

Was (Not Was) • Lou Reed meets Vaclav Havel • Mariah Carey • The Neville

MUSICIAN

OCT 90



WHO PUT THE X IN

THE X-FILES

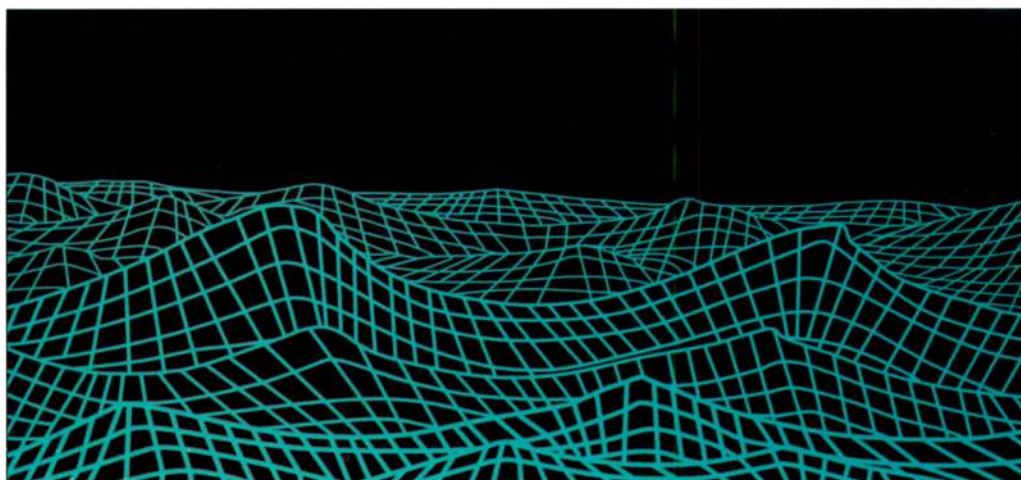
HANDSOME DEVILS AND SUICIDE BLONDES
BY CHARLES M. YOUNG

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ISSUE NO. 144



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A GUITAR HERO FOR THE MASSES

Los Angeles Times

SANTANA

"SPIRITS DANCING IN THE FLESH"



After more than 20 years, Carlos Santana is still fueling the legend with fiery guitar that sizzles and smokes. Vernon Reid joins in

for a searing duet on the Coltrane-Santana-Hendrix trilogy Peace On Earth...Mother Earth...Third Stone From The Sun.

"Spirits Dancing In The Flesh." New from Santana. On Columbia.

Produced by Carlos Santana, Vernon Reid, Peter Wolf and Jim Gaines. Management: Santana Management "Columbia" Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. by CBS Records Inc. © 1990 CBS Records Inc.

```
Edit/Chord[1]/Note
F#: Note=JJJJ
```

The U-20 can store 8 chord "sets," each consisting of a different chord assigned to each pitch in the octave.

```
I-R3: Electric Set U:0
C#3: I-128 So:C#3 Mu:Off
```

If you're considering composing, consider this: The U-20 can store four different drum and percussion arrangements, each with its own key assignment, level, panning and tuning.

```
Edit/Sound/Effect/Chorus
Out=Pre Rev Level=17
```

Each of the 64 sound patches can have its own reverb and chorus parameters, with each part being assignable to just reverb, just chorus, or both.

```
Edit/Timbre[1]/Tone
Tone = 03-018 BARAFON 4
```

While any of the 128 preset tones can be assigned to any of the 128 timbre locations, more exotic instruments can be accessed via U-Series ROM cards.

```
Edit/Sound/Part4/Output
Asgn=Rev Lvl=127 Pan=3
```

Each of the six parts can have its own effects on/off, level, and pan setting.

```
Edit/Sound/Part2/Timbre
Timbre=B35:JP8.Brass
```

Any internal timbre can be assigned to one of six parts. This keyboard, by the way, is multi-timbral with a 30-voice polyphony, making it ideal for live performances.

```
Rx[01|02|03|04|05|06|10
I-88 #064 : Worlds Apart
```

Since the U-20 will simultaneously receive on up to six MIDI channels plus a rhythm channel, you can create entire arrangements with an external sequencer, and split or layer up to six sounds on the keyboard.

```
Edit/Timbre[5]/Pitch
Bender Range=7-36 2
```

Each of the 128 user-definable timbres has its own flat and sharp bender range, making things like "whammy bar" solos as easy as the proverbial flick of a wrist.

One size fits all.

If we were to tell you that our new U-20 RS-PCM Multi-Timbral keyboard was perfect for any kind of performing, you'd probably mutter something about truth in advertising and go on about your business. So instead of telling you this, we'll let you come to that conclusion all by yourself.

And the reason we expect you to is this: The U-20 possesses an extraordinary diversity of sounds—to the tune of 128 multi-sampled tones, including both acoustic instruments and popular synth sounds, as well as a staggering array of drum and percussion sounds.

And since these sounds are the product of a Re-Synthesized Pulse Code Modulation technology, their quality is remarkable. (Basically, RS-PCM allows sam-

pled sounds, which normally require massive amounts of data, to be re-synthesized so that they deliver great sound quality without taking up a great deal of memory.)

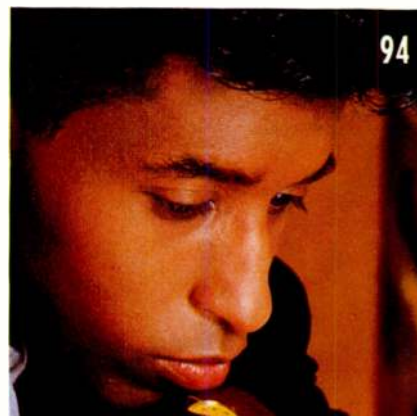
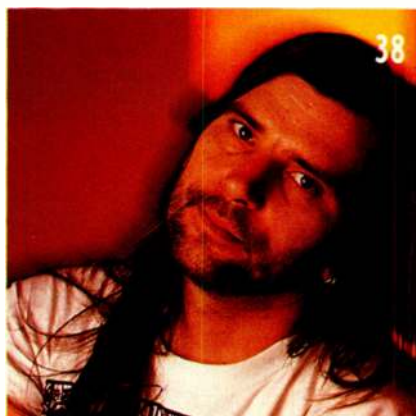
And because of a new, high quality signal processing, you can be as expressive with the sounds as you wish. The Roland U-20, unlike most sample playback machines, offers attack and spectra sounds that enable you to actually "synthesize" your own sounds.

All of which led one magazine to suggest, "... the only problem you'll probably have with the U-20 is finding enough time to explore everything it has to offer!"

Fortunately, it's so affordable you can start right away.

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Musician • October 1990

A Billboard Publication

- 7 **Front Man: Robert Cray** He was hailed and embalmed at an early age—but Cray has his own ideas about where he's going. . . . *By Tony Scherman*
- 20 **Mariah Carey** Amazing but true: This remarkable young singer is as good as her hype. . . . *By Leonard Pitts, Jr.*
- 24 **Béla Fleck** Now wait a minute—banjo as a jazz instrument? Listen and believe. . . . *By Chip Stern*
- 30 **Exhuming Chet Baker** Since his mysterious death the beautiful loser has been worshiped as a martyr and scorned as a phony. The controversy's made it hard to hear the music. . . . *By Paul Nelson*
- 38 **Steve Earle** After three Nashville albums, the rocker stopped pretending he's country—and made one of the best LPs this year. . . . *By Mark Rowland*
- 46 **Vaclav Havel's Velvet Revolution** Lou Reed travels to Prague to interview the playwright turned dissident turned president, and to explore the connection between rock 'n' roll and the Czech revolution. . . . *By Lou Reed*
- 60 **INXS** Ten years of hard work have made this Australian sextet one of the most popular bands in the world. Now if you had worked that hard to get that much power, what would you do with it? . . . *By Charles M. Young*
- 74 **The Neville**s The heart and guts of New Orleans, from "Tell It Like It Is" to the Meters to *Yellow Moon*. . . . *By Peter Watrous*
- 130 **Dead Folkies** Is there a singer/songwriter heaven? . . . *Backside*

A Working Musician Special: Recordmakers 1990

- 80 **Was (Not Was)** While David was walking the Dinosaur in Detroit, Don was becoming the hottest producer in L.A. As the world beats a path to their door, the Was boys trade a little sibling resentment. . . . *By Jock Baird*
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Photograph (center): Steven Pumphrey
 Cover photo (clockwise from top center): Michael Hutchence, Tim Farriss, Kirk Pengilly, Jon Farriss, Andrew Farriss, Garry Gary Beers

DEREK AND THE DOMINOS

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Robert Cray

What did you learn working with Clapton on the Journeyman album?

Well, we work well together because we didn't step on each other's toes.

You're not in awe?

Oh yeah, definitely. He sat in with us one time at a club in London called the Mean Fiddler. I was just rambling on, playing a whole lot. [Cray bassist] Richard [Cousins] was yelling the chord changes at him, and he told Richard to shut up! Afterwards we were hanging out and he walked up to me and said, "Robert, don't try to challenge me, 'cause I will cut you off at the knees." It was said in fun, it was a good time.

What's he like as a jammer?

He's pretty relaxed. He's really relaxed. You almost have to coax him to take a solo.

So did you try to challenge him?

[Laughs] Naw, I know better than that! As a younger guy, you forget that guys like this have forgotten more than you know. They can pull anything out of that bag, at any time.

But technically, is he someone you see as superior to you?

I can't say, I don't make comparisons like that.

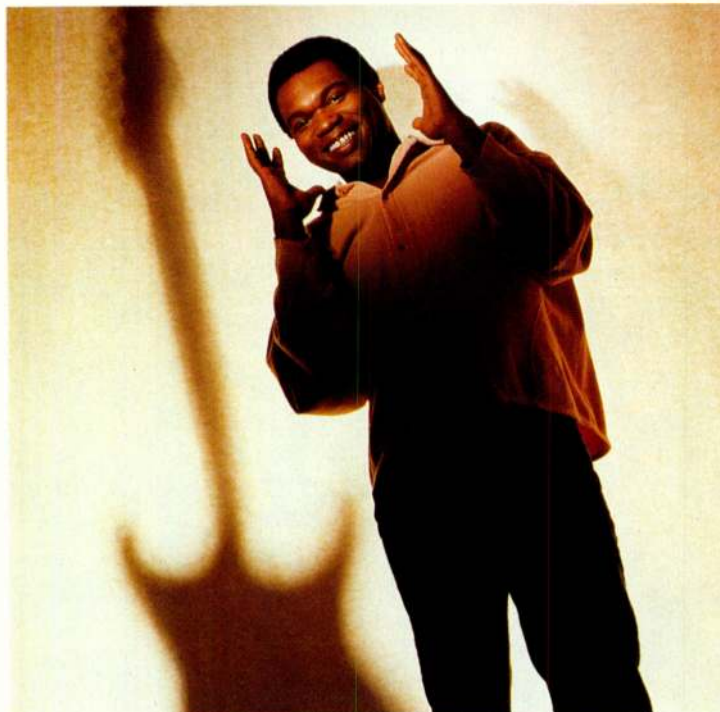
Did you learn anything about record-making working on Journeyman?

I was really nervous when I walked in. But it was interesting—the way they went about making a record was pretty much the same way we do. I was surprised—I thought they would go through some kind of big production thing and try to get solos exact and all that. But it wasn't like that. It was relaxed.

People say sometimes that your music's too smooth, too clean, almost an idealized version of R&B and blues.

Well, that to me is a compliment. It goes

with my personality. I like ballads, I like smoother tunes and I'm not a hard-edged guy. I can't be as hard as Howlin' Wolf—though I had to hold back from doing my Wolf impression on "Midnight Stroll" on the new album, 'cause that song lays for it, you



player I like a lot, Charlie Baty, he plays with Little Charlie and the Nightcats. He's a monster.

In your last interview with Musician you said, "I don't want to go through hard times anymore, but it's always going to happen."

What hard times could you see yourself going through?

Well, on a personal level I'm alright now. I just got married in February, so hopefully everything's going to be alright for a while. Looks that way. The hard times, I guess, come from being a traveling musician. Your personal life is hell. Nobody wants to go through that kind of hell. Other than that, I enjoy my work. If the door was to slam on us tomorrow recordwise, we'd still be a working band.

In your songs you'll often project yourself almost as a bad guy—the "Strong Persuader," manipulative, macho. In fact, you're not like that at all. What's the story—

is there a dark side to Robert Cray?

[Laughs] There was a different side! I had my fun in the past. I write those songs thinkin' about those days. But I don't think the not-so-nice side is around anymore, though you might get some of the guys in the band to tell you different. No, I'm pretty easy-going, I've mellowed.

I guess I'm wondering if saying, as you often do, that there are all kinds of good music, not just blues—if that's a rationalization—

What, for me to get away with something?

—for you to make music that's more commercial—

No, I'm not saying it for that reason. I'm saying it 'cause I believe it, I'm saying it because it's terrible to keep your mind closed. Like, I like blues; I also feel like listening to Brazilian music, to jazz. Now, I may not like rap...

—Tony Scherman

know? I do a Wolf impression onstage.

Very few blacks today are into the blues. Why's that?

Well, it was probably no longer played around the house when they were growing up. It was probably embarrassing to their parents, reminded them of the hard times. Though my parents were blues fans.

But yeah, even if I tried to personally introduce someone to the blues, they probably wouldn't listen. I'd probably be frustrated trying to turn somebody on to Wolf, trying to point out the fine points of a Howlin' Wolf tune.

Who do you know who deserves wider recognition?

There's a buddy of mine up in Portland, Oregon named Curtis Salgado, a singer and harmonica player. Oh, you know who's really good is this guy named Lloyd Jones, who's also out of Portland; he writes great songs, blues and R&B. There's a guitar

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Unlocking David Jones

THANKS TO Timothy White for the marvelous interview with David Bowie (July '90). Other interviews repeat the same things over and over, but yours shed light on things Bowie hasn't commented on before, like his parents and song interpretations.

Julie Lahner
Austin, TX

DAVID BOWIE, to this day, is still a quirky, imaginative and unpredictable music artist. He's so aware of his limitations and isn't hesitant at all to cite any regrets or mistakes from his past. No other superstar could release an album as powerful and intense as *Tin Machine* at age 43. He's also probably the first performer to get trapped knee-deep in commercialism and escape it unscathed.

Keith Fox
Upland, CA

Panning the Critics

IN DAVE DIMARTINO'S interpretation of Jeff Lynne's *Armchair Theatre*, DiMartino states that "the only difference between this record and the last four or five by ELO is that Jeff Lynne is now deemed cool" through his association with his fellow Traveling Wilburys. There's more difference than that, pal! Maybe it sounds like a rerun to DiMartino because Lynne and Har-

ison were the creative forces behind the Wilbury sound.

Jay Carnahan
Gainesville, FL

CRITICIZING KIRSTY MacCOLLS *Kite* (*Short Takes*, July '90) for having too many vocal tracks is quite a petty attack considering the excellence of her songwriting. Melodically and lyrically, *Kite* is one of the best albums of this year.

Bob O'Bannon
Fishers, IN

Sound Off Echo

I'M SO TOUCHED by your concern for my kids, Perry (*Sound Off*, July '90). Could you please babysit tonight so I can go get a copy of *Hustler*? I want to take up your suggestion and teach my kids about the wonders of "nature." Of course I'm sure that you haven't contributed to the environmental mess. How convenient to blame it on parents, grandparents et al. Ever drive a car, Perry? You have a "fear of smoke-stacks" and "the men who feed their flames," right? Ever buy their products?

And your great concern over the equality of women...what a nice name you picked for your band. And how nice of nature to "tie the infant to the female"; after all, she seems to deserve it in your opinion.

Now about censorship: It might have been interesting reading if that's what you had written about, but you merely attempted to drag the role of parenting through the mud. In your great concern for "nature" you failed to note that "nature" itself gives a great deal of discretion to many species in the raising of offspring; this discretion includes protection of the young in areas that they do not yet have discernment in. Nix the babysitting, Perry; I think I'll stay home with my kids tonight.

Thom Reinstein
Modesto, CA

Why Not Wyatt?

THIS IS MY one-man campaign to get some exposure for one of the unknown greats, Robert Wyatt. The Hendrix article (July '90) featured a poster of an Experience gig with Soft Machine: Robert Wyatt was the drummer and vocalist for that band. You're getting warmer! Please don't let any more time go by; get one of your quality writers to do a feature historic overview of poor, forgotten and vastly important Robert Wyatt.

David Hawker
Ripley, NY

Listen Up

I ATTENDED A ROCK CONCERT earlier this year and consequently have partial hearing loss in my right ear ("Rockers Sued for Ear Damage," July '90). I also have no awareness of exceeding volume levels anymore. I have to ask other people if my music is too loud. Yet you do not see me suing the groups that performed that night. Since I am 14 years old, I realize that if I go to a number of concerts while I'm still young I could ruin my hearing altogether. That would be my fault, not the performers'.

Melissa McQuade
Endicott, NY

Big Brother

THANK YOU FOR your article on the new INS regulations regarding foreign musicians entitled "World Beat Stay Home" (*Faces*, July '90). I am outraged and am writing a letter of protest, as should every musician. I place a high value on the great variety of music that I can purchase and see performed. Can we now expect governmental selection of our music? This is a blatant example of our government wasting its time on racist and ignorant issues, so coincidentally at a time when African and Latin

music, more recently referred to as "World Beat," is growing at an "alarming" rate (sarcasm intended).

Sinda Allyson
Hollywood, CA

Erata

THANKS FOR the interview with Bob Clearmountain (July '90). I appreciated reading about the equipment in Bob's personal rack, especially his comments about the Roland SDE-3000 Digital Delay, but I would like to point out that his comment that "Roland stopped making them" is only half true. Roland *did* stop making the SDE-3000 for a brief period; however, due to exceptional demand from recording studios and professionals like Bob, we started making them again about two years ago. The new units, now called the SDE-3000A, are exactly the same as the old ones (same features, same functions, same specs) with the exception of some extra paint on the front panel.

Chris Gill
Roland Corp US
Los Angeles, CA

CAREFUL, GUYS! In the July chart, you listed the #82 album as *They Might Be Giants* by a mysterious band called "Flood," rather than the other way around. Picky, I know, but we can't let misinformation corrupt the young.

Chet Scoville

The Jali Roll Orchestra was inexplicably referred to as "rhythm sisters" in our July '90 Short Takes review of Dembo Konte and Kausu Kuyateh. Now will you take your foot off our neck, Dembo?

John Platt should have been credited as co-author of "Jimi Hendrix: Inside the Experience" (July '90).

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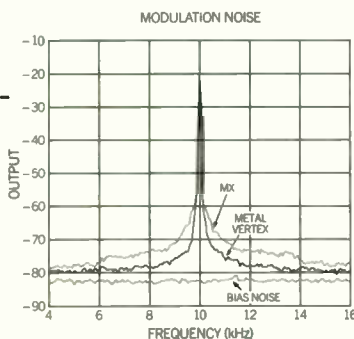
makes this mechanism truly unusual is the golden emblem center, which is not simply decorative but serves to dampen external vibrations even further. Bad vibes aside, our new Metal Vertex cassette shell also provides unmatched durability and heat resistance.

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FACES

SHINEHEAD

Rap for one ordinary Joe

SHINEHEAD, a song stylist and clever mimic, can squawk and shriek like I-Roy, croon like Brook Benton and Gregory Isaacs, roll his Rs in cute Oxfordian English like Slick Rick or Young MC, while blurring the boundaries of rap, reggae and pensive gospel-tinged soul serenades.

"I open my mouth and out comes an utterance. I make a joyful noise unto the Lord and the crowd loves it," Shinehead claims.

He says his style has changed little since he started performing in the "downbeat style, a mobile sound system like those in Jamaica, in the Bronx, July 5, 1982 with Downbeat International" and since recording his first album for manager/producer Claude Evans and African Love Records in 1985. "It's just that a whole lot more shit got incorporated."

His new recording, *The Real Rock*, and his shows with his band—the No Offense Crew—where he mingles with the crowd, exhibit a continued egalitarian and socially conscious bent.

With versions of Sly Stone's "Family Affair" and the Everly Brothers' "Till I Kissed You" and the self-esteem raps of "Potential" and "Strive," Shinehead promotes unity, nostalgia and concern. As he says, "the song must pertain to the ordinary Joe and it must make sense."

—Don Palmer

Photos (l-r): Ken Collins/Retna; Aldo Mauro

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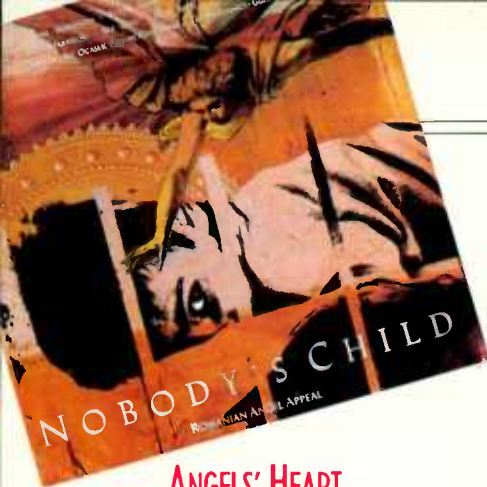
Remix, bake, serve fresh

IT'S TAKING US as long to remix this stuff as it did to record it!" said Natalie Merchant, lead singer for 10,000 Maniacs. She was sitting in Manhattan's Electric Lady Studios, finishing up a painstaking archeology project: remixing the band's first two recordings, cut in 1982 and 1985. Engineered by college students, the records, *Human Conflict #5* and *Secrets of the I Ching*, were hardly of audiophile quality. "Especially the drums," said Merchant. "The snare drum sounded like a bag of rice dropped onto the kitchen floor and the bass drum

sounded like someone whacking a wet cardboard box." So Merchant, along with former Maniac John Lombardo and engineer Joe Barbaria, hunkered down at one of Electric Lady's SSL consoles to spiff up the songs. The biggest problem was the *Human Conflict* tape's advanced decomposition—it was shedding particles so badly Barbaria had it baked in a special oven.

The result, a 14-song compilation called *Hope Chest*, will be released in October. Her two-week labor almost done, Merchant sat listening to her vocals. "Considering that the first record was made in three days and the second in a week, it sounds pretty good." —Tony Scherman





ANGELS' HEART

Profits help orphans

TOMORROW IS A GIFT," sings Ric Ocasek on a track he donated to *Nobody's Child: Romanian Angel Appeal*, a benefit album released in July by Warner Bros. to assist impoverished orphans in Romania. The effort was organized by Olivia Harrison, wife of George Harrison, and features songs by the Traveling Wilburys, Guns N' Roses, Elton John, Eric Clapton and 11 others.

Olivia first enlisted the support of the other Beatles' wives—Yoko Ono, Barbara Bach Starkey and Linda McCartney—to publicly solicit donations. Then in April, she went to Bucharest. "I saw things that assaulted my senses and emotions," she said. "A bathroom for 75 children had two rusty pots in a concrete cellar with two taps, and kids would stand in a bucket and be hosed down with icy water."

Sickened, she phoned her husband from Bucharest, requesting that they do something more. George came up with "Nobody's Child," an old Lonnie Donegan track, to be released by the Wilburys as a benefit single. Then George put the word out to his friends and the tapes poured in.

Profits are being spent on such basic needs as hot-water heaters, rubber gloves, mattresses and clothing. Donations will be accepted by Romanian Angel Appeal, P.O. Box 5966, Playa del Ray, CA 90296.

—Mike Mettler

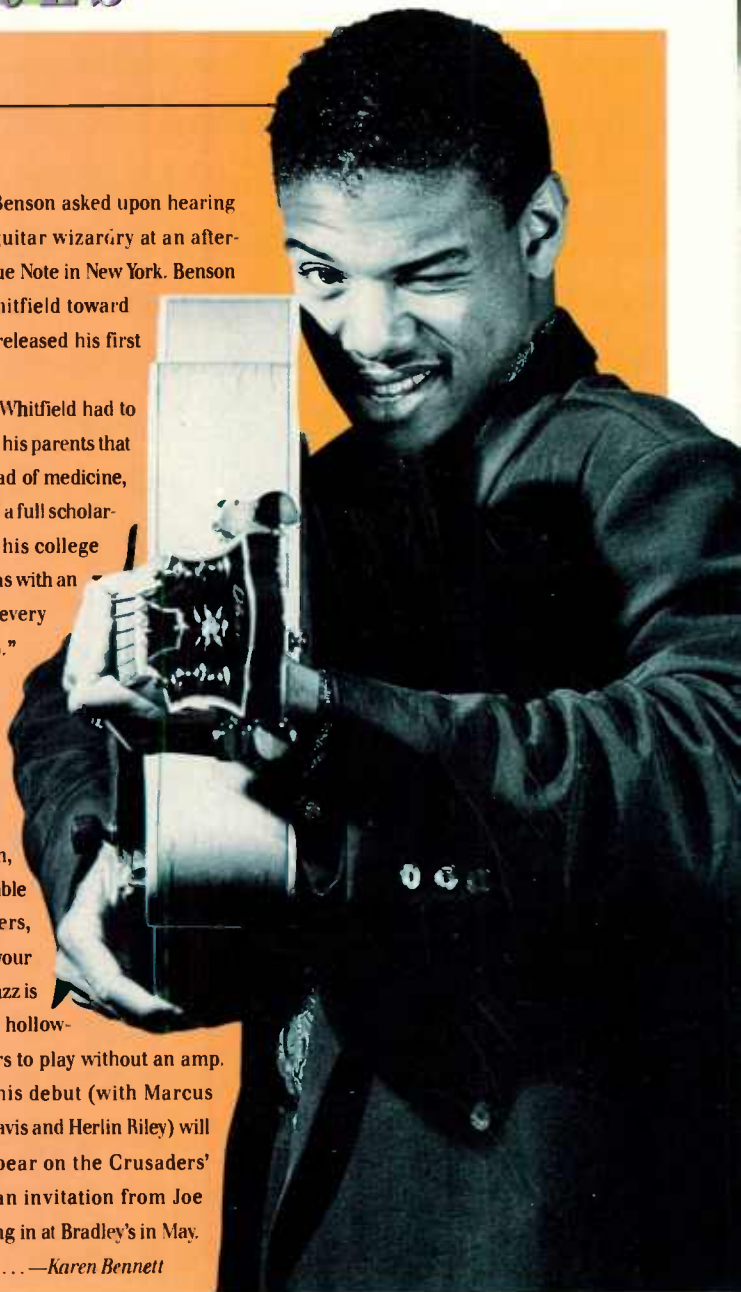
FACES

MARK WHITFIELD

Guitar doctor

WHAT IS HE?" George Benson asked upon hearing Mark Whitfield's guitar wizardry at an after-hours jam at the Blue Note in New York. Benson helped to steer Whitfield toward Warner Brothers, which has released his first album, *The Marksman*.

A 23-year-old Berklee grad, Whitfield had to do a lot of lobbying to convince his parents that he should pursue music instead of medicine, especially when he had earned a full scholarship to Georgetown. During his college years, he did a brief stint in Vegas with an R&B band; later he "played every nook and cranny in the U.S." with Jack McDuff, and appeared on Donald Harrison and Terence Blanchard's album *Black Pearl*. Now, instead of the "little \$20-a-night gig" where Benson spotted him, Whitfield's looking at an enviable contract with Warner Brothers, which he aptly notes "is not your standard jazz deal at all." But jazz is what he'll be pitching on his hollow-body Ibanez, which he prefers to play without an amp. Whitfield is a scorcher, as his debut (with Marcus Roberts, Reginald Veal, Troy Davis and Herlin Riley) will demonstrate. He'll also appear on the Crusaders' reunion album, thanks to an invitation from Joe Sample, who caught him sitting in at Bradley's in May. Medicine's loss is music's gain... —Karen Bennett



JAZZ COMPOSER WINS BIG BUCKS

GOOD THING FOR songwriter Marc Cohen that he earned less than \$5000 writing songs last year. It made him eligible for top honors in *Billboard* magazine's International Song Contest, which awarded the New York composer a cash prize of \$25,000 for his jazz piece "Skippin'."

At a ceremony at Fat Tuesday's, Les Paul presented Cohen—a pianist who's worked with Peter Erskine and has recorded "Skippin'" with James Moody—with an autographed gold-top Les Paul. Cohen also received the first place prize, which granted an additional \$5000 and yet another Gibson guitar. What's a pianist to do? "Keep 'em," says Cohen. "What's significant is that a jazz tune won, because jazz isn't always given its due, unlike other music. It can appeal to a wider audience without pandering to that audience. It's nice, after so many years of hard work, to get some recognition." The home front is still tough to crack. Cohen's next record, featuring bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Billy Stewart, is expected soon—on the Japanese Jazz City label.

Opposite (top): Larry Ford
(center): Alan Messer
(bottom): R. Deitz/Retna



DEL AMITRI

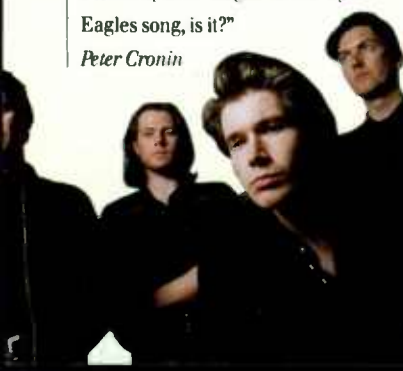
Highland string fling

IN 1985 DEL AMITRI'S debut album, a slapdash collection of frenetic, wordy, guitar-driven pop, created a critical stir for three whole seconds before the band found themselves back in their native Glasgow, splintered and without a record deal. "We were barely out of adolescence when that first record came out," says singer/bassist Justin Currie in a husky burr, "and we spent a few years being very precious and serious about who we were."

Finding themselves back on earth, Currie and guitarist Iain Harvie did pick-up jobs around Glasgow and stumbled upon something that completely changed their musical outlook. "We did a couple of country gigs as a kind of joke," recalls Currie. "It was a revelation." On *Waking Hours*, their first release in five years, del Amitri is anchored by a stronger, more measured rhythm section, dobros and fiddles.

Not to worry, though. Currie's razor-sharp songwriting and Harvie's swamp-thing guitar style guarantee that del Amitri won't be getting mellow—although critics have been comparing them to every country rock band on the planet. "I have never listened to the Eagles," says Currie with a laugh. "Well, I've heard 'Hotel California' but that's such a ripoff of 'Angie' it's hardly an Eagles song, is it?"

Peter Cronin



HUMAN RADIO

Cover band goes legit

FEEL LIKE we're infiltrating the system," hippie-haired Ross Rice says of his band Human Radio's entangling alliance with mighty Columbia Records. "It's easy to be outside railing against it; we're more of a sneaky little virus."

The Memphis group's debut album has infiltrated consciousnesses with songs that are equally clever in the music and lyrics departments. They're currently playing clubs across the country—"This has been the 'how much can you take?' tour," Rice says archly—and hoping they'll one day make as much money as they once did playing R&B in lounges. In the meantime, artistic freedom—



as it is expressed and discussed in Human Radio's ambiguous "Me & Elvis"—is its own reward. "They're not gonna get rid of us that easily!" Rice declares.

"We're not gonna end up in Las Vegas." Somewhere another Memphis citizen is drawing, "Amen."—*Scott Isler*

CD ROT AND OTHER SONIC WOES

THUGHT THOSE inviolate CDs would never, ever wear out? Listen up. "We have been hearing rumors about 'CD rot,'" warns Bernie Grundman, a prominent mastering engineer based in Los Angeles. "And apparently, there is something to them. CDs use aluminum as a reflective surface, and the aluminum is cased in plastic. But over a period of time, enough air gets in there to oxidize the aluminum. Aluminum is bad that way; it oxidizes easily."

Grundman says that once such oxidation occurs, the disc surface becomes less reflective and disrupts proper operation of the player's laser beam. "They're finding that discs that weren't manufactured as well as others won't play after about five years now. For a while, they were saying that the lifespan of the compact disc is about 20 years. I don't know how valid that figure is."

Grundman also affirms the rumor that tracing the edge of a CD with a green felt-tip pen improves the disc's performance. "Apparently it's true, although I haven't tried it myself. It has something to do with absorption: The green absorbs stray laser-beam reflections. There are all kinds of things that seem strange but actually improve sound. Isolating the CD player from vibration is another."—*Alan di Perna*

MARTI JONES

Holiday in Akron

ATENTION ALL YOU frustrated, burned-out lounge singers: There is life after the Holiday Inn circuit. Just ask Marti Jones. "I played in those places for seven years, six nights a week, five hours a night," says the Akron-based vocalist, who continued in the cover-band tradition with pleasing results on her first three albums. By featuring the work of writers like Graham Parker, Elvis Costello and John Hiatt ("He looks just like Herman Munster!"), Jones and producer/bassist/husband Don Dixon managed to put a new spin on some great songs, make a lot of famous friends and pick up a few pointers through creative osmosis.

Jones' new record *Any Kind of Lie* contains her trademark collection of taut, playful pop tunes, but this time around she and Dixon wrote most of 'em. "My new record company knew we wanted to write, so they just said, 'We're not gonna send you any songs—even if a hit comes knocking on our door we're not going to give it to you,'" she laughs. "Writing at home, we'll slate out maybe three hours a day to try and get something done," says Jones. "We do our laundry and stuff in between."—*Peter Cronin*

THE MUSICIAN CHARTS

Top 100 Albums

The first number indicates the position of the album this month, the second its position last month.

1 • 1	M.C. Hammer <i>Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em</i> /Capitol
2 • 9	Wilson Phillips <i>Wilson Phillips</i> /SBK
3 • 6	Madonna <i>I'm Breathless</i> /Sire
4 • 39	New Kids on the Block <i>Step by Step</i> /Columbia
5 • 3	Soundtrack <i>Pretty Woman</i> /EMI
6 • 98	Keith Sweat <i>I'll Give All My Love to You</i> /Vintertainment
7 • 4	Bell Biv DeVoe <i>Posion</i> /MCA
8 • 14	Johnny Gill <i>Johnny Gill</i> /Motown
9 • 7	Depeche Mode <i>Violator</i> /Sire
10 • —	Mariah Carey <i>Mariah Carey</i> /Columbia
11 • 2	Sinéad O'Connor <i>I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got</i> /Ensign
12 • 10	Michael Bolton <i>Soul Provider</i> /Columbia
13 • —	Anita Baker <i>Compositions</i> /Elektra
14 • 5	Heart <i>Brigade</i> /Capitol
15 • 12	Phil Collins <i>... But Seriously</i> /Atlantic
16 • 59	Faith No More <i>The Real Thing</i> /Slash
17 • 8	Paula Abdul <i>Shut Up and Dance</i> /Virgin
18 • 13	Billy Idol <i>Charmed Life</i> /Chrysalis
19 • 18	Aerosmith <i>Pump</i> /Geffen
20 • 22	En Vogue <i>Born to Sing</i> /Atlantic
21 • 11	Janet Jackson <i>Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation</i> /A&M
22 • 26	Steve Vai <i>Passion and Warfare</i> /Relativity
23 • —	Bruce Hornsby & the Range <i>1 Night on the Town</i> /RCA

Top Concert Grosses

1	Paul McCartney <i>Giants Stadium, East Rutherford, NJ/July 9 & 11</i>	\$3,415,165
2	Paul McCartney <i>Veterans Stadium, Philadelphia/July 14-15</i>	\$3,107,980
3	Paul McCartney <i>RFA Memorial Stadium Starplex, Washington, D.C./July 4 & 6</i>	\$2,756,760
4	Madonna, Technotronic <i>Hembley Stadium, London/July 20-22</i>	\$2,578,625
5	New Kids on the Block, Rick Wes, Tommy Page, Perfect Gentlemen <i>Giants Stadium, East Rutherford, NJ/July 20-21</i>	\$2,542,125
6	Paul McCartney <i>Cleveland Municipal Stadium, Cleveland/July 20</i>	\$1,994,280
7	Grateful Dead <i>World Music Theatre, Tinley Park, IL/July 21-23</i>	\$1,972,542
8	Paul McCartney <i>Soldier Field Stadium, Chicago/July 29</i>	\$1,807,975
9	Paul McCartney <i>Cyclone Stadium, Iowa State University, Ames, IA/July 18</i>	\$1,747,298
10	Grateful Dead, Crosby, Stills & Nash <i>Hich Stadium, Buffalo, NY/July 16</i>	\$1,612,320

24 • 28	Mötley Crüe <i>Dr. Feelgood</i> /Elektra
25 • —	Poison <i>Flesh and Blood</i> /Enigma
26 • 17	Lisa Stansfield <i>Affection</i> /Arista
27 • 31	Ice Cube <i>Amerikkka's Most Wanted</i> /Priority
28 • 20	Don Henley <i>The End of the Innocence</i> /Geffen
29 • 54	Jeff Healey Band <i>Hell to Pay</i> /Arista
30 • 15	Bonnie Raitt <i>Nick of Time</i> /Capitol
31 • 21	Slaughter <i>Stick It to Ya</i> /Chrysalis
32 • 45	Soul II Soul <i>Hol. II—1990—A New Decade</i> /Virgin
33 • 23	Digital Underground <i>Sex Packets</i> /Tommy Boy
34 • —	Soundtrack <i>Days of Thunder</i> /DGC
35 • 16	Public Enemy <i>Rear of a Black Planet</i> /Def Jam
36 • 27	Taylor Dayne <i>Can't Fight Fate</i> /Arista
37 • —	Bad Company <i>Holy Water</i> /A&M
38 • 47	After 7 <i>After 7</i> /Virgin
39 • —	Eric B. & Rakim <i>Let the Rhythm Hit 'Em</i> /MCA
40 • 95	Snap <i>World Power</i> /Arista
41 • 71	The 2 Live Crew <i>As Nasty As They Wanna Be</i> /Skywalker
42 • 79	The Sundays <i>Reading, Writing and Arithmetic</i> /DGC
43 • 49	Milli Vanilli <i>The Remix Album</i> /Arista
44 • —	The Time <i>Pandemonium</i> /Paisley Park
45 • 52	Van Morrison <i>The Best of Van Morrison</i> /Mercury
46 • 24	Paula Abdul <i>Forever Your Girl</i> /Virgin
47 • —	Harry Connick, Jr. <i>We Are in Love</i> /Columbia
48 • 40	Tony! Toni! Tone! <i>The Revival</i> /Wing
49 • 50	L.A. Guns <i>Cocked & Loaded</i> /Vertigo

50 • 58	Gloria Estefan <i>Cuts Both Ways</i> /Epic
51 • 87	The Lightning Seeds <i>CloudcuckooLand</i> /MCA
52 • 32	Damn Yankees <i>Damn Yankees</i> /Warner Bros.
53 • 44	New Kids on the Block <i>Hangin' Tough</i> /Columbia
54 • 97	Garth Brooks <i>Garth Brooks</i> /Capitol
55 • 19	Soundtrack <i>Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles</i> /SBK
56 • 51	The Kentucky Headhunters <i>Pickin' on Nashville</i> /Mercury
57 • 48	Soundtrack <i>The Little Mermaid</i> /Walt Disney
58 • 41	Clint Black <i>Killin' Time</i> /RCA
59 • 38	George Strait <i>Livin' It Up</i> /MCA
60 • 29	Babyface <i>Tender Lover</i> /Solar
61 • —	Various Artists <i>We're All in the Same Gang</i> /Warner Bros.
62 • —	John Hiatt <i>Stolen Moments</i> /A&M
63 • 36	Basia <i>London Warsaw</i> /New York/Epic
64 • —	Nelson <i>After the Rain</i> /DGC
65 • 55	Andrew Dice Clay <i>The Day the Laughter Died</i> /Def American
66 • 34	Alannah Myles <i>Alannah Myles</i> /Atlantic
67 • —	Crosby, Stills & Nash <i>Live II Up</i> /Atlantic
68 • 74	Lita Ford <i>Sleight of Hand</i> /RCA
69 • 78	Alabama <i>Pass It on Down</i> /RCA
70 • 63	New Kids on the Block <i>New Kids on the Block</i> /Columbia
71 • —	Allman Brothers Band <i>Seven Turns</i> /Epic
72 • 53	Eric Clapton <i>Journeyman</i> /Duck
73 • 35	Linda Ronstadt (featuring A. Neville) <i>Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind</i> /Elektra
74 • 42	Midnight Oil <i>Blue Sky Mining</i> /Columbia
75 • 67	The Black Crowes <i>Shake Your Money Maker</i> /Def American
76 • 33	Robert Plant <i>Manic Nirvana</i> /Es Paranza
77 • —	Mellow Man Ace <i>Escape from Havana</i> /Capitol
78 • 85	Troop <i>Attitude</i> /Atlantic
79 • 46	David Bowie <i>Changesbowie</i> /RYKO
80 • 37	The B-52's <i>Cosmic Thing</i> /Reprise
81 • —	Danzig <i>Danzig II—Lucifer</i> /Def American
82 • —	Soundtrack <i>The Adventures of Ford Fairlane</i> /Elektra
83 • 96	World Party <i>Goodbye Jumbo</i> /Ensign
84 • 62	Pretenders <i>Packed</i> /Sire
85 • —	Tyler Collins <i>Girls Nite Out</i> /RCA

86 • —	Stevie B <i>Love & Emotion</i> /LMR
87 • 92	Luther Vandross <i>The Best of Luther Vandross: The Best of Love</i> /Epic
88 • —	Glenn Medeiros <i>Glenn Medeiros</i> /MCA
89 • —	Electric Boys <i>Funk-O-Metal Carpet Ride</i> /Atco
90 • 25	Fleetwood Mac <i>Behind the Mask</i> /Warner Bros.
91 • 56	Billy Joel <i>Storm Front</i> /Columbia
92 • —	Santana <i>Spirits Dancing in the Flesh</i> /Columbia
93 • —	Concrete Blonde <i>Bloodletting</i> /A.R.S.
94 • 43	Technotronic <i>Pump Up the Jam—The Album</i> /SBK
95 • 30	Rod Stewart <i>Downtown Train</i> /Selections from Storyteller/Warner Bros.
96 • —	Cameo <i>Real Men Wear Black</i> /Atlanta Artists
97 • —	Joe Cocker <i>Joe Cocker Live</i> /Capitol
98 • —	UB40 <i>Labour of Love II</i> /Virgin
99 • —	Kid Frost <i>Hispanic Causing Panic</i> /Virgin
100 • —	Bonnie Raitt <i>The Bonnie Raitt Collection</i> /Warner Bros.

The Musician album chart is produced by the Billboard chart department for Musician, and reflects the combined points for all album reports gathered by the Billboard computers in the month of July. The record company chart is based on the top 200 albums. The concert chart is based on Amusement Business Box Score reports for July 1990. All charts are copyright 1990 by BPI Incorporated.

Top Labels

- Columbia
- Capitol
- Arista
- Atlantic
- MCA
- Virgin
- Sire
- Elektra
- RCA
- SBK
- Warner Bros.
- DGC
- Geffen
- Epic
- Chrysalis
- EMI
- A&M
- Ensign
- Vintertainment
- Motown
- Mercury

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MARIAH CAREY'S SOLE VISION

MARIAH CAREY'S NOT WHAT ORDINARILY LEAPS to mind when you talk soul. She's not black, she's white, and she didn't learn her craft by singing in some storefront church. She's also young (20), with looks that seem to belong more to a fashion model than to a soul singer.

But make no mistake, Mariah Carey is the real deal, as she

amply demonstrates on her self-titled debut CD and number one hit single, "Vision of Love." And though she landed her record deal just three years after leaving home to seek her fortune, she bristles at the suggestion that her commercial breakthrough has come overnight or without struggle.

"To you," she says, "it would seem like only three years. But it's really been my whole life. I started writing songs and working with different musicians from the time that I was 13 or 14 years old. This has been my one goal." She adds with emphasis, "I've never, ever swayed from wanting to do this."

Carey's self-assurance is undeniable. She sings like a black Whitney Houston: the same technical proficiency, stately phrasing and sweeping, dramatic highs. But she also has the one thing Houston has never had—the ability to let go, to sing with fire and abandon, to moan, wail and whisper and thereby convey a universe of meaning without singing a word. She appropriates gospel and blues idioms as if they had her name on them and cops stratospheric Minnie Riperton runs with the gutsy daring of a bandit. So when Carey says, "I've always known I wanted to do this," it comes off like, I've always known I *would* do this. Like it was destiny. And maybe it was.

She grew up in New York State. Her mother was a jazz and classical singer who divorced Carey's father when Mariah was three. Her home was often full of mom's musician friends, casually jamming, and Mariah thought nothing of singing right along with them. "I don't think I was aware

of the fact that what I was doing was any different than what every other kid was doing," she says. "I assumed that everybody went home and had musicians jamming in their house."

Mariah's older brother and sister introduced her to the R&B likes of Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder. She graduated quickly to gospel, making happy discoveries in the music of Shirley Caesar and Edwin Hawkins. She loved "the authenticity in the music... and the spirituality of it. I just think it's the most real music that you can listen

to." It's also what taught and nourished her, until, at 17, this white kid had a voice that sounded neither white nor kid-like. More like church choirs and jubilee praise, red beans and rice, hot sex, sweet sin and the glory of salvation.

No wonder she couldn't wait to try her luck in New York City. She found an apartment, got a job waiting tables and proceeded to hate every minute of it. After hours, when the customers were starting to filter out, Carey would sit in the restaurant bar, nursing her tired feet and wounded ego. The bartender would switch the big-screen TV to the video channel and Carey would watch, feeling as if she were doing time in

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By Leonard Pitts, Jr.





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some kind of purgatory.

"I'd be sitting there watching some video—Debbie Gibson or something—and I'd be fuming furiously. Like, 'Why do I have to sit here and waitress while these people are doing videos?' I was *sooo* pissed."

But you know the rest: Carey's demos came to the attention of the local music community; she started doing session work. Went out on the road with Brenda K. Starr, who became a fan. Brenda K. took her to a party where she met Tommy Motolla, who heads CBS Records. She gave him a tape and the rest is about to be history.

Meaning that Mariah Carey is soon to be a major star. Bet the farm on it. CBS is buying lots of big trade ads to make sure all the Right People are familiar with her. Critics are beginning to run out of superlatives. And perhaps the ultimate endorsement: Black radio has jumped on her music with both feet.

Mariah accepts all of this with surprising equanimity. On the one hand, she admits to feeling like a Cinderella whose prince has

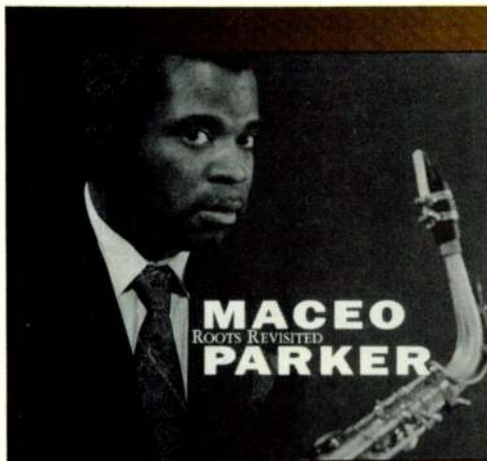
finally come. On the other, well... "I believe if you really believe you can do something and you really work at your talent and your craft, you can do it."

She's not frosty about it. Not for her the studied arrogance of other newcomers. What she has goes beyond arrogance. She's just—very—assured.

If there is anything that remotely rattles Carey's self-confidence, even for a moment, it's the thought of following in the footsteps of the gospel stars who gave her so much inspiration. Recently, she told a reporter for the *L.A. Times* that she doesn't think she's good enough to sing gospel—yet.

Asked to elaborate, Carey says, "It was just me showing my respect for those singers. I wasn't saying, 'Oh, I can't sing gospel,' I was saying I think I should get a little bit more established before I get so bold as to say, 'Yeah, I want to sing with the Winans.' I feel like I need to pay a few more dues to get up to their level."

A word to the Winans: Don't let her modesty fool you. The dues check is in the mail. Mariah Carey is on her way. **M**



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BÉLAVISION

WHEN BÉLA FLECK AND THE FLECKTONES take the stage at Manhattan's Bottom Line, what you see ain't what you get. First there are the Wooten Brothers, Victor and Roy, manning the bass and rhythm chairs respectively—but the drums are nowhere evident. Seems that Brother Roy's letting his fingers do the walking on the touch pads of a futuristic Drumitar, which only looks like a guitar. Meanwhile, Victor's settling the groove with his warm, acoustic-colored bass guitar sound, echoing Fleck's lines with frailing melodies of his own and improvising contrapuntal passages with both hands, à la Stanley Jordan. At one point, keyboardist Howard Levy picks up what looks like your garden-variety diatonic blues harp and proceeds to blow chromatic changes on it with a melodic freedom recalling Toots Thielemans.

And there in the center of the storm, exuding his own quiet brand of mastery, stands New York native Béla Fleck. Combining the Olympian control of Jascha Heifetz with the aw-shucks demeanor of Pat Metheny, Fleck expends nary an iota of wasted motion, as both hands work furiously on his peculiar-looking hybrid electric banjo. Yet what comes pouring out isn't retrograde dixieland, but a personal blend of modern jazz, funk, ethnic, blues and classical sources. And if it's all animated by the kind of rural American grandeur that echoes bluegrass, it must be subliminal, because the polyrhythmic tension of Fleck's cascading arpeggios and bell-like counterpoint is quite unlike anything you've ever heard on a banjo before.

"Well, jazz was always the Holy Grail—musically that was my goal all along," Fleck explains earnestly. "But only now am I getting a chance to play that way within a rhythm-section format—with a drummer.

That's so important for me, because I like things to have rhythmic as well as melodic hooks. Almost every tune I write has to have those elements in there somewhere. It has to groove, but there's a moment of uncertainty as to what is the groove, even though most of my stuff counts through in four. And

because our instrumentation is a little offbeat, straight-ahead jazz tunes like 'Hurricane Camille' give us a certain credibility among those people who won't buy the idea of jazz banjo or jazz harmonica—or even jazz Drumitar," he laughs. "But for me it's perfectly natural."

Fair enough, but then Béla Fleck did

grow up on West End Avenue in New York City, attending Music and Art High School in Harlem along with future jazz luminaries Marcus Miller, Omar Hakim and Kenny Washington. So despite Fleck's impeccable bluegrass pedigree—as a solo artist for Rounder Records, and as a member of the trailblazing New Grass Revival—his urban background engendered a different set of goals. By high school, Fleck recalls, "I was already pretty familiar with the banjo world, but growing up in New York you get to hear everything. So I started learning all of these Charlie Parker heads. I heard Chick Corea and Return to Forever play the Beacon Theatre. I dreamed of someday having a band like that—playing my music. Then I realized how nobody had explored the idea of playing the banjo more like a guitar: going back and forth with your thumb and forefinger and playing up and down the strings like a guitar or a mandolin or a violin—nobody was doing that on a five-string banjo while wearing fingerpicks.

"It was hard, too, because the banjo's a

Béla Fleck
does more than strum
his old banjo
By Chip Stern



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bear, it really is—a tough, cruel instrument—and no one had taught me how to play the scales. Nobody really knew how, because the techniques weren't applicable. In the melodic style, you alternate from one string to the next, and you never play two consecutive notes on the same string. Bill Keith really opened up that technique, but it was limited, because you could only get certain scales in certain keys, and only certain patterns. Then, of course, there's Earl Scruggs, who turned the whole instrument around—people called him the Paganini of

the banjo. The Scruggs style is picking patterns based on rolls with your right hand, using the open strings, and then adding slides and hammer-ons with the left hand. And years ago Don Reno pioneered a style where he played little three- or four-note licks on one string, and he had different positions that he could go to, but he never really learned the instrument the way you'd learn a classical instrument or jazz guitar—by mastering every scale up and down.

"So I started working real hard to find my way around, starting with first position, and

worked my way to the top of the neck. Starting with just a major scale, I learned every mode, and then I did it in thirds and fourths and fifths and sixths and sevenths. I learned my instrument as an *instrument*, so I knew where every note on the neck was, what it was and why, how far to go to the next, what happened when you switched strings and

THE MEETING

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FLECKTRONICS

WAS TRYING to get someone to build me an electric banjo for quite a while," says Béla Fleck, "and then Deering's version came out. I didn't like its looks or sound at first, but then I fooled with it and got it sounding much better. I like it fine for certain tunes, but not for all of them, because my old 1937 Gibson flat-head five-string mahogany banjo has a really rootsy sound, with all these sparkly overtones that I really love—like the difference between a piano and a piano sound. This old banjo is what I've used on everything for the last 12 years.

"I usually tune the head to between A and B-flat—that's where it sounds good on my banjo. Banjos are machines, and you can take 'em apart with a wrench and substitute different parts. The Gibson was originally a four-string, and I just put the neck from my old Gibson on it, but then I had this really fine luthier John Monteleone build me a five-string mahogany neck. The wood is a lot thicker, and the weight actually causes the banjo to sound different—the weight of everything is critical to the tone. He also made an arched fingerboard for it, like on a Fender electric guitar.

"The Gibson has an on-board microphone that sits on a little gooseneck stand out in front, to get the real ambience of the instrument. Then I have an electric guitar pickup inside which picks up the sound from a piece of metal that sits between the head and the bridge without touching the head. It's very finicky, and that rack behind me is what I have to use to translate that signal into something that sounds good. I have a 10-band Klark-Teknik parametric EQ to pull out feedback in different rooms, a preamp-splitter box built by my soundman Richard Battaglia called the Acoustic Helper, and it's basically a mixer for the mike and the pickup. And I use a Polytone Taurus with a 15-inch speaker and two little tweeters. Then I have an Alesis QuadraVerb. For the Deering, I have a Samson Wireless and a Roland GP16 guitar processor, and a Barcus Berry BBE."

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how big the intervals were.”

Fleck became so accomplished on his instrument that he joined a Boston band called Tasty Licks straight out of high school, staying with them for three years before moving to Kentucky and co-founding a band called Spectrum. Then it was off to Nashville as a member of the New Grass Revival. Still, Fleck’s vision of a modern jazz banjo persisted, albeit without the impetus of a pumping drummer. “But jazz isn’t just a solo idiom—it’s a group idiom,” he points out. “And I couldn’t get really good at it until

I could spend years playing with a great rhythm section. I’m finally getting a chance to do that now.”

Thanks in part to television producer Dick Van Kleek, who hosts his own “Lonesome Pine Specials” out of Lexington, Kentucky. “He said, ‘Béla, I’d like you to do a show for us,’” Fleck recalls, “and the only condition is that you come up with something completely unusual. I don’t want all the guys you always play with—even though they’re phenomenal.”

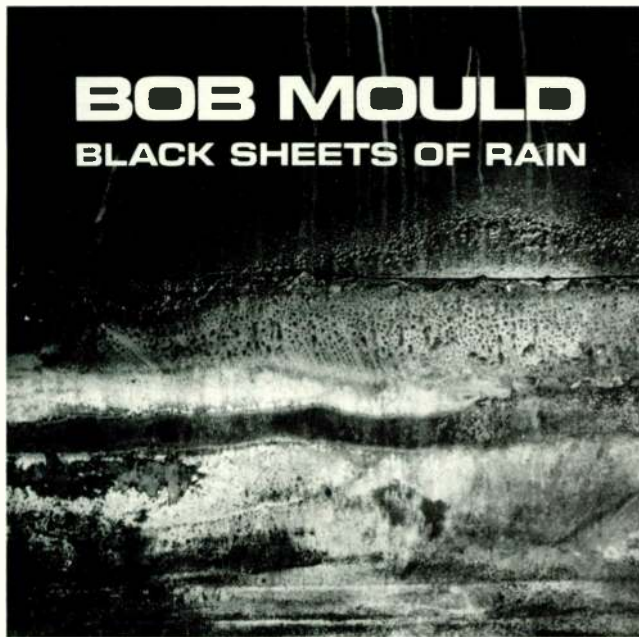
So Fleck started looking for a new kind

of group. He met Howard Levy at the Winnipeg Folk Festival: “We hooked up after the show and just played until the sun came up—great interaction.” Bassist Victor Wooten was recommended by a mutual friend: “He played for me over the phone. I invited him down to Nashville and discovered that he had not only an arsenal of techniques quite unlike anything I’d heard on bass guitar, but he could groove. And he told me his brother Roy was not only a great drummer, but that he’d gotten this weird guitar that he was playing drums on. I thought, ‘Oh man, that’ll look great on TV.’”

The day before the taping, in August of 1988, Fleck assembled the group for their first rehearsal at his home—which was promptly struck by lightning. “We tried practicing in the dark for about an hour, but finally said the hell with it and decided to go up to Lexington, where we had one run-through for the cameras. That was the first time we played together. The next time was on the show, and it worked.”

Fleck went back to New Grass, and the group dispersed. “But when the show was broadcast, everyone flipped out, and I realized we’d better do some gigs somewhere, just to explore it. I had some time off around Christmas, and we did four little concerts around the Tennessee area. The next time I had a few weeks off was in April of 1989, so I called everyone up and said, ‘Let’s make a record—I’ve got the money.’ We rehearsed for five days and recorded for five days, and that’s *Béla Fleck and the Flecktones*. Then I proceeded to try and sell it.”

After getting the old ho-hum from major jazz labels, Béla was signed up by Warner’s Nashville chief Jim Ed Norman, who assured him he’d be marketed not as a country act, but as a jazz artist. “Now I might be too close to it,” Fleck goes on, choosing his words carefully, “but except for the nature of the instruments themselves, I don’t really hear a lot of country influence in the Flecktones. I mean, I was in New Grass Revival for over eight years, so I’m sure it’s there in some way I’m not aware of. And somewhere down the line I’d like to put together the most kick-ass bluegrass band there’s ever been, and let people know what *that’s* really supposed to sound like. But as far as the Flecktones are concerned, we’re the opposite of that, and I want us to be able to tell people, ‘This is nothing like bluegrass—this is contemporary music.’”



In 1989, Bob Mould released **WORKBOOK**, his first solo effort. “Classic,” said *New Music Express*, “would be too demeaning a term.” “Quite Magnificent,” said *Q*. *Rolling Stone* wrote, “the road to success and maturity can indeed be treacherous, but **WORKBOOK** proves that every once in a while it’s worth it.” “Proves there’s life after thrash rock,” opined *GQ*. While *Musician* wondered: “Is it too early to ask for more?” Here it is.



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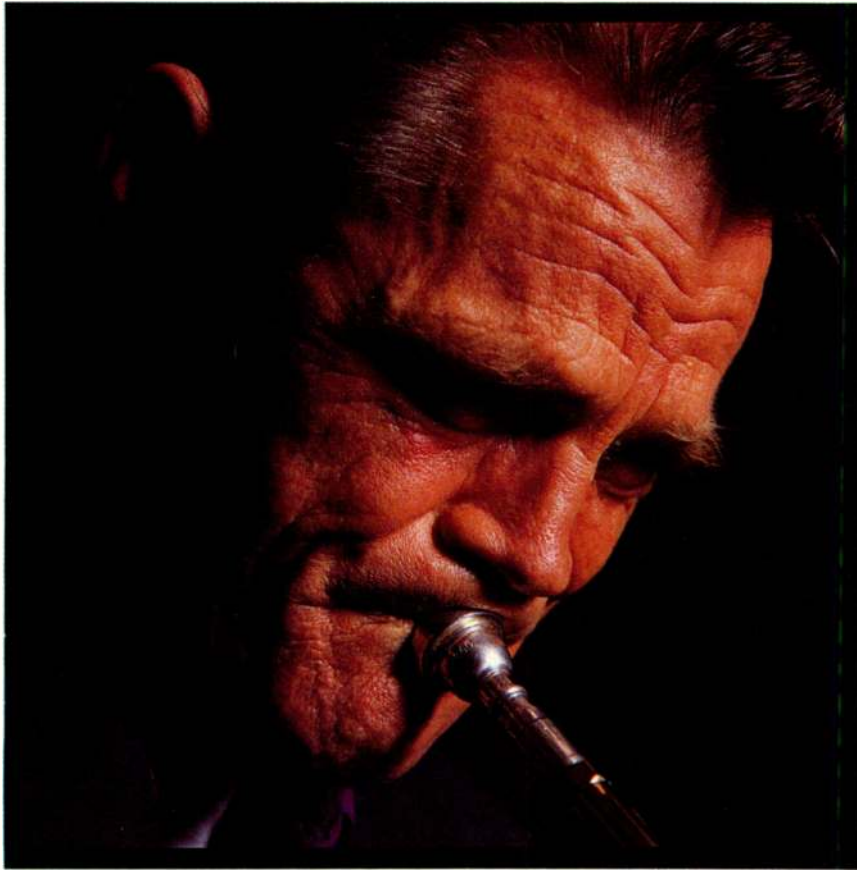


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CHET BAKER GETS LOST IN TIME



"THEN I GOT BUSTED AGAIN," CHET BAKER told Rex Reed in 1973, speaking about his most notorious international incident. "I spent 15 months in an Italian prison. There was no heat, no toilet, no running water, and nobody spoke a word of English. All I had for light was a five-watt bulb, but I read a lot and I almost went blind. It was so cold that when one hand turned blue, I'd put it under the covers and change the book into the other hand until that one turned blue. For 15 months, I lived in that cell, working chess problems and playing my horn."

With the recent and widespread videocassette release of Bruce Weber's dreamy, addictive, romantic, complex and controversial time-traveling Chet Baker movie *Let's Get Lost*, the Baker renaissance, which has burned like a small fire for decades with a persistence and intensity that have surprised even some of the '50s

keepers of the flame, has gone four-alarm. You can see the smoke pouring from record stores everywhere; at least 78 albums featuring Baker have been issued since his death. If nothing becomes a legend's life like his leaving it, then Baker's mysterious and untimely fall from a second-story hotel window in Amsterdam at three in the morning on Friday, May 13, 1988—"police reported that they found the body of a 30-year-old man with a trumpet"—had plenty to do with today's inferno. Baker was 58 years, 19 weeks and one day old when he died. Had the police turned the clock back to the '50s, when the hot flashes began?

Maybe you had to have been there, but I've always felt that the '50s—that much-maligned decade rightly chastised for its

blandness, repression and worse—was also, paradoxically, America's last golden era. Framed on one side by Depression communalism and post-World War II optimism spiked with *noir* and on the other by the sensational '60s before they exploded into apocalypse now, the '50s tendered nearly everyone a humane lifestyle complete with an undercurrent of dimly unaware, thwarted and mostly unwanted innocence: i.e., something to rebel against—personally, socially, politically, whatever. From this potent brew came a strange band of vulnerable romantic icons whose solitary allure and smoky touch are still very much with us and will probably withstand time's every test—larger-than-life, good-bad, twang-of-the-void onenamers from the country's heartland: Clift and Brando from Nebraska, Dean from Indiana, Elvis from Mississippi, Marilyn from sunny California and, on the cusp of the '60s, Dylan from Minnesota. I'm not sure that any other decade could have produced such intense introspection, sweet rebellion and naive, confused cynicism. Or such an air of utter aloneness.

Born in Yale, Oklahoma, on December 23, 1929, Chesney Henry Baker—his father was a marijuana-smoking disc jockey and guitar player, and his mother took him to sing at talent contests in California when he was 12 or 13—taught himself to play trumpet in junior high school. Fearing that Chet might be trouble, his family signed him up for the

army when he was 16. Baker played with the 298th army band in Germany, heard his first jazz on V-discs, was discharged, listened to more jazz, re-enlisted, played with the Presidio army band in San

Francisco, gigged all night at jazz clubs until it was time (like Robert E. Lee Prewett) to play reveille, was transferred to Arizona, went AWOL and (more *From Here to Eternity* stuff) was sent to the stockade before being drummed out of the service.

After playing a three-week stint with Char-

It takes a
tough bopper to
be cool

By Paul Nelson

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ally at Stryker's on West 86th Street when he played there regularly in the mid-'70s. He'd walk in the front door a little later than the last minute and go straight to the stage, where the other musicians would be already. Considering his problems, he looked amazingly good, his long hair slicked back over his collar like a brown crow's-wing, the eyes sharp but shy, the ears sticking out slightly, giving only the faintest impression of the sexy hick as well as the bop hipster but really looking more like Woody Gatsby from East Egg, Oklahoma. The audience response was as if the hero of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* or Leonard Cohen's "The Stranger Song" had arrived and said: I'm unarmed, except for my sensibility, and even that seems like a blank sometimes.

Onstage, Chet always sat in a chair. Straight and erect, somewhat stiff, the trumpet's golden bell resting squarely on his right knee, he looked unnaturally quiet and alone in repose, as though he spent 16 hours a day that way, sandpapering the cigarette smoke and darning that dream: a vulnerable, aging Mafioso, stylishly seedy, the face older and rounder than it first appeared, the body tightly composed in the severe right angles of a Walker Evans photograph. His voice was Southwestern soft and polite, but there was a surprising directness in his speech. It may be ridiculous to be moved by a man naming that tune, but I was, and so was everyone else in the audience. I've done this a million times before, he seemed to be saying, but I still care about it.

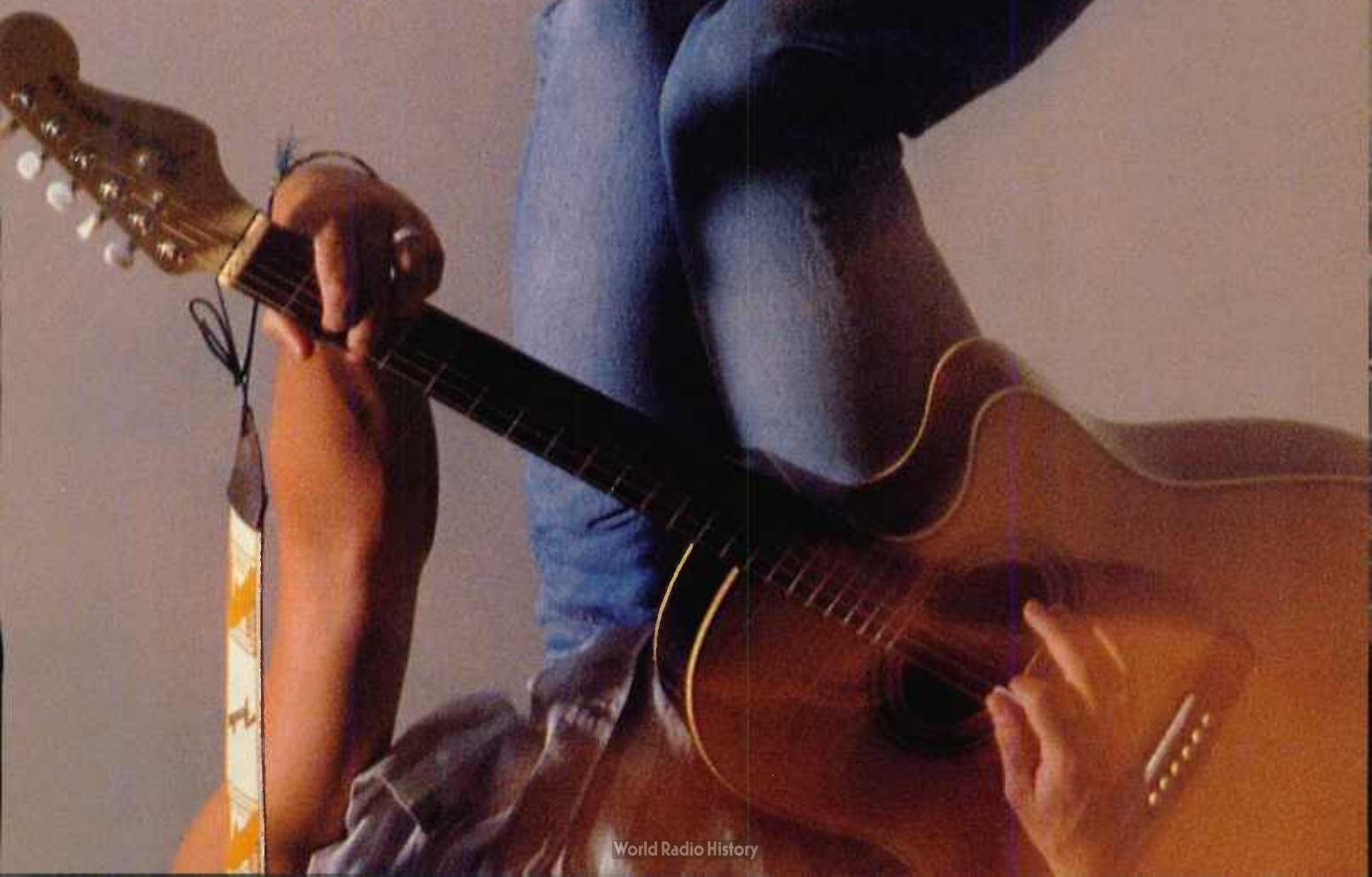
Chet has almost no singing voice—it's all shadings, slides, glides and whispers: yearning in its purest form—but his tightrope phrasing, punctuated by an occasional Elvis lip curl, can either hang you up or out to dry. The effect is rather like Dean's in *Rebel Without a Cause*: a longing to belong to someone given representation by a technique (not a lack of it) so willfully artless and accessible yet emotionally powerful that not everyone can handle it—or wants to. It's both too much and too little. But in death and matters of the heart, all of us—Chetsters and jazz connoisseurs alike—might be amateurs.

I think Bruce Weber's understanding of Chet's appeal is right on the money in *Let's Get Lost*, but he let his star get a little too stoned for a few of the scenes. As a result, Chet sometimes seems less intelligent than I've seen him in other interviews. Weber has been accused of being a fetishist (that probably comes with this territory), glorify-



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ing a go-with-the-flow dope addict (mostly not guilty), vilifying Chet's all-around sterling character and his every action (this from Chet's mother, his third wife and three children!), and exploiting Chet's mother, his third wife and three children (twice guilty, and both times it hurts). Some people feel there's too much emphasis on Chet's singing—the movie really *isn't* wall-to-wall vocals—and not enough on his trumpet playing. They're right, but there's plenty of both, and I love the singing. Weber obviously loves Chet and he's made the best jazz movie I've yet seen, but he's extremely clear-eyed regarding his valentine's flaws. All of the film's moth-to-the-flame women portray Chet as a shape-shifting Jekyll and Hyde—manipulative, undependable and insincere—and you know that they're right.

It's like Will Friedwald wrote: "For most musicians, art is what you make on the bandstand and life is dealing with things like the rent and relationships. Baker had it the other way around: When he ambled up to the microphone, what came out of his trumpet or his mouth was life. His music was so natural and direct, not a reflection of his soul but his soul itself...and he had to work no harder to sound the way he did than to look the way he did."

Maybe Friedwald's comments that "while Baker may look 'cool' in his undershirt, he has to be about the most emotionally direct player who ever handled a horn, far more so than many of the blackest and bluesiest hard boppers touted as a more virile (and therefore, to most jazz crits, more acceptable) alternative to the mellow Californians" and that "it requires strength to be soft" could apply to Weber's movie, too.

In his last interview, when asked about why he took drugs, Chet said: "In order to block out a lot of things. Maybe to give you a particular kind of insight into what you're trying to get into. If you're talking about music—allowing you to *concentrate*. And the fact that all of the people that I enjoyed the most in music passed through this thing [made my taking drugs] something that was inevitable. It was something that I just had to find out about. And I found out that I was strong enough to do it, strong enough to get away with it without killing myself...I'm not sorry. And I don't apologize for anything. I've never done anything to hurt anyone, and I don't think I've hurt myself [*pauses to consider*] too much. I'm 58 years old, I'm still here and I'm still playing." 

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sparks to the new season." They call his debut album, "**Diamond In The Rough**," impressive.

Saxophonist **Christopher Hollyday** delivers tightly crafted jazz. *The New York Times Magazine* says "Hollyday, on his new album '**On Course**,' seems too young to play with the authority he shows."

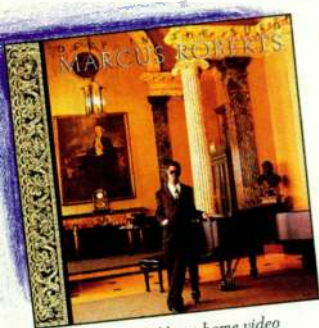
The Chicago Tribune noted "it takes a lifetime to learn to sing as simply and as hauntingly as **Carmen McRae**, and most singers never get there."

Her new album is "**Carmen Sings Monk**."

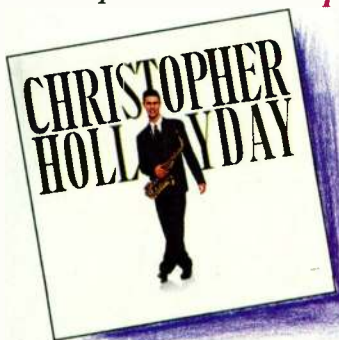
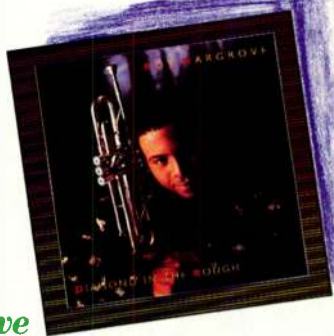
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STEVE EARLE

Does It the Hard Way

D

BY MARK ROWLAND

RIVING WEST OUT OF NASHVILLE ON A SUMMER AFTERNOON THE HILLS LOOK GREEN AND LAZY, A DECEPTIVELY PASTORAL VIEW. "THIS IS A POOR COUNTY," STEVE EARLE EXPLAINS BETWEEN CIGARETTE DRAGS. "YOU CAN ALWAYS TELL AROUND HERE, IF IT'S REAL HILLY; THE PLACES WITH NO ARABLE LAND AROUND HERE WERE THE POOR ONES." HIS EYES FLICK BACK TO THE ROAD. "TERRIBLE PLACE TO BE IN JAIL, TOO."

EARLE'S VOICE HAS THE RING OF EXPERIENCE. "IT WAS THE DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO," HE CONTINUES, WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT. "I WAS LATE TO PICK MY SON IAN UP; I HAD LIMITED VISITATIONS BACK THEN, SO I WAS SMOKIN'. CHEATHAM COUNTY PULLED ME OVER. TURNED OUT MY EX-WIFE HAD GOTTEN A NOTICE IN THE MAIL THAT MY LICENSE WOULD BE SUSPENDED IF I DIDN'T SHOW PROOF OF INSURANCE. THEY RAN A WARRANT CHECK AND I WENT STRAIGHT TO JAIL. I HAD THE FLU. IT'S A BANK HOLIDAY. THEY TAKE CASH STRICTLY."

HE SLICES OFF THE NARRATIVE, AS IF TO SET IT ADRIFT LIKE SO MUCH STALE SMOKE. IT'S A GOOD STEVE EARLE STORY, KEEN ON DETAIL AND QUIET DESPERATION.

A FEW EXITS LATER, WE APPROACH A NEO-RUSTIC A-FRAME WITH A LOT OF GREEN ACREAGE AND NOT MUCH ELSE IN SIGHT. EARLE PARKS THE CAR, A LUXURY BMW HE'S BEEN DISOWNING SINCE ABOUT FIVE SECONDS AFTER WE'D MET (IT BELONGS TO HIS WIFE, TERESA ENSENAT, MCA'S VICE-PRESIDENT OF A&R). HE LEADS A TOUR THROUGH

Photography by Steven Pumphrey

the basement, which features a recording studio, computer (he's writing a novel), shelves of records and a very cool collection of guitars, including the Telecaster Earle played in seventh grade and an original Gretsch Chet Atkins. Locked up nearby are his guns.

Upstairs it's airy and comfortable. Earle flops on a couch gratefully, but he's up again in seconds, pacing the floor nervously. "I get to spend so little time here, and it's become so precious to me. The sun rises out that window"—he gestures toward the kitchen—"and maybe every 10 mornings there'll be deer when I wake up. I used to be nomadic and never thought I could care about a place," he admits. "But you get older and things change."

A guy who grew up in south Texas, left home at 16, showed up in Nashville with six dollars in his pocket, and has since survived four managers, five marriages, a felony rap that threatened 10 years in stir and, oh yeah, a musical career that's zigged from folk

to western swing to rockabilly to country to flat-out rock 'n' roll, must know a little about "things change." Indeed, so many of Earle's songs are portraits of transition—hopeless romantics and highway rats on the road to nowhere—that Earle, with his skull-and-crossbones tattoo, unfashionably shaggy hair and clothes that rarely stray beyond leather and jeans, seems to naturally embody those values. No doubt it's part of his appeal—the singer of outlaw songs who lives and dies the part.

Earle has yet to crumple, however. Since his spectacular 1986 debut, *Guitar Town*, he's toured incessantly with his band, the Dukes, while putting together three more records of consistent, sometimes sterling quality. Or as Earle sings on his latest album, aptly titled *The Hard Way*: "There are those who break and bend/I'm the other kind." It's a good thing too. Because even as the characters who populate his songs are drawn with clarity and emotional insight, Earle's own story frequently suggests self-torture and confusion.

"I guess it does seem like a jumble," he admits. "Some people like to give the impression that I create chaos in my life intentionally. That's not really necessary—life's hard enough as it is.

"Don't get me wrong. I've had a lot of fun, too. When I finished *Guitar Town* I remember thinking, 'I can die now.' Thirty-one years old and it took me that long to get a chance to make a record. That year we played the Park West in Chicago, and I remember telling the audience, 'It just occurred to me that my dreams have come true.'

"But I could have saved myself a lot of trouble and pain if I had realized that night that I'd done what I'd set out to do and it was time

to come up with a new plot. Because I didn't know what to do next. I think this is the most personal record I've made since *Guitar Town* and thank God it worked, in the sense that it focused things for me," he says. "Cause toward the end there it got a little scary."

STEVE EARLE grew up middle-class on the outskirts of San Antonio, the oldest kid of five. His father was an air-traffic controller. He picked up on music so early "I never even wanted to be a fireman or a cowboy. I was one of those kids who took my guitar to every party I

went to, and was considered a nerd because I did." He was also something of a hippie, against the Vietnam War, suspended from school for putting out a newspaper that published a caricature of the vice-principal as a Gestapo. San Antonio was a military town, with plenty of big strong farmboys who thought that was just fine, which meant Earle got his



Earle in July at Ardent Studios producing a Memphis rock band called Guilt for MCA.

share of stompings and involuntary shearings. He started running away at 14.

Soon he was gone for good and playing professionally, folk songs and an acoustic guitar. Too young for clubs that served liquor, he found a niche at a coffeehouse called the Gatehouse. "They published the local underground newspaper; they were like old communists. That's probably why my political ideas have been pretty consistent over the years." The music has changed of course, but Earle still makes a practice of playing a few shows by himself whenever he writes new songs for an album: "If I can make it come across with just a song and a guitar," he says, "then I know I can make a great record."

A few years later he hitched to Nashville, taking part of Texas with him. Eldon Shamblin, the great Texas Playboys guitarist, "probably had more influence on me than any other guitar player," Earle admits, "especially his bass runs and his rhythm. That's where the style came from." Indeed, Earle cooked up a western swing band in Nashville called Los Gringos, albeit with a set list broad enough to include the Bob Wills tribute "What Makes Bob Holler?" and the Wailers' "Lively Up Yourself."

He'd also fallen in with an older generation of Texas songwriters like Jerry Jeff Walker, Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark—iconoclasts and hard livers all. But Earle was hardly overmatched. "The night we met, Guy Clark spent the whole night trying to score speed from me," Earle recalls with a laugh. "I quit doing cocaine the night I looked in the mirror and realized it was the most redundant thing in the world.

Only one can be the best.



People pay a lot of money to be as nervous as I am."

But even Earle couldn't subvert the Nashville establishment, where singers sang and songwriters wrote, and never the twain shall hyphenate. For a decade he made his living at a publishing house, knocking out "story songs" for others, his career effectively on hold. He cut some rockabilly singles for Epic; a record he made with CBS was shelved. "And one Christmas I was home listening to *Born in the U.S.A.* along with some older Dylan albums and Guy Clark's *Old No. 1*—the first album I ever got my name on. And I realized that I hadn't written a story song that was really about me, the way I felt, in years."

He composed "Guitar Town," then "Fearless Heart" and "My Old Friend the Blues," and got himself a deal. "I'd applied years of craft to writing the way I had when I first came to town," Earle observes. "And that was such a release, 'cause I didn't think I could find my way back there. I thought I'd lost it."

Guitar Town was that rare perfecta—a critical pop success and a country hit. The songs were strong on melody and romantic narrative—always Nashville's strong suits—but with a defiant, populist edge; "the most anti-Reagan album of the year," as Earle proudly notes. At the same time Steve's penchant for motorcycles, firearms and divorce courts let you know he wasn't no tweedy liberal neither. Lumped with other emerging talents like Dwight Yoakam and Lyle Lovett as part of a so-called country renaissance, Earle probably had more in common with Dylan, Springsteen and the Stones. But like the best country pioneers, Willie or Hag or Bob Wills, Earle's music wasn't that easily nailed. It seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere.

Earle figured he was a pioneer too, knocking down the walls between Nashville and rock, "and for a while I thought we'd done it." He was wrong. Rock audiences proved far more receptive to Earle's take on country than Nashville was to his take on rock. After *Guitar Town's* initial dent, there weren't any more country hits, a fact that still rankles: "Some stuff on country radio today is so urban it's ridiculous. What they're really afraid of is what the songs say, not the way the records sound."

But Earle was signed as a country artist, and country artists put out albums every year. While on tour to promote *Guitar Town*, he and the Dukes cut their next record, *Exit 0*, in 30 days, from basic tracks to final mix. "And I'll never forget, the night we finished it, we listened to that last mix and got right back on the bus."

Earle's personal life offered little respite. Still not officially divorced from his third wife, the mother of Earle's oldest son, Justin, he was living with soon-to-be wife number four, then pregnant with younger son Ian. He'd also struck a friendship with Teresa Ensenat, though at the time, Earle says, her destiny as wife number five had yet to be unveiled. "I was and am a very monogamous person," he insists. "But this business has a tendency to eat wives for breakfast." The guilt involved in breaking apart a marriage that includes children, he adds, is "phenomenal. Teresa's and my relationship went through a real baptism by fire."

Were that not enough, in December of 1987 Earle got in a fight with friend and roadie Chip Phillips outside a Dallas nightclub. The law intervened. Earle was charged with assaulting a police officer, a felony in Texas that can get you 10 years. According to Earle, what

actually occurred was the opposite—a cop assaulted him—but the case dragged on for months. At the last minute, charges were drastically reduced and Earle pleaded no contest to resisting arrest—mostly for the sake of his father, he says, who was recovering from a heart attack at the time. Earle actually wanted the trial: "I wanted a shot at getting that police officer off the force. To this day I feel guilty because that cop is still at large."

In the midst of this soap opera, Earle assumed legal custody of a teenaged nephew whose parents had more or less disappeared. He set up Fearless Hearts, a charity to help homeless children. And he put together *Copperhead Road*, a record that seemed to underscore the schizophrenia of his career, with one side raging rock and on the other more romantic love songs. "It's really two unfinished albums," Earle admits. "I went through a period of stage fright on *Copperhead* because I didn't really know if I could make it without the band. I'd always considered myself totally literary. But I discovered that I was a better musician and knew more about making records than I thought I did."

As it came time to write songs for *The Hard Way*, things became a little calmer. Earle and Ensenat had married, bought a house, and Earle found in it enough space to "start taking stock of my life." Not too surprisingly, his stock-taking became the album's theme, with several of the songs shaped by his experiences. His tangle with the Dallas police helped inspire "Justice in Ontario" and "Billy Austin," the former song based on the controversial trial of a Canadian biker gang, the latter an unsparing portrait of a killer that serves equal indictment against capital punishment. There's a tender echo of a close friend's suicide in "Have Mercy," while on "The Other Kind" Earle sings about a survivor more or less like himself—increasingly fenced in by responsibility, riding his motorcycle for a taste of the freedom that once surrounded him like air.

"Making this record was easy once we started," he notes drily. "Living through the two years that it's about was not."

Produced with hard rock savant Joe Hardy, the record also reflects Earle's newfound confidence and musical range. There's a song about evangelical opportunists, replete with a full gospel choir; a devilish rocker about the corruption of a sweet

young thing, with NRBQ rhythms and *Exile on Main Street* attitude; a ferocious "West Nashville Boogie" that takes John Lee Hooker into Lynyrd Skynyrd land. Of course there's also romantic pop and what must be Earle's fifty-seventh variety of highway song. But it's telling that the record ends with "Close Your Eyes," an eerie lullaby that Earle claims is one of the songs he's most proud of, and then adds, "I probably know less what that song is about than any I've ever written."

"I guess it's a lullaby to myself," he finally decides. "About putting too much pressure on myself and trying to control things that you can't. I'm one of those people who always think they can affect the outcome. That always think they can help people and fix things."

He says that writing the record has helped "exorcise" his bitterness at Nashville. "I almost moved to Los Angeles," he says. "I felt underappreciated here, like I'd done something for country music and then took a lot of licks for it."

"But I feel real good about this town now. And this [cont'd on page 129]

DUKE BOXES

STEVE EARLE plays Gibson Chet Atkins acoustic guitars. ZIP GIBSON plays a Les Paul Custom, a Tokai Strat, and a Gibson SG through a Korg effects rack. BUDDY BAXTER twangs an Emmons steel guitar, a Gibson SST and a Joe Glazer Fenderbender guitar. KELLY LOONEY bottoms out on a Kubicki Factor bass and a Fender Precision. KEN MOORE's keyboards are a Yamaha KX88 and a Korg organ. All the Dukes use Peavey amps and backline. Drummer CRAIG WRIGHT chooses Pearl drums and Zildjian cymbals.

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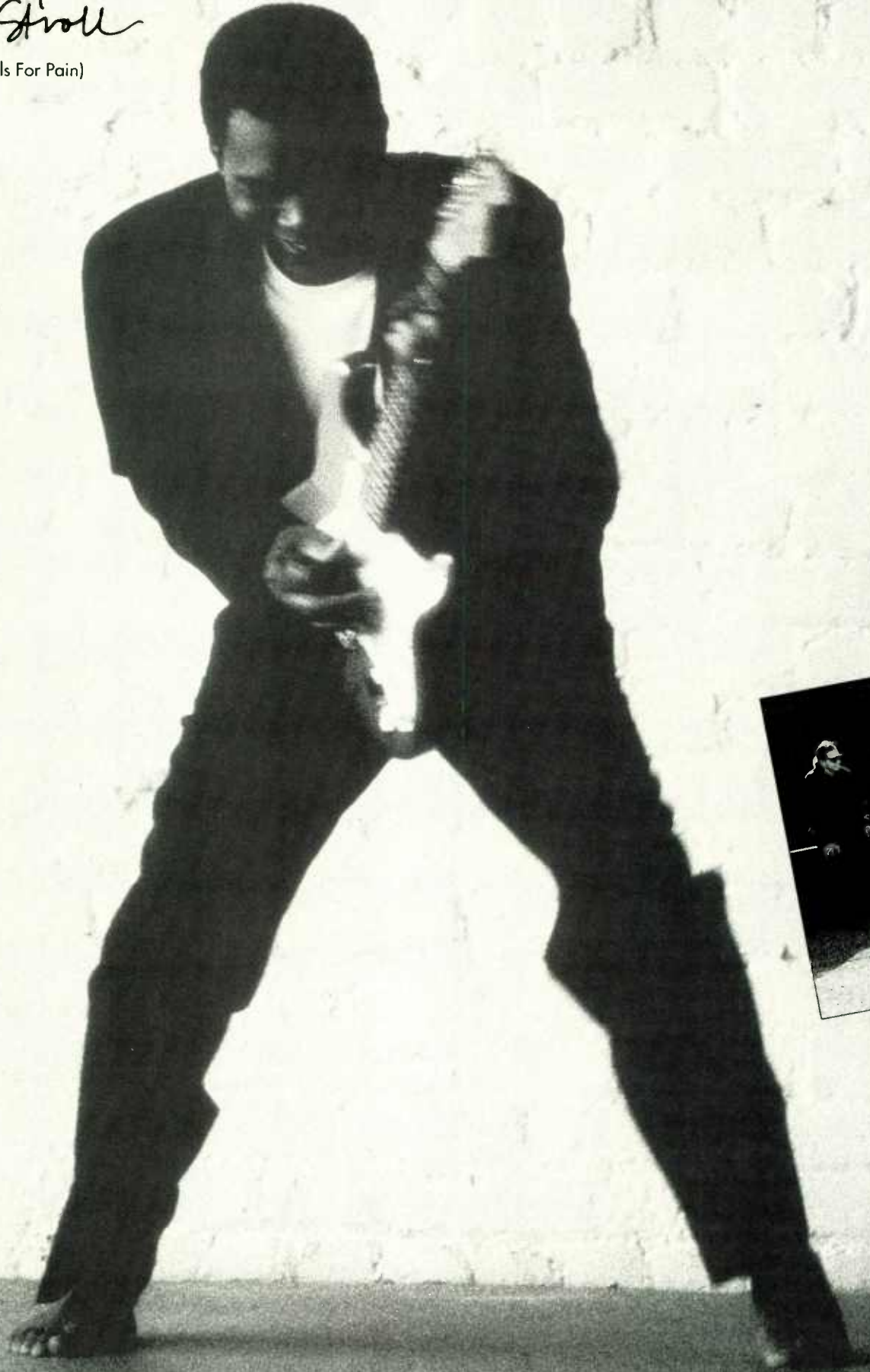
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To Do the Right Thing

Lou Reed interviews Vaclav Havel





Reed & Havel at Je Podivna:
"Here I am getting ready to
play for these amazing,
wonderful people—not to
mention the President—and
I'll be out of tune.
Just like the real Velvet
Underground."



I was backstage at Wembley Stadium. I was there for the Nelson Mandela concert. The weather was typically English. It was hailing and outside 72,000 people were sitting in the cold. I didn't think I would meet Mr. Mandela but I was hoping to at least see him. I had been reading in the press about how the lineup for this Mandela concert was inferior to the previous one—no megastars. That we musicians were politically naive and stupid—didn't we know he was a Communist—he hasn't rejected violence, etc. Plus an interviewer from the BBC with incredibly



bad breath had informed me that WEA—my record company—had taken out an ad to retailers saying, “Make Mandela work for you,” and what did I have to say about that. Well, they’re obviously capitalist dogs, I said, and we should cancel the concert right now, don’t you agree. So what if Nelson Mandela went to jail unable to vote and emerged 27 years later still unable to vote—so what that he was being given the opportunity to speak to one billion people this night (except in America—America, where it was deemed too political and people are tired of these benefits anyway).

And no, I didn’t get to see Mr. Mandela, not in person anyway. I viewed him on a big video monitor and then on a TV just as you may have. And he was incredible at age 71, at any age, and I hoped I could be that way at that age, and I wondered another thought—how does anyone go to jail for 27 years over an idea. I couldn’t comprehend 27 years. Three months, okay. A year. But 27 years. It reminded me of the old Lenny Bruce routine when he’s playing a captured soldier and they threaten him—hey, this isn’t necessary, here’s their time, dates, do you want his home phone number.

This question stayed in my mind because I was leaving the next day to fly to Prague and interview Vaclav Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia and a personal hero of mine—a man who like Mandela could have left. They wanted him to leave, he was a successful playwright—why didn’t he leave. They’d told him—if you put a wreath on that dead dissident’s grave you go to jail. He did it anyway, and went to jail. And now he was president of the country, his cabinet made of various other dissidents, the Communists removed from power, the Czech people rising up to demonstrate 300,000 strong in Wenceslav Square for days, finally clashing with the soldiers over the senseless death of a 10-year-old boy. And Vaclav Havel was no

longer in jail but president. A poet, a playwright, a great man.

Before leaving we had had some strange conversations with our Czechoslovakian contacts, exacerbated, no doubt, by the language problem. It was Kafkaesque. Phones dropped off hooks—footsteps clicking down long corridors, it was hard to get clear answers to the most basic requests. The line that made me nervous was when we were told with exasperation—the government will take care of you. I’m from New York. I wouldn’t want the government to take care of me. Plus they wanted me to play. At a club. For the local promoter. Visions of various people I knew raced through my mind making me nervous—scalpers, bootlegs, ticket prices. I said no, I didn’t want to play for the local promoter. Maybe later when I do a real tour, and no photos or press conference at the airport. After all I said I’m here as a journalist.

PRAGUE IS SO CLEAN, so elegant, so old. We were in the International Hotel, which at a distance looked to me like a project. Close up it was actually okay, just very boxlike and brown. It had actually been hard to get a room because there were so many journalists and tourists in town. The Pope was coming to Czechoslovakia in two days. We were taken around Prague by Paul, a German photographer, and later by a man who I think became a new old friend, Kocar. Kocar’s real name was Kosarek. It’s a 400-year-old name and means small carriage. When he grew up his name became Kocar or big carriage. Kocar was a very streetwise person who spoke what he called street English and had resisted all attempts to enroll him in a school to teach him correct grammar. But he spoke just fine. He told us that only a while ago Havel was hiding in his house trying to get the dissidents of Charter 77 together yet again for more protests against the govern-

“Most of the bands after the Soviet Invasion broke up or started playing different music, because good rock music was actually banned.”



ment. And now he was president.

Kocar apologized for the very large clumsy man following us, another bodyguard. Havel has many enemies. The Communists hate him. And he said, making a gun with his hand and pointing to me, they'd like to hurt his friends. Havel, Kocar said, gets 20 death threats a day. Of course 99 percent of these are not serious. But one might be.

And so we went through Prague waiting for the interview. We saw where the 30-meter bust of Stalin was destroyed. Kocar pointed to the spot with particular revulsion. He'd been 14 in 1968 when the Russian tanks came and had blown up two tanks himself. The Russians are stupid, he said. Their gas tanks are on the rear of the tank quickly available to a hammer and a match and then you run quick. In the demonstration that overturned the Communists he said if you were in the front lines, and he was, the secret was hit and run quick. He had seen an 80-year-old woman beaten by a soldier after she'd told him he was worse than a Nazi. Kocar attacked him and I supposed that was how he lost his front teeth.

We went to the Jewish ghetto and the Jewish cemetery, which was very sad. There was so little land the bodies could not have individual graves—the tombstones were piled atop and next to one another. Isn't that sad, I said. Isn't that beautiful, said our translator Yana, I hope misunderstanding.

We went to the old square. There was a large crowd gathered in front of the astrological clock. On the hour saints popped out of the windows and at the end a brass rooster crowed. We went across the Charles Bridge, named for Charles IV, their greatest king, from the thirteenth century, a king of their people. The bridge had 30 statues of various Catholic icons placed 10 feet from one another on both sides of the bridge. Young kids were playing Beatle songs and Czech

country songs. Prior to Havel no music could be played or sung on the bridge. No young people could gather there. You never knew what they might come up with. We passed a Czech-French film crew. We passed a bust of Kafka on a street but were told not to bother to see his apartment—everything had been ripped out. We ate some dumpplings in the oldest restaurant in Prague and then gathered ourselves to go to the castle to meet Vaclav Havel.

The castle is just that, a large castle in yet another square directly opposite a very beautiful church with a gold-plated clock. We were met outside by Sacha Vandros, the young bespectacled secretary of state. He led us up the red-carpeted stairway to the president's office. We went inside the office and sat at a medium-sized table. The press secretary was to act as our translator. President Havel's English, he said, was not so good. I set up my tape recorder, and suddenly there he was, President Vaclav Havel.

He's the kind of person you like on sight and things only get better when he talks. He searched for a cigarette and chain-smoked the whole hour. I'd been told he put in 18-hour days, which was a little rough on him since only three weeks ago he'd had a hernia operation. He's one of the nicest men I've ever met. I asked him if it was okay to turn on the tape.

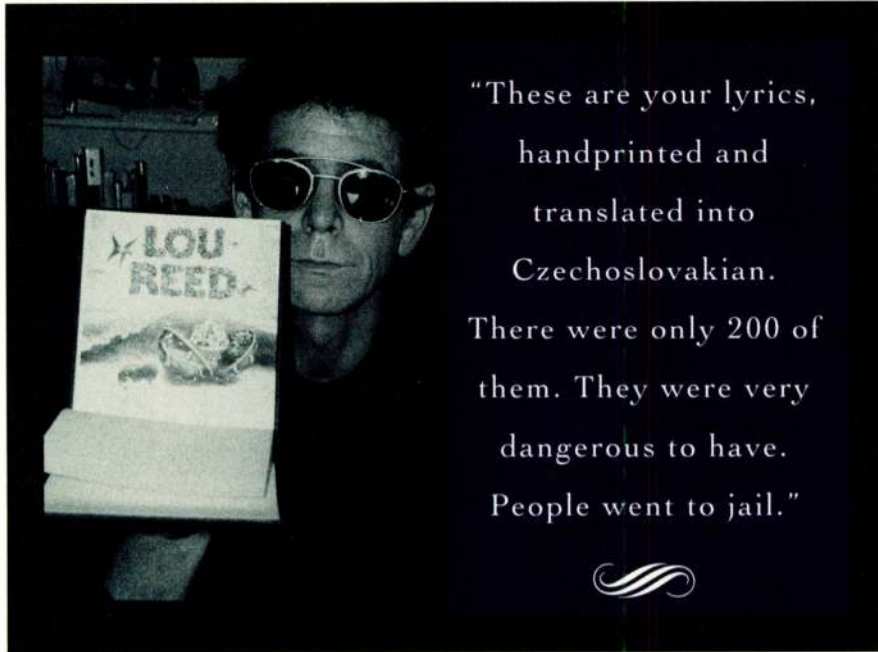
HAVEL: We invite you too for breakfast . . .

REED: No, I mean in the hotel we ordered breakfast and three people came up to give it to us. We thought it was very odd, small tray, three people. So I always thought of Kafka—I think of Kafka when I read you, I er, I'll see if this is working . . .

HAVEL: The State Security was liquidated in our country, but these people work in spite of this fact. I think they are interested more in

me than in you, these people.

REED: I don't think so, I don't think so. I don't normally do this. I've done one other interview in my life, that was two weeks ago. There's a writer I really admire named Hubert Selby, who wrote a book called *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, and a new magazine asked me to interview him. I really wanted to meet him all my life, so I said yes. And it was really wonderful. I got to



ask him a lot of questions about writing. So yesterday I found out that that's a great interview. If we had more time I would show it to you. I also have a present for you. Anyway, the magazine rejected the interview.

HAVEL: [*In Czech*] Hang on, I don't understand . . .

INTERPRETER: [*In Czech*] That the magazine rejected it.

HAVEL: [*Laughs*]

INTERPRETER: [*In English*] Was it your idea to do the interview?

REED: It wasn't my idea. It wouldn't occur to me I would be interviewing the president of a country. I was told that I was one of the people who would be acceptable to do an unconventional interview.

HAVEL: Well, I think I have some message work for this magazine, and I would like to tell it to you in this interview, but we must begin immediately because unfortunately I have a lot of work. There are a lot of crises and problems which I have to solve very quickly. And we can begin if you agree. But I would prefer to answer you in Czech and Michael will translate it because he speaks much more better than me.

REED: This is a present for you.

HAVEL: Thank you very much.

REED: That is a CD—

HAVEL: [*In Czech*] Ah yes, this is great. Finally, I'll be able to listen to some music properly.

REED: —of a project called *Songs for Drella*. It's about Andy Warhol that I did with John Cale.

HAVEL: I will be very soon in the little village where he was born, Andy Warhol. Meziz Droje. Mezilabolze, very small village in—[*coffee served*]

REED: No alcohol—

HAVEL: No, no, no. It is forbidden in this castle, only me, I can secretly drink.

HAVEL: [*Through interpreter*] The worst thing about being a president is that I have no time to listen to music. Only the presidential tune . . . And the only time I can listen to music is in my car when I'm going from place to place. Nevertheless I will play the CD as soon as I have the opportunity to. But I equally enjoy good rock

"These are your lyrics,
handprinted and
translated into
Czechoslovakian.
There were only 200 of
them. They were very
dangerous to have.
People went to jail."



all out of prison and the music is played on the radio.

REED: Is it true that not so long ago, on the Charles Bridge, you couldn't play guitar?

HAVEL: Yes, it is true, the pop musicians there were arrested from time to time. Or at least detained and . . . detained for a while in a police station and then let go. But since we started to talk about music, I'd like to say one thing. That this revolution of ours has, apart from all other faces, also a musical face. Or an artistic face. And it also has a very specific musical background.

At the end of the '60s there was a wave here of rock music . . . Most of the bands after the Soviet invasion broke up or started playing different music because good rock music was actually banned. There was one band in particular which lasted, which did not rename itself, which did not change. There were several, but this one was the best known. And their style of music was much influenced by the Velvet Underground. Whose record I brought back from New York in 1968, it was one of the first records . . . And this band began to be much persecuted—first they lost their professional status, and then they could only play in private parties. And for a time they also played in the barn of my summer cottage where we had to, in a very complicated way, organize secret concerts . . . And its name was the Plastic People of the Universe. And there originated around it a whole underground movement in the dark '70s and '80s. Then they were arrested. With several friends we organized a campaign against their arrest, and it was quite hard to convince some very serious gentlemen and academics and Nobel Prize winners to take a stand on behalf of some hairy rock musicians. Nevertheless, we succeeded. And this led to the formation of a community of solidarity of sorts.

Most of these musicians were released and some received light sentences under the pressure of our campaign. And it seemed to us that this community that originated in this way shouldn't just dissolve after this but should go on in some more stable form, and that's how the Charter 77 human rights movement originated.

REED: Really?

HAVEL: The trial with the bands was a special affair. Then it was still possible to enter the court building to be at such a trial. The building was full of people. You could see a university professor in friendly talk



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with a former member of the Praesidium of the Communist party and with a long-haired rock musician, and all of them surrounded by police.

This was a sign of the things to come, of the special character or nature of the Charter 77, which united many people of different backgrounds and different views in their common resistance to the totalitarian system and in their speaking out

against the system. And then some of us got arrested and jailed. But now, members of the Charter 77 are deputies in the parliament, members of the government, or here in the Castle.

I myself was one of the first three spokesmen of the Charter 77. By this I mean to say that music, underground music, in particular one record by a band called Velvet Underground, played a rather significant role in the development in our country, and I don't think that many people in the United States have noticed this. So this is one thing I wanted to tell you, and I have another thing to say but maybe in a little while.

But first I should mention that, as is usually the case of rock bands, they undergo changes, they change their names, some of the people leave, etc., etc. Well, the core of this band still exists but it has changed its name and it's now called Midnight—Unots. We had Easter recently, and I turn on the radio in my car while I'm driving to my cottage, and the music they played was Passover music played by this very band, and recorded at my cottage.

REED: Passover music?

HAVEL: Yes, Passover music. The music was recorded about 13 years ago . . . It was never released before. They just locked themselves in at my cottage for two days and recorded this thing. *[In Czech]* Secretly. It was a very strange experience to suddenly hear this music on Czechoslovak radio.

REED: Joan Baez says hello.

HAVEL: *[In English]* Thank you very much. Please greet her too, and I hope I will see her on the seventh of June when she has to have a concert in Prague. Sixth or seventh, I think. You bring her to Moscow. She will have one concert in Bratislava, I think, and one in Prague.

REED: I admire you so much. In reading *Letters to Olga* . . .

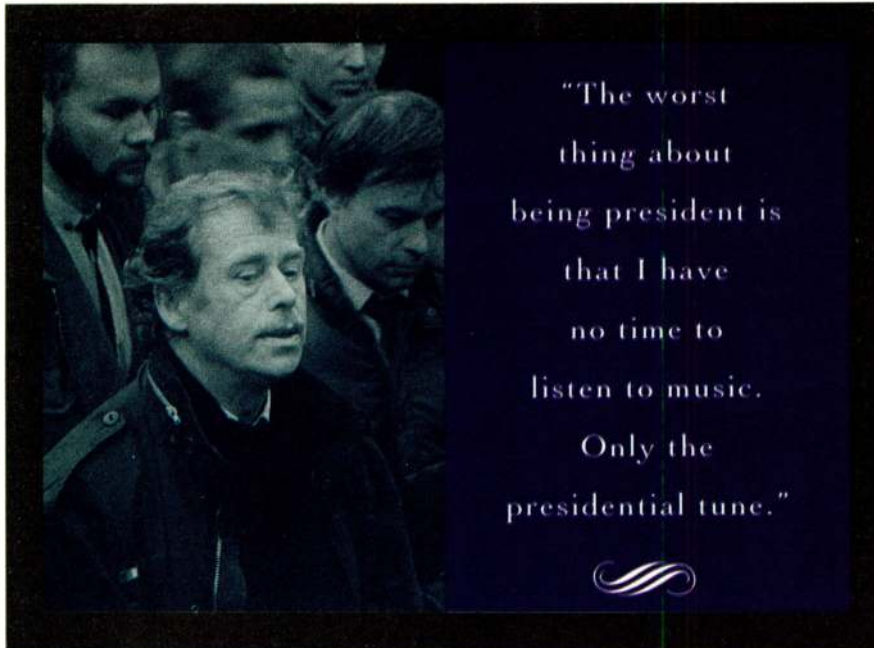
HAVEL: This unread-, unre-

REED: Unreadable.

HAVEL: Unreadable book. It was written in prison, and everything what was understandable, was er, forbidden.

INTERPRETER: Censored.

HAVEL: Censored. Censored, and they learned me to write more and more complicated sentences, and now I don't understand it well. It is extremely complicated language, but it was the result of



"The worst thing about being president is that I have no time to listen to music. Only the presidential tune."



pressure of prison censorship, yes, because if they don't understand it, they permit it *[laughs]*.

REED: Why was it called the Velvet Revolution?

HAVEL: This name *[in Czech]*. I'll say it in Czech.

HAVEL: *[Through interpreter]* The name was not given to it by us, but by Western journalists. They like simple labels. But the label caught on here. And some people use this word to this day.

Well, it is true that the interesting thing about our revolution was that, except for the first massacre which started it off, there was no blood spilled during the revolution. But it doesn't necessarily mean that it was as velvet as that. Or that we lived in a velvet time. That's just by the way.

I wanted to say another thing for this magazine, if I can volunteer. The whole anti-establishment movement of the '60s had marked significantly my generation and also the generations after that. In 1968, I was in New York for six weeks. I took part in demos and rallies and student protests *[at Columbia University]*. *[In Czech]* As well as that I went to Greenwich Village and the East Village.

REED: Which ones?

HAVEL: They were on strike but they still invited me to give a talk there—I was also at Yale and MIT. And with Milos Forman I participated in be-ins and things like that. We wandered round Greenwich Village, and East Village, and I bought a lot of posters which I still keep. Psychedelic posters which I still have hanging in my cottage.

REED: Did you go to CBGB's?

HAVEL: That was later. Many of the famous musicians like Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix were already there, but some only appeared later. *[In Czech]* Recently during the revolution someone stole two of my treasured posters, I don't know why.

REED: So you never saw the Velvet Underground?

HAVEL: Not live, but I bought the record. First edition. At least I think it was the first edition.

REED: Does it have a banana on it?

HAVEL: I haven't seen the record for a long time. I mainly played it at the beginning of the '70s. So I don't remember the banana. But I know it's all black with white letterings *[White Light/White Heat LP]*. And from time to time some rock musicians wanted to steal this record. But I think I still have it. But to go on with what I wanted to say.


The whole spirit of the '60s, the rebellion against the establishment affected significantly the spiritual life of my generation and of the younger people, and in a very strange way, transcended into the present. But we differ from this 20-year-old rebellion in that we made

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LIVE IN BERLIN



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there behind me and it was a glorious feeling. Soon I had exhausted myself and sweaty but ecstatic I followed Kočar to the balcony and sat down at a table with a beaming Vaclav Havel. He'd removed his jacket and loosened his tie. "Did you enjoy yourself?" he asked. "Yes," I said, "I did." "Good," he said. "I'd like you to meet some friends of mine." He then introduced me to an astonishing array of people, all dissidents, all of whom had been jailed. Some had been jailed for playing my music. Many told me of reciting my lyrics for inspiration and comfort when in jail. Some had remembered a line I had written in an essay 15 years ago, "Everybody should die for the music." It was very much a dream for me and well beyond my wildest expectations. When I had gotten out of college and helped form the VU I had been concerned with, among other things, demonstrating how much more a song could be about than what was currently being written. So the VU albums and my own are implicitly about freedom of expression—freedom to write about what you please in any way you please. And the music had found a home here in Czechoslovakia.

President Havel was having a drink with his friends, something which he does not do in public because he is president. The only time he had for writing was for writing speeches. And the Pope was coming in two days. I thought, imagine a man who writes his own speeches, says his own words. What if George Bush . . . no. Havel said the speeches were easy to write, in fact some resented the fact he said he wrote them so quickly. So now he told them it took longer. He had no time for his own writing, no time to listen to music. No time to have a drink. Foreign policy was not difficult, he said. There are other more unpleasant matters.

And then he was up from the table. "I must go. I have to meet some

foreign minister or some such thing. Oh, you must have this," and bending from the waist he handed me a small black book about the size of a diary. "These are your lyrics hand-printed and translated into Czechoslovakian. There were only 200 of them. They were very dangerous to have. People went to jail, and now you have one. Keep your fingers crossed for us."

And he was gone.

The day after next—Havel called it a miracle—the Pope arrived. His and President Havel's speeches were broadcast outdoors through the square. As we left the hotel and took a back road to the airport we still heard their voices. The Pope, we later learned, had warned Havel against the virus, the moral decay of the West. "Maybe he meant you," laughed Kočar. "There," he pointed to an ugly square gray building behind wire fencing. "That's where they detained Havel before they sentenced him. You know it's safer to be in an old car than a rich car." He pointed his hand in a gun again. "Better the old car. You know we double the security for the president last night. He must go to club, make things difficult. But to get him would not be so easy. And you had a good time in our country, my friend?"

Yes I did, Kočar. Yes I did. And not a day goes by that I don't think of Vaclav Havel and the answer he'd given to the question I'd most wanted to ask—"Why did you stay, why didn't you leave? How could you stand the terrible abuse?" And he'd said, "I stayed because I live here. I was only trying to do the right thing. I had not planned for these various things to have happened but I never doubted that we would succeed. All I ever wanted to do was the right thing."

I love Vaclav Havel. And I'm keeping my fingers crossed. I too want to do the right thing. M

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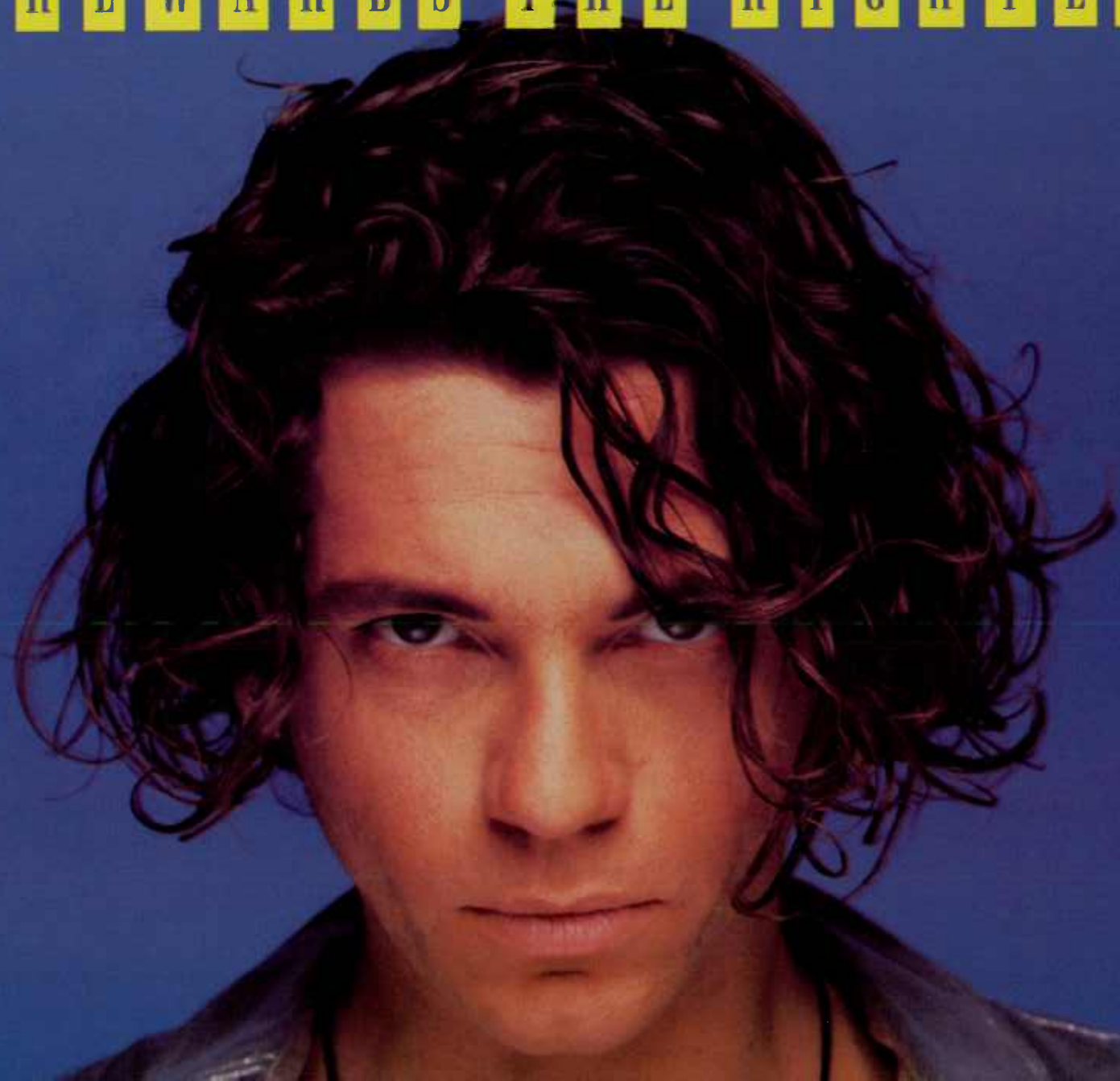


For Will Calhoun and Living Colour, opening for the Rolling Stones meant at least 50,000 people every night. This would be a tall order for some new bands. But Living Colour is not just some new band. Living Colour's success is based upon their music which seems to transcend musical boundaries and has elevated their debut disc to multi-platinum status. Obviously there is something unique and special about these guys. Their reputation for diligence, schooled musicianship, professional attitude, non ego manner, and brilliant writing, are the foundation



for their position. Will Calhoun fits this description in every way. You don't simply assume stature, it is a long time in the making. Much like the drum set he plays, CZX Custom by Pearl. Both, in fact, compliment each other perfectly: years of hard work with a designed goal of perfection. Living Colour, Will Calhoun, and Pearl's CZX Custom... the sound of success.

GOD REWARDS THE RIGHTEOUS





I

WHAT, I ASKED MYSELF, AS I ALWAYS ASK MYSELF, DOES GOD WANT ME TO LEARN FROM THESE GUYS? OVER A ROOM SERVICE TRAY COVERED WITH HALF-EATEN FRUIT, MICHAEL HUTCHENCE WAS HOLDING FORTH ON THE VIRTUES OF RECORD COMPANIES. THIS IN ITSELF WAS A SOMEWHAT RARE OCCURRENCE—USUALLY MUSICIANS PREFER SLAGGING THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THE BUSINESS—BUT NOT THE EPIPHANY THAT WOULD FOR A BRIEF MOMENT ILLUMINATE THE COSMOS AND EXPLAIN FATE DROPPING ME HERE IN THIS SUITE ON THE SEVENTH FLOOR OF THE BERKSHIRE HOTEL IN LONDON. “SOME OF THEM REALLY, REALLY LOVE MUSIC.”

N

V

S

HUTCHENCE ENTHUSED. “THERE IS MORE PASSION AT RECORD COMPANIES THAN THERE IS ON THE STREET, A LOT OF THE TIME.” I VENTURED MY OBSERVATION THAT THE AVERAGE RECORD COMPANY PERSON IS BRIGHTER THAN THE AVERAGE NETWORK TELEVISION PERSON, LACK OF ORIGINAL THOUGHT BEING THE MAIN REQUIREMENT FOR ACCESS TO OUR MAJOR PROPAGANDA CENTERS. YOU JUST KNOW THAT EVERY NETWORK HAS SOME GEEK IN THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT STAMPING CERTAIN SELECT RESUMES “TOTAL MORON” AND FORWARDING THEM TO THE NEWS DEPARTMENT. TOTAL MORONS FEEL COMFORTABLE ONLY

By The Reverend Charles W. Young

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN STODDART



around other total morons.

"I don't know how to grade what's smart and what isn't that easily," said Andrew Farriss.

I tried to glib my way out of it. I said that people I like are obviously smarter than people I don't like. Farriss laughed politely and got serious again. "It's a Biblical thing," he said. "If you send them up, they're going to send you up. That's what I believe."

Was this the secret of keeping a band together for 13 years with the same lineup?

"It helps, yeah," said Farriss. "You've got to see that whopping big log in your eye rather than the mote in your brother's. 'Cause I play with my brothers in this band and sometimes I'm thinking, 'How can he *do* that?,' and then I realize, 'Because *I* do that, too.'"

Farriss had a look in his eyes like he was expecting God to smack him with the Louisville Slugger of Karma just for listening to me. But there was something more than fear of cosmic retribution going on in his head. It suddenly dawned on me that I was talking to a genuinely nice man, someone genuinely uncomfortable with malice, someone beyond dis, a species unseen in New York since there were cows in Greenwich Village. A clear light threw the room into stark relief: This genuinely nice man was worth several million dollars, whereas I, ever eager to cast the first stone at Total Morons, could not even pay my hotel bill because my American Express card was over two months past due. And thus I knew what God wanted me to learn from these guys. The barn of the righteous shall be filled with plenty; but he who mocketh Total Morons layeth up wickedness in his soul and emptiness in his purse—Proverbs 33:3.

What God probably wants you to know about these guys is that INXS, of whom Hutchence and Farriss are the Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, has a new album coming out and if you buy it, even more reward will accrue to the righteous. Their last album, *Kick*, went quadruple platinum with an above-average royalty in the age of the CD, which is indeed some major-league reward. Hutchence and Farriss titled the new album *X*. Had they meant it as Christian, Latin, Satanic or algebraic symbol?

"We just wanted to rate it ourselves, so the PMRC wouldn't do it for us," Hutchence laughed. "The Italian press thought it meant '10' because we've been recording for 10 years now. After the name *Kick*, we didn't want anything long and complicated. We wanted something that could be interpreted any way people wanted to interpret it, really."

I thought the songs seemed more filled in this time; INXS let the guitars ring more and syncopate less. There was less air, less internal architecture audible.

"I think it's more raw," said Hutchence. "There's not as many defined avenues on this album. On previous albums, especially *Kick*, we would tend to say, 'We're doing a dance song here,' and it was very obviously a dance song. Then we'd do a rocker, then a ballad, then R&B. On this album there are more shades per song. We squished

"ROCK 'N' ROLL WAS
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NEEDED DISTANCE."

things together a bit. It's almost a thread running through the songs, like a formula but without a formula."

"We had a lot of songs to choose from, too," said Farriss. "Personally I've written 30 pieces of music and 12 or 13 finished songs. Michael had so many lyrics that I deliberately left several songs unfinished so we could work together. We had a great selection."

I thought it sounded like a cross between Al Green and AC/DC.

Hutchence laughed. "I like that. I guess we've been more solid about our roots on this one. We've let our soul roots out, and our roots in the Australian pubs. It's hard soul, I guess. We like our funk, and we like our rock."

As I was walking over here, I saw this gorgeous woman in a halter top sitting at a sidewalk cafe. I walked by her twice just to look. I knew there was no way I could talk to her, and I knew I would never see her again. The rest of my life looked so

bleak without her that I wanted to kill myself. It made me think of your new single, "Suicide Blonde."

"Exactly," said Andrew. "Metaphorically. Do not try killing yourself at home. You get the picture."

"The title should go down well in the States," Hutchence shuddered in reference to the current trial in Nevada where Judas Priest was accused of causing a couple of suicides.

"The song is about a hair color, actually," said Farriss. "In the '40s, you had a hair color called 'Suicide Blonde,' because you had to dye it in your kitchen sink, using your own hands. It's not such a serious topic."

I thought the song most likely to be listened to in 10 years was "The Stairs." The structure had powerful drama.

"We're really proud of that one," said Hutchence. "We've never done one in that thematic style—it just builds up and builds up. Took quite a bit of work."

"If I may say what you wrote about, Michael, the lyrics concern people living in concrete urban spreads and never truly seeing each other," said Farriss. "They try not to see each other, despite passing on the stairs all the time."

"It's been a year of walls, hasn't it?" says Hutchence. "People look at the collapse of the wall in Berlin as an enormous piece of symbolism, but they don't realize they all have their own walls, and they live behind them all day."

I barely know the people in my apartment building.

"Me neither. We all do it."

Yes, we do all live behind self-erected walls, but not all the time. And this, to me, is the essence of INXS: breaking down those barriers. With virtually all cultures and subcultures there is an implicit line drawn in the dirt. All on this side of the line have the correct haircut, correct trousers, correct attitude. All on that side of the line do not. The cool and the uncool, the raw and the cooked, smart guys and Total Morons. With INXS, unlike most bands, there is no line. Take the huge hit from *Kick* "Need You Tonight," surely one of the all-time

great sexual invitations. It has no veiled misogyny, no hostile barb, no supremacist command, no projection of evil onto the other's desire. It's just an incredibly sexy invitation to have sex with a genuinely nice guy who really, really wants to have sex and doesn't want to draw any lines in the dirt or erect any walls in the air. Women like that, and men who like women like that. A prominent DJ friend of mine places INXS in a category with the Rolling Stones as one of the very few white bands that don't drive people away. INXS creates no lines in the dirt on the dance floor.

At this point I got quite excited remembering Anthropology 101 and declared that at this very moment there was an invisible wall of space between us and if it were breached, we'd all be very uncomfortable. To demonstrate, I got out of my chair and sat thigh-to-thigh next to Farriss in the midst of a spacious room with plenty of chairs. If I'd done this when I walked in the room . . .

" . . . I'd think you were a little weird," said Farriss, thinking I was a little weird.

Right. But a rock 'n' roll show gives us permission to break down these invisible barriers of space. When a bunch of atomised individuals coalesces into a crowd, becomes a single organism, permission is somehow granted to touch, to jostle, to jump on each other, sing along—all stuff you're not allowed to do in the normal course of age- and class-segregated America. A great rock 'n' roll show creates instant community.

"I also think it's significant that rock 'n' roll was the first time that

(L-R) Kirk, Garry, Andrew, Michael, Jon, Tim

"WHEN YOU'RE IN A
BAND YOU START
BELIEVING YOU HAVE
TWICE THE LIVER,
TWICE THE BRAIN
CELLS OF ANYONE
ELSE... YOU
SUDDENLY REALIZE,
'I'M BECOMING A
CLICHÉ.'"

people did *not* touch each other while dancing," said Hutchence. "The freedom they were expressing, they needed distance. The waltz was very intimate and probably very sensual, but there's this energy level in rock 'n' roll, this explosion of freedom, that comes out in this primitive expression."

The waltz reflected the rise of capitalism. Holding someone while dancing was a claim of property. It was a dance of control, whereas rock 'n' roll was a dance of losing control.

"Yeah, one-two-three, one-two-three, that's very constrained," said Hutchence. "Right now dance is becoming the Great Equalizer again. The Manchester scene, acid house and all that, people are getting together in large friendly groups again. They aren't factionalizing themselves into disco crowds versus rock crowds, fans versus stars. The walls are coming down. It's symptomatic of the time, like Woodstock but with less self-indulgence. We're back to just people. Priorities have changed."

The long frosted tresses that contributed so much to the overwhelming sensuality of the "Need You Tonight" video

had grown back to the halfway point over Hutchence's pale and unshaven face. A handsome, slightly androgynous ectomorph, he nonetheless needed another six inches of hair to smolder again. Farriss wouldn't smolder with any amount of hair, and so keeps it conveniently short. The rest of the band—Kirk Pengilly on guitar and saxophone, Garry Gary Beers on bass and two more Farriss brothers, Tim and Jon, on guitar and drums—remain in their hometown of

[story cont'd on page 70]





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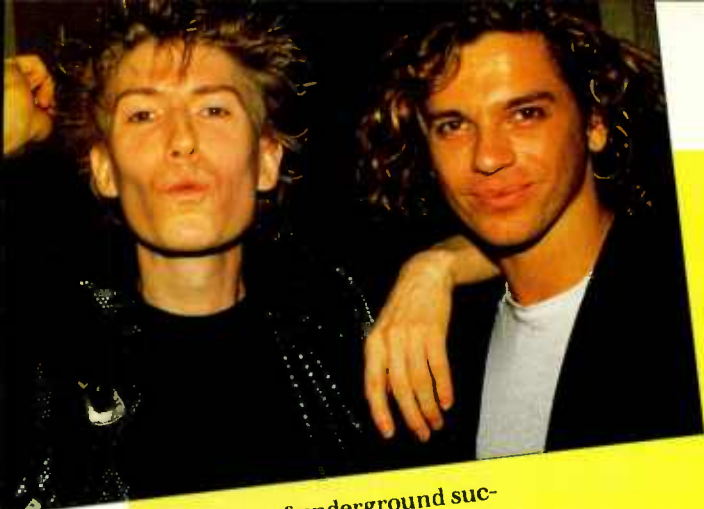
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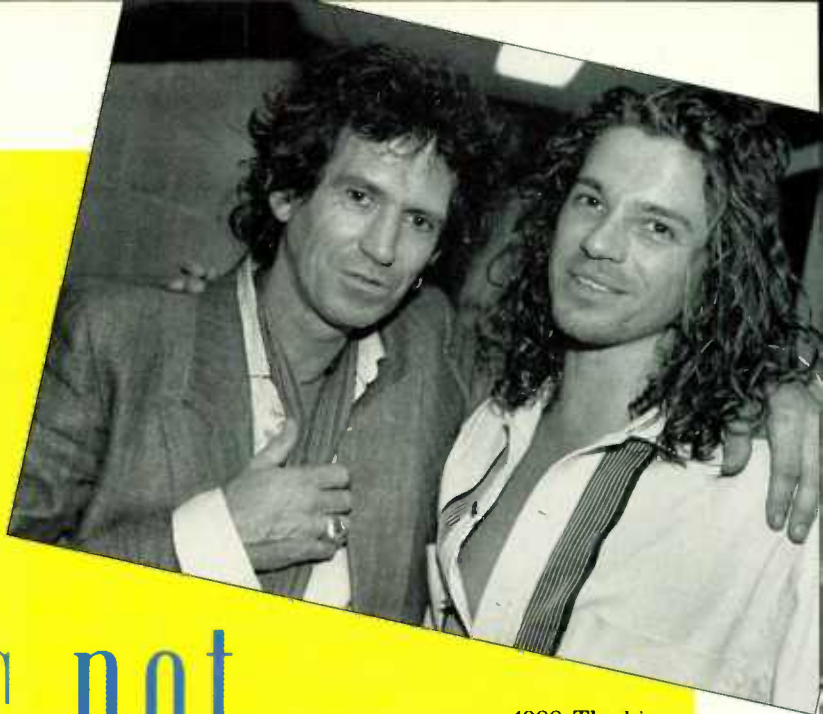
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Sydney where *X* was recorded. Producer Chris Thomas returned to London with Michael and Andrew to mix. *X* was their seventh album and third produced by Thomas.

"He's kept such a low profile over the years, never doing photos or interviews, that people don't know what he's done," said Hutchence. "The Sex Pistols, the Pretenders, *Dark Side of the Moon* [which he mixed]—he's done so much that we like that we just wanted to work with him. I don't know what we'll do next time. We might even do it ourselves. He's good because he basically just records us, doesn't put his own indelible stamp all over you. We didn't want that."

"I could go on and on about producers," said Farriss. "I produced a record for a girl named Jenny Morris . . ."

For which you won an Australian Producer of the Year award.

" . . . Yeah, I couldn't believe that. It was the first album I'd ever produced. No one was more surprised than I when they read my name. Anyway, I think the producer's role has changed over the years. The producer's role is simply to record in the best possible way what the artist is good at. At least that's what I tried to do. I don't believe in molding anyone."

"Chris never says we should be doing this or that," added Hutchence.

Was he allowed to say, "I think this song sucks"?

"Well, I expect him to say what he thinks," said Hutchence. "He might ask, 'What does that lyric mean?'"

On three songs—"Suicide Blonde," "Who Pays the Price" and "On My Way"—there's a beautifully eerie harmonica. Who played harp?

X-RATINGS

FOR KARMIC REASONS, ANDREW FARRISS refuses to put down musicians who do endorsements, including (especially) musicians in his own band who do endorsements. Such deals are nonetheless not for him. "Maybe I'm dumb," he says. "Maybe I should have cashed in. But I don't think it's right to be locked into one maker of instruments."

So in a non-endorsing way, Farriss is fairly locked into a pair of 1956 Stratocasters "for the rhythmical stuff." For the other stuff, his favorite guitar is a 1976 Telecaster with humbucking pickups. As for keyboards, "I don't care what I play. I have no interest in keeping up with the latest equipment."

KIRK PENGILLY prefers Selmer saxophones of the baritone, tenor, alto and soprano varieties, and they all sound "real sweet" to Andrew. The band has found Apple Macintosh sequencers useful for arranging and composing.

Brother JON FARRISS plays Pearl drums with Sabian cymbals. Other brother TIM favors Tokai guitars. Tim and Kirk both play D'Addario strings. GARRY GARY BEERS "uses every bass guitar ever made," says Andrew. "The one I like best was specially made by Fender out of clear plastic. It's got a great sound."

HUTCHENCE prefers the trusty old Shure SM-57 stage mike for his vocals. "It's what I grew up on, it's what my voice works to," he says. "When you go into a studio and they try to put a \$5000 Neumann in front of you, it's bullshit. Why use a microphone that will pick up the hairs bristling on the back of your neck? Then you have to modify the sound to get rid of the extra shit so it ends up sounding just like an SM-57."

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"A guy called Charlie Musselwhite," said Farriss. "Great, great player. Little older than us. Quite a nice guy, too."

You flew him all the way to Australia?

"No, he just happened to be touring there. He was the only guy outside the band who played on the record. We try to keep things in the family, but he happened to be in town. I was playing harmonica myself and I thought I was pretty good. Then I heard Charlie and I thought, 'Shit! He better play.' I could have some fun with it on tour, though."

When are you touring?

"We're going to do a few pub dates in Australia to warm up," said Hutchence. "Then we open in Prague in November. We'll be in the States in January. We'll be on the road a year and a quarter."

"INXS is a really hard-working band," Farriss added with obvious pride. "A couple of days ago, we were having some production meetings for the tour, and I asked this guy what he considered a hard tour to be. He said six weeks on and two weeks off. Our last tour, we did five or six nights a week for 16 months. Maybe that was *too* hard—at one stage my brother Jon the drummer got really sick. We had to stop. But it was so exciting. It was success. You wanted to be part of it every day. Eventually, though, you discover you're human."

Didn't five or six nights a week blow out Michael's throat?

"I've missed one show in 13 years because of my voice," said Michael. "Screaming your guts out in a smoky pub tends to condition it, or ruin it, actually. I've lost a couple of notes from my range, I'm sure. I was hoarse every night for years, couldn't even talk until

gig time."

Both Hutchence and Farriss were the progeny of hard-working parents. Michael's father imported champagne and Scotch to Hong Kong and consumed a fair amount of his wares in the process. Now he's manufacturing bags of junk for first-class airline passengers. "I'm trying to get him to retire," said Michael, "but he loves working and he doesn't want to do anything else. Whenever I talk to him, the news is always about the new factory, not his golf game. He's a workaholic, and I'm the same."

"My parents sell carpets," said Farriss. "You wanna buy a rug? I can get you a deal."

Both of them also inherited that inborn Australian suspicion of authority that made punk something of a redundancy in a country where the prime minister was nowhere safe from heckling. The pub circuit already had the wildest and toughest crowds in the world, descendants of exiled convicts and kangaroos, driven mad by the sun and 24-ounce cans of Foster's lager. This tribe didn't need any spiky-haired dweebs telling them how to be rebellious.

"I'd like to see one of these L.A. glam metal bands play the Antler Hotel," said Hutchence. "They'd get canned before they made it out of their limo. Australia just doesn't have a star system. When you finish playing, you don't go backstage. You're expected to leave from the front of the stage and go directly to the bar. When nobody is buying our records anymore, it won't be that difficult going back, because we never believed we were stars in the first place."

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be fabulously wealthy. They took a gamble on financing their own recording in return for a higher royalty rate, and so far it has paid off handsomely, and not only in money.

"Yeah, we have a lease deal," said Hutchence. "It means we do more work as far as supplying money, video and artwork. We make what we want to make, we say what we want to say, and we give it to them. We get more points for that, but mostly we have more control. When you're signed and someone has given you the bucks, that gives them the right to show up in the studio and ask, 'What are you doing with our money?'"

"It is a gamble that we have to pay for if the record doesn't do well," said Hutchence. "But at the end of the day it means we can make records on our terms. You know exactly what the bills are going to be because you're in charge."

Since ending the *Kick* tour in early '89, Hutchence has workaholically put out *Max Q*, an album of higher-tech dance music, with his friend Ollie Olsen and played Percy Shelley in Roger Corman's first film in many years. What was Ollie doing now with INXS back on the front burner?

"Oh my God, he's been all over the place," Hutchence sighed. "It sort of thrust him back into the world and then it stopped. He and Gus Till who did keyboards on the album went back to Melbourne to start a band called Third Eye. They do hardcore house music. He was trying to get a deal here, living for three months in a squat in Brixton. Typical Ollie scenario, getting as low as he could get and feeling really bad about it."

Maybe if *Max Q* had done a little better . . .

"Oh, he's got money. He's had enough fuckin' money. I made sure he's okay, but I'm not giving him any more. He kept giving it away. When we were in New York, he would give \$100 notes to guys on the street. And I would say, 'One day you're going to call me for more money, because you're giving it all away.' And of course he did ring me for more money. He spends it on worthwhile causes, I suppose, but he was just getting stripmined in New York. I hope all the guys in the band made enough to buy themselves an apartment."

How did you end up playing Percy Shelley?

"Roger Corman rang me up and asked me," said Hutchence, shifting into a honking American accent. "I really believe the romantic poets were the rock stars of their time. Would you like to be Percy Shelley?" I said yes, and ended up doing a historically inaccurate, very cartoonish portrayal. The movie was sort of *Back to the Future* with the Frankenstein monster running around. This scientist in the future is experimenting with weapons, like Dr. Frankenstein, and one of the side effects is these little black holes. He travels back in time through one of the black holes to Italy when Lord Byron and Shelley were there."

Lord Byron probably would be a rock star today. The rest of them would be embittered English professors.

"Byron certainly. Shelley was an odd person. Very high voice. And he was hopeless around Byron, couldn't do anything around him. Byron would come down to breakfast announcing, 'I've just written something,' and pull out *Childe Harold*. It wasn't [cont'd on page 88]

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Cyril



Charles

The Neville

As pop music gets older, a strange thing has started to happen. A pop act's 15-minute life span—a handful of hits, then back to the carwash—has now been extended. Rod Stewart is still out there stinking up arenas for adoring fans. Rock is acting like classical music; generation after generation discovers the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead, etc., lengthening the commercial life of a flock of dinosaurs.

By itself, the phenomenon makes sense, an ugly fact but no big deal; everybody should have some sort of a job. But in combination with a couple of other odd events—the reacceptance, to a small degree, of black music and black popular icons by Americans (reacceptance because Louis Armstrong was one of America's best-known

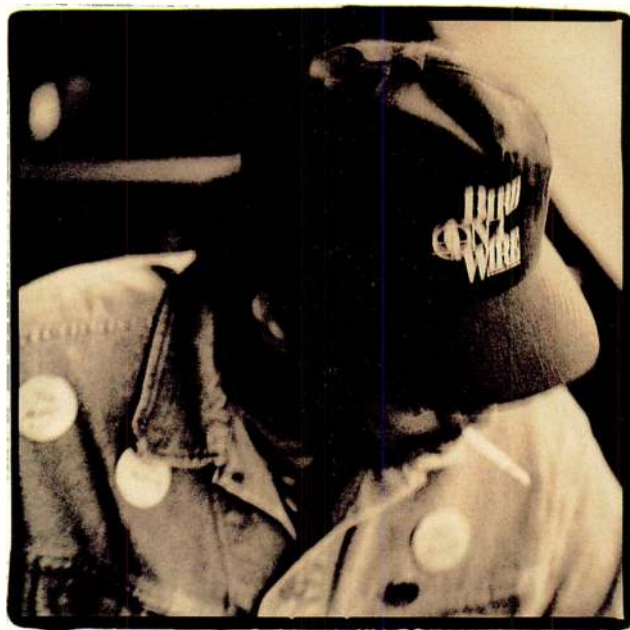
figures for most of his life) and the acceptance, for whatever reason, of regionality in food, music and dress—it has led to one of the more bizarre stories of pop success: the Neville Brothers.

Which isn't all that bizarre if you know who they are and have heard them play. They're simply one of the great bands to have ever made pop music. Master trance-inducers, they make music as a cathartic experience and turn every audience, in the grand Afro-American tradition, into a single organism, united with the band. In pop terms, though, a handful of middle-aged black men, traditionally disposable and threatening to mainstream white culture, shouldn't have any success at all.

But *Yellow Moon*, their last album, is still



Aaron



Art

e Brothers

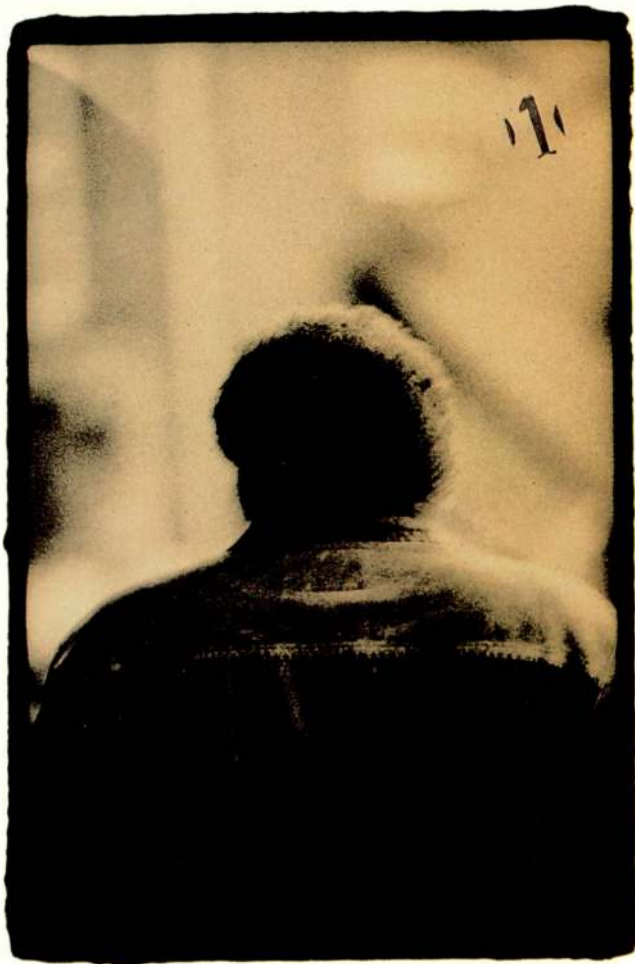
After decades of furious, underpaid funk, New Orleans' greatest band rolls into the '90s--fulfilled at last.

By Peter Watrous

Photography by The Douglas Brothers

selling strong, up to a highly dubious record-company figure of 750,000 (Rule of Thumb: Halve any industry figure to get the accurate number sold). And brother Aaron's had a weird success with Linda Ronstadt—check out their strange video to see what I mean. Most middle-aged black acts are either sold as oldies, in the grotesque vein of Chubby Checker, or tarted up with the next young producer who comes in to give, say, the Isley Brothers their one track of new jack swing. But the Neville Brothers have actually been allowed to treat their music as an art, the same as white people get to treat their music.

And over the course of both *Yellow Moon* and now *Brother's Keeper*, the band has managed a strange mixture of hippie message-delivering,



pre-disco black pop and New Orleans music. Rooted in the black experience, they are listened to exclusively by white people—black radio won't touch their music—and have become a cultural anomaly, successfully selling music that shouldn't interest anybody.

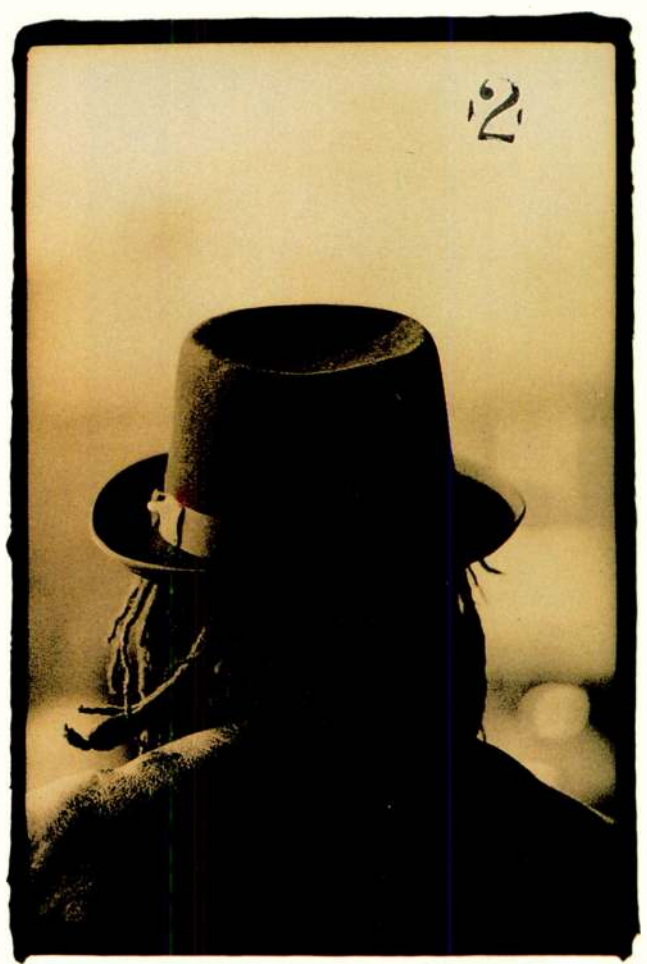
For a long time it didn't. In the 1960s the Neville Sounds, featuring Art, Aaron and Charles, went nowhere. The band dissolved and turned into the Meters, featuring Art and, later, Cyril. After a few regional hits on the Josie label, and despite a later major-label contract with Warner Brothers, the Meters also went nowhere. The Neville Brothers formed in 1977, and flopped, too. And from the 1950s to the present, the Brothers, separate and together, kept on recording singles, hoping to repeat Aaron's longshot national hit, "Tell It Like It Is." Nothing like that ever appeared again, and probably won't.

look at what we're all doing," says Art, "and I'm so proud of Aaron and Cyril and

"I almost quit," says Art, who at 51 is the oldest, a taciturn man absolutely aware of who he is and what he wants. "But we stuck. We can stay through any adversity now. It took a little time. Recording had collapsed in New Orleans, and we couldn't make a living, or just barely made one."

"We went through managers and came to the realization that there are no honest people out there. We were getting fucked," remembers Charles, 50, the group's resident intellectual, a playwright, historian and sci-fi freak. "Then we were fortunate enough to get involved with Bill Graham in 1984."

Bill Graham, the brothers agree, really turned their fortunes around. "Once we started with him," says Art, "things immediately started to change. We started playing bigger clubs and, more



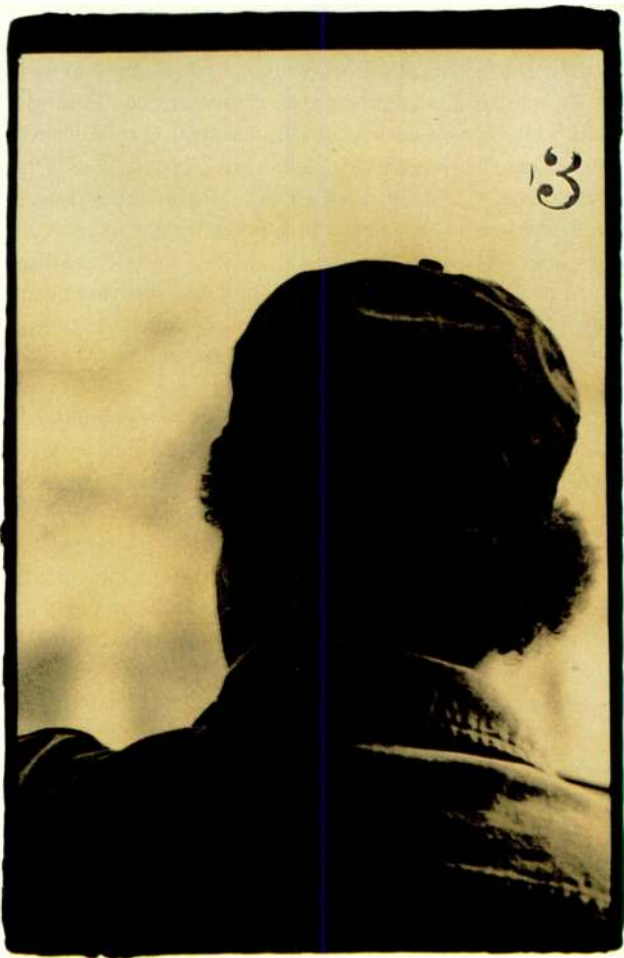
importantly, we hooked up with the Grateful Dead, which immediately expanded our audience. The Deadheads, they really liked us. They still come everywhere, the Nevillized Deadheads—or the Nevilleheads—in tie-dyed shirts. We see them all over the world in tie-dyes—there they are. We did things with Santana, then we did all the major TV shows. We had interviews with just about every magazine. We had songs in movies, in *The Big Easy*."

But a bunch of other things were happening at the same time. The increase in interest in Americana during the Reagan era brought attention to regional cultures, while traditional white rock audiences, alienated by hip-hop and dance music and its flaunting of new technology, began looking to regional music to supply its dancing needs and authenticity fix. It's also important to understand how

important colleges are in Louisiana for supporting live music. The white people who had essentially grown up on the music, lived it in clubs and at parties, went home and told their friends.

"It didn't shock me that we were getting a white audience," remembers Art. "We were doing something they wanted to hear. All the young kids from Tulane, LSU, Loyola, they started it; they had frat and sorority parties which kept us alive. You have to understand that after 'Cissy Strut' and 'Sophisticated Cissy' [Meters hits from the late 1960s] the black audience wouldn't come out to see us. They wanted to hear hits, and radio was closed off to us."

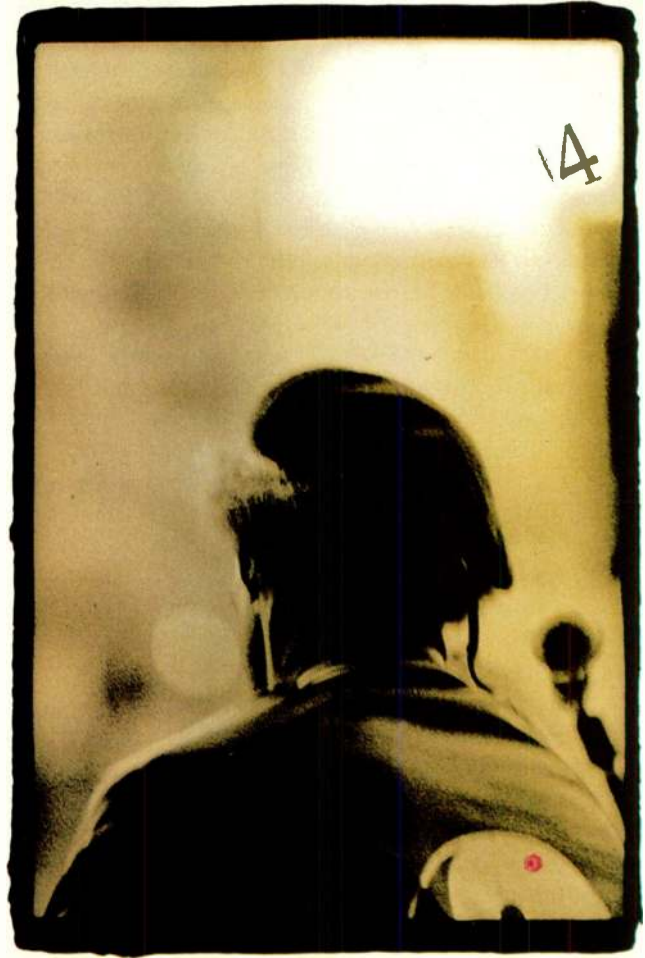
"We were at that point where you have to do something commercial, something the record companies wanted. At the same time, as soon as you do something commercial, you're pegged as a black



group, so the music has got to be 'black.' What are these people talking about?! I never did understand that. Here you have a group with a 90-percent white audience and the record company is pushing you to a black audience. It didn't make no sense. Somebody didn't see or hear."

"After Bob Marley and the increase in roots and message music, people started coming out a bit," says Charles. "We're popular because our music is the closest thing to folk music America has happening on this level."

To understand why the Neville Brothers are as good as they are, you have to understand the power of a community of musicians—and of a musical community, a place where you can learn your craft in front of an audience you grew up with. In the 1950s, when the elder Neville



Brothers Art—"it was luxury living. I moved out of a wooden house with no linoleum on the floor, from oil lamps to electricity. There was pretty grass around the place. It was taken care of, guys coming around picking up any bit of paper. It was a lot of families, old people, and everybody got along with each other, not like now."

"In the late '60s, there was still a lot going on in New Orleans, when I really started," remembers Cyril, 43, the youngest brother, a guy ready to jump at a stupid comment and the most overtly political member of the band. "The Night Cap was the place, the best club on the black circuit. When the Meters went to the Quarter, me and Aaron got together with Sam Henry, Robert Barney, Bulldog, Eugene Synegal, and we formed a group called the Soul Machine.

"It was one of the better combos in town. We played at the Desert

Charles. I can't explain why it's happening to us but it's a gift, a thing that didn't have to happen."

brothers were learning how to do it, New Orleans was teeming with musicians and places to play. Claiborne Avenue, now just another street, was loaded with clubs, under a huge, cool canopy of trees. At one end, by Esplanade, the neighborhood produced musician after musician, and Mardi Gras Indian tribes would congregate there to challenge each other and work out routines. The Neville family lived in the Calliope Projects, at one time a nice place to live. As a teenager, Art Neville led a band called the Hawketts, which in 1955 had a minor regional hit, "Mardi Gras Mambo," and featured Leo Morris on drums (later the great jazz drummer Idris Muhammed) and baritone saxophonist Roger Lewis, now of the Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

"The Calliope Projects was totally different back then," remem-

Sands at Claiborne and Esplanade, and down the street at the Off Limits where one of my mentors was working: Alvin 'Shine' Robinson. He was singing and playing guitar with Buddy Williams on drums, Walter Washington on guitar and Johnny Adams singing. The smoke was so thick you could cut it with a knife. It was one of those places people try to depict in movies. To walk into a place and have people like that welcome me—I can't find words for it. Buddy let me play his drums, and Shine let me sing. It was heaven. Down the street from there, at Club 77, the M.C. was none other than Google Eyes [Joseph August, a singer and legendary man-on-the-scene]. There was a good band called the Soul Brats, and Deacon John had several bands—Deacon John & the Ivories and Deacon John & the Electric Soul Train, which I played drums with and Art played keyboards.

"All this was going on on this strip of Claiborne Avenue from Orleans down to Esplanade," Cyril continues. "Then the city began to fuck it up. Claiborne Avenue used to run through the city and all the trees would meet and it was cool and beautiful. People used to ride horses up and down, and then it was all torn up. The highway fucked everything up, destroyed the neighborhood. Right now people are trying to make sure that nothing further will happen."

For Art, Charles and Aaron the recollections are different: They were around when rock 'n' roll was being invented, and helped shape its development in New Orleans. Charles, who left New Orleans early for Memphis, played saxophone with virtually every blues, R&B and soul performer to ever hit the stage, from Big Joe Turner to Wilson Pickett to Bobby Bland. Aaron, who at age 17 was stuck in the pen for stealing a car, was learning how to sing while driving trucks and painting houses. And Art worked in the studio-and-package-tour circuit out of New Orleans, playing and recording with his own band along with Little Richard and Larry Williams.

Charles had gone to Memphis in 1956; he was stationed in the Navy there, and Beale Street was still alive. "There were some bad musicians there. It was so exciting, clubs everywhere. And juke joints, where a guy would be playing guitar and somebody would be playing a jug bass, harmonica and washboard. And there was bebop. It was all there. I didn't miss New Orleans because Beale Street was just like Rampart Street. Memphis was more spread out, but the same scene was happening, and some of the bands I had played in at the Dew Drop in New Orleans played in Memphis. I really felt fortunate to catch the end of the heyday of that sort of entertainment." Charles wrote a play about it called *Shangri-La*, which had a run in New Orleans and that he says he wants to take to Broadway.

"I moved to New York for 10 years," Charles says, "and lived at 54th and Broadway. The hippies were what was happening. The love generation. There was a musical revolution going on that's also really affected the way I think. Lots of stuff then is inconceivable now on radio, given how narrow everything is. But that was the beginning of accepting different cultural ideas.

"I played with the guitarist John Hammond at the Gaslight Lounge, and Jimi Hendrix was playing at the Cafe Wha? and he'd sit in with us and we'd sit in with him. I played at the Cheetah, a really big hip club, with strobe lights, black lights, gigantic balloons, movies and slides on the walls, and, all around the floors, lights cued to the instruments. And go-go girls. And hippies. I was a hippie, and it was perfect for me. I met the jazz guitarist Tiny Grimes and we got to be friends and did a lot of gigs together. I got to play at Thelonious Monk's birthday party at Minton's, the Baroness was there and George Coleman and Sonny Rollins and Charlie Rouse. We all jammed on a bebop version of 'Happy Birthday.' That was the thrill of a lifetime."

Aaron, now 48, had a career symptomatic of the Neville Brothers and the whole New Orleans scene: strange and idiosyncratic talent, but no cash and only slivers of recognition. After "Tell It Like It Is," for which he made no money, he hustled from gig to gig, bottomed out on alcohol. As with his band, the '80s finally brought success, in Aaron's case by singing truly sappy duets with Linda Ronstadt.

Ronstadt is now helping him produce his own record, due next year.

For Art, bottoming out was never part of the equation. "I was on a couple of Little Richard sessions, and live dates with Larry Williams," he remembers. "Those were good experiences; it was all good in the early days. I wasn't trying to make a living, I was doing it because it was fun. There wasn't any money in it. I was working in television repairs, in a parts department. I was an elevator operator and I had big records and a hit and everything, but it wasn't paying me no money. When 'Cha Dooky Doo' [a minor hit for Specialty Records in 1958] came out, I was in Navy boot camp in Chicago."

"At home there'd been music all the time," says Charles. "You'd walk past people's houses and hear music on a record player or people would be playing and singing. Red Tyler [a legendary tenor saxophonist] lived downstairs from us and we'd hear him practicing. Frank Parker, the drummer, lived around there. And Jolly [Chief Jolly, founder of the Wild Tchoupitoulas], our uncle, was traveling in the merchant marines. We heard all these stories about him and my mother being fantastic dancers, and they were. He played blues piano, too. He'd play in bars and clubs, just walk in, that was great.

"We'd sing doo-wop," Charles says, "and hang in the park in the project and sing together. It sounded real good—the realization of how good hit me much later when we did the Wild Tchoupitoulas album [a classic collection of Mardi Gras-based chants] in 1976. That decided me, and I moved back to New Orleans. That was when we decided to put together the Neville Brothers band in '77. It was the first time that the four of us had played together in 10 or 12 years."


And after another 13 years, *Brother's Keeper* is nothing short of perfection—at least one-half of it, where a touch of well-produced psychedelia merges with perfect songwriting. If *Yellow Moon* was more political than anything they had done, *Brother's Keeper* maintains the pressure. It's an album

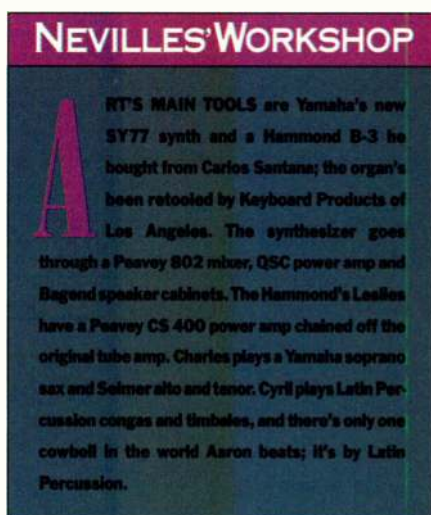
the brothers could've made 15 years ago, had the industry let them.

"*Brother's Keeper*," says Charles, "has a lot of religious imagery on the album. That's how it came out; none of it was planned. The songs Aaron wrote came from a book of poems he's had for a long time and they reflect his religious background. Aaron has always been that way. He went through a bad alcohol phase. Everybody in the band went through a bad phase. That's life in America. Most people from poor backgrounds and ghettos are prone to get involved in that."

While *Brother's Keeper* is one of their best albums, the live show is the best indicator of the Nevilles' relationship to their community.

"If there are 7000 people, that's fine," says Charles, "but when there's that big separation between us and the audience, the music isn't as good. The function of music is to awaken in the listener that part that can respond to emotions. Black music does away with the separation between audience and performer; it just becomes 'us.'"

"I look at what we're all doing," says Art, "and I'm so proud of Aaron and Cyril and Charles. We all have things going on outside of the band, which makes me really happy. I love playing with the Meters. I can't explain it all, but it is a gift. There are a lot of great musicians that don't have the blessings we have. Why? I don't know. But it must work, because there are lines wherever we play." 



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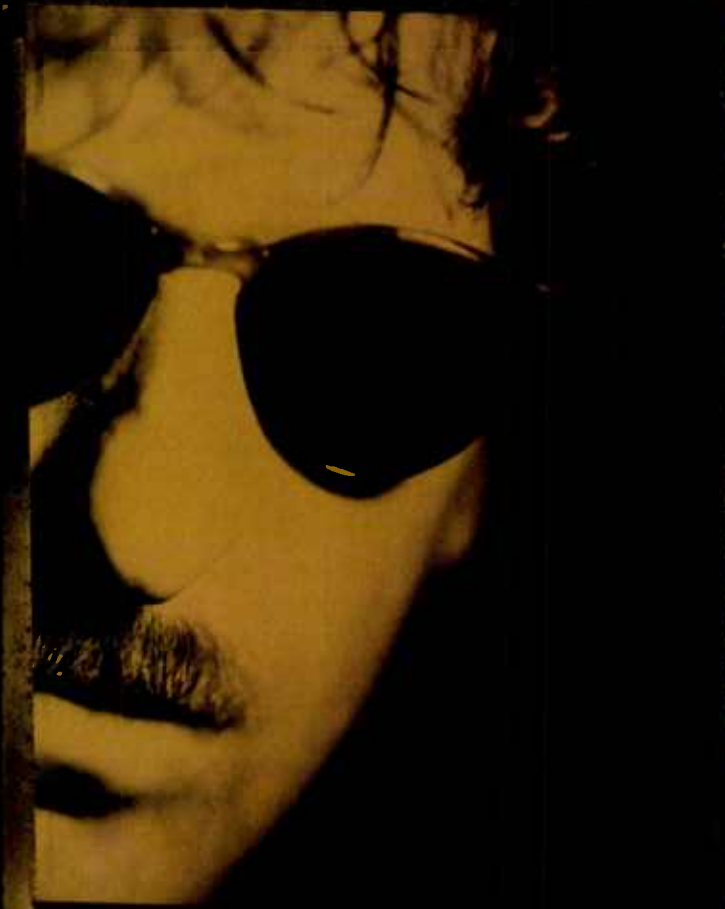
WAS
 (not was)
 IS HAPPY
 (unhappy)

Will success as producers mess up their band?

CHICAGO—IN A COMFORTABLE BUT MODEST HOTEL ROOM, DAVID WAS (A.K.A. WEISS) IS PROMOTING WAS (NOT WAS)'S STRONG NEW ALBUM *ARE YOU OKAY?* VERY MUCH THE DISHEVELED BOHEMIAN, DAVID IS ASKED ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND PARTNER DON WAS, WHOM HE HAS KNOWN AND WORKED WITH FOR OVER 25 YEARS. "WELL, I THINK THERE'S A TENSION THAT'S ALWAYS EXISTED, IN TERMS OF DON'S KNOWING HOW TO GO FOR THE JUGULAR AND MY WANTING TO TORTURE SOMEONE SLOWLY," DAVID SMILES. "DON'S A KILLER.

BY JOCK BAIRD

Photography by Catanzaro & Mahdessian



He's always been a very canny first-degree murderer as far as making records. And I didn't realize until recently that it was a virtue. I knew it was the foil to my sort of precious perfectionism. One of us had to finally mix the record and have it pressed, 'cause I always figure there's something left to do. Now *together* we make a decent whole, because I think Don's committed to the moment and I'm worried as hell about posterity."

Is that one reason David has decried the creeping "Paula Abdulization" of Was (Not Was)? (Don's wife, Gemma Corfield, is the Virgin A&R exec responsible for Paula Abdul.)

"Well, it was taken a little too far," David admits. "It's not about commercial or artistic. That's a false issue. You can't apply those standards to the Beatles, who simply wrote some durable-ass songs—you could never accuse them of pandering. What makes Don the producer that he is is that he loves music so thoroughly, every kind of darn music since he was a teenager. It's why he can work with Bonnie Raitt and Iggy Pop and Bob Dylan, not because he's hungry to make money and he'll produce anyone they bring to him. It's because he can really *feel* the nerve inside, he understands it and loves it.

"And that's why the 'Paula Abdulization' thing..." David breaks out in a premeditated grin. "It's kind of a joke. But I do think this record is embarrassingly commercial and it does testify that—and I'll be frank, even though Don doesn't appreciate it when I am—we've got a huge debt. You can only be indulged by these Medicis for so long until you just become a pain in the ass. When you've run up a debt of over a million dollars, there's simply no getting away with 'Dad, I'm in Jail' anymore. And it's a blessing—I don't *want* to do 'Dad, I'm in Jail' again. So the burden to be weird's been lifted off our shoulders."

LOS ANGELES—The next day, Don Was (né Fagenson) is relaxing by the pool behind his Hollywood Hills home, when the phrase "Paula Abdulization" is repeated. A red light suddenly goes on in Don's brain. "All right, as long as he keeps bringing this up," he begins heatedly. "I always gloss it over, but in this case I'll give you a solid answer. The fact of the matter is, if he would *show up* to the fucking sessions, he would have some input into whether it's Paula Abdulized or not. He wasn't *there*. That's what really irks me."

Uh-oh. Pissing contest in the media pool! "I'm just getting so sick of hearing it," continues the ruffled Don, who got in at six this morning after a late-night Bob Seger session and rose two hours later to be interviewed. "All the interviews for *Are You Okay?* have followed the identical pattern. I talk to people after he does, and it's always the same thing: I'm neglecting Was (Not Was) by producing other people, and the records are too commercial for him. Hey, he never came to a session."

When pressed further about this, Don deftly segues into a very specific production technique involving sampled drum loops. This allows him to recover his standard interview stride and his sense of humor, and the letter bombs are left behind. Not



DAVID

"There's a tension between Don's knowing how to go for the jugular and my wanting to torture someone slowly."

until five hours and a Synclavier string overdub session later is Don reminded about his initial anger and his revelation. So what does it mean that David, the nominal co-producer of *Are You Okay?*, wasn't present for something as essential as track-cutting? Don squirms visibly at the wheel of his new Saab 900 convertible and laughs.

"Yeah, I should probably retract that. I mean it is true, but my life'd be better if you didn't print that. But I take it real personally. If it was the first time I heard it, I'd laugh it off, but I'm getting this in *every* interview. The hardest questions are coming from his accusations about me not paying attention, or that I'm going to burn myself out creatively. I've had to answer that four or five times, and it just pisses me off. I've worked real hard on this record, I've rehearsed the band, done all that stuff. And then I read this 'Paula Abdulization' thing, and I took it personally. 'How do *you* fucking know what it was? You weren't even *there*!'

"To me it's like an athlete who stays in training," Don continues, careening without a seatbelt

around a tight canyon curve. "I feel like because I'm so focused, my ears are getting tuned in to a deeper level. I'd worry more about a guy who goes off and plays *golf* all the time, which is what he does. How do you gear back up?"

Don pauses, then shakes his head. "There's something going on in the studio in this period of time. I can really sense there's a vibe to everything we're cutting. Were I a religious man, I would say something along the lines of, 'The hand of God is over the control room,' but I'm not. But it's that kind of thing. I don't know *where* these records are coming from. There's a chemistry. And *that's* why I'm not quitting. Because even though I'm tired, something's sweeping me away. Like I turn to the engineer, Ed Cherney, all the time and at this point it's just a *look*. We know. 'Ah, it's *another* amazing day here.'"

THERE'S BEEN A LOT of amazing days for Don Was. When you're hot, you're hot, but this is ridiculous. In the last 18 months, beginning with Bonnie Raitt's luminescent *Nick of Time*, Don has produced tracks for the B-52's (including the hit "Love Shack"), Iggy Pop, Michael

McDonald, Elton John, the Rolling Stones (actually an ill-fated remix), Bob Seger, Bob Dylan and one-off duets by Roy Orbison and k.d. lang and Bonnie Raitt and B.B. King. And, of course, Was (Not Was). Don has also toured extensively in the last two years with the killer 11-piece Was (Not Was) road band, with its three powerful black R&B singers (parts of the band also back up John Hiatt on occasion). He and David even make an appearance in the new Brando film *The Freshman*, as the band accompanying—naturally—Bert Parks.

The Bonnie Raitt project began Was' current production streak in more ways than one. Was says he "crossed a threshold on that album," involving the importance of live rhythm dates: "It really turned me around. I was making these computer records, and they're not fun to make. It's a very lonely thing to sit up late at night and type your

DON

"I'd worry about a guy who goes off and plays golf all the time, which is what he does."



World Radio History

songs in. It's not why I learned to play guitar. There's a real charge doing a live rhythm section, a nice camaraderie—it reminded me of what it was like to be in bands. I've been doing everything like that lately—not that I'm against sequenced songs. There's one on Bonnie's album, but the philosophy was that if she couldn't sit down alone and play it on acoustic guitar or piano and sell the song, the song was out. And there were times when she'd be in tears singing it, just hitting it straight on. We tried to keep that feeling in the studio, even if at times it meant pulling almost all instruments out to get it."

Don's sparse-is-better approach may stem from the absence of a hidden agenda: "Because I have an outlet as an artist, I don't feel this compulsion to leave my stamp all over everybody else," he says. In fact, many of his projects involve getting older rock artists to get back to basics, usually artists that Don had some musical/mystical reaction to during his teenage years in Detroit. "I think in the end, you gotta be a fan," Don admits. "I was such a fan in those days, I could *dream* the next Dylan or Beatles album, whole songs that never existed, just because I was so excited about what they'd do next. If you're cynical about it and you try to second-guess radio, I think you're doomed. The best I can do is make an album that I like and hope that other people are gonna like it."

Does this mean he has to love *every* song on a Bob Seger album? "If I don't love it I would ask him to present a good reason why it should be included. And if the good reason is that 'This is inside of me, I feel this and I want it out,' that's as good a reason as you could ever have to do a song. But if I hated it, I would have to say get someone else."

Still, it can be hard to pour cold water on some of your biggest heroes. "There was one day we had George Harrison in to play a solo on the Dylan album," Don recalls. "He ran the first pass and both Dylan and George Harrison turned to me at the same time and said, 'Well? What do we do?' Oh damn, now I'm going to have to tell George Harrison that the first four bars were good but the last four were out of tune. I just thought, 'Well, the guy's paying me a lot of money to sit here and tell him what's real. I've got to forget who these guys are and treat it like you're back in the garage.' I will say this about Bob, though: His instincts are the very best of anyone I've ever worked with. He was right almost all the time."

Does writing and playing his primary instrument, bass, come as part of the Don Was production package? "I have a theory, the Drunken Father theory," he muses. "When you produce someone, you're like their dad. You're there to shield them from pressures and keep them directed and to nurture them. And if I play bass on the record or write a song with them and I'm not doing well, it's like seeing your dad come staggering through the front door drunk. It's disheartening, it blows the overall vibe of being a producer. It's not worth the repercussions of screwing up. But," he adds, "if any of them ask, I'm more than willing. I would love to write with Bonnie. I got to play bass with Bob Seger.



DAVID

"This record is embarrassingly commercial. When you've run up a debt of over a million dollars, there's no more getting away with 'Dad, I'm in Jail.'"

I would've loved to have played with Iggy, but . . . he never asked.

"Half of producing is nothing to do with music; it's just making people comfortable, getting all the obstacles out of the way so that they can be creative. It's not *my* job to create. I just have to make sure the artists don't get lost inside the muck of record company pressures that surround them."

That sounds slightly simplified, because the father's role is also to prod. "It's slightly simplified," Don nods, "but it reads so well as a humble statement." For instance, Bob Seger could use a hit now. . . . "But you *know* that already," Don says. "He doesn't need to be told that."

Not all of these production plums are Don's alone. David has shared the producer's chair on more than one, including the new Dylan LP, a dizzying series of guest-star walk-ons with everyone from Stevie Ray and Jimmie Vaughan to Elton John. What's the difference between a Don Was production and a Don and David Was production? "It's a lot more fun making records with the two of us," smiles Don. "Like the Dylan album—you immediately can hear it's very upbeat. It's a rock 'n' roll album. It's almost the alter ego to *Oh Mercy*—although I think Bob's in

the same writing period. That's a dark album—it's a *wonderful* album, but it's a dark, moody album. This is an upbeat, rock 'n' roll album. And I think it was this vibe created in the studio. We had fun.

"It was a very lighthearted five weeks. We put together a different band for every day—we didn't even tell *Bob* who was coming in. We figured, 'This is not going to be an organized record. This is not something like Bonnie Raitt, where we sit down and plan it for eight months, or like Iggy's where we're continually updating his demos and sending each other copies.' But if you make a commitment to record that way, you might as well go all the way, so all I could do is make sure nobody knew *anything*. No one even heard the songs before the session. Then if we wanted it spontaneous, it would be."

Ironically, it was David who made the most blatantly "commercial"

suggestion: "Dylan had written a song which I felt, at the end of the chorus, was demanding a stop-time sustain of the chord, as in 'The Weight' by the Band," David recalls. "I told the musicians and Don about it, quietly, 'cause I didn't want to disturb Bob, who was thinking about something else. Everybody thought it was a good idea, but I hadn't broached it with Bob. So they were about to take the song and I thought, 'I gotta say something.' And I had never deigned to address Bob over the microphone of the control room, but I did.

"I said, 'Bob?' And he said [*snarling*], 'Who's talking?!' So I broached it with him and he said okay. They did it and it was *gorgeous*. It was so gorgeous that Dylan had second thoughts about it. It was just too pretty, it was bugging him too much, and he had us do a take without the stop. I missed it desperately, but he wanted it that way. Happily, though, the band had lost the feel so it wasn't as good a take, and when we had determined that it couldn't be edited

DON

"I'm just getting so sick of hearing...the records are too commercial for him. Hey, he never came to a session."



out, we were stuck with it. I was happy, and Dylan jovially said, 'Thanks a lot, David.' But someone had to dare to use one of these devices, like a false ending on a Count Basie song. They're contrivances, but they're just made for the audience."

With projects like these filling their days, Was (Not Was) must be saying no to a lot of interesting work. "Yeah," Don says. "I just had a heartbreaker: The original Byrds are doing a boxed set and want to cut four new songs. Physically it was impossible to do it, but I was just stuttering, 'There must be something, there must be two Augusts. . . .'"

After Seger's album is done, what's next? Was says he's going to do a record with ex-Knack leader Doug Fieger, a long-time Was (Not Was) guest vocalist. "And I'm going to produce a couple of tracks for, uh . . . Paula Abdul."

"DON'S ALWAYS BEEN a survivor, in a very *Machtpolitik* sense," says David. "He used to go like an urban anthropologist, a disco Alan Lomax, into these gay, black, vanguard dance music clubs in Detroit, back in 1980. Armed with a blaster, he'd go in and when the dance floor was at its most furious pitch, he'd record the music going on. And by the end of the night this bounty hunter had bagged three grooves to take back for analysis and refurbishing. That was the original impulse of Was (Not Was) and the way we used to make records, you could actually get these 12-inches out and have 'em on the streets before the immediacy of those beats had gone to seed. That's how we started, but it didn't last long. Ze gave us an album deal immediately and we had to figure out how to start writing songs and build an act. It's taken about 10 years."

Young David Weiss met young Don Fagenson in the full flower of adolescent Jewish intellectual Vietnam-era alienation. Don at the time was doing a full-blown Dylan imitation—he's joked that it took David seven years to realize where he got it from. David was a single-note wind specialist—he had learned and then dropped virtually every orchestral instrument but the violin, and recoiled from professionalism even then. "I studied classical flute when I was a teenager, and I think that's where my sense of melody comes from," David says, "but I know more about music than I bring to bear when I sit down to write it. I consider myself to be the Grandma Moses of pop music. I mean I'm a primitive, a naif. And part of the charm of rock 'n' roll is that it's thievery, but it's amateur thievery—you get away with the jewels but you broke all the windows on the way out. Don is definitely more the rhythmic meister; he knows how to make a groove percolate. Me, I like single-note stuff. To me, the most graceful period of American music in the past 25 years are those head arrangements on all the Blue Note records." David had such strong opinions about jazz, in fact, he spent years as jazzcrit for L.A.'s *Herald Examiner*—among his pet peeves was Keith Jarrett, whom he termed a "jazz Liberace."

As for Fagenson, he had dropped out of college, using his school money to buy a 16-track Revox. "I learned to engineer in Detroit, and there was no



DAVID

"Songwriting is like police work: you're paid to notice everything. You sift through your own garbage."

one to serve as a role model," he shrugs. "There were no great engineers in Detroit, and all the New York techniques never filtered back. Motown's the best example of that—it was a bunch of jazz musicians sitting around drinking, trying to imitate New York soul records, and getting it totally *wrong*. And in the process, they invented a sound, inadvertently, out of a certain provincial eccentricity. You have to get away from the trend centers, basically, where it's very easy to pick up the latest thing. If you like the sound of Paula Abdul's record, you can go out and hire [engineer] Keith Cohen." Don pauses, then adds, "Which is exactly what Was (Not Was) did."

The incipient Was conspiracy did get one important regional advantage from Detroit—their two stand-out singers. Running a warehouse demo studio in a tough Detroit neighborhood, Don met and recruited Sir Harry Bowens, who has also logged eight years with the O'Jays, and Sweet Pea Atkinson, a street-hardened auto worker who came into the studio dressed head to toe in flaming orange. Both have remained permanent Was (Not Was) fixtures, even though Was (Not Was) records have always featured a glittering array of guest vocalists. "People would say, 'You've worked with Mel Tormé, Madonna, Ozzy Osbourne . . . Who would you want to work with next?' And we'd puzzle trying to think of a good answer. The fact is, *nobody*. We've got these two guys, now three guys with Donald Ray Mitchell, and I think we could settle down into this mode of having untoward, alienated suburban sentiments sung by very hard-ball, gritty-style black R&B singers and be happy there."

Born to Laugh at Tornadoes, their first Geffen LP, was deservedly called brilliant. Behind the obvious grabbers of solid grooves and Ozzy, Mel and Mitch Ryder walk-ons, David Weiss' lyrics depicted a blighted landscape of permanently damaged people, with a deep sadness lurking just below the comedy. On the two subsequent Was (Not Was) albums, David has refined his characters and brought more direct narrative to his songs (despite his fear of "becoming the next Harry Chapin"). David puts himself and his friends in this world, often inflicting pain on the hapless, as in *What Up Dog?*'s "Earth to Doris."

"Ah Doris, I knew her well," David smiles. "Let me go on the couch. Songwriting is such a catch-as-catch-can profession—it's like police work: You're paid to notice everything. You sift through your own garbage. As such, I cultivate experience even where there's no profit in it spiritually, so you actually have something to process, some roughage. But I would hope these things aren't too depressing. 'Earth to Doris' is a terrible reality but stylistically it's a comedy. And without getting too highfalutin' it takes some sort of psychic health to face your demons down and really make something out of that."

It's that bizarre mixture of tragedy and comedy, warped lyrics sung by straight R&B singers, that gives Was (Not Was)'s work a disassociated quality. To David, that's the point: "Barry Ulanov, a jazz critic from the '50s, once wrote that blues is a perfect

DON

"Were I a religious man I would say, 'The hand of God is over the control room.' I don't know where the records are coming from."



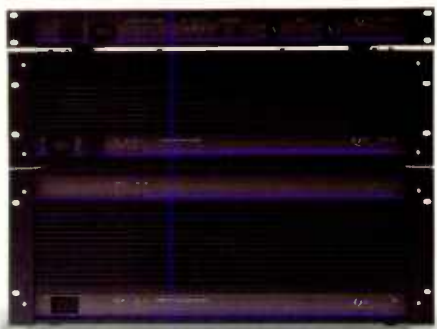
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balance between passion and detachment. I believe that writing a song detachedly and having Sweet Pea sing it like it is some major affair of the heart is exactly what gives these songs a reason to live. Otherwise, if they were sung by another angry, disaffected young non-singing white guy, they'd be the most disposable culture there is."

Geffen Records did not agree. They called the band a "marketing nightmare," told them to ditch the singers, get a cute white guy (the band even held auditions), and make hits. Otherwise, the label would not release the next album. For nearly five years, Was (Not Was) was on suspension, frozen in time. Don now feels Geffen was only saying, "Get organized, tell us what you're selling here and try to stick to that." David likens the suspension to purchasing a ticket for the sixth race at Hialeah and having a sign go up on the tote board suspending the race for two years.

Like many down-on-their-luck R&B heavies, it was success in England that revived Was (Not Was). Championed by British Phonogram exec David Bates, Don and David signed with Chrysalis and in 1988 finally ran their suspended race with *What Up Dog?*; "Walk the Dinosaur" became a huge hit on both shores, Was (Not Was) joined the Club MTV tour, and critics lavished praise upon the sprawling, gritty, 16-song album. But the band had made compromises it regretted. They recut the tracks with "name" session men and pop producer Paul O'Duffy was brought in to produce four tracks and mix two more. David also feels releasing the straightforward "Anything Can Happen" as a single was a dumb move: "It became a big smash at Adult Contemporary and in so doing halted the entire progress of the album."

The biggest blow for Don was surrendering his producer's chair: "It was real odd. We went to the studio one day and here's a guy sitting where I normally sit, with his own engineer and his own keyboard player, and they're working on our song. It was 'Spy in the House of Love,' a song which we had already recorded, and they were redoing our arrangement in a bigger style, but note-for-note. It was like seeing somebody play you in a movie."

Couldn't it be argued that this was shock treatment, the record business grabbing him by the shoulders and telling him to straighten up or stop producing? "No, fuck, in the end the song that was the hit was the one we produced ourselves," Don counters. "I knew it was bullshit. I don't believe in that. The worst thing you can do is have a hit that doesn't reflect you. I don't know if we'll ever recover from 'Walk the Dinosaur': I like the song a lot, but when it becomes a video and a dance and you're lipsynching on TV and looking stupid, then it's wrong."

Once again at the controls for what was only their fourth album, *Are You Okay?*, Don made a decision. "He chose a method to make this record that worried me," David says. "He was going to track some of the stuff at Jeff Lorber's studio: Jeff's like a track doctor to the stars, and I felt like we were getting into an area where our records could've been *anyone's* records. I could've participated more, but to tell you the truth, I was the slightest bit disaffected that it was being done so clinically, so professionally. I expected the worst, and happily

my expectations were not confirmed." (Translation: That's why I didn't show up when the tracks were cut.)

But though Lorber worked on the album, Don had a totally different MO up his sleeve: mixing his live-band specialty with sampled drum loops. "There's something about these rap records that have a homemade, hands-on texture to them. It's really like an old Howlin' Wolf album. So we used these drum loops as the foundation of the record. We probably even sampled the same records as N.W.A. You sample four bars of a drum beat from an old '70s record, and then you trigger it with the computer so it replays over and over and over again. Then we set up the band to play live on top of it. For the first time we felt we had a full band identity, so we used it."

Don urged a remake of "Papa Was a Rolling Stone" with a rap section; David blanched: "I thought our pith helmets would really be showing." But in came Young MC protégé G Love E, who wrote his

own smoldering lyric, and Weiss's doubts vanished. The album also includes the closest thing to Leonard Cohen rapping we'll ever hear in this dimension ("Elvis' Rolls Royce") and drop-ins by Syd Straw, the Roches and Iggy. All in all, the moments of atonal insanity more than counterbalance the commercial ones.

David even had a moment of self-doubt when he completely rewrote the lyrics of "K-Mart Wardrobe" to turn it into a song called—yuck—"I Can't Forget You." "It was too pat," David shrugs. "Too stilted, so we went back to K-Mart. It was the blue-light special." Yet on "Maria Navarro," the true-life tale of a murdered woman whose calls to 911 were ignored, David decided to go for the "obvious" rhyme, "There's no tomorrow for Maria Navarro," placed over a bright, uptempo track. "I didn't want to go for it for a second," he says. "It seemed too cheap a way of dispensing with a human life. But the serendipity of the rhyme was paramount, the fact it would play on the part of people's brains that just want consonance and assonance and cadence, and it had to be. Without it, without a little candy to invite you in, then I don't know if it's worth making a martyr of Maria Navarro. I think you walk the line

always. If something's funny, I hope it's disturbing at the same time."

To Don Was, success for the new album is a silver cloud with a dark lining: "My problem with our earlier records was that you could always see the seams. You could see we took some bebop and some MC5 guitar and stuck it over a dance beat and added these Bohemian lyrics and, voilà, it's a stew. But you could see all the ingredients in the stew, and instead I always kind of wanted a clear broth.

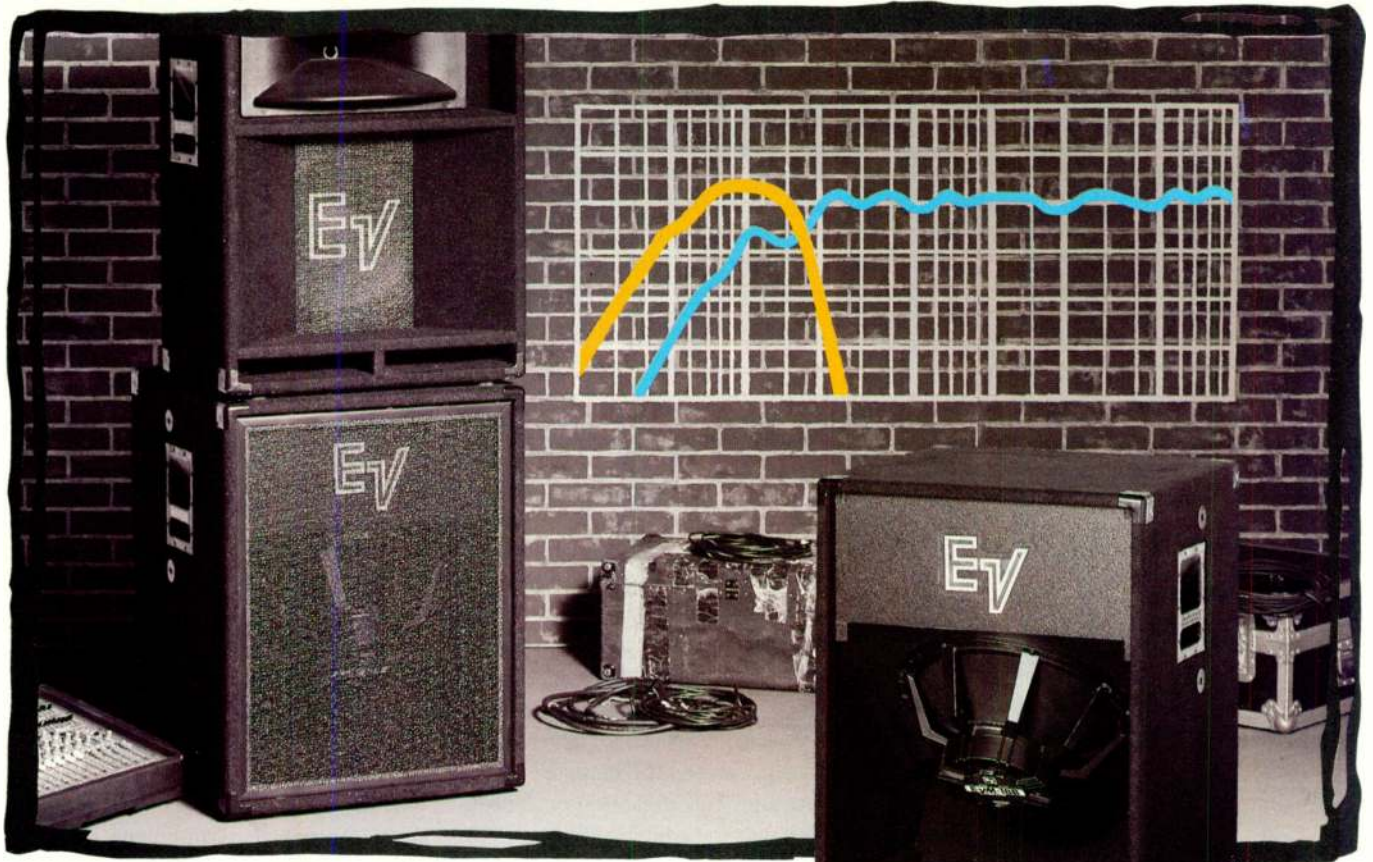
"Now in this case, one of the elements in the stew happens to be these drum loops, which I think are fooling a lot of people, like record company people, into thinking, 'Oh great, we got hit records.' But in the end it's probably gonna be the commercial downfall of the band, because I think we're essentially making adult records in the same way that Bonnie Raitt makes adult records, but with these textures that get us on Club MTV. How do you reconcile the two? The kids don't get why they blew up the United States and my fear is that adults will be put off by the groove of it. It could be the worst of both worlds."

Still, it would seem after a few hours of doing string overdubs on

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the "clear broth" of a very intense but straightforward Bob Seger track called "The Real Love," Don would feel an urgent need to play a few bars of "Earth to Doris." "Earth to Doris' for me is as sincere a statement as this song is to Bob," Don says. "I really didn't have to dig deep in the creative well for this—producing someone else and being the artist are two really separate and distinct gigs. But after being in the studio with someone else for a long period of time, I start building up interest in being the artist again. Watching Dylan write a song makes me want to go write, to try some things I picked up from him. And you know, you're *spent* after you make your own album—you oughta be, anyway, if you've done it right. So it's refreshing to go off and work with other people or go out on the road and sit in the back of a tour bus and watch movies."

Won't it be more expensive for him to tour with Was (Not Was) now? He'll be turning down all that production work.

"Yeah, that's a very . . . real thing," he laughs ruefully.

Maybe this whole "Paula Abdulization" argument is really about David's legitimate worry that his partner will become too successful as a producer; that Don won't need Was (Not Was) and where will *he* be? "I'm sympathetic. I understand what that's like," Don nods. Then he adds, "David's singularly the most gifted, creative person I've ever run across. I've never met anybody like him in my life. His mind is so fantastic! I've known him for almost 30 years, I've traveled all over with him. I can still have dinner with him every night or sit on a bus with him for 10 hours and never get sick of him. He's a talented person who's capable of doing anything he wants to do. If he wanted to write scripts he could be the King of Hollywood. You've got to look at it in the long run—David could easily go out and write a movie tomorrow that turns into the next *ET*. [In fact, Weiss recently sold his first film script.] These things turn around, everything's cyclical. There'll be a point where I'll lose whatever I'm in touch with, just like an athlete. It may be temporary or I may never get it back. But I'm interested in a career, not a year, and I think that there are ways to pace yourself. It's the kind of work you choose to take on."

How will he know when it's over?

"I guess by the number of messages on my answering machine when I get home," Don smiles. "I get around 52 a day now. When it gets to 12, I'm going back to college." ☺

INXS

[cont'd from page 72] good for old Shelley's ego. Creative people can be quite intimidating. It's the self-possession. You can't fathom what they're thinking, can't relate on any level, almost. As far as I'm concerned, it's their process and they can fuck off."

On the other hand, maybe Byron would have died of an overdose before he did anything interesting if he were alive today.

"Yes, I've only just got in under the wire myself," said Hutchence. "If you're not interested in having millions of groupies line up outside your hotel room, or in finishing *War and Peace*, then you have to look for escape somewhere. It was escapism for me, very enjoyable escapism, and you are indulged. When you're in a band, supposedly you're allowed to behave that way every night for years. You start believing you have twice the liver, twice the brain cells of anyone else. It's all bullshit."

"The prospect of mortality really slows you down," Farriss added. "Death just wrecks the party. If you're lucky you discover that you're much more valuable to others if you are your natural old self."

"If it's a constant state, you become really boring," Hutchence continued. "You suddenly realize, 'I'm becoming a cliché.' And you just stop. I did the entire American tour under my own natural chemicals. No alcohol, no smoking. It was an incredible experience. The power I had over myself, over my mind was staggering. There's an insecurity in life that everyone has to go through. Happiness is fleeting. Unhappiness is fleeting. Luckily. Usually. The power of drugs is that they remove that insecurity. You know exactly how you're going to feel for the next couple of hours. It takes away the uncertainty of your emotions. I think it's better for artists to live with that uncertainty."

One final question from the British tabloids: Was it true you're going with Kylie Minogue, the teenybop idol and Australian TV star?

"Yes," said Hutchence. "I fell over her a couple of times at parties when I was drunk. We went out one night, and that was that. She's not what people perceive her to be. She's all woman."

And she knew there weren't any lines in the dirt around Hutchence. ☺

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EXILED FROM MAIN STREET

Jimmy Miller produced the Rolling Stones' greatest albums—then disappeared

By Richard Buskin

I'VE NEVER OUTGROWN my appreciation for basic live musicianship," asserts Jimmy Miller, "and I still don't particularly like records that are created by just an engineer and a super keyboard player who do everything and then somebody comes in and sings. That's just not my music. I still enjoy bands spiritually driving off of one another, reflecting off of one another, stimulating one another and making magic happen—human magic. That's the start and then the technology can do wonders from there."

Miller is a producer with a knack for making auspicious debuts. After all, when

your first session with a virtually unknown Spencer Davis Group creates "Gimme Some Lovin'," and then a couple of years later your initiation into working with the Rolling Stones is "Jumpin' Jack Flash," you know that things are falling into place very nicely.

Traffic, Blind Faith, Spooky Tooth, Ginger Baker's Air Force, the Move, Delaney and Bonnie, Jim Capaldi, Rick Grech, Motorhead, the Plasmatics, plus five albums for Mick and the boys during their halcyon period: *Beggars Banquet*, *Let It Bleed*, *Sticky Fingers*, *Exile on Main Street* and *Goat's Head Soup*—through the late '60s and into

the '70s Miller was right up there, hailed as the wunderkind who had brought the Stones back to life and working his butt off in the studio en route to amassing a grand total of 88 gold records.

Then, just as suddenly, it was all over. A general disillusionment with the business (and, true to the times, a few too many chemicals) saw to that, and for several years he dropped out of sight.

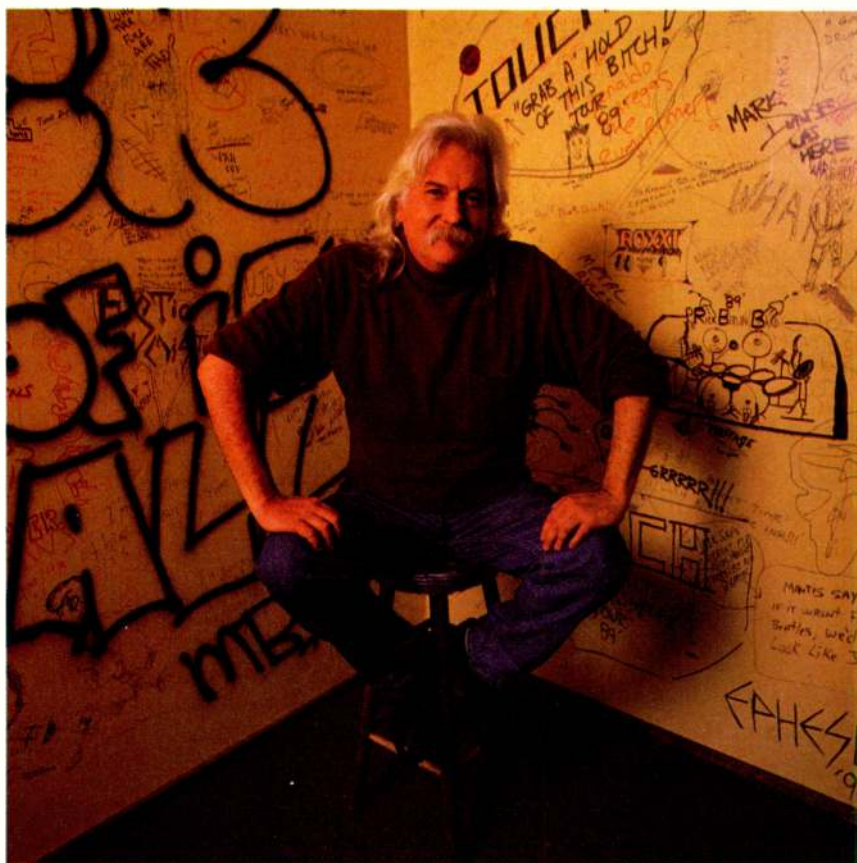
"I didn't really like what was happening on the music scene," he now says. "I just felt that I had lost the inspiration and the drive that it took to do good work, so I thought that rather than do work I didn't like I'd sooner do no work."

Gradually, however, Miller began turning the dial away from talk-radio and toward the music, but by the time he felt the itch to return to the studio the technology had left him behind. Eighteen months were spent reacclimating himself, and today, under the guidance of the London-based Shannon O'Shea Management, he is working his way back into the mainstream and looking to collaborate with both new and established acts on both sides of the Atlantic. Currently residing in Rhode Island, Jimmy has been working behind the 48-track SSL board at Normandy Sound studios with numerous local artists, including Jagger-soundalike Ken Richards and new SBK Records signing Steve Carilli, whom he describes as "a touch of rock, a touch of pop, a touch of reggae and a touch of Joe Jackson." He has also mixed the tracks "Not Giving In" and "Love Keeps Hanging On" (featuring Dave Gilmour on guitar) for the forthcoming album by the Pretty Things.

"When I did my very first computerized mix a couple of years ago, I just left it up to the engineer," he admits. "I stood there and said, 'I don't really understand what you're doing but I'm going to watch.' In the beginning I felt somewhat lost, but now that I understand it I've taken control again."

Born and raised in New York, Miller had been writing songs and cutting demos there when he ran into Chris Blackwell in the fall of '66. Soon thereafter he was invited to England to work for six weeks with the Spencer Davis Group, featuring 18-year-old Stevie Winwood on keyboards and vocals. Instant international success followed, "and

six weeks became 18 years!" It was largely on the strength of Jimmy's work with Traffic that Mick Jagger asked him



Twenty-two years after *Beggars Banquet*, he's still against the wall.

Photograph: Steve Miller

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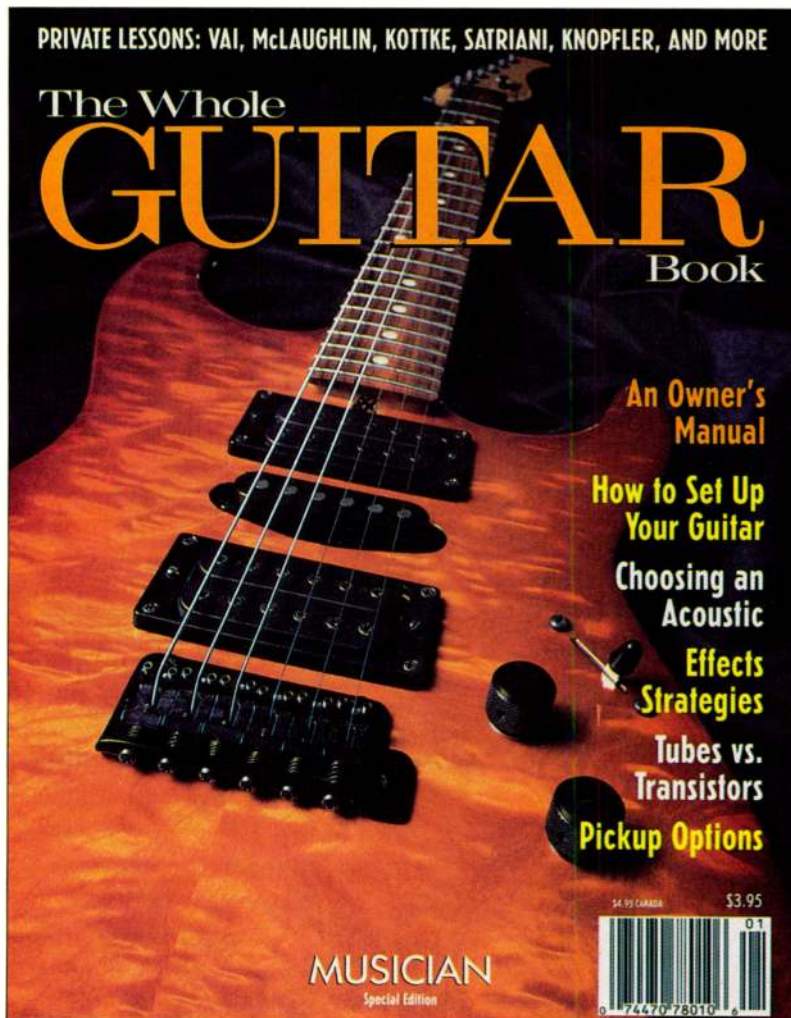
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to produce the Stones, and thus put the band firmly back on the rock 'n' roll track after a year of acid-induced meandering around *Their Satanic Majesties Request*.

"I didn't in any way insist that they change direction," Miller says. "I think that they were ready to change, as indicated by the songs that they had written for *Beggars Banquet*. It was back to basic rock 'n' roll. I'm often credited with that, but I think I benefited a lot by being in the right place at the right time. I think it's also fair to say that being American helped, because they, like many successful English bands during the 'British Invasion,' had been raised on American records. My being American was kind of a 'grass is greener' thing."

At the same time, Jagger and Richards utilized their comprehensive record collections to turn Miller on to blues artists he had never heard of. Over the next few years they developed a solid and hugely successful working relationship.

"That doesn't mean it was always easy," says Miller. "They occasionally took quite a long time over what they were doing, but it was always a pleasure, especially when they hit those magic moments which made it all worthwhile." For "Street Fighting Man" both Keith Richards' and Charlie Watts' parts were recorded on a cassette which was then transferred to a multitrack, to attain a suitably distorted sound. "When the song was first played to me [as "Did Everyone Pay Their Dues"] it was on an old Phillips mono cassette, which was sort of state-of-the-art for those days, and I remember Keith saying how distorted his acoustic guitar sounded and how he wished we could get that sound in the studio. So I said, 'Well, why not record your acoustic on a cassette?' We did a basic track with his acoustic, Charlie's drums and some percussion. Here we were spending maybe £30 or £40 an hour—good money in those days—and we were recording onto a £20 cassette machine! If you took that track out the whole sound would become terribly sterile.

"In those days we couldn't take too much time. Things weren't each on separate tracks as they are today. We were combining things and mixing down, and we were stuck with whatever mixdown we did for the rest of the record. So we would mix it down until it was right. We'd go from one four-track machine to another, perhaps combining the original four into a stereo two-track on the second machine, which

would then give us two open tracks to add more things. So in a way we were mixing as we went along, whereas when non-computerized 16-track came along we really had our hands full because everything was inevitably left until the end.

"For effects we would put guitars through a Leslie rotating cabinet, and we'd use a Mellotron—we thought that had a really far-out experimental sound—tape echo, EMT plates and tape phasing. We'd have to run the sound onto another machine, and then send it back and just get it a little bit out of sync so that it would start to phase. It was all done manually with a vari-speed, and you'd get it for a while and then it would drift; you'd have to go back and punch in."

The console Jimmy utilized on these sessions with engineers Glyn Johns and Eddie Kramer was a four-channel Helios with color-coded faders: blue, red, yellow and green. When this was upgraded to eight-channel by the next year for *Let It Bleed*, the faders for channels five and six were placed at the extreme left of the board while seven and eight were at the extreme right.

"The engineer more or less looks after the sound while I look after the groove, the timing, the arrangement," Miller explains. "After having the band do a run-through I invite them to contribute their own ideas. Mick was always very, very good. If after getting things as good as we could we were still having a problem with the bass, when I'd bring the band in they'd all say, 'Yeah, yeah, that sounds good.' But on his way out Mick would inevitably turn around and say, 'You will work a little more with the bass sound, won't you?'"

"I feel the band peaked on *Let It Bleed*, although I know that to this day *Beggars Banquet* is Keith's favorite. He was a workhorse on that record because he was the only guitarist, and he played every slide, every rhythm, every lead. It was his showcase and so it should be his favorite."

After producing *Sticky Fingers* at Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Alabama and Olympic in London, Jimmy's penchant for trying to capture musical spontaneity—"that magical moment"—was put to the ultimate test. As tax exiles from Britain, the Stones decided to record their next album in the basement of Nellcote, Keith Richards' house in the South of France. Though *Exile on Main Street* may be the Rolling Stones' most acclaimed album, Jimmy Miller has never been happy with its overall sound. He remembers the technical

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deficiencies and less-than-ideal surroundings that inadvertently helped produce *Exile's* raw, blistering attack.

"For all the work we did mixing we never really got as good a sound as we had on *Let It Bleed* and *Sticky Fingers*," he says. "They had recently built their mobile truck we had used a little bit on *Sticky Fingers*, particularly on 'Bitch' and 'Sway,' which had been recorded at Mick's house in the country. His house had a giant hall and a lot of wood, and suddenly here we were in a concrete basement with very little ventilation during a very hot French summer. To me the sound was rough, and no matter how many different positions we tried, we could never get it right. To make a long story short, we worked a lot when we took the tapes to L.A. to mix it all in a proper studio [Elektra in Hollywood]. Since then I've thought, 'Oh boy, I bet if we had the technology we have today we could have made it sound wonderful,' but a few months ago I was at somebody's house and he put it on. He claimed it was his favorite Stones album ever, and I had to agree with him at least for the reason that it was so basic, so I thought, 'Well, it's best to have left it alone.'"

Apart from its rawness, another significant aspect of the sound on *Exile on Main Street* is its tendency to submerge Mick Jagger's vocals in the overall mix, the result of the singer's endless exhortations to the producer. Miller would soon discover this was simply an underlining of Jagger's natural pragmatism.

"I'd usually record Mick with a Neumann U-67 with a power-pack, or something not-too-quality-sounding on blues songs, such as a hand-held M160 or some other ribbon mike going through an amp. One day I was sitting with him away from the studio and I asked, 'Mick, why are you always asking for less voice? Aren't you confident about how your vocals sound?' He said, 'No, it's not that.' The reason was that when he grew up with what he described as negro blues songs, kids were always trying to be the first in the neighborhood to know all the words to a record, and they couldn't do this by hearing it now and then on the radio. They'd have to go out and buy it and play it over and over. So in his practical way he believed that as a result of mixing down his vocals, people—especially bands who'd want to cover the songs onstage—would actually be more prone to buy the Stones record to be able to get all the words!" 



KENNY EDMONDS: BEHIND THE BABYFACE

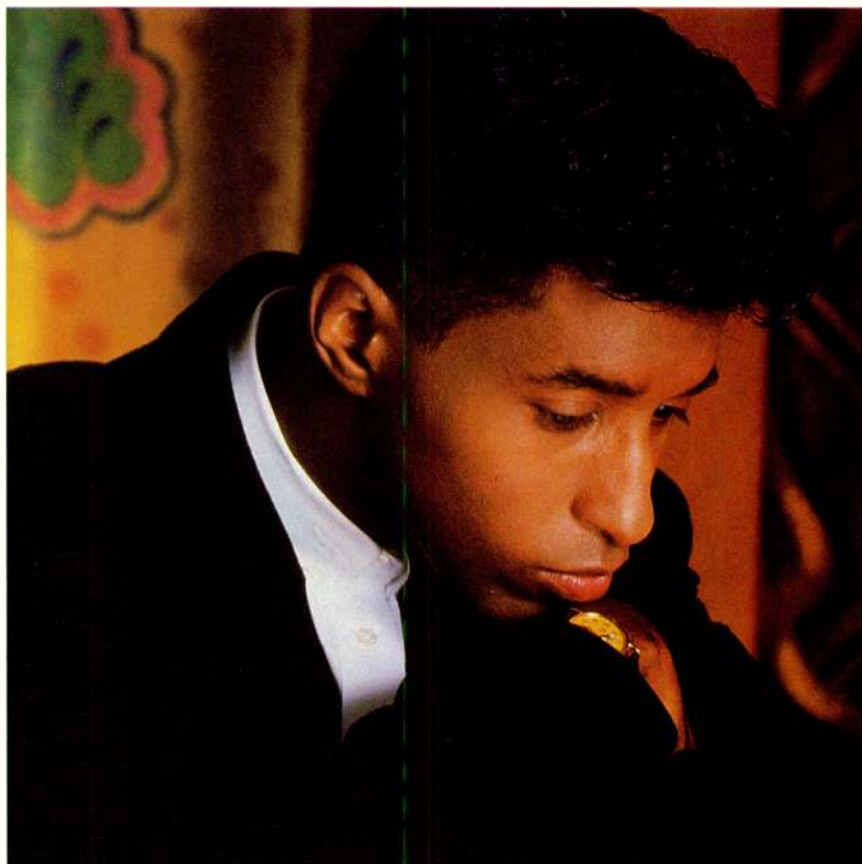
The evolution of R&B's
hottest production team

By Jock Baird

WHEN KENNY EDMONDS was in ninth grade in Indianapolis, he came up with a foolproof way of conversing with his musical idols. He'd call up concert promoters using "a really terrible Jimmy Stewart impersonation," claim to be a high school teacher with some promising journalism students and request interviews with visiting stars for them. Edmonds first tried the scam on the Jackson 5. "I actually sat and talked to Michael most of the time. I had on this high school letter

sweater and Michael thought I was in college—I think we're the same age but I was a lot taller."

Edmonds went on to obtain "interviews" with stars like Earth, Wind & Fire and Stevie Wonder, and got an encore with the Jackson 5. He must've taken excellent notes. In the 15 years since then, as half of the killer production team of L.A. and Babyface, Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds has not only turned those R&B seminars into a slew of hits for everyone from Paula Abdul to Bobby Brown to, yes, the Jacksons, but has himself become Babyface, hit artist, whose second



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solo album has just gone triple-platinum. In fact, his label Epic Records has insisted Edmonds is far too important to get out of attending today's May afternoon luncheon honoring...Michael Jackson.

"I was sitting up there, and it was really weird to me," says Edmonds afterwards. "I was just thinking, 'Wow, this is the guy who made me want to get into music, who made it seem possible because he was a kid, too.'" The two did talk briefly about someday doing a project—no, Jackson didn't recognize Edmonds from the 1972 interview and no, Edmonds didn't bring it up.

Other than Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, it's hard to name another production team that's so completely dominated black pop music as Antonio "L.A." Reid and Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds. Charter members of Cincinnati's the Deele, the pair began producing hits for Solar Records with the Whispers and Shalamar, then moved on to clients like the Jacksons, Karyn White, After 7 and Pebbles. With two tracks on Bobby Brown's *Don't Be Cruel* (the title cut and "Every Little Step I Take," both Edmonds compositions), the duo broke into the pop mainstream and has followed up with high-rent projects for Paula Abdul, Whitney Houston, Sheena Easton and more work for Brown, including his "Ghostbusters."

The core L.A. & Babyface sound has always included spunky electronic textures, explosive percussion and complex, rubbery bass lines, even as it's changed to stay ahead of an army of imitators. But much of Edmonds' success goes back to the same R&B tradition he studied at such close range in high school. Unlike a more groove-oriented producer like Teddy Riley, Edmonds and Reid put strong songs and singing at the center of their tracks: "We more or less write a song first and then try to make it danceable, rather than starting with a street-groove. And doing dance music doesn't always come that easy for us—we have to work harder at the groove side."

Musically the partnership breaks down to L.A. Reid handling drums and percussion and Babyface Edmonds doing all the guitars and keyboards, as well as most of the vocal arranging. Another long-time associate (and fellow Deele member) is Kayo, who handles the "lead" bass lines. Much of the track-cutting is done by this trio. "It's a very small circle," Edmonds nods. "Sometimes when we have to depend on other people, it takes longer, and we're not as patient as we

used to be." Edmonds & Co. can pretty much cut all the music for a hit in one eight-hour day (they won't sweeten until mix-down, though), and then usually another full day for vocals.

A lot of the L.A.-Babyface brew is created by layering MIDI parts. For example, Edmonds does simple keyboard bass parts



when roughing out a new song, and then leaves them in. "Kayo will just come in and play on top of them. That's what creates the sound," Edmonds explains. "It's a combination of my bass lines and his bass lines. It doesn't work when he plays on top of himself, but it works when he plays on top of me."

Reid's percussion overlays are similarly built, with a core part supporting more intricate elaboration. "Yeah, that's very L.A.," Edmonds nods. And much of it's sung by the same person—Edmonds. His background vocal arranging technique is steeped in counterpoint, whether it's him multitracked or sung by the client artist. And with two albums as lead singer under his belt, Edmonds has shown he can serve up a variety of vocal pitches with plenty of heat. "I don't claim to be a great vocalist," he says a bit too modestly, "but I know how to work my voice with its limitations. My talent is I know how to work what I have. It might not always be a picture-perfect performance, but what we look for is the emotion. Sometimes the emotion comes from it being just a pinch sharp or flat."

Edmonds sings with a sense of history on his current *Tender Lover* album. On "Whip Appeal," Edmonds' choked delivery resembles Prince's; on "Let's Be Romantic" there's a strong hint of Jermaine Jackson; and the title cut has more than a bit of Howard (Shalamar) Hewett's lilt.

"I'd agree with you on 'Whip Appeal,'" Edmonds offers. "There's no question I got that from Prince—he'd do the hell out of that song. 'Let's Be Romantic'? I would imagine Marvin Gaye singing that, but it's interesting you say Jermaine because he's heavily influenced by Marvin and sings a lot of Marvin's inflections. And yes, there's a similarity between me and Howard Hewett, the fact we both do yodels. I'm not a great singer. I'm a *stylist*."

Edmonds' love for ballads also mines a rich vein of R&B fundamentalism—it fills the whole second side of *Tender Lover*, songs written entirely by Edmonds alone. "I don't *try* to lean toward the traditional. Maybe it sounds that way because I always try to make it emotional—ballads from a while ago generally were a lot more emotional. There was a time when everything was a 'cry' ballad, a 'whiner' ballad, and I do lean that way."

By contrast, side one's more uptempo, electronic songs are co-written with Reid. Edmonds characterizes Reid as more of a "go-getter" and himself as more of the shy, thoughtful type.

"It's funny, we recently figured out one of the biggest differences between us. As a kid, I can remember the very first kiss I had with a girl. L.A. doesn't. He remembers the first time that somebody liked *him*, somebody

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winked their eye at him. 'I'm the person; they wanted me.' Not so much that he wanted *them*. There's no romance in there!"

They met in Cincinnati nine years ago when Edmonds joined the Deele as a guitarist/keyboard player. The band did three albums for Solar Records, *Street Beat*, *Material Thangz* and *Eyes of a Stranger*, the latter two produced by Reid and Edmonds. That brought their production skills to the attention of legendary Solar chief Dick Griffey, who Edmonds credits as "the main guy who got us into producing other people." L.A. and Edmonds left the Midwest for L.A.

Edmonds admits the pair's first productions were very much in the Solar oeuvre, best exemplified by Leon Sylvers. "It's just slick music, very clean," Edmonds elaborates. "There might be strings in it, but the rhythm was the main thing. And it involves using electronic music in a very R&Bish way—using synthesizers to play parts normally carried by Rhodes, guitar, bass and drums." Critic Nelson George castigated the Reid/Edmonds sound as the epitome of homogenized L.A. pap. Edmonds felt a need

BABY TOYS

BABYFACE AND L.A. have recently moved much of their operation from L.A. to Atlanta, Georgia, including their new label, La'Face. They keep extensive MIDI multitrack systems in both cities, on which they do all their writing and demoing. Edmonds' L.A. rig, tucked into a back bedroom at his new palatial condo in Westwood, centers around his Tascam 688 MIDI-Studio, with a big new Roland D-70 and a Korg T3 serving as master keyboard controllers. The main hardware sequencer (no computer, thanks) is a Forat-modified Linn 9000, but Edmonds also uses an Akai Roger Linn model. His chock-full equipment rack includes Roland D-550, Kawai K1R, Korg M1R and Yamaha FB01 synth modules, Akai S1000 and E-mu E-Max samplers (with a CD ROM unit for the E-Max), E-mu Proteus, Roland U-110 and U-220 play-only samplers and a 360 Systems MIDI Bass. 'Face's only reverb is an Alesis MIDIVerb III, his MIDI patchbay is a Digital Music Corp. MX-8 and his monitors are Yamaha NS10s powered by a Carver PM-100 amp. Somewhere in the condo, Babyface also has Roland JX8P and Casio CZ synths stashed, as well as a Kurzweil KX-1000 horn expander.

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
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to move on: "If something sounds *just like* something else we've done, it's hard for me to deal with and put out. I started hearing records that made me go, 'Wow, this is an arrangement *we* might've done.' It was getting very predictable, things like when the bridge was going to come and what it would do. If a song is really great, that stuff doesn't make a difference, but if it *isn't* so great, it's kind of a trap. You have to be careful."

L.A. & Babyface do a lot of thinking

before taking on a production project. "For instance, we're working with Whitney Houston right now," Edmonds says. "We think of the radio and *what* this person could come out with that would probably be different for them, be fresh and still be accepted." Do they get a lot of input from their clients? "We might talk to them a little bit, but most of the time they respect our opinion," Edmonds replies. "They usually don't say, 'Give me a song like this.' They just say, 'Give me a *hit*.'" **M**



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Audio scientists are desperate to break out of stereo's two dimensions

By Michael Golub

WANDERING THROUGH the cavernous banquets and halls of the 1989 New York Audio Engineering Society convention, I ran into a friend who asked me if I wanted to hear something "mind-boggling." Taking me to a makeshift studio, he played me my first tape of three-dimensional audio. After 15 years of mixing and listening in mono and stereo, I felt like I was having a religious experience. In my happy headphone world, I heard all the images and sounds that never emanate from tape. I heard things circle my head, three hundred and sixty degrees. I heard steps behind me walk towards me, tap me on the shoulder and whisper in one ear and then the other. Things dropped from above my head, whisked across my face, fell to the floor and rattled around in a circle. The sound moved not only left to right, but in and out, up and down, round and round. I was hearing an audio playback that exactly duplicated real life. My jaw dropped, accompanied by giddiness and dizziness. "How...?" I stammered. He told me of an Argentinian inventor who constructed a complex microphone that duplicates the phase and time-related hearing of the human ear and brain. The microphone is in the shape of a human head.

Klaus without his toupee: Jaffe acoustic head mike

I found out that right here in the good old U.S.A. was a superior head microphone designed by those good old Germans. I left immediately for Jaffe Acoustics, in Norwalk, Connecticut. When I arrived, I was treated

as a peer interested in a common goal: the beauty of binaural, three-dimensional sound. The cheerful band of scientists there so far only apply their magnificent Heads profitably towards the testing of automobile noise for new cars.

The Head mike at Jaffe was nicknamed Klaus and he stood as tall as a man, with hair, shoulders (they actually affect human hearing) and of course beautiful ears. I walked around him whispering sweet three hundred and sixty degree nothings in his ears. I dropped and threw various objects of different weights and sizes at or around him, and then heard it all back with incredible accuracy, depth of field, and imaging. This was, I must point out, a headphone experience.

On speakers the recording, while pristine, lacked the same drama...Why? Sound emanates from a single source. The brain processes this sound binaurally (through the left and right sides of the head via ears, bone and skull). Since we don't hear things at exactly the same time through both ears, the brain makes the calculations of that difference at high speed, thus giving source and depth information. Present stereo speaker formats tend to inhibit the brain from this binaural perception, while the closed headphone world does not. While I





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was pondering this sonic barrier, my AES friend called to tell me he had heard of a small Canadian company, Archer Communications, that claimed they could achieve the same results as the Germans without a mike or Head or even headphones. Not only could they place any sound source anywhere in the 3D spectrum, they could do it in post-production, in mixdown, with no loss of quality. It could then be played back on any stereo speaker system right off any tape! This is it, folks: Audio Genesis.

First, I had fantasies of having discovered this small company and being on the cutting edge of a monstrous new technology. Surely they could use someone of my great intellect and business acumen. I'm an audio Archimedes, right?

Wrong! This small Canadian company was big business. There's more money and power behind it than most third world countries and enough publicity to boost the fortunes of your average starlet. Celebrities, patent attorneys and well-heeled Wall Street investors were already in up to their necks. Their inventor called it Q Sound and

I had to hear it.

The only copy of the Q Sound demo resided in midtown Manhattan at the office of a stock analysis firm for investment bankers and brokers. Subsequent conversations went like this:

Call #1: "Hello, I'm an audio engineer with an interest in Q Sound. I'd love to hear the demo tape and..."

"Thank you for calling, someone will get back to you."

Call #2: "Hello, I'm a producer of hit records with an interest in Q Sound, I'd love to hear the demo tape and..."

"Thank you for calling, someone will get back to you."

Call #3: "Hello, I'm the Elephant Man and I am not an animal, I am a human being with an interest in Q..."

"Thank you for calling, someone will get back to you."

Call #4: "Hello, I'm with the investment firm of Smith Barney and some of my clients are interested in Q Sound. I'd like to hear it."

"Why yes, right away, I'll set something

up. How about today? Or would tomorrow be better?"

Flush with victory, and dressed like it too, I went off to hear the Second Coming for the first time.

The Q Sound demo, to some degree, did what it advertised. The degree in question here was more a function of the tremendous advance hype than any serious limitation. Anything billed as the "Holy Grail of Sound" is going to have trouble no matter what the knights of the round table tell you. The fact that no finished, fully functional model existed to meet the nonbelievers didn't help. However, this tape does exist and it did produce three-dimensional images from two speakers with clarity. Although far from perfect, I had to smile as I listened to orchestras and bands as if in the middle of the sound source itself. Unfortunately I had to be, with pinpoint precision, at the tip of a triangle opposite the two speakers. The promised Q Sound breakthrough wasn't here yet—but it seemed tantalizingly close. I think that a computer hardware-software system utilizing digital technology to imitate and manip-

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ulate spatial hearing and placement is the correct approach. They might have done better to iron out some rough spots before declaring victory, but in the rush for profit dear prudence was trampled.

Let's take a hypothetical direct from a Q Sound promo package: "In 1987 worldwide recorded music market sales were \$17 million...If Q Sound had a 5 cent royalty on every sale..." That's a lot of shekels. Even sliced in half, that's a ton of dough. And we're not even discussing movies. In order to demonstrate Q Sound to potential investors the company announced that, during the 1990 Super Bowl, a major commercial would be mixed and encoded with Q Sound for broadcast. Anyone with a stereo TV hookup could hear the public launch of the Future of Audio. Apparently those who listened in didn't hear the Future. Q Sound stock dropped after the broadcast.

Well, the Wright Brothers didn't get up the first time either. The promise of Q Sound—the promise that 3D audio could be not only pumped through standard stereo speakers but even added to tape after recording—still has musicians, producers, record executives and movie moguls smacking their lips.

Adding to Q Sound's mystique is the method planned for distributing the magic wand. Studios would not be able to buy a Q Sound device of their own; they'd send for the Q Sound man who would come in with the black box, add 3D to the tape, then pack up the Q Sound and split. To enthusiasts this super secret system suggests the sonic equivalent of the Manhattan Project. To doubters it sounds like buying swamp land in Florida. But to everybody, it sounds like a gold mine for the owners if Q Sound catches on.

In March a third system came into view. B.A.S.E. (Bedini Acoustical Spacial Enhancer) Sound was demonstrated at the Edison Recording Studio in New York. B.A.S.E. is a neatly packaged piece of out-board gear that increases and restores the three-dimensional spatial ambience lost on speaker systems without increasing the actual amount of sound in the room... wha???

Okay. The demonstrator played regular stereo mixes and switched back and forth, stereo to B.A.S.E. The sound, while getting more spacious, also seemed to get louder. Out came various sound measurement devices to prove that things weren't really

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getting louder, just better: The sound pressure levels remained constant. I started to feel like an escapee from a lunatic asylum. The demonstrator, noticing my twitching, asked me, "What do you hear?" I said, "In all honesty you have disabled my ability to A-B because I can't get past the 'apparent' increase in level. Would you mind making them equal?" He said, "Why, in order to do that, I have to lower the output 8 dB."

Someone said, "Do it."

He said, "But that's 8 dB."

Someone else said, "Do it anyway!" The crowd was now stirred into a frenzied mob. "Do it!" yelled one. "The whole world is watching," yelled another. From the back of the room, a man with a horribly disfigured face shrieked, "Stone him, stone him!"

Now everyone knows most modern recording studios long ago got rid of stones but there's always plenty of useless out-board gear to hurl with great force, so people start ripping and tearing at limiters, compressors, echo and delay lines, after all, who needs those anymore... Actually, he simply agreed to match levels, and once he did, I could hear that things did sound a little wider, ambient and spacious. There were some interesting frequency boosts and phase-related manipulations, plus an ability to alter vocal sound and placement in a premixed track. Do you absolutely have to have it? It's a judgment call that should be left up to individual producers and mixers.

3D or not 3D? There is one irrefutable fact: Everything is changing. Music and sound technologies are exploding, forming, reforming and exploding again. Like some atom without a nucleus, technology seems to randomly follow its own turbulence, spiraling toward ends unseen. As for me, my heart yearns for beautiful melodies sung with powerful emotion, fueled by a desire so simple as to be in essence pure. The 3D pioneers are pure singers of songs as well. Audio, while as susceptible as anything else to media manipulation and hype, need not be presented as a flat medium devoid of dimension and depth. The human ear tells us that our recording technology hasn't yet reached its potential. Before too long someone is going to break the barrier between how we hear life and how we hear recordings. The first one to get there will revolutionize music-making, and get very rich in the process. It's already a hell of a race. M



OLIVER LEIBER'S OPPOSITE ATTRactions

Songwriting heir dances
his way up the charts

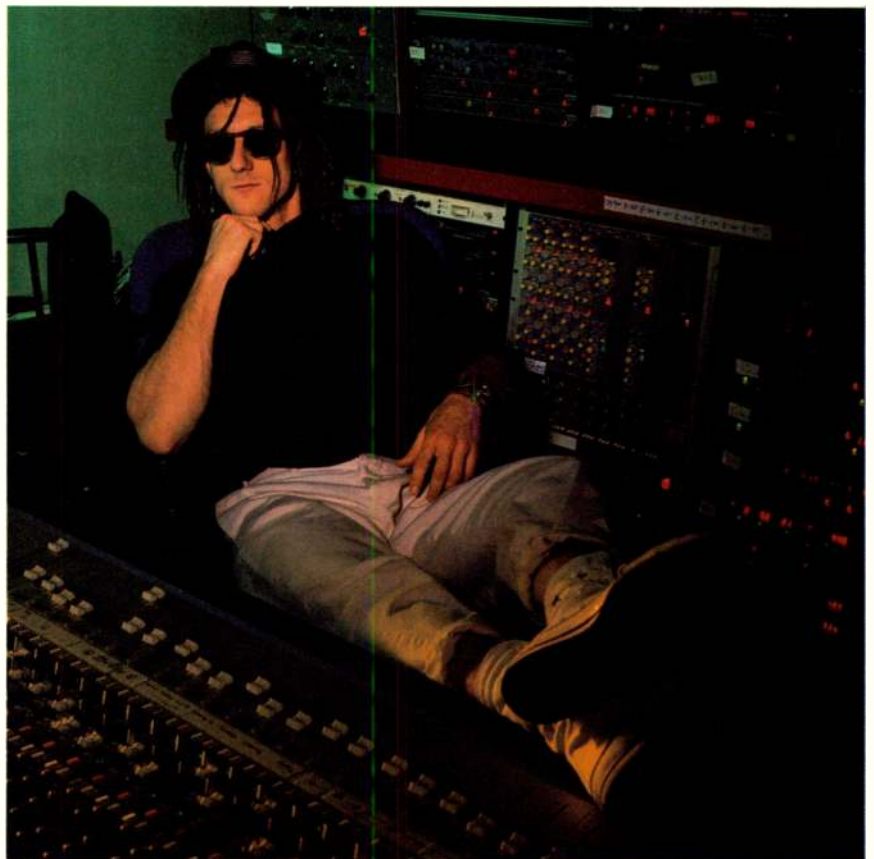
By Kate Bales

OLIVER LEIBER was in a fix. A song he'd written was being fought over by two artists. Granted, worse dilemmas occur. But for a young talent looking to make his mark in the music business, it was also the kind of choice that could determine one's fate.

On the East Coast was veteran producer Russ Titelman, who wanted the song for Chaka Khan. On the West Coast was a young choreographer who had yet to cut her first record. On the surface, the decision

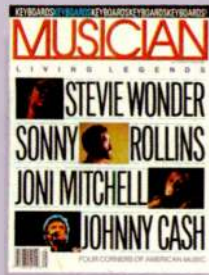
seemed easy enough to make. But while Leiber greatly respected Khan's work, gut instinct told him that if she recorded the song and it was a hit no one would ever ask his name. On the other hand, if a newcomer recorded the same song and it was a hit, people would be more curious about where the tune originated. Leiber also figured that this particular newcomer had a shot at becoming a star. He decided to take the risk. The newcomer was Paula Abdul; the song, "The Way That You Love Me," rose to number one on the charts.

"If you don't claim your own identity, you





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Ronald Shannon Jackson



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Stevie Wonder
Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Johnny Cash



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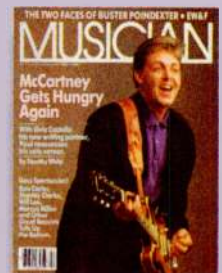
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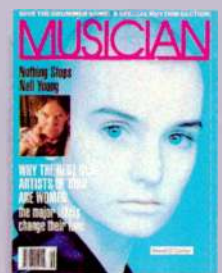
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don't have a chance," Leiber now declares. "You have to seek your own identity, not someone else's."

He should know. Oliver's father is Jerry Leiber, who with Mike Stoller created one of the legendary songwriting teams in pop music history. It was a hard act to follow. Jerry Leiber had once been a drummer, and Oliver says his happiest childhood memory was the day he came home from kindergarten to find a drum kit from Manny's all set up in his bedroom. At age 10 he wrote his first song, "Getting Mugged," complete

with chorus. He played guitar in bands throughout high school, but by then he'd set aside his songwriting aspirations; his father's success left the younger Leiber feeling less than adequate for the task. "My father was very critical of himself, and also of both my brother and me. I don't know if he ever really acknowledged his own talent, and he certainly wasn't prepared to acknowledge ours. I believe he wanted to be supportive, but sometimes he was pretty ruthless. As a child those voices became so strong that for many years I was completely

unable to complete a song."

In college his confidence and sense of direction were further eroded through intimate acquaintance with alcohol and drugs. Dropping out one semester short of graduation, he decided to move to the Midwest and become a cook, leaving the music scene as far behind as possible. But, he notes wryly, "Nothing in life ever happens the way you intend. If you try to set something up in one way, you can be damn sure it will happen just the opposite."

By chance Leiber chose to live in Minneapolis, which at the time was percolating what would become some of the most influential pop music of the '80s. He began sitting in on guitar in a few local jam sessions. One audition landed Leiber on a national tour backing singer Alexander O'Neal. Around the same time, he found himself in a band, Tamara and the Scene, produced by Time guitarist Jesse Johnson. "He is a great guitarist, and his music inspired me," Leiber says. "I'd leave his studio saying to myself, 'I've got to try to do this.'" After watching Johnson pick out "phenomenal" melodies on a keyboard with two fingers, Leiber also bought his first set of keys, and began using a Linn 9000 sequencer. Other sequencers may be more technically evolved, but Leiber believes the Linn 9000 has a funkier, more R&B feel which suits his taste.

Tamara and the Scene ended up performing on "American Bandstand" and "Solid Gold"—"a mix between a goof and a thrill." Leiber then wrote a song called "Rich Man" for St. Paul, a singer who'd worked with the Time and the Family. Paula Abdul was hired to choreograph the video. She heard Leiber's demo of "The Way That You Love Me" and requested it for her own solo album. While working on the song she expressed interest in another rhythm track that Leiber was working on titled "Forever Your Girl." Oliver spent a weekend reworking the tune to better suit Abdul's style. The song eventually became a number one hit as well.

One of the biggest mistakes producers make, Leiber says, is not taking the time to contour songs for individual artists: "Often the potential of a good song isn't realized because it is recorded in the wrong key, or the vocal range is beyond that of the singer." Acknowledging Abdul's limited vocal training, he writes to her strengths, even dancing around the room himself to make sure that the music will lend itself to great choreogra-

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phy. He'll use horns, for instance, to punctuate what will ultimately be a video image. Had "The Way That You Love Me" been recorded by Chaka Khan, he says, the result would have been "a much bluer, gospel-flavored song, with more aggressive vocals."

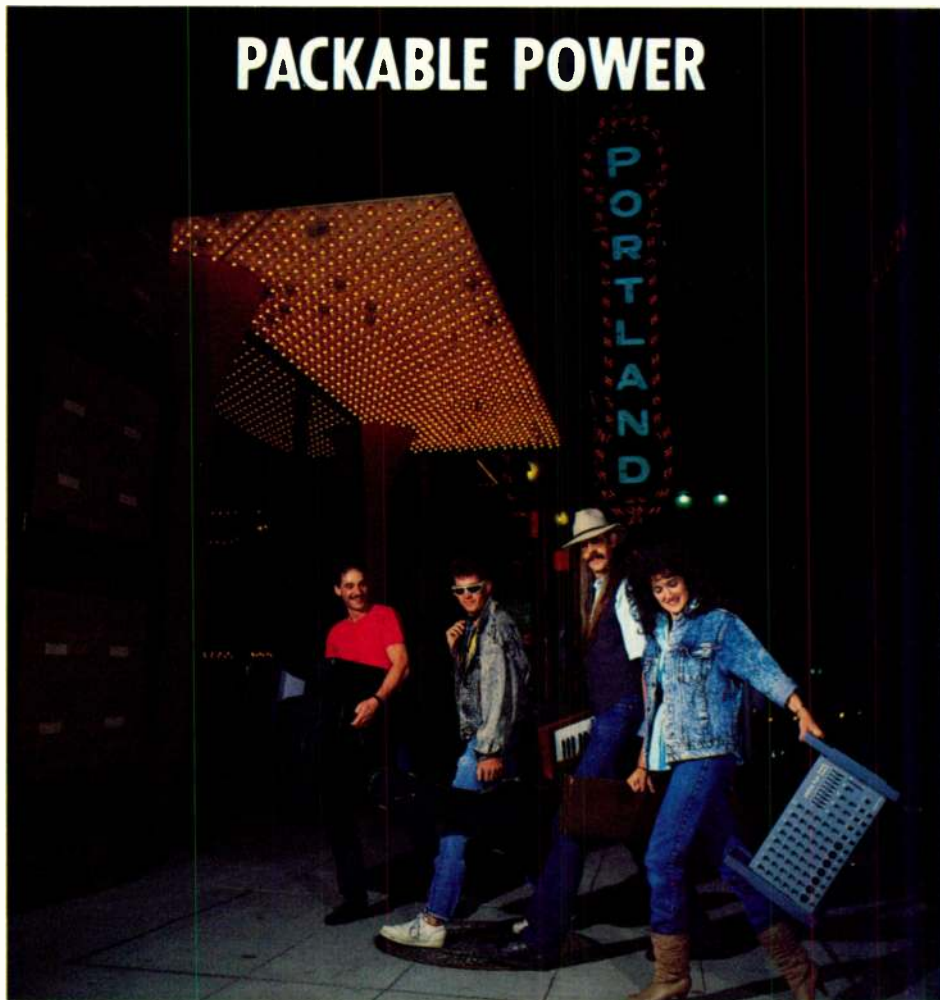
Before writing for an artist Leiber makes an effort to spend time with them. "I have lots of meals with someone before I go to work. I need to know who someone is to know what they will be comfortable singing." He figures that his home studio, far from Los Angeles or New York, also helps create an environment freer from stress and more conducive to experimentation. "Forever Your Girl" was re-written in Leiber's living room and then moved downstairs when it was time to record.

During that recording session, Virgin Records asked Leiber to compose a third track for Abdul. He went back to the living room and wrote "Opposites Attract," which became a hit duet with Abdul and Leiber's young band, the Wild Pair. Leiber sees "Opposites Attract" as the song which most closely evokes his roots and the music of his father. "Visually and comedically I was definitely influenced by the Coasters and songs like 'Yakety Yak.' It was funny; sometimes I'd be writing and a line would come out and I'd say to myself, 'That's a Jerry line.'"

For Leiber writing begins with the melody. "After I begin to get a melody I go back to match the right sentiment with the music. I have hundreds of ideas, or hooks, for songs on lists. Once I begin to write I pull them all out and see what feels right." He keeps the track limited to drums and a bass until the basic melody is in place. "If there is too much music early on then there isn't enough room to work on lyrics. It's a process of building up step by step."

At age 29, Leiber has already invested decades in his work. The main difference in his life now, he observes, is that people are interested in cutting songs that three years ago he couldn't get anyone to listen to. Also, he has a "much nicer watch." Recently, Russ Titelman called, congratulated Leiber on his success and proposed to work with him in the future.

Asked if he'll eventually perform as a solo artist, Leiber looks a bit surprised. "I don't know," he begins, "I've never really thought of myself as an 'artist.' I've always been the guy in the background." Of course, he once didn't think of himself as a guitarist either. Or a songwriter. Or a producer. M



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TWO MASTERS OF THEIR CRAFT SHARE SECRETS

Bernie Grundman and Bob Ludwig bridge the gap between art and product

By Alan di Perna

THE RECORD BUSINESS' two top mastering engineers may live and work on opposite coasts, but Bob Ludwig and Bernie Grundman come up with nearly the exact same words when asked to define their craft: "Mastering is the last creative stage of the record-making process and the first stage of the manufacturing process." What does that mean, exactly? It's like this: First the artists lay down their parts on a multitrack tape. Then the engineer and producer (and sometimes the artists, too) take all these tracks and mix

them down to a stereo tape. This mix is what they then give to the mastering engineer, who turns it into what's called a production master—the thing that's used to make the millions of copies of the album that go out to the public.

In simpler, more carefree times, there was only one production master: a metal disk from which vinyl copies of the record were pressed. Today, the mastering engineer still has to make one of these. But he also has to make production masters for the CD and cassette copies of the LP. Both take the form of a digital two-track tape recorded

on a Sony PCM-1630 machine, which is the standard format for CD masters.

But mastering isn't just a passive transfer from one medium to another. Along the way, a lot of sonic grooming can take place. "The first goal in mastering the tape is to make sure it sounds as consistent as possible," explains Bob Ludwig, who owns and operates New York's Masterdisk. "People don't mix entire albums in one sitting, and the engineer, no matter how good he is, is going to hear things differently from day to day. Also, the engineer is often mixing out of context. If he's mixing the intro of a song, he may have no idea which song is going to come before it. So he doesn't know how loud or soft that intro should be. Which means it may end up sounding anemic and weak coming right after a song with a very loud, powerful ending."

It's a fact of life. Mixes come out too bright or too bassy and need to be re-equalized. They might have sharp volume spikes that need to be smoothed over with compression or limiting. These little blemishes come to light when the mastering engineer first sits down with the producer, engineer or artists to run through the mixdown tape. "It's usually a sobering moment," says Bernie Grundman, taking a break from the busy schedule at his Hollywood mastering facility. "The mastering engineer is generally the most objective person who comes into a project. He doesn't spend a lot of time on any one record. Whatever you bring in, he's probably heard what other people are doing with that kind of music, and he knows what sounds impressive in that genre."

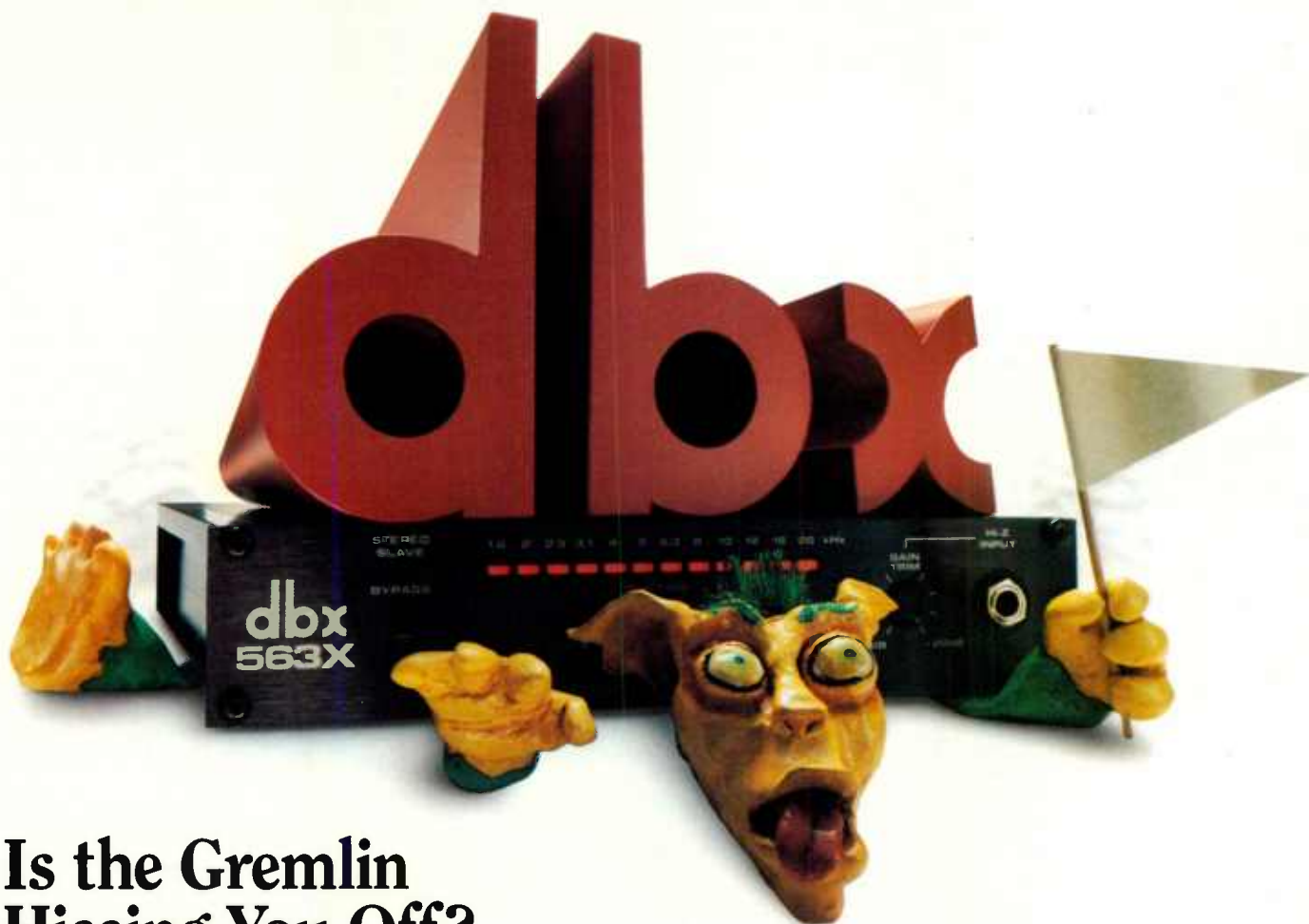
"I usually have a gut reaction to a tape as soon as I hear it," says Ludwig. "Within about two seconds, I'll get 90 percent of the EQ down. But then it'll take hours to do that last 10 percent. As we're running through the tape together, the artists often have a list of things they want done. Like maybe they pushed a guitar solo a little too far forward and they want it brought back a bit."

Can that be done after an album is mixed? "Oh yes," Ludwig laughs. "Some of our digital equalizers have any frequency and any bandwidth you can think of—in gradations as fine as one-tenth of a cycle. So we can home in on anything."

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digital consoles, because contemporary albums are mixed down to either analog or digital two-track tapes, depending on the artist's, producer's and engineer's preference; Grundman estimates that roughly 50 percent of the mixdown tapes he currently gets are analog. Logically enough, analog tapes are usually processed through the analog console at each facility, and digital tapes through the digital console. But that's not always how it goes.

"There are times when analog EQ sounds better with digital tape than digital

EQ does," Grundman notes. "Sometimes we'll convert the digital signal to analog, do whatever processing we need to do and then convert it right back to digital for the compact disc or the cassette production master. So even if you have a 'DDD' designation on the back of a CD, it could have gone through analog stages. The code refers strictly to the storage mediums."

Mastering engineers use extremely high-end converters from companies like Apogee, Pygmy and Wadia to minimize the signal degradation caused by conversion

from analog to digital. Grundman also warmly contends that degradation takes place even in a straight digital-to-digital transfer. "I've proven it time and again. The design engineers know it happens too. But they don't really understand it. No matter how much detail they go for in oscilloscope pictures, they can't see any difference. But they say everyone can hear it if they listen closely. You get this buzzing sound on complex signals, a kind of extra resonance, on human vocals or saxophone."

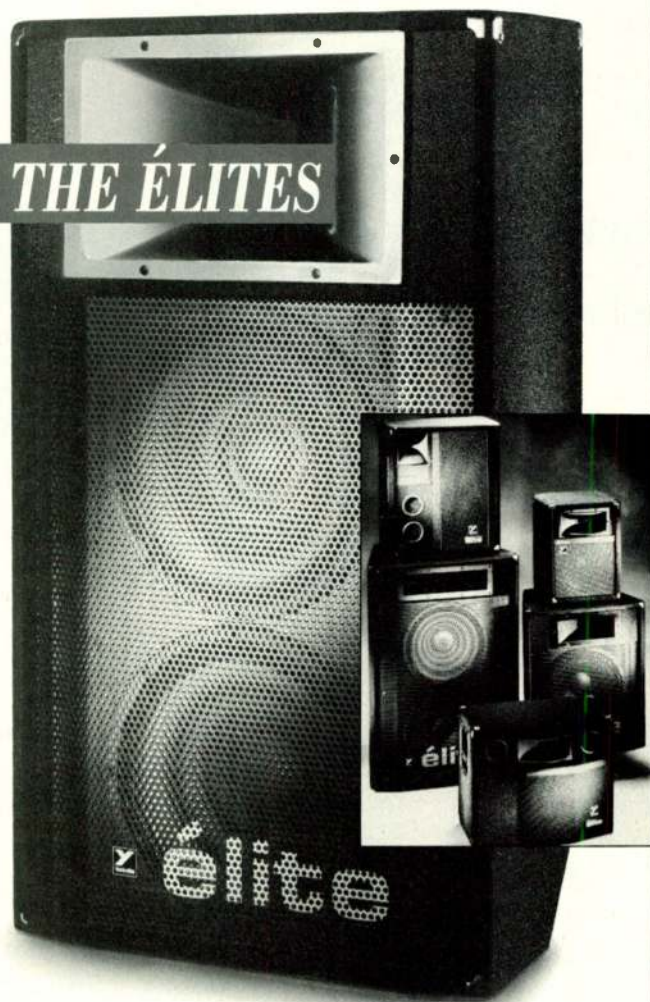
Only the very naive will be shocked to learn that neither Grundman nor Ludwig regards the compact disc as the "miracle medium" it was once touted to be. In fact, both betray a lingering fondness for the vinyl disk. "Today's LP cutter heads actually have a wider frequency response than CD," Ludwig says. "The Neumann head is rated within a dB from 10Hz to 25kHz, and it responds up to over 50kHz. The CD cuts off at 22.05kHz [i.e., one-half the 44.1kHz sampling rate for CD: the Nyquist frequency limit for digital audio]."

"I've heard some great digital recordings," adds Grundman, "but somehow it's hard for me to get the sensation that the musician is right in front of me. I have experienced that with analog recordings—not very often, though, because analog's a very delicate storage medium. However, CD is probably the best thing we've had for mass production. The consumer can spend \$150 on a CD player and get vastly superior sound to what he could get in the past for that money. Unless you have a \$200 or \$300 cartridge and a good turntable, you're not going to hear what a vinyl disk has on it. So when you put a \$150 CD player next to a \$150 turntable with a five-dollar cartridge, it's like, 'Wow, this CD is so much better than the LP.' Actually it isn't."

The mastering engineer's detailed knowledge of each medium's limitations is invaluable when it comes time for the transfer: the part of the process where the production master is made. In the case of vinyl LPs, the mastering console feeds a computer which in turn drives the cutting lathe that etches out the master disk. This is one area where the two master cutters diverge. While Grundman remains an advocate of traditional disk cutting, Ludwig's facility does both conventional mastering and Direct Metal Mastering (DMM), a newer technique which eliminates some of the

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intermediary steps in the cutting process. Grundman says his clients haven't been too interested in DMM, but Ludwig has found it a godsend ever since CD ushered in an era of longer albums.

"Because of DMM, we can fit a 32-minute side on a vinyl disk, like I did on Def Leppard's *Hysteria* and some of the Metallica records. Without DMM, that would have been impossible at any volume level. Sometimes, though, if the record is very long, we will cut the extreme low bass, say below 40Hz, or else slightly mono-ize the bass."

Before it becomes a CD or cassette master, the signal leaving the mastering console goes through a digital editing system. A lot of routine functions are taken care of here, such as the insertion of "p and q" codes that enable a CD player to chase to any song on a disc. But sometimes editing can be a creative step, too. For Hall & Oates' new live album, Ludwig had to insert individual words from one take of a song into a completely different take. "Our editing system really saved our buns on that one," he admits.

After editing, the signal is transferred—still in the digital domain—to the standard Sony 1630 two-track. The resulting digital tape is used as the production master. Depending on the circumstances, separate production masters for CD and cassette are created by digitally cloning the first 1630 master or via fresh passes from the mastering console. There are times when the cassette master needs special processing.

"Cassettes are an interesting animal," says Ludwig. "The first thing that saturates, particularly with the cheaper tape formulations, is the upper midrange—snare drum, for instance. A good snare crack can turn to mush when you duplicate it to cassette. There's no question that cassette is the lowest-quality medium out there. There are two things that would improve its quality overnight: One would be an azimuth adjustment on all the cassette players on earth. The second would be better-quality tape. In the real world, when artists find out that the cost of using chrome tape instead of ferric oxide is going to come out of their own pockets, a lot of them won't spring for it."

Luckily, mastering engineers like Bernie Grundman and Bob Ludwig are on hand to help negotiate that gap between artistic vision and the bottom line. M

MESSIN' WITH THE BEST

By Tony Scherman

SITTING IN TRAMPS' shabby dressing room, bare chest haphazardly tattooed, pants partly unzipped to accommodate his ample gut, Little Milton Campbell at 56 exudes authority. After all, he's a 50-year star of the chitlin' circuit, treasured by middle-aged blacks who love his middle-of-the-road soul standards ("Grits Ain't Groceries") and earsplittingly fat, greasy blues guitar. Milton never really crossed over; he still plies the South and Midwest with his 11-piece band, calling only occasionally on New York City's roots-music cognoscenti.

One of whom is now making an urgent request. How does Milton feel about asking tonight's opener, the brilliant rockabilly guitarist Danny Gatton, onstage with him? Milton shrugs equably: "You just bring this boy down here so we can meet him, then I'll call him up during my finale."

Five minutes later, Gatton, a fat little 45-year-old whose good-old-boy charm belies his shyness, listens to the plan. "Well, O.K.," he allows. "But Milton might want to watch us first, see if we're too weird." Incredible! Gatton and Little Milton are gonna jam! This could kill!

Taking the stage, Gatton wastes no time in dropping the audience's collective jaw. Thumbed octave runs *à la* Wes; superdeft, liquid harmonics; effects-pedal wizardry—one of the greatest guitarists in America is at work, shearing off notes like sparks. My God, it's Johnny Winter, taking a stageside seat! Gatton picks some squawking slide with a half-full Heineken, jovially sloshing beer.

His first set over, Gatton lets himself be led downstairs, where Milton is eating chicken. But Gatton's got cold feet. "No," he says to Milton's offer, "I don't think I want to sit in. I'm not real comfortable sitting in." Little Milton inclines his head courteously; if he's offended it doesn't show. It certainly doesn't show during Milton's set, an elaborately paced, high-voltage revue that builds from schmaltzy lounge ballads to Milton's blistering single-note licks. Deeply satisfying.

Yet the insatiable blues fan will not rest. After some huddling, a note from Gatton's manager goes onstage at the start of the second set. Gatton's singer reads it, nods, and announces, "Folks, the great Johnny Winter is in the audience. Johnny, ya wanna?" Winter's reluctant, but the house, sniffing a monster jam, is already on its feet cheering, so Johnny Winter clambers onstage to join Gatton—who hands Winter his Telecaster and walks off! Shrugging goodnaturedly, Winter thumbpicks and hollers 10 screaming minutes of "Baby You Done Lost Your Good Thing Now," driving the crowd, which can't believe its good luck, nuts. Whether Gatton's competitive fires are stoked or he's just plain inspired, when he returns he's unbelievable... He plays a fast shuffle... an even faster 2/4 blues. He plays "Wipeout" ... and finally dive-bombs into "The Star Spangled Banner," summoning Hendrix as time stops dead (so does Gatton's dumbstruck band) and Gatton plays on, and on. And exits, leaving Winter and the whole room howling in appreciation.

The blues fan approaches Gatton. "Boy, you really pulled the banner out of your pocket," he says, a bit remorseful after his evening of messing with the guitarist's head.

"Well," says Gatton cryptically, "you do what you gotta do." And he sits alone for a long time, nursing a beer, before slowly climbing onto his bus.

WHO
Little Milton,
Danny Gatton
WHERE
Tramps, NYC
WHEN
July 13, 1990





THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.

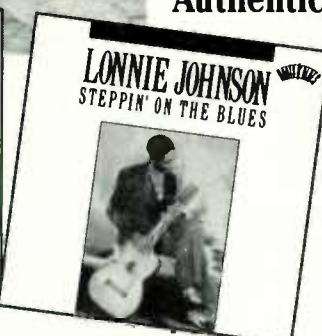
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HI-FI SPEAKERS VS. NEARFIELD MONITORS

Subtle differences can mean a lot in your home studio

By Alan di Perna

AH, TEMPTATION. You start assembling your home studio with the purest intentions, dutifully shucking out for the best console, the top-rated tape machine, etc., etc., wiring it all up strictly by the book. Then it comes time to buy monitors. Suddenly your pro audio orthodoxy deserts you, its departure speeded by an Unbearable Lightness of Wallet. A demented leer contorts your features as you eye those old home stereo speakers.

Can you use them to record and mix on?

Or should you spring for a set of pro monitors? What loaded questions. We're dealing with three distinct types of speakers here. Hi-fi speakers, nearfield reference monitors and studio monitors. Studio monitors are the larger speaker systems you see in recording studios. They're designed to reproduce sound with absolute accuracy inside a specially tuned, acoustically treated control room—not standard features of most home studios. Your little basement hit factory typically requires a nearfield reference monitor. "Nearfield" means the speaker was designed to be heard at close range,

where the sound is relatively unaffected by room acoustics. "Reference" means that the monitor "refers" to the wide world of speakers outside. They provide some idea of what your music will sound like on actual playback systems.

Make no mistake: Nearfield reference monitors are fully professional gear. Every pro recording facility in the world has a set of nearfields and a set of studio monitors. But the distinction between hi-fi speakers and nearfield reference monitors does tend to blur at times. In fact, the world's foremost nearfield studio reference monitor, the Yamaha NS-10M, was originally marketed as a hi-fi speaker. Then record engineers discovered it was great for mixing—seems it's the one consumer stereo speaker that doesn't blow up when you start cranking levels in the control room. A lot of other home stereo speakers will. Records, radio broadcasts and everything else meant to come out of a hi-fi speaker are all nicely compressed and mastered for your polite listening pleasure. But in the studio, you're dealing with raw, untamed dynamic range. Solo up a kick drum, get carried away with EQ and the tweeters from your poor old college-dorm stereo may go whizzing past your head.

We're talking about a spec called **power handling capability**. Pro monitors generally have more of it, which makes a good argument for choosing them over hi-fi speakers for home studio work. You'll be less likely to trash your speakers, and you'll have less trouble with **power compression**, which takes place when the speaker voice coil heats up so much that its impedance starts to increase, which makes its overall output decrease.

Nearfield monitors also tend to be voiced differently than stereo speakers. That is, their crossover circuitry and cabinetry are designed to emphasize different areas of the frequency spectrum. A company like JBL makes consumer stereo speakers as well as nearfield monitors (the Control series) and studio monitors (the 4400 series and model 4312). And according to JBL marketing manager Hector Martinez, they're all voiced differently. "The hi-fi models emphasize high-end and low-end. That's what makes music sound big and exciting, and makes

Tannoy's System 12 DMT, one of their new Monitor series; (bottom) the MS205, featuring Yamaha Active Servo Technology for better damping

the speakers competitive with other hi-fi speakers, which are mostly all voiced the same way. We've found over the



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years that a reference monitor wants to be voiced so that it's aggressive in the midrange. If you can get the articulation, clarity and imaging of your mix sounding right on reference monitors, chances are the mix will sound good on a traditional home stereo."

One more point: dispersion. "Hi-fi speakers generally have greater dispersion," says Mark Cohen of Fostex. "They want to spread the sound around the room; they don't want to be beamy. Whereas you *do* want nearfield monitors to be beamy, to have narrow dispersion and a definite sweet spot. That's what eliminates room effect."

Okay, you've beat temptation. You've got to have a pair of *real* monitors. **Point-source, phase-coherent** enclosures are one way to go. In these systems, the tweeter and woofer are mounted on the same axis, with the tweeter either inside the woofer or directly in front of it. This way, the signals from both components are coming at you from the same angle, so there's no phase cancellation between signals. Examples of

this type of technology include Fostex's line of coaxial nearfield monitors, the RM-800, RM-900 and RM-1000 (\$600, \$700, \$1000/pr.) and the Celestion Model 5 (another popular nearfield that started life as a hi-fi speaker).

Tannoy's dual concentric system is a point-source, phase-coherent technology that's been widely respected for a long time. And at this September's AES show, Tannoy will be introducing four dual concentric systems as part of their new Monitor series: the System 8 NFM, System 10 DMT, System 12 DMT and System 15 DMT (\$1000, \$1500, \$5000, \$5500/pr.). They're among the first models to incorporate another new design idea from Tannoy: Differential Materials Technology (DMT). Basically, every little part of the speaker system that's joined to any other part is made of materials selected by computer-assisted design (CAD) to dissipate rather than store up acoustic energy (vibration). "You shouldn't hear the stored energy of the frame, the cone, the enclosure and all these other structures that sing their own sine wave sonata," says Tannoy's Bill Calma.

The alternative to point-source, phase-coherent design is called **discrete component** technology. This is the traditional tweeter-and-woofer or tweet-mid-woofer speaker cabinet we all know and love, and here we veer perilously close to the hi-fi speaker. But there are a few essential differences to keep in mind, like the fact that discrete nearfield monitors are manufactured in mirror-image pairs. Know how tweeters will often be mounted either to the left or the right of the woofer? Well, in a pair of pro monitors, both tweeters will either be on the outside (i.e., the right tweeter to the right of its woofer, the left tweeter to the left) or on the inside. Stereo speakers, on the other hand, will often be manufactured with all the mountings done just one way—all tweeters right or all tweeters left. A subtle point, perhaps, but this affects stereo imaging when you're listening to a mix.

Two-way systems are generally better than one-way. Why? Because every time you add a speaker to the system you have to add another crossover point, and this increases the potential for phase cancellation

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between speakers. Phase cancellation not only gives you a distorted picture of the sounds on tape, it also contributes to listening fatigue as your brain works to consciously or unconsciously correct the sonic errors.

Leaders in discrete component nearfield monitors include the previously mentioned Yamaha NS-10Ms (\$475/pr.) and JBL's Control 1 (\$250/pr.) and Control 5 (\$395/pr.). Then there's Tannoy's very popular discrete units, the P8M 6.5 (\$350/pr.), and P8M 8 (\$500/pr.), both of which will be shown with a new radius-edged enclosure at AES. The Clearfield monitor, distributed by Brother International, is a newcomer. A solid, affordable two-way, it's available in a powered version, the PB-6 (\$349/pr.), and as the unpowered BR-165 (\$249/pr.).

Powered monitors represent another up-and-coming trend in home studio gear. Roland recently brought out a powered nearfield, the ActivNF25 (\$695/pr.), which is a two-way system powered by an internal 17.5W amp and encased in a Jetsonesque, vacuum-formed circular enclosure. Yamaha has a new powered monitor called the MS20S (\$225), a two-way system with an integral 20W amp. The system uses Yamaha's newly-developed YST (Yamaha Active Servo Technology) design. For you engineering majors, YST is essentially a negative feedback scheme. It's a system for improving speaker damping—the efficiency with which the speaker “obeys” the commands it receives from the amp. By improving damping, Yamaha has been able to lower the bass response of the MS20S, without allowing that bass to get mushy.

Fast Product: AES Edition

Looks like this year's AES Convention (September 21–25) will be fastforwarding us into the Digital Future quicker than if we'd stepped on an oversampled banana peel. It's highly likely that Korg will stage the U.S. debut of their new digital audio workstation at the convention. And it's certain that Roland will exhibit their new digital four-track hard disk recorder, the DM-80. This promises to be the “digital portastudio” we've all been fantasizing about. It has on-board digital mixing facilities, digital I/O ports for interfacing with DAT machines, effects processors and other goodies entirely in the digital domain. The thing'll even make with the SMPTE, MIDI

Time Code and MIDI clocks for synching up to a sequencer. Meanwhile, J.L. Cooper will be debuting a hardware controller for that other digital audio manipulating monster, Digidesign's Sound Tools. Slotted to sell in the \$500 range, Mr. Cooper's latest box will include a scrub wheel, keypad, cursor keys and assignable soft buttons.

Digital effects processing should be another hot item at the convention. DOD/Digitech has completely revamped the Audiologic line of compressor limiters, crossovers, delay units, etc. And Aphex has

a new version of their Dominator tri-band peak limiter. Dynamic range is up by 24 dB; price is holding firm at \$1350. Finally, Lexicon will trot out the new LXP-15 multieffects unit: all new programs in an approximately \$1000 package designed for ease of use onstage. In addition to Lexicon's Dynamic MIDI control of effect parameters, there'll be five external control ports for manipulating parameters without having to mess with the M-word.

In all, it promises to be a happening AES. I hope you can slip on by. M

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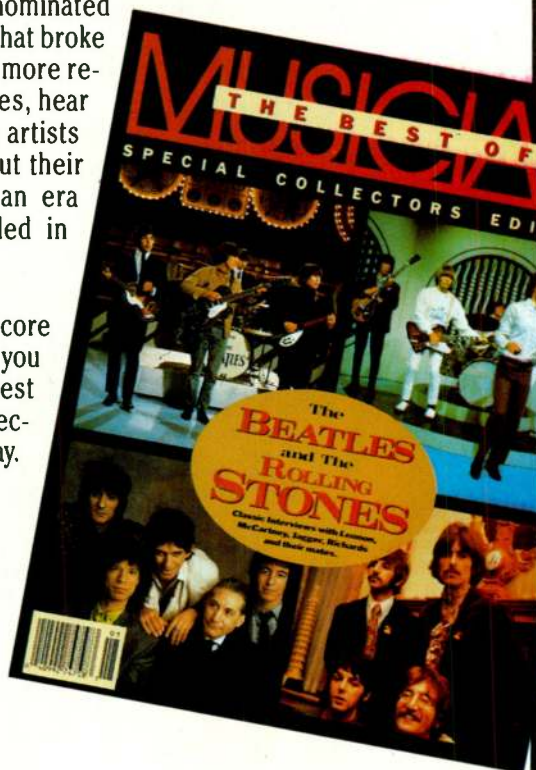
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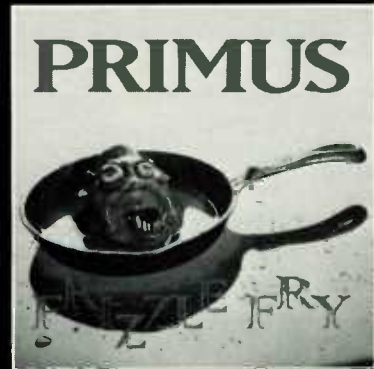
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World Radio History



The Force of the Horse

Neil Young
& Crazy Horse
Triumphant

Ragged Glory
(Reprise)

IF EVER an album deserved a “This record should be played *loud*” advisory, this be the one. It’s been 21 years since Neil Young & Crazy Horse’s *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, and the major triumph of *Ragged Glory* is that it takes the promise of the last 15 seconds of *Nowhere*’s “Cinnamon Girl”—you know, where things sort of die down for a second till Neil & Co. kick in with ominous harmonic squeals—and delivers the same goods for a whole album.

First thing you’ll notice here is the endearing way lots of the songs end: They don’t. They

drone for maybe 10–45 seconds or so, then someone pulls a plug and *pow*—next song. Which is great, and maybe even not unexpected after *Freedom* and the Japanese-only *Eldorado* EP, Young's last two records, which had their share of grunge guitar and were produced by "The Volume Dealers," Young and Niko Bolas. But neither of them featured Crazy Horse, and *Ragged Glory* does.

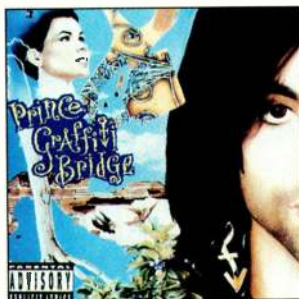
But hey—so what? The party line is that Young's best albums are those he's done with Crazy Horse, and that's mostly true: *Nowhere*, *Tonight's the Night*, *Zuma* and *Rust Never Sleeps* may be four of the best rock 'n' roll albums ever made. But the party line conveniently forgets albums like *Re-Ac-Tor* and *Life*, which might have rocked, but mostly said nothing particularly interesting for a little too long a time. And if you're among those who think the Horseless *Freedom* was Young's best album in years, as many do, ask yourself if lyrics like "We got a thousand points of light/For the homeless man/We got a kinder, gentler machine gun hand" will sound any more meaningful in 20 years than "Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming" does in 1990.

No, what makes *Ragged Glory* so god-damned great is that it isn't Neil Young singing about Johnny Rotten or self-referentially declaring himself and the guys "Prisoners of Rock 'n' Roll" or bewailing the perils of corporate sponsorship. It's a fierce, loud set of songs that instead deals with subjects that matter now and will always matter: love, betrayal, idealism, bullshit. *Ragged Glory* is great because of tunes like "Love to Burn," which tells a story relevant through the ages: "In the valley of hearts/There's a house full of broken windows/There's lovers inside just quarrel all the time/Why'd you ruin my life/Where you taking my kid/And they hold each other/Saying how did it come to this."

And *Ragged Glory* is great because it contains the instant classic "F#!#in Up," which with no apparent effort has placed Young at the forefront of writing true punk rock: "I can see you on a hill," he sings, "Comatose but walkin' still/Curves beneath your flowing gown/Only I could bring you down/Why do I keep fuckin' up?" Maybe it's that last couplet that shows why Neil Young, when he's hot, hits it like no other. Consider: What does "Only I could bring you down" mean? Only I could bum you out? Only I could bring you back to reality after your ingestion

of many drugs? Only I could be man enough to convince you to place yourself prone on the hill and, well, you know? That the question even arises is one thing; that every answer works is another.

Though Young's best music has usually been that most open to interpretation, the message behind "The Days That Used to Be" appears frankly black and white. Freely borrowing from the Byrds' version of "My Back Pages," Young sings, "I wish that I could talk to you/And you could talk to me/Because there's very few of us left, my friend/From the days that used to be." Apparently a jab at former bandmates—the ones who put hot dogs on their album covers instead of their hefty selves—the sentiment may seem beneath him. But the Neil Young who wrote those lyrics is the same guy who sees fit to cover the Premiers' 1964 hit "Farmer John" on *Ragged Glory*. In 1990, farmer's daughters mean a hell of a lot more to Neil Young & Crazy Horse than wooden ships ever did.—Dave DiMartino



Prince

Graffiti Bridge
(Warner Bros.)

MUST HAVE BEEN great weather in Minnesota this summer; each of the state's rock stars (Dylan, the Time, Bob Mould, the Replacements and Prince) has a new album dedicated to the glories of not *trying* so hard. *Graffiti Bridge*, the soundtrack to Prince's new movie, is not the continuation of *Batman*'s cheesy funk you might have dreaded, but neither is it the *Purple Rain*/*Sign 'O' the Times* sequel you might have hoped for. It's not one of Prince's experimental albums either. It's something unprecedented for His Purpleness: an album of short, catchy, upbeat songs (by Prince and his Minneapolis pals) without any unifying style or theme.

Graffiti Bridge feels like a collection of 45s—which ain't bad, 'cause Prince's 45s are

usually pretty terrific. From the rock 'n' roll of "Can't Stop This Feeling I Got" to the psychedelic funk of "Elephants & Flowers" to the take-me-to-the-casbah single "Thieves in the Temple," *Graffiti Bridge* is made to play in the car. What it clearly lacks is a "Purple Rain" or "The Cross," a big song to add gravity. It also lacks—and this is probably a bigger dent—a pure pop masterpiece as irresistible as "U Got the Look" or "Little Red Corvette."

What recommends the album is Prince's greatest gift: the pure joy that he conveys in his performances. It's full of the sense of discovery and exhilaration that comes after great attention to craft. Prince has a quality that you see in great actors and athletes: You can tell he's put in endless hours of hard work and practice to get to a point at which he can, when it's time to perform, soar. Like Michael Jordan or Jack Nicholson, Prince always lets you feel the sheer pleasure he takes in his own talent.

Graffiti Bridge is always interesting, always fun. Who knows, maybe the movie will even tie it together thematically. It's not up to the highest standards of Prince—but then, what is?—Bill Flanagan



Los Lobos

The Neighborhood
(Slash/Warner Bros.)

IT SHOULD COME as no surprise that Los Lobos have turned up the juice a notch. When last heard from, on 1988's *La Pistola Y El Corazon* (the surprising follow-up to their hit movie soundtrack for *La Bamba*), the East L.A.-based quintet explored their Hispanic origins on an album of almost purely folk-based material, sung in Spanish to boot. There's no such low amperage in this *Neighborhood*—the sound is obese, bottom-heavy and often distinctly impolite. A brace of ringers (notably studio drummers Jim Keltner and Jerry Marotta) have been brought in to beef up a noise

that's already USDA Prime.

The heavier sonics are mated to band originals by David Hidalgo and Louie Perez with impressively dark themes. "Down on the Riverbed" mates a "Wade in the Water"-like melody to a chilly romantic scenario. "Deep Dark Hole" is as black as its title suggests. The title cut is a pessimistic look at life among the homeboys, brightened only momentarily by a cautiously optimistic chorus. Even the customary ravers of guitarist Cesar Rosas, who often plays manic jester to axemate Hidalgo's introspective thinker, have a bleaker cast: "I Walk Alone" and "I Can't Understand" (the latter co-authored by Willie Dixon) are penned and played in deeper shades.

The Neighborhood isn't entirely situated in Gloomsville: You still get the Gary "U.S." Bonds-styled whoop-up "Jenny's Got a Pony," the delicate "Little John of God" (one of two tracks featuring guest vocalist Levon Helm) and the lively, optimistic ethnic of "Be Still" and "The Giving Tree." But finally, this is the record of a blunter, bolder and harder Los Lobos, one that makes their 'hood eminently worth hanging out in.

—Chris Morris



Kipper Jones

Ordinary Story
(Virgin)

IN HIS AMBITIOUS solo debut album, singer/lyricist/horn player Kipper Jones touches a lot of bases, in fact more than he can cover. *Ordinary Story* does offer three very fine tracks—each a tribute to a different genre of black music—and enough fervor, humor and intelligence freshen this production to lift it above the mere pastiche of styles it might have been in other hands.

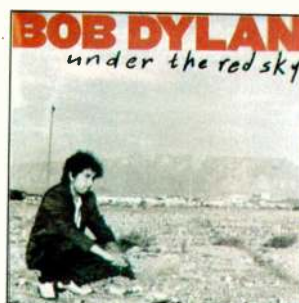
Former Gap Band member Reggie Stewart wrote the music for some of the songs here, notably "Carry On," my favorite cut of this and many another album. "Carry

On" is simple enough: a James Brown riff with Jones' horns layered over it, some words sung in honor of funk, then a roll call of great black musicmakers, whose names are punctuated by the anthemic cry—"play funk music!" The song brings Jones—who was a member of Tease, along with Chuckii Booker—closest to his announced goal of bridging R&B and rap; the cumulative effect is unstoppable and effortlessly political.

Alas, Jones' preachy side gets the upper hand elsewhere, and his careful craftsmanship lapses. Apart from an eerie recreation of the Isleys' "Footsteps in the Dark," and "Shock Wave," an Ohio Players-style paean to the powers of woman, the rest of this collection is often predictable and heavy-handed. Compare Jones' stale maxims on "My House," for instance, with Queen Latifah's winning rap on "Come into My House." The title cut, "Ordinary Story," substitutes cute didacticism ("2 keep the race alive and well, there R some things that we must tell") for acute insights. On this and the dreary "Consider Me Yours," Jones even sings out of tune. To paraphrase Louis Armstrong: Modulate lightly and politely, daddy, when you modulate.

Part of the problem here may be the breadth and sophistication of Jones' musical tastes, which outstrip his ability to execute them. But if he plays to his strengths, Kipper Jones will definitely carry on.

—Celestine Ware



Bob Dylan

Under the Red Sky
(Columbia)

LIKE A LOT OF GOOD Bob Dylan records, *Under the Red Sky* deliberately raises more questions than it intends to answer, yet I can't think of another Dylan album that's ever done so in quite this way or been as difficult to pin down. Many of the songs here seem simultaneously innocent

and apocalyptic, comic and sad. The lyrics often strike a somewhat bizarre but genuinely haunting balance between children's tales and biblical fables, most sounding childlike, fresh and as ancient as eternity. More than anything else, *Under the Red Sky* seems to revel in its own mysteriousness, to celebrate the twang of the weird and just how fantastically strange and unbelievable everything we see and know and do is.

Musically, Dylan gathers up a sort of farm-team Traveling Wilburys (George Harrison, Elton John, Randy Jackson, David Crosby, Al Kooper, Slash, Stevie Ray Vaughan, David Lindley, Waddy Wachtel, Bruce Hornsby and others) who sound anonymously exultant and not supersession stiff. When Kooper kicks off the title tune and "Handy Dandy" with some catchy, *Highway 61 Revisited*-style organ playing and Dylan launches into a goofy talking song ("TV Song") reminiscent of those on his early albums, we think we know where we are, and it's a comfortable place for both Dylan and us.

Then the words make us wonder. "Wiggle Wiggle" starts like a classic double-entendre rock 'n' roll song but soon pushes into scary, disturbing territory ("Wiggle till it bites, wiggle till it cuts.../Wiggle till you vomit fire"). Everything seems pastoral for the little boy and girl in "Under the Red Sky" until they're "baked in a pie" and Dylan sings, "This is the key to the kingdom and this is the town/This is the blind horse that leads you around." "Born in Time" is a torchy love song, timelessly happy and unhappy, while "God Knows" suggests that lovers—and people—can get through anything with belief and perseverance. "It's Unbelievable" and "Cat's in the Well" indicate that there's a lot to get through, with more on the horizon.

So far, my favorite songs on *Under the Red Sky* are "10,000 Men" and "2 X 2," a pair of biblical-sounding stunners that are as wonderfully impossible to summarize and grasp as they are to forget, and "Handy Dandy," which takes off on a "Like a Rolling Stone" riff and just doesn't quit. All this is subject to revision, though, because further listenings could well lead to new alleys, and who knows for sure what's here, except mystery and a casual mixture of major and minor that sounds like a deliberately throwaway masterpiece?

—Paul Nelson

[Reviews cont'd on page 126]

SHORT TAKES

So much music, So little time



ROCK

DREAD ZEPPELIN

Un-Led-Ed [I.R.S.]

Sure, the concept is golden—Led Zeppelin covers played reggae-style with an Elvis impersonator doing the vocals—but what really makes *Un-Led-Ed* a gas is that in addition to being funny, it's dead on the money. For all its stylistic bloat, Tortelvis' Elvis schtick deftly points up the Presleysisms in Robert Plant's sound, while the audacity and eclecticism of the instrumental interplay is authentically Zep-like. Besides, who else would cap "Black Dog" with a chorus of "Hound Dog" and mean it?

TEXAS TORNADOS

Texas Tornados [Reprise]

Admittedly, the Tornados—Freddie Fender, Augie Meyers, Doug Sahm and, from time to time, Flaco Jimenez—aren't everybody's idea of a supergroup, but for rollicking, accordion-driven two-steps, soulful roadhouse balladry and sheer Tex-Mex spice, I'll take these guys over the Wilburys any day. Then again, the Wilburys never were much for accordion playing.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Knebworth: The Album [Polydor]

Jimmy Page sits in with Robert Plant, Eric Clapton with Dire Straits...finally, a charity album where the listener benefits.

MAXI PRIEST

Bona fide [Charisma]

Reggae pop comes in all varieties, from clubland slick (like Soul II Soul) to dancehall ragged (like Shelly Thunders). Maxi Priest tries a little of everything, not just because he likes playing it safe. Blessed with an almost chameleon-like ability to blend with any groove, Priest plays off the beat with astonishing ease, from the deep-grooved pulse of "Close to You" to the quiet sweetness of "Space in My Heart."

BLACK BOX

Dreamland [RCA/Deconstruction]

Manchester may get all the press, but it's not the only EuroDance scene worth checking out. For instance, this sample-happy, soul-saturated quartet is French and (mostly) Italian, and boasts a sound that's pure Chicago. But what makes Black Box tick isn't its suave, house-style groove but its sense of song, from the giddy "Ride On Time" to the gospelized "I Don't Know Anybody Else."

TOY MATINEE

Toy Matinee [Reprise]

If you ever suspected that the sound of Madonna's last few albums was less the work of Ms. Ciccone than collaborator Patrick Leonard, here's where you get put straight. Toy Matinee, which pairs Leonard with singer/guitarist Kevin Gilbert, isn't anything like a prayer—arch, arty and almost fussy in its instrumentation, it's at its best a sort of post-graduate ELO.

POISON

Flesh and Blood [Enigma]

In the real world, nobody really cares which band has the loudest guitars, the longest hair or the loveliest groupies. In the real world, the only thing that counts is who has the strongest hooks. And, from the power-chord chorus of "Let It Play" to the hip-swinging bass of "Unskinny Bop," these are the hooks that kill.

MONIE LOVE

Down to Earth [Warner Bros.]

Like Queen Latifah, Monie Love understands that rap's women can never be too black or too strong, so she raps about self-destructive sex in "Pups Lickin' Bone." But she also understands that pop makes the world go 'round, and balances consciousness with slyly intelligent Top 40 material like "R U Single" or "Monie in the Middle." If only more rappers were so down to earth.

ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

Seven Turns [Columbia]

Never mind whether the South will rise again—the real question is whether the original Southern rockers will ever benefit from the boogie revival. Well, the Allmans certainly think so, and even if this doesn't make as big a splash as Havana Black, at least it boasts the band's best work in over a decade.

TUCK ADDRESS

Reckless Precision [Windham Hill]

Without Patti's soulful exhortations to ground it, Tuck's wispy tunefulness at times comes dangerously close to fuzak. But when he gets it right, he manages a balance between melodic statement and improvisation that leaves him sounding like a new-age Wes Montgomery. And that takes more than mere precision.

—J.D. Considine



JAZZ

ART TATUM

The Complete Pablo Group Masterpieces [Pablo]

Here's a Christmas gift that will keep giving. Though horns and a rhythm section were extraneous appendages for this Michael Jordan of the keyboard, Art Tatum enjoyed the companionship of other musicians, and it's interesting to hear them try and match the master's swinging slam dunks, which is what makes this six-CD compilation of Norman Granz's group sessions such an inspirational document. No instrumentalist in the history of jazz has ever encompassed the range of orchestral motion like this majestic pianist. Not only did Tatum's inhuman dexterity and rhythmic intensity rival that of the greatest drummers, but his harmonic authority provides an astonishing parallel commentary to the ongoing cycle of chords and melodies that make up his beloved standards. Tatum modulated more in one chorus than some players do in a lifetime, and for all the incredible fire of Buddy Rich, Roy Eldridge and Lionel Hampton, the subtle symmetry that Benny Carter, Ben Webster, Jo Jones and Buddy DeFranco bring to their encounters touches me most deeply.

HANK ROBERTS

Birds of Prey [JMT/PolyGram]

Best known for his spirited interplay with guitarist Bill Frisell, Hank Roberts certainly puts an exploratory edge on *Birds of Prey*. But instead of simply focusing on his solo

Largamente.
cantabile.



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abilities, cellist Roberts brings his arranging talents to bear on a suite of songs, and there hasn't been a more compelling, user-friendly, progressive jazz/funk recording to come down the pike since the last Ice Age. These songs are blissfully free of the smug platitudes and cosmoblather that sully so much "serious" fusion, what with themes on infidelity, tribal roots and family. Of course it doesn't hurt to have a talent like D.K. Dyson as your lead vocalist. Dyson has one of the most wailing, gospel-tinged instruments since Miss Dinah Washington. If she looks half as good as she sounds, she ought to be declared a controlled substance. The pressure is going to be enormous for her to eventually turn a Whitney Houston or Anita Baker, because she's a diva, and the anthemic "Comin' Home" and ritualistic "Pretty Boy Tom" ought to intrigue progressive R&B programmers (yeah, sure, Chip). Roberts' quirky arrangements and changes, replete with modern classical, country fiddling and American Indian references, take Dyson into a new kind of blue as he doubles up with guitar, bass and voice to give each song a funky propulsion and a mysterious fiddler's air.

THE MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS ORCHESTRA

The Hearinga Suite [Black Saint]

Ever since I saw this pianist waste three other avant-gardists with his triumphant Ellington arrangement at a Town Hall retrospective some years back, it's been clear that the big band is Muhal Richard Abrams' real instrument. It's a shame that the economics of the music business militate against big bands, because Abrams has developed the most profound orchestral palette of any contemporary jazzman, and *The Hearinga Suite* is the best of his many excellent big-band settings for Black Saint. Progressing from the spatial counterpoint of the title tune, he guides the band through a modernist's affectionate paraphrase of traditional ballad, blues and bop forms, before alighting on the freebop hyperswing of "Finditnow" and the invocational "Bermix"—summing the best aspects of Abrams' pioneering work with the AACM. Innovative use of synthesizers (as an orchestral color, not as a lo-cal substitute) and tuned percussion (Warren Smith) gives each melodic line a sharp, lively edge, while the crisp grooves of drummer Andrew Cyrille hold these bold contrapuntal designs together. Masterful.

PAT METHENY

Question and Answer [Geffen]

From the seminal *Bright Size Life* (with Bob Moses and Jaco Pastorius) through *Rejoicing* (with Billy Higgins and Charlie Haden), Pat Metheny reserves his most fervent notions for the naked format of a guitar trio. There's nothing particularly slick about *Question and Answer*: It is barren of production values. It looks like a jam, feels like a jam and sounds like a jam. Lo and behold, it is a jam. And what more intrepid explorers to explore the freedom principle of group improvisation than bass giant Dave Holland and that eternal modernist, the legend Roy Haynes. If for no other reason than the digital showcase *Question and Answer* affords Haynes' jabbering, counter-punching style of radical syncopation, this would be an important document. But as his cool reading of the standard "Old Folks" demonstrates, Metheny is an artist of unimpeachable integrity, not to be lumped with purveyors of adult contemporary happy jazz.

STANLEY JORDAN

Cornucopia [Blue Note]

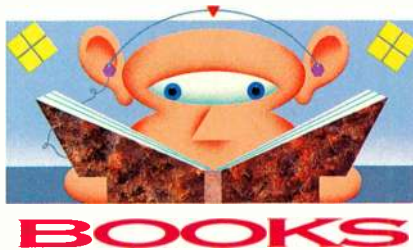
It's hard to make a rational critical assessment of guitarist Jordan's gifts, because his techniques are without precedent, and his range of musical interests transcends pigeonholing. The title of this release is particularly apt, because it's a grab-bag of straight-ahead modern jazz in a group setting—old ballads, contemporary pop tunes and electronic wizardry. Aided and abetted by Charnett Moffett, Kenny Kirkland and Jeff Watts, it's all very tasty and satisfying. Jordan continues to pare the ornate aspects of his Tatumesque tapping in search of the most essential, swinging notes. But the MIDIed splendor of "Asteroids" notwithstanding, it is the unremitting invention of the title tune's 21:45 of two-handed solo improvisation that keeps bringing me back. And like the man says, *no overdubs*.

CHARLIE HADEN

Silence [Soul Note]

One of the warmest, most cliché-free bebop albums I've heard in some time, *Silence* has the distinction of being one of Chet Baker's last sessions, and it surely ranks among his best. It's easy to forget how deeply rooted in tradition bassist Haden really is, given his association with Ornette Coleman and the cutting-edge leaders of modern jazz, but he has the kind of robust tone and grounded beat that gives bebop its weighty, even propulsion. *Silence* reminds one how far Haden has carried the standard of rock-solid bottom dwellers like Wilbur Ware. Along with pianist Enrico Pieranunzi and long-time rhythm partner Billy Higgins—another stalwart of free, buoyant swing—Haden's singing tone, harmonic subtlety and deep groove goose Baker into some of his strongest work, touching upon the work of Charlie Parker ("Visa") and a couple of jazz standards ("My Funny Valentine" and "Round About Midnight") more closely identified with Miles Davis.

—Chip Stern



THE ROCK AND ROLL MOVIE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE 1950S

Mark Thomas McGee [McFarland & Company, Inc.]

McFarland has published some excellent genre-film books, but this isn't one of them. An "encyclopedia" in neither breadth nor depth, this slim volume is startlingly slapdash and a lot less focused than the films it supposedly surveys. Hard to believe McGee is the same author who co-wrote the thoughtful *J.D. Films*. (Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640)—*Scott Isler*

HIT MEN

Fredric Dannen [Times Books/Random House]

Everyone already knows the record business is sleazy, but *Hit Men* manages to appall anyway. Starting with the

widespread use of independent promotion men as a conduit for payola, business reporter Fredric Dannen chronicles in lurid detail the unethical (and sometimes criminal) conduct of the "opportunists and crooks" who dominate the industry. Flamboyant Walter Yetnikoff receives the most attention, though Irving Azoff and Clive Davis, among other movers and shakers, are subjected to equally unflattering scrutiny. If this sprawling narrative occasionally bogs down in a morass of minutiae, the relentless arrogance and avarice of the main characters remains grimly fascinating.—*Jon Young*

FINGER FITNESS

Greg and Lorraine Irwin [Banner Press]

Hey, all you musicians (and jugglers, typists, card sharks)—are you aware that instead of fingers you just might have 10 little couch potatoes stuck to your hands? Author/digital gymnast Greg Irwin wants to change all that. In this fascinating treatise he provides instruction and photographs to help you get 'em in shape and increase the speed and accuracy of your playing. The author swears the results are amazing, and let's face it, there's a little Yngwie in all of us. (Box 13359, Hamilton, OH 45013)—*Peter Cronin*

ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE: THE UNCENSORED HISTORY

Robert Draper [Doubleday]

This generally alert and incisive history of the great behemoth of rock journalism charts the mag's parabola from its late-'60s San Francisco salad days as rockcrit's incubator to the movie star-infatuated entropy of the '80s. Draper lays the blame for *Stone's* precipitous plummet at the feet of founder and editor-in-chief Jann Wenner, who comes across as a crafty, supremely gifted nurturer of editorial talent who ultimately succumbed to his desire to hang out with wealthy stars. Along the way, Draper offers canny sketches of the magazine's best-known contributors, most prominently Hunter S. Thompson, who is depicted as the magazine's drug-addled id (counterpoised to Wenner as superego). This is caustic stuff, laced with backstage insights, that will appeal to anyone who has ever applauded or bemoaned rock's pet rag.—*Chris Morris*

STORMY MONDAY:

THE T-BONE WALKER STORY

Helen Oakley Dance, foreword by B.B. King

[Da Capo Press]

T-Bone Walker, who died in 1975, revolutionized the blues guitar in the mid-'40s by playing on his electric Gibson guitar bright single-note lines, on top of the beat, that had all the sophistication of jazz and much of the downhome spirit of the country blues. He had a clean, clear sound: "If I could have played like him, I would have," said B.B. King. Helen Oakley Dance intended this biography of the composer of "Stormy Monday" to be based on interviews, but T-Bone proved an elusive subject. Dance talked in snatches to Walker, and based the rest of her book on interviews with his friends and family. She followed T-Bone around—to his last performances, to his publisher's to track down royalties, and eventually to his funeral. *Stormy Monday* tells us little about the music as such, but Dance illuminates the blues life of this immensely talented man.

—*Michael Ullman*

SOUND OFF!

MUSICIANS AGAINST CENSORSHIP



AS I QUEST towards the TV it's Saturday morning and G.I. Joe has about 74 casualties and they're on the prowl for some more stats and I think about the majority watching this masterpiece of animational violence and yo it's about kids from three years old to 30 years old. Is anyone screaming Censorship? Nope. Because just about all those watching across the board like this stuff. Shit! I then turned on the radio to this bugged out station playing Guns N' Roses and their message via song is all of you immigrants, black folks and whatever else I don't like, jet out of the U.S.A. pronto. I'd like to put them on a jet to the moon, but I wait for the cry of censorship. There is none. Shit! Then I hear some of my homies in rap drop some "Me So Horny" and I say, damn—they're "as nasty as they wanna be" and I think it's cool, but so does my other partner but he's white and in the middle class of America, but he's down with the rap scene. And why shouldn't he be? Rap is music and music is the universal language. This starts to happen across the country,

though for every black kid who likes "2 Live" there is one white kid and I repeat again, So?

But someone up top doesn't like this trend that we can come together through music even if we're 2 horny and we can party together in peace. So they scream censorship. You may ask who are they, they are the

powers that be. They are the ones that say you have freedom of speech and watch you be raped of it. Does anyone force anyone else to listen to 2 Live Crew or rap in general? No. So why censor our music. If parents don't want their kids to have that type of music, then that should be done by the parent!! Not by a board of electives. I think the whole censorship issue is bullshit.

Leave music to the musician, leave the choice to choose what they want to hear to the public. Everyone who thinks this is bullshit, please stand up for your rights and support your favorites regardless of such attempts to ban them. Music is universal and choice is a basic human right. Don't lose it!!!

MUSICIAN

Where the Players Do the Talking

World Radio History

Q Tip

A Tribe Called Quest



INDIES

INSPIRAL CARPETS

*Cool as ***** [Rough Trade/Cow]

Sounding more like doors than carpets, this Manchester five-piece runs through its repertoire of neo-psychedelics with a cheesy eagerness, from Clint Boon's roller-rink organ effects to Tom Hingley's endearingly prole locution. It's charming enough when the hooks are kept front-and-center, but does anybody really need 15 minutes of pointless, two-chord jamming on "Plane Crash"? (611 Broadway, #311, New York, NY 10012)—*J.D. Considine*

MARKUS JAMES

Season of Dread [Firenze]

Former student of Joe Satriani has the chops, but never hits you over the head with them. Maybe because James' real forte is composing eerily atmospheric pop, occasionally suggestive of early Pink Floyd/King Crimson, and with flavorings of blues, reggae and Indian raga mixed into the brew. James has a pleasantly sincere vocal style to match, which lends "Inside a Dream" the kind of charm Crowded House fans can warm to. Ultimately a little insular and trippy for mass tastes, perhaps, but for the discerning palate, James' musical range and utterly assured direction make this outing a delight. (1827 Haight St. #65, San Francisco, CA 94117)

—*Mark Rowland*

TOM RUSSELL

Poor Man's Dream [Dark Angel]

It's a darn shame that one of country music's best singer/songwriters has to market his record through an 800 number, but maybe it's Russell's stubborn indie streak that keeps his songs so close to the bone. Augmenting his own richly detailed story-songs by co-writing with Ian Tyson, Nanci Griffith, Dan Zanes and Katy Moffatt, Russell travels the stylistic map, while his excellent honky-tonk band stays right with him and makes it all look easy. Go ahead, pick up the phone (1-800-1)ARK ANGEL).—*Peter Cronin*

BOREDOMS

Soul Discharge [Shimmy-Disc]

Leave it to the Japanese to do it better, or at least louder. This primal endurance test is virtually nonstop thrashing: erratic tribal and/or sampled rhythms slug it out with shrieked exclamations that probably mean just as much in Japanese. Not recommended for home listening; however, could make a good jogging tape. (Box 1187, New York, NY 10116)—*Scott Isler*

JOHN RENBOURN

The Black Balloon [Shanachie]

Along with Bert Jansch, Renbourn was the guitaristic force behind the quasi-famous Pentangle of the late '60s. Their no-boundaries folk style reflected Renbourn's diverse interests, which are showcased on this instru-

mental album. The songs here are treated in Elizabethan polyphonic style, utilizing one or two guitars, flute and tabors. Side one includes a carol, Irish traditional tunes and thirteenth- and fifteenth-century pieces. Side two is original Renbourn, and something else entirely. The modestly majestic "Pelican" and the convoluted Tudor blues of the title track make this one more than just an archival exercise.—*Mac Randall*

ROBERT WYATT

Compilation [Gramavision]

The edgy beauty of Wyatt's voice and spartan accompaniment only sticks the shiv of his anti-capitalistic indictments further into the gut. Unlike most broadsides, these ooze; unlike most world-beat collages, they skip on the rhythm; unlike most insurrectionists, Wyatt doesn't break a sweat. That shouldn't imply the music is bloodless, however. Perhaps it's just a way for a one-time art rocker to atone for a past of bloated instrumentals. However you look at it, minimalism suits him fine, emphasizing the pithy lyrics that make his viewpoint poetic, and the steely resolve that makes it seem correct.—*Jim Macnie*

SHONEN KNIFE

Shonen Knife [Giant/Gasatanka]

We could make it quick and wrong and call them the Japanese Shaggs, but that would discount the fact this all-women trio wield their economic pop mechanics the same way the Buzzcocks or the Archies did. Add in the banana fixations, a very mechanical rhythm section and product endorsements ("Tortoise brand pot cleaner is the best!"), and you've got a weirdo outfit that makes with the happy talk simply because they think it's the right thing to do. Their innocence is attractive to the cool-assed undergrounders who tout them because the Knife's music is void of irony. Way out of step and genuinely refreshing. (Box 800, Rockville Center, NY 11571)—*Jim Macnie*



REISSUES

BUNNY WAILER

Time Will Tell: A Tribute to Bob Marley [Shanachie]

The first American release of Bunny's 1981 tribute to his former partner in the Wailers, Bob Marley. With two additional tracks—"Rebel Music" and "Bellyful"—this LP answers the question of what some of Bob's most important songs might have sounded like if he'd been backed by Sly & Robbie instead of the Barrett Brothers. A revelatory and satisfying companion piece to *Bunny Sings the Wailers*.—*Roger Steffens*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Clancy Eccles Presents His Reggae Revue

[Heartbeat/Rounder]

Sixteen superb tracks trace the career of one of Jamaica's unsung musical heroes from the late rock steady to the early reggae periods. Sweet singers like Alton Ellis, Larry Marshall, Joe Higgs and Beres Ham-

mond join toaster King Stitt and the Coolers for a look at some of the insinuating riddims that never made it off the island, courtesy of master producer Clancy Eccles.

—*Roger Steffens*

ALLAN HOLDSWORTH

Velvet Darkness [Epic/Associated]

Allan would have left this one as it was: a forgotten mistake and, in its original version, a holy grail for Holdsworthians. Producer Creed Taylor corralled Allan and a pickup band of drummer Michael Walden, bassist Alphonso Johnson and pianist Alan Pasqua for this 1976 session, but as Allan tells it, the red light was on while they were only rehearsing. The alternate takes here are a guilty pleasure, but the producers idiotically substituted an alternate "Floppy Hat"—unearthing what is undoubtedly the guitarist's only recorded bum note—for the superior proper take, which now becomes unavailable except on out-of-print vinyl. Those interested are advised to stick to Allan's recent work; despite the often stellar performances, poor packaging and record-company duplicity combine to make this one almost as much a ripoff for the consumer as it was for the artist.—*Matt Resnicoff*

MOTHERS OF INVENTION

Weasels Ripped My Flesh [Rykodisc]

As someone who felt personally betrayed when Zappa junked the original Mothers of Invention and brought in those dweebs from the Turtles, the reissue of the largely instrumental *Weasels Ripped My Flesh* is cause for celebration, and points out just how profound an influence the original band's sonic assaults had on people like John Zorn (check out the title tune). Yes, the Mothers were R&B retreads; no, they couldn't execute all of Frank's stratagems the way he heard them, but from the charming waltz-cum-polyrhythmics on "Toads of the Short Forest" through to the hyper-bluesy "Directly from My Heart to You" and the richly subversive pop tune "Oh No," the Mothers' potpourri of modernism and mayhem remains fresh and new to ears weaned on rock radio.—*Chip Stern*

RECORDINGS



Merle Haggard

Blue Jungle

(MCA/Curb)

IT'S CURIOUS THAT this is Merle's best album in almost a decade, 'cause the last time Hag made such consistently rich music was 1982's *Big City*—precisely the last time (by my reckoning, at least) that

he sat down 'n' wrote one of his right-wing anthems. On *Big City* it was "Are the Good Times Really Over?," here it's "Me and Crippled Soldiers," as incoherent a piece of patriotic jive as anything Merle's done. Point is, it seems that getting off a good reactionary grumble gets Merle's juices goin' like nothing else, sparks him into cutting a whole album of great music. That was the case with *Okie from Muskogee, Fightin' Side of Me, A Working Man Can't Get Nowhere Today*. Happened on *Big City* and it's the case here too, with Hag makin' music I'd come to doubt he still had in him.

I shouldna doubted him so; the great ones don't shed their gift so easily, and Haggard is one of the great ones, at this point one of the towering living American musicians in any genre (his own term, "country jazz," is as close as I'd wanna come to labeling his stuff). I chanced to see him play a few weeks ago. There he was, stubby pint-sized Lincoln in the footlights, his cracked baritone soaring into the balcony, his canyon of a face beatifically contorting to his guitar solos. Best concert I've seen all year.

And one of the best albums I've heard this year. Here's a renewed Merle, sangin' sad songs with doleful passion ("Sometimes I Dream," "Lucky Old Colorado," "When It Rains It Pours"); sangin' two un-maudlin tunes about the homeless ("My Home Is in the Street" and "Under the Bridge"—don't ever try to categorize this man's politics); sangin' ethereal country-jazz balladry ("Driftwood"); sangin' rich 'n' rolling country-jazz honkytonk ("Blue Jungle" and "A Bar in Bakersfield"). Even "Me and Crippled Soldiers"—like "Okie" and "Fightin' Side"—sounds great, making jingoism seductive. Throughout, the Strangers lope along, loose 'n' tight (ya hardly notice the damned drums are sequenced, a concession to contemporary country's wretched dictates). Every song delivers, a rarity amid Nashville's one-hit-and-a-lotta-shit philosophy. At 53, after 30 years on the road, Merle Haggard is making some of the best music of his career. Match that, everyone.—Tony Scherman

George Michael

Listen Without Prejudice
(Columbia)

WHEN I LOOK at Barry Gibb I think werewolf—such a feral, hirsute mug! George Michael bears a striking resemblance to Bee Gee Barry, and

he too has a peculiar wolfish quality. However, for all his growling, pouty butt-wagging and claims of "I want your sex," Michael wouldn't look out of place romping adorably around a stage with New Kids on the Block.

This combination of opposing forces—his virile but vulnerable, girls, and yes, he wants world peace—is a standard-issue pop star prototype, and it fits Michael like a glove. This makes him an ideal pop icon for beginners. An androgynous jukebox with training wheels attached, he has the strange ability to sanitize whatever subject he addresses, and regardless of lyrical content, his records seem safe as mother's milk. Though Michael's music has grown up considerably since he wowed the teddy bear crowd as leader of confectioners Wham!, he still leans for the most part on a highly conservative recipe: simplistic platitudes ("It's hard to love/There's so much to hate," he sagely points out on "Praying for Time," the first single from this CD) couched in a musical hybrid that takes its central cues from American soul.

The follow-up to Michael's mega-selling breakthrough album of 1988, *Faith, Listen Without Prejudice* (such a pious title!) has several potential hits, among them a giddy

rocker called "Freedom," a cover of Stevie Wonder's "They Won't Go When I Go" and an upbeat lullaby called "Cowboys and Angels." It's a slickly produced album and sure to do well. Nonetheless, there's nothing remotely original about this music. A patchwork quilt of pop quotations that finds Michael lifting entire lines from songs by Suzanne Vega, the Rolling Stones and the soul standard "People Get Ready," there's barely a note on the record that's not easily traceable to another source. There are an awful lot of dopey "sensitive" tunes here, too. Typical is "Mother's Pride," a doleful lament about war replete with gloomy piano chords and a flute solo.

Michael has great pitch and he sings with a lot of muscle, but his voice lacks character. Big on the kind of vocal grandstanding that makes Patti LaBelle such a tedious performer, Michael is a very uninteresting singer—predictable in his phrasing, unconvincingly involved with his material. He's more in the tradition of Liza Minnelli than Stevie Wonder (whom Michael obviously admires). Though show business is clearly in his blood, there doesn't seem to be a whole lot going on in his head.

—Kristine McKenna

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STEVE EARLE

[cont'd from page 42] record is about those kind of decisions in some ways. What is home and what's not? And how do I maximize what I've learned and apply it to the next part of my life? It's not as simple as when you're 16 and you want to be a star. I've got kids in school now. So it's a lot about learning to balance your personal life and career."

Earle goes on in this vein, his flat tones hypnotically reassuring. Then he glances at the clock and realizes that his plane to New York is leaving in a little over an hour; the airport is on the other side of town, and he hasn't done any packing. Suddenly he's frantically scouring closets for boots, clothes, a tuxedo for a friend's wedding. Several minutes later we're pulsing toward town, desperate to shave minutes, yet wary of Cheatham County's finest. "You know," he admits between glances at the clock, "I don't feel like I've really had a rest from any of this yet."

Time is decidedly tight as the Nashville skyline comes into view. To save a few minutes, I offer to get off at a downtown exit and walk back to the hotel. Earle obliges with apologies. At the light we exchange see-yalaters, and as it flashes red to green he's off like a dragster, quickly dimming from sight as he motors down the highway.

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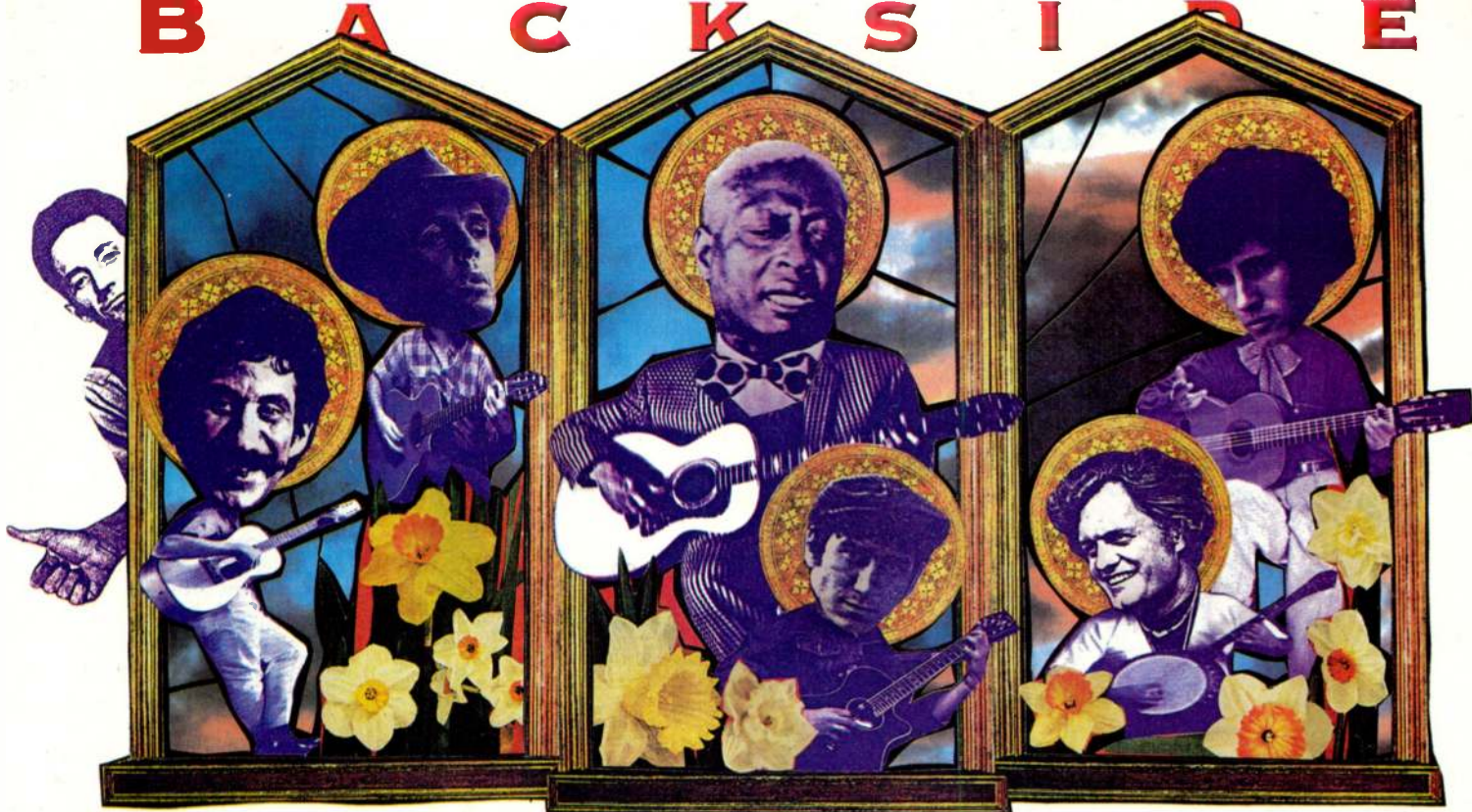
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Jim Croce

needles Phil Ochs all the time. Amuses the cherubim with songs making fun of the seraphim. "You don't tug on St. Peter's halo, you don't blow out the tongues of fire..." Really gets on Nick Drake's nerves.

Tim Buckley

keeps fading in and out of the ether, crooning. Hopes to be reincarnated as a buzzin' fly.

WHAT
GOES
ON IN
FOLKIE
HEAVEN



Tim Hardin

keeps getting prayers meant for Tim Buckley. Jim Croce likes to float by Hardin wearing wings and a halo and say in a loud voice, "Still need a reason to believe, Timbo?"

Harry Chapin

is seated at the right hand of the Beatific Vision. This is to reward Harry for his acts of charity and kindness on Earth, and also so no one has to listen to him sing "Cat's in the Cradle."

Nick Drake

is eternally melancholy. Searches for something to be depressed about. Finally settles on feeling bad about all the atheists whose faith is shattered when they get here. Even Sandy Denny tells him to lighten up.

Richard Farina

claims he took the motorcycle meant for Bob Dylan and Death couldn't tell them apart. Only Phil Ochs buys this. Richard's motto is, "Been Dead So Long It Looks Like MacDougal Street to Me."

Woody Guthrie

never has showed up. Rumor is that he arrived at heaven's gate, took one look at the streets of gold and hitchhiked off in the other direction.



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