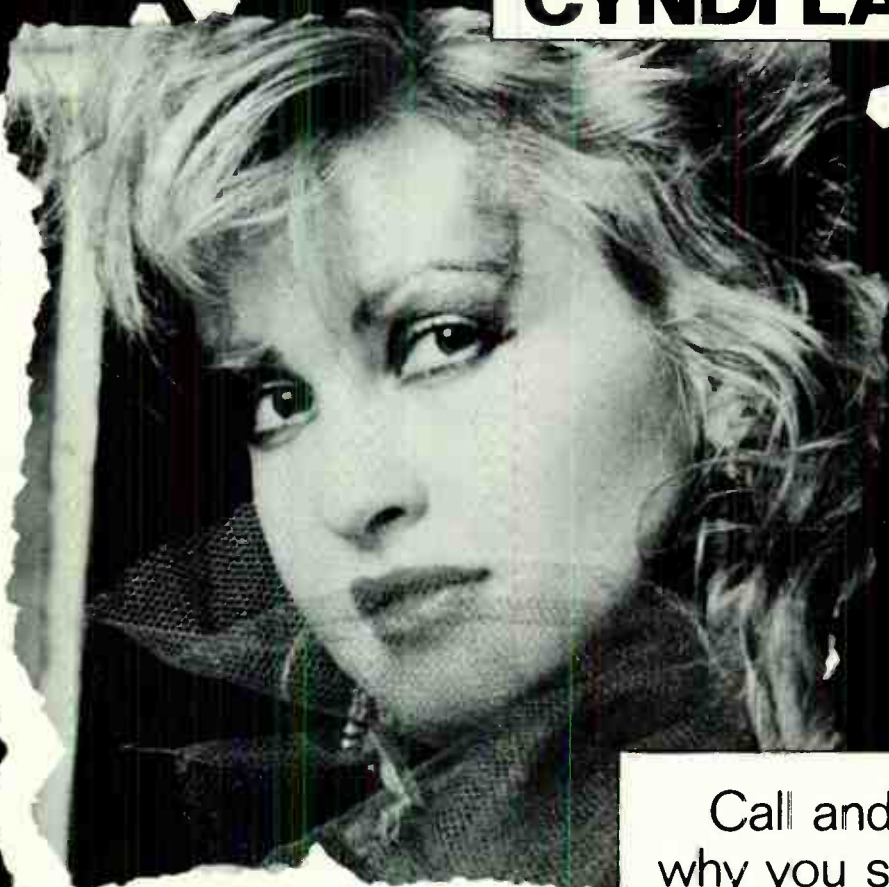
In other news, the most exciting development just might be a collaboration between George Clinton and Thomas Dolby. After working on a few cuts on Clinton's latest LP, Dolby is directing portions of an anti-nuke long-form program for Dr. Funkenstein. Given Clinton's renowned visual bent, his smash vidclip bow with "Atomic Dog," and Dolby's outstanding video track record, this is like, wow. Clinton is also compiling the reams of vintage P-funk stage footage he's had laying around all these years. Woof woof indeed.

**Michael Shore**



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### Cavaliere from page 95

Still, he remains a superstar to one audience he's never lost: "When I walk down the street, very few white people know who I am, but them black dudes know it. If you make it in black, in R&B, you're a star the rest of your life. They haven't had—until recently—the media hype. The white world's the one that changes in its demands, and that's why there's so many crazies coming out of it. Not many people live up to the hype.

Genius in exile? Maybe, but Felix has one fat ace that may greatly aid his return to the public's auditory nerves: the hunger for a Rascals reunion. Still Felix remains agonizingly indecisive on how to manage it. He hates the idea of merely doing the old stuff, hates the thought that he'll be perceived as a nostalgia hawk when he has a new batch of tunes. He notes with keen interest new work by Box of Frogs and John Fogerty. He's in regular touch with Dino, now with Steve Van Zandt's Disciples of Soul (Felix in fact played on Little Steven's first LP); Gene is still in shape, although now more enamored than ever of 50s rock 'n' roll; and Eddie has been seen singing again in Manhattan with Paul Shaffer. Still, the biggest problem for Felix is which version of the Rascals to reunite—he prefers the Columbia-era model, especially with Buzzy Feiten. "I said to Dino, 'Let's do it, but PLEASE,

just you and me, okay. Let's keep it sane.' Now tune in next week to see if it's gonna be sane or not, because I doubt it. I'm worried about the other two Rascals.

"One of the things that keeps blowing these Rascals reunions is that I can not get us into a room together to play. All of a sudden we've become lawyers, sitting down having business discussions. I mean, we're musicians, let's play. Sometimes I just can't put up with all the nonsense. I can't. And I have to learn how to do that if I'm ever going to be successful again as an artist. But if we used the Rascals name, we'll get a deal that will let us record some new material. I think something good will come of it, because it did in the past.

"They called the Rascals soul music, and I think the reason it was soulful was because everybody got along so well. It was a close-knit organization, a family. When that soul interlink between the musicians stopped happening, our music stopped being soul music and became for sale music, like everybody else's. The spirit had gone out of it. And the spirit of the Rascals is the most important part. I think that's what the people related to, whether they were aware of it or not, a certain vibration, an uplifting harmony that I'm very proud of. For better or worse the Rascals—and Felix Cavaliere—were on a quest, some kind of crazy quest." ☐

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## Replacements from page 20

*Out The Trash* and the *Replacements Stink* EP. Westerberg's pop, country and romantic balladeering influences came to the fore. *Hootenanny* is dizzyingly eclectic—the band trashes the better part of our musical heritage—but always on the mark. As the group became less cartoony, less trapped by its own joke, they showed they had a resource besides unfailing rowdiness: honest-to-God talent. The frolicsome four could still burn when called upon, but the emphasis shifted toward Westerberg's songwriting.

The successful branching out paved the way for *Let It Be*, the band's last album for the independent Twin/Tone label before signing to Sire Records. *Let It Be's* tunes are grippingly melodic, and Westerberg's confessional lyrics trade the bluster of old for emotional honesty. Without condescending to professionalism, the Replacements have created a moving, accessible LP that offers a rare combination of unaffected fun and catharsis. While the boys still will be boys—particularly on "Gary's Got A Boner" and the irresistible "Tommy Gets His Tonsils Out"—that's now just one aspect of their character.

"I'd say attitude and humor are our strong suits," Westerberg says. "And emotion—emotion being anything from

frustration to anger. We're real. We get frustrated. We're not a pretend band. I don't deny that we have talent. But I don't think that's what has sustained us for this long. We don't worry about the music end of the deal so much as keeping the spirit up. The people that like us are wise enough not to pay their money to see us hit the right chords. They come to see something exciting and fun."

In the early days, this meant a drunken spree. The Replacements spent their first years staggering from stage to stage, not making any money and not winning many fans. "We don't do as many vice-oriented things as we used to," Westerberg says. "We're a little more concerned about living to next week. That [reputation] is getting to be an albatross around our neck. We can go up there straight as an arrow, and if someone stumbles one inch, then it's Oh, the Replacements, they're drunk again."

That's partly because, even straight as an arrow, the band can still be skunk sloppy. Especially when it comes to covers. They'll play songs they heard on the radio on the way to the gig, or dig up the worst shit you can imagine: the De-Franco Family's "Heartbeat—It's A Lovebeat," "Love Grows (Where My Rosemary Goes)," from Edison Light-house, or the theme from *Gilligan's Is-*

*land*. And it isn't camp. "Our biggest influence is probably the AM radio from '72 to '76," Westerberg declares, "one of the worst periods in all of music. We're not afraid to acknowledge the stuff we grew up on, like the Jackson 5 and the Raspberries, Brownsville Station." *Let It Be* boasts a totally straight version of Kiss' "Black Diamond." The Replacements simply refuse to fake it.

"Sometimes you wonder," Westerberg muses, "why the hell am I even doing this?"—the frustrating feeling of 'what are you doing with your life?' All of your other friends your age have jobs. What do you do? You scream your head off in a bar in front of fifty people who don't really care.

"There's nothing else I could do, really. It's the worst way to look at it, but it makes you realize you're lucky to be doing this. At times you feel you want to blow your head off, but overall it's a pretty fun group to hang around with." He comes around. "I'm having a fucking riot. We wouldn't do it if it wasn't fun. It's a stone gas." ☐

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