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MUSICIAN

MAY 1991

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Wild Weekend

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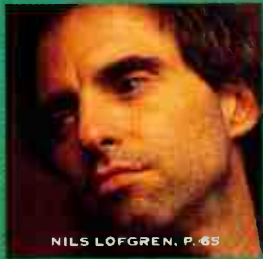


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WORKING MUSICIAN



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NILS LOFGREN

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BY PETER GRUNIN

GERI ALLEN

Bringing together different piano traditions.
BY GENE SANDRO

BOOTSY COLLINS

Putting airplanes into the music.
BY GENE SANDRO

TERRY BOZZO

How to play with chops without playing fast.
BY RICK MATTHEWS

GETTING BOOKED

Tips from the staff of First Avenue.
BY MARTIN KELLER

ERIC CLAPTON

A king of the Royal Albert Hall.
BY DAN DANIEL

NAMM-A-LAMA-DING-DONG

The new lines in synths, amps and mixers.
BY ALAN DI PRANA

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COVER: Eddie Van Halen, Albert Lee and Steve Morse photographed in Anaheim, California by Karen Miller. **This page:** Karen Miller (Lofgren); Christine Alcino (Isaak); Deborah Feinberg/Outline (Byrds).



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AND THE SLUGGERS

OUT OF NASHVILLE'S BURGEONING HIP SECTOR COMES THIS SYMBIOTIC ALLIANCE OF A CUTTING-EDGE ROCK & ROLL POET AND ONE OF THE NATION'S GREAT UNDISCOVERED BANDS. ON THE TIMELY—AND TIMELESS—*RADARTOWN*, MARK AND HIS NEW COMRADES POKE AROUND IN THE DARK FOR THE FRAYED ENDS AND BARE WIRES OF THE AMERICAN DREAM, AND WHAT THEY BRING BACK MAKES FOR SOME STRIKINGLY ORIGINAL AND PROVOCATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC.



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Keith Richards

The Stones' new live album *Flashpoint* has two new studio tracks—"Highwire" and "Sex Drive."

In January we put the boys together, Ronnie with two broken legs, and went into the Hit Factory in London and popped 'em in real quick and easy. Because the rest of it's a live album we didn't want to do a real elaborate studio job on 'em. We wanted to keep it fairly sparse and fairly live. The Stones' general feeling was that since we had three or four live albums out already—and from their very nature a lot of the material will be the same—we didn't feel like putting out a live album called *The Best Versions Yet!*

"Sex Drive" was a warm-up riff we used to play at rehearsals for the tour. Then we said, "This is getting hot, let's expand on that." To me the riff, even the title, is a little hats-off to James Brown. To celebrate his release.

The single "Highwire" is an anti-war song—and it came out the day the war ended!

I know, that was strange. We were finishing it off and some guy in the TV room said, "They're going in!" We said, "Uh-oh!" It is anti-war, but to me it's not quite as simple as that. I must stress that Mick wrote this one, but we talked about it. It's more about how you get guys like Saddam. And what about the next one. We supply and boost these guys up and then you've got to go in there and slap them down. Why? Money. It's really more about the *cause* of these sort of things than it is a direct anti-war statement. Mick and I looked at each other and said, "Do we want to provoke things? How is this going to be viewed?" But anybody can play it safe. I think it's a worthwhile comment. Probably the guys who were out there having to fight this war would agree more than most people. Thank God this war went over with fairly light casualties—though I don't suppose the ones who died think so. It would be nice to try to make people aware, to prevent another thing like that happening.

In the old days, when making a record didn't take so long, people used rock 'n' roll records like newspapers.

Exactly, that was the other point. When you could make a record and get it out in a week it was a much more immediate statement. The Stones have always stuck our necks out when we thought we had something worth saying. At



"Mick and I said, 'Do we want to provoke things?' Anybody can play it safe."

the same time we said, "We'll get people saying we're cashing in on the war." But if anybody doesn't need to cash in on anything it's the Stones. We felt we had a certain integrity that might make people listen and not take it as a cheap shot. If you're gonna say this thing it's got to come out while it's on people's minds. You gotta get 'em while their cars are opened.

Has Bill Wyman left the Stones?

Oh man, I'm wondering myself! I've sent him a couple of messages. I'm really not sure. He's had a rough time of it. I don't know if it's just menopause. He's been hinting at this

since the tour finished. I was saying, "Look man, you might feel different in a few months. We're not going to be working for a bit. So why don't you just do what you've got to do." He's got a divorce. I'm just trying to give him all the leeway I can, but he seems to keep talking to these bums from Fleet Street. I sent him a couple of messages because I couldn't get a hold of him on the phone. I can't really clear it up for you very much, it's as much a mystery to me as it is to you. I know that he thinks he's too old. I said, "You're as old as you feel, baby. You're playing great, what's the problem?" That's my attitude. This is something he's going through on his own. I sent him a letter: "Can I help? Do you want to talk about it?" But at the moment I don't know. I hope he figures it out without having to do it through the yellow press. If I can, I'd help him out on it. But I'd rather keep it in the family. The guy suddenly starts wanging away on his own...I don't know. Maybe he's gone mad!

He was on the "Highwire"/"Sex Drive" session?

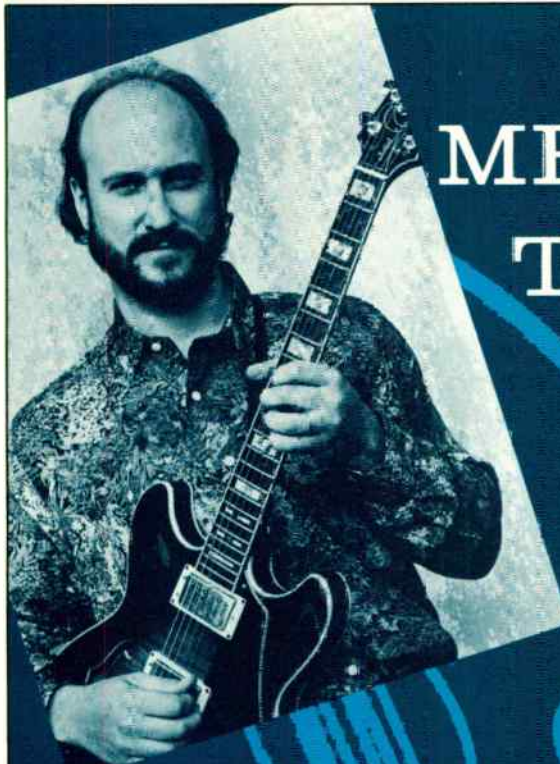
Oh yeah. Then he didn't come over to New York for the video. It was only last Friday. "Where's Bill?" "He's not coming." "Oh shit." That's all I know, I haven't heard from him. He's keeping his own counsel on this, I guess. I just hope he figures it out. My advice to him is just relax, think it over.

Will you do another album with the X-Pensive Winos?

Yep, just this week I've started setting it up. I'm trying to find them! I spoke to Ivan Neville today. We may get together and start things off.

On the live album there's a girl yelling, "Paint it black, you devils." That's gotta be sampled from Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out.

Did they put that in? Quite honestly I haven't listened that closely. I haven't heard that. That sounds like a Chris Kimsey or even a Mick joke. I wonder who put that in. I'll have to check that. It must have been a sample. Unless there's some chick who goes around doing that. —Bill Flanagan



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ISSUE NO. 151

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MUSICIAN (USPS 451-010), 35 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA 01950 (508) 281-3110, is published monthly by BPM, Inc., One Astor Place, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. Billboard Publications is a subsidiary of Affiliated Publications, Inc. © 1991 by MUSICIAN, all rights reserved. Second class postage paid at Gloucester, MA 01950 and at additional mailing offices. Subscriptions \$17 per year, \$32 for two years, \$49 for three years. Canada and elsewhere, add \$12 per year, U.S. funds only. Subscription address: MUSICIAN, Box 1923, Marion, OH 43305. Send address changes to above address. Call 1-800-347-6969 for subscription in the cont. US and 614-382-3322 elsewhere. Current and back issues are available on microfilm from University Microfilms Int'l., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Billboard Publications, Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer: Gerald S. Hobbs; Executive Vice President: Samuel S. Holdsworth; Senior Vice President: Ann Haire; Vice Presidents: John B. Babcock, Paul Curran, Martin R. Feely, Rosalee Lovett, Lee Zhitto.

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One Lost His Band...

I BECAME A FAN OF PINK FLOYD during the *Dark Side of the Moon* era and had heard bits and pieces about some guy named Syd that was there before. In 1987, I heard Piper at the *Gates of Dawn* and Syd's solo records and became a fanatic. It's rather sad that his addiction to LSD marred what could have been a brilliant career.

Farrell McNulty

...One His Friend...

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE ARTICLE on Pink Floyd (Feb. '91). I still love Syd and it was such a relief to find out what he's doing now. I also think that David Gilmour has proven that he has worlds of talent, contrary to what Roger Waters has been trying to make us believe all these years.

Annette Fleming
Wichita Falls, TX

...and One His Mind

AS A KINDRED SPIRIT OF SYD BARRETT I can understand his safari deep in the depths of lost Eden; I was sad, however, to read he eventually became lost.

Brian Ironhorse
St. Louis, MO

PERSONALLY I THINK ROGER WATERS wound up losing all three.

Eddie Gorham
Chattanooga, TN

Still Crazy

FRED SCHRUEER'S ARTICLE ON NEIL Young got at the heart of the craggy, unkempt artist who I defended in a fist fight in 1970 when I was 10 years old. He's got the stuff. I got suspended.

Roger Weiss
New Paltz, NY

I THOUGHT NEIL YOUNG WAS A MUSICIAN who would never sell out to a sponsor. A week later tickets for his tour went on sale. To my amazement, printed on the front was: "Budweiser presents Neil Young & Crazy Horse."

Tell me it's not true: Another hero sells out. I guess the only ones who won't sell out are dead.

Joe Naplachowski
Orlando, FL

Ron Cohen of *Cellar Door Productions*, which promoted the shows in Orlando, admits they included Young in their Budweiser concert series without his permission, and have run several ads since then apologizing to Young and his fans.

IT WOULD BE A PLEASURE TO THANK Neil Young for his gift of music by making a donation to the school he co-founded with his wife and others. Please print the address of Bridge School so others may help.

Carl J. Asman
North Haven, CT

Bridge School, c/o Gerber Rosenfield, 315 South Beverly Dr. #409, Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Led into Trouble

I'VE NEVER BEEN AS TICKED OFF AS I am after reading D.A. Kelly's letter in the February '91 issue. I cannot believe anyone could be as musically ignorant as to call Zeppelin a "godawful, bombastic con job of a band." There is no other band in rock history with as much musicianship as Zeppelin had.

Shawn Martin
Plattsburgh, NE

I'M NOT SAYING D.A. KELLY SHOULD dig Zeppelin, especially since he or she probably does not have the love for fine music that it takes. Behind each member of Zeppelin stands

years of solid raw musical genius. As for their sound, how can us millions of dedicated fans be wrong?!

Michael Brown
Dana Point, CA

I DON'T KNOW WHAT RECORDINGS D.A. Kelly's been listening to, but he obviously missed the remarkable drumming in "Good Times, Bad Times," the beauty of "The Rain Song" and almost every song on *Presence* and *Physical Graffiti*. Their career was a combination of talent, hard work and timing coupled with music that has obviously appealed to several generations.

Neil Parton
Menlo Park, CA

KUDOS TO D.A. KELLY FOR THE amusing and contentious letter regarding the Limp Blimps.

David Hakes
Sunnyside, NY

Cover Art

FROM THE CHOICE OF TITLE TO THE opening graphics, the tribute to Art Blakey was sensitive and just. It's obvious that Karen Bennett has a special rapport with some of the finest jazz musicians around.

One sour note. Please explain— for your choice of cover line—why you decided to compete with the *National Enquirer*: "One Lost his Band, One Lost his Friend, One Lost his Mind." Such trash!

Drew Sanders
New York, NY

Take Note

WHAT EXACTLY DOES PETER Watrous mean (*Short Takes*, Feb. '91) when he says that "Blue Note is no longer a player on the jazz scene"? The snipe has no bearing on his review. When I listen to McCoy or Don Pullen or Scofield or

Eliane Elias, I think I'm listening to great music. Blue Note's also keeping a lot of vintage jazz available. Watrous is certainly entitled to an opinion, but aren't we entitled to have him back it up?

Pollo

Great Taste, Less Filler

I AM A NEW SUBSCRIBER, SO YOU'LL have to excuse me: You mean you have no fashion issue? What will we do?

E.K. Hesse
Abington, PA

Name Game

YOUR FEB. '91 BACKSIDE ("10 WAYS TO Name Your Band") reminded me of a game called "Supergroups." The rules were simple: Take two or more rock groups whose names mesh together and send them out on tour! Examples:

Twisted Sister Sledge
Timbuk 3-Dog Night Ranger
Kissing the Pink Floyd Cramer
Kenny Rankin Roger Daltrey
The Rolling Stone Roses
and who wouldn't wait in line to see...
Boy George Michael Jackson
Brownsville Station?

Gerry Wright
Fullerton, CA

Erratums

THE DEAN BENEDETTI RECORDINGS of Charlie Parker (*Reviews*, Feb. '91) can be ordered from: Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902.

Jon Young's review in the February issue mistakenly refers to Cinderella's *Night Songs* as *Night Thoughts*.

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Hall & Oates

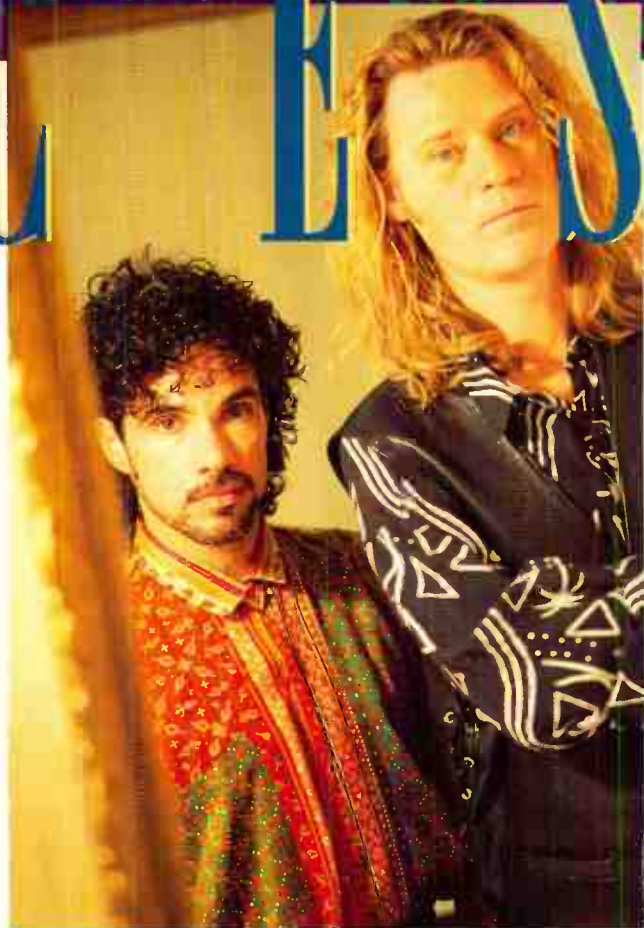
STRIPPING AWAY THE PRODUCTION

THEIR RECORD COMPANY HAD JUST ONE QUESTION FOR HALL AND Oates. "Oh hitmakers of the '80s," they intoned, "where are your radio songs?" Daryl Hall didn't even flinch. The duo dropped off their new *Change of Season*, then threw a counterpunch: an acoustic tour to support the record. Booked for mid-sized theaters and set to feature as many obscurities as FM chestnuts. What could the execs say? "They probably had a lot to say behind our backs, but didn't have a lot to say to our faces," Hall laughs. "We don't follow orders; they work for us, and I'm not going to make music that only exists so they can sell it more easily."

The packaging of pop music is even narrower today than when they were peaking. Oates makes a dire case. "Being a songwriter is kind of depressing, because you put 12 songs on a record and realize only two will ever be heard by the mass public. It's a real drag. I hate that, but that's American radio; you get one or two shots. There's just too much out there." "The whole point of this exercise," adds Hall, "is to show we could write songs. Stripping the production away also strips away

time and place. There's a continuity in our music that shows we have a style of writing that hasn't really changed much over the years."

So synth pads become acoustic guitar parts, drones become cello and violin lines. The arrangements were worked up by Hall and keyboardist Bob Mayo partly to accent Oates' acoustic guitar, partly to accent the personal tone of songs each brought to the new record. They haven't been writing together much, and Oates is planning a solo album. Hall says that as long as they remain friends, they remain partners. "John and I don't need each other to complete a song. We're separate entities who share a concept." Separate entities indeed. "We've regained and lost our way over the years. Now we've regained it again. We're being truer to ourselves than we have in 10 years." **MATT RESNICOFF**



JESUS JONES: MESSIAHS OF COOL

Mike Edwards wants Americans to know that Jesus Jones has "something new and exciting, and it's coming for you." The resurrection of the three-minute single on the English quintet's genre-breaking new album *Doubt* confirms The Word. If an infotainment-drenched decade calls for schizo musical messiahs, pencil in Jesus Jones as new gods.

Doubt, which Edwards calls

"the old new album, written at the end of '89 and recorded in seven days," darts seamlessly from surging guitar ("Trust Me") to Beatles-with-a-beatbox satire ("International Bright Young Thing") to "Blissed," a moody house track that samples the Sex Pistols.

The band formed in 1988 after rhythm guitarist/singer Edwards,

guitarist Jerry De Borg and drummer Gen had absorbed "acid house, American hip-hop and guitar rock. I decided that if you could combine those things you could combine anything," says Edwards. "We can actually count the bands we haven't been compared to on two hands. The trend now is to refer to us as uncategorizable. That's exactly as it should be." Since the birth of Jesus, Al Jaworski (bass) and Barry D. (keyboards) have arrived to nail things down.

"Innovation is still alive in rock music," Edwards says. "I like strange juxtapositions and bending noise around to the way I want it to sound. I just like any sort of noise that thrills." **MARK BARSOTTI**



Photographs: Jonnie Miles (top); Simon Fowler

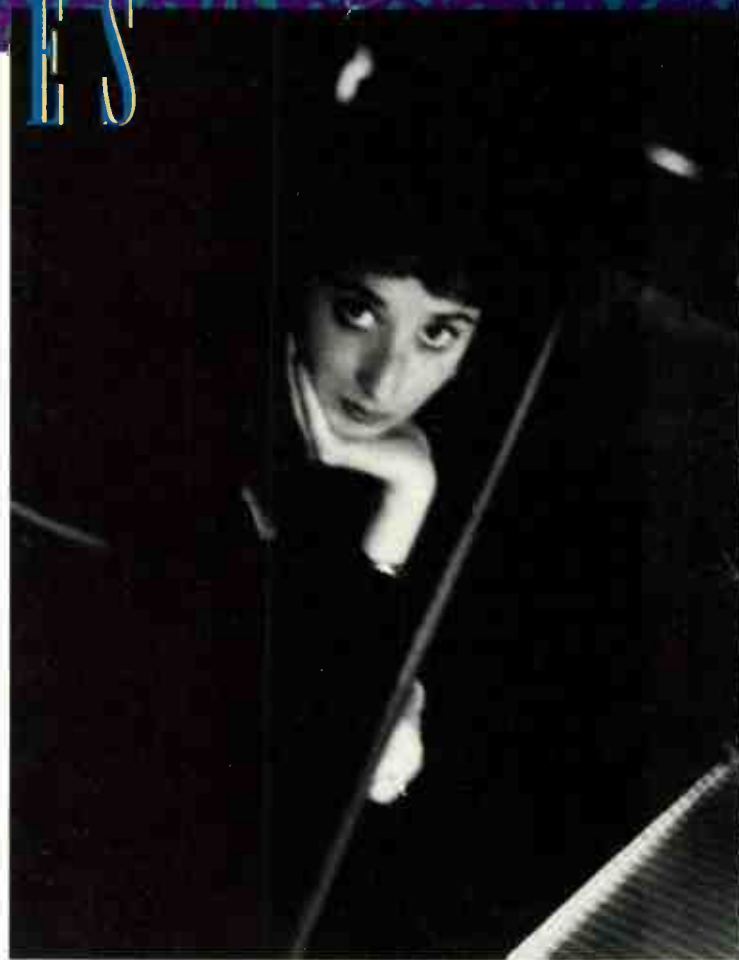
Renee Rosnes

PLAYING REAL GOOD FOR FUN

AT 29, PIANIST RENEE ROSNES IS A VETERAN: SHE'S GOT 12 recordings under her belt—three as a leader—and is busy playing gigs with her own trio and three other groups. But young as she is, she's smart enough to respect her elders.

"It's an absolute necessity to work with older musicians," she says. "That's how you learn the craft." Her debut album, *Renee Rosnes*, must have taught her a lot—it featured Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Ron Carter.

On her new release, *For the Moment*, Rosnes' modern-yet-mainstream keyboard style is supported by her trio, bassist Ira Coleman and drummer Billy Drummond, and guest saxophonists Steve Wilson and Joe Henderson (it was seasoned tenor-man Henderson who gave Rosnes her start, hiring her in 1987, after she'd moved to New York from her Vancouver, B.C. home). The new record proves that Rosnes has indeed absorbed her lessons well. It's a strong statement from a young lady who says she started playing jazz in high school "just for fun. I wasn't dreaming of making it big." SUZANNE MCELDFRESH



MR. FIDDLER

MOTOR CITY JAZZFUNKPOP, WITH KAZOOS

YOU CAN CALL THEM MR. FIDDLER (really their last name), or you can call them Bubz (né Thomas) and Amp (Joseph Anthony—"Amp is short for Anthony, in Detroit"). They're brothers, they're from the Motor City, and their debut album, *With Respect*, is a funketeletronic mix of Parliament grooves, '90s moves, jazz smooth, and kazoos. "People in Detroit have always been innovative," says Amp, who spent the last five years playing keyboards for hometown hero George

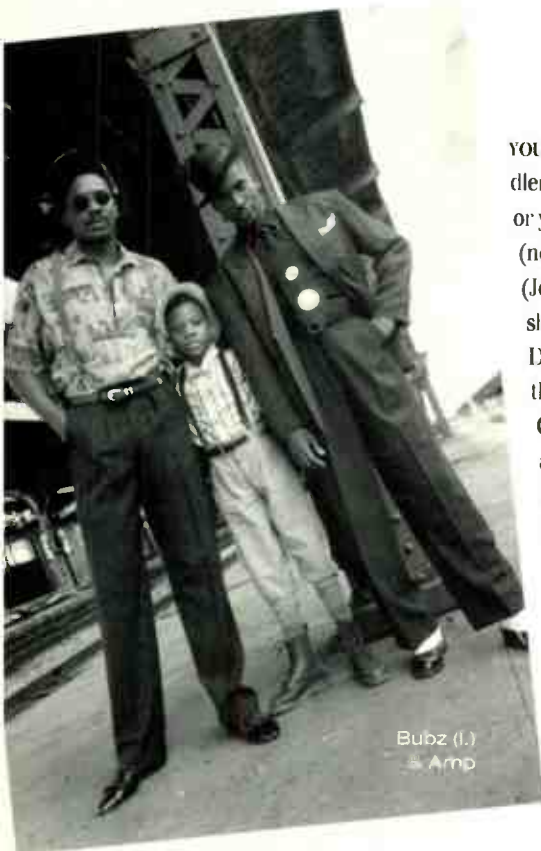
Clinton. "That's one thing I've always admired about Parliament-Funkadelic and George Clinton: They've always been left-field. Crazy."

Detroit also inspires the brothers' lyrics. "Living in Detroit brings out titles like 'So You Wanna Be a Gangster' (the album's lead track), because of violence and drugs, and the attitudes of the rappers who are promoting a lot of slang and cussing," Amp says. "I love rap. I just think that the image they're portraying for the kids is not too wholesome. The reason we call our record *With Respect* is because most kids and most rap groups don't have any

respect, for women and children and adults."

Amp prefers the work of his jazz elders. "I've always wanted to have a big band, 'cause I'm a fan of Louis Jordan, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington. I've always wanted to incorporate those types of melodies with up-to-date rhythms." For now, however, Mr. Fiddler is a duo that works with a lot of musicians. And, if you listen closely, kazoos. "It's our little secret weapon," bassist Bubz explains. "You just blow on it, rattle it and hum a melody, and the sound comes out. It's something everybody can do."

EVELYN McDONNELL



Bubz (l.)
= Amp

DHARMA BUMS TURN BLIGHT TO BLISS

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE time, and the Dharma Bums decided to record their third album, *Bliss*, in a nineteenth-century Grange hall in a small Oregon town. But toward the end of the episode—after sleeping on a hardwood floor for two weeks, taking infrequent showers at a house down the road and sharing the stomach flu—all these gentle souls from Portland, Oregon wanted was a good night's rest.

"It *was* a romantically great idea, and great-sounding for the guitars," says 22-year-old vocalist Jeremy Wilson. "But I think now we're going to get some self-esteem and do things an easier way."

The last 24 months have been emotionally trying: Courted by a major label (they turned it down to stay with little Frontier), the Bums also dealt with the death of a parent, the suicide of one friend and the rape of another. This is bliss? Explains Wilson, "Everything exists with good and bad. Bliss is in everything,



even if it doesn't seem like it."

Happily, the result of so much suffering is an album of honest lyrics, spontaneous energy, sublime inspiration and, yes, excellent guitar sounds.

SUZANNE MCELFRISH

James Morrison ONE-MAN BRASS SECTION

ON HIS FIRST WORLD TOUR WITH THE PHILIP MORRIS SUPERBAND, Australian multi-instrumentalist James Morrison played in the trombone section. On his second tour, he joined the trumpets. "Urbie Green told me next year I'd be slumming it with the saxes," Morrison jokes.

In fact, when it came time to record some of his own big band arrangements for his third Atlantic LP *Snappy-Do*, Morrison didn't ring up his road buddies. Instead, he did all the horn parts himself.

"Even in the great big bands," Morrison explains, "you can always tell the guy who wrote the chart—he plays differently. I wanted to see what would happen if everybody sounded like that, where every little nuance had that feeling of oneness."

So Morrison wrote for five saxes, four trumpets and four 'bones. Using a scratch trumpet track to coach them, Morrison recorded the Philip Morris rhythm section. Then he put down his own piano tracks. Then horns. Then more horns.

"The inner parts were first, and then the bottom parts, with the lead alto and trumpet added last," Morrison recalls. "Since I do anything to avoid the dreaded practice ritual, it was a good way to get playing a bunch of instruments regularly."

TOM MOON

Doc Pomus Dies at 65

The great songwriter Doc Pomus died in New York City on Tuesday, March 14. He was the composer of "Little Sister," "Viva Las Vegas," "Save the Last Dance for Me," "Teenager in Love" and other rock 'n' roll classics. He was 65 years old.

Pomus was a familiar figure in Greenwich Village, a big, friendly man in a wheelchair with a regular table at the Lone Star Cafe where he traded stories with a steady line of musicians, songwriters and pilgrims. Doc never lost his enthusiasm, the joy he conveyed in hearing music and meeting people. He was a real bon vivant.

He was diagnosed as having lung cancer in January. Doc earned an ovation from his peers at the Rhythm and Blues Foundation's Pioneer Awards on February 21, when he sent over a tape-recorded greeting from his hospital bed promising he'd be with them all again next year.

When Irving Berlin in 1989 died Doc called the *Musicians* office and asked if we would take a look at an appreciation of the great songwriter that he had written. He said that *Rolling Stone* had told him the piece was too long, that people today didn't know much about Irving Berlin. Doc said that Irving Berlin's songs were everywhere, that they were a part of America, and that surely people could not have lost sight of that. Doc wrote of "that magnificent but narrow structure known as the popular song." He said of Berlin, "Like all master-creators, he made us understand the world and ourselves a little more. He always knew much more about me than I did. He helped me realize that I had more in common with the world outside than I ever dreamed possible and that if I hung in there I had a shot." We accepted Doc's Berlin piece, had it typeset and laid out, but it got bumped for space reasons. After that, it was too dated to run. Doc said he understood, the article wasn't important. What was important was that the music press not allow the passing of so great a songwriter to go unnoticed.

He was right. And what he said of Irving Berlin is also true of Doc Pomus.

His songs are part of what it means to be an American. And he should never be forgotten.

BILL FLANAGAN



Top 100 Albums

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

1 • 3	Mariah Carey <i>Mariah Carey/Columbia</i>
2 • 1	Vanilla Ice <i>To the Extreme/SBK</i>
3 • 62	Sting <i>The Soul Cages/A&M</i>
4 • 6	Whitney Houston <i>I'm Your Baby Tonight/Arista</i>
5 • 5	M.C. Hammer <i>Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em Capitol</i>
6 • 7	Wilson Phillips <i>Wilson Phillips/SBK</i>
7 • —	Gloria Estefan <i>Into the Light/Epic</i>
8 • 9	Bette Midler <i>Some People's Lives/Atlantic</i>
9 • 2	Madonna <i>The Immaculate Collection/Sire</i>
10 • 4	The Simpsons <i>The Simpsons Sing the Blues Geffen</i>
11 • 11	The Black Crowes <i>Shake Your Money Maker Def American</i>
12 • 8	AC/DC <i>The Razors Edge/Atco</i>
13 • 30	C&C Music Factory <i>Gonna Make You Sweat/Columbia</i>
14 • 17	Tesla <i>Five Man Acoustical Jam/Geffen</i>
15 • 40	Chris Isaak <i>Heart Shaped World/Reprise</i>
16 • 10	Paul Simon <i>Rhythm of the Saints Warner Bros.</i>
17 • 14	Janel Jackson <i>Janel Jackson's Rhythm Nation/A&M</i>
18 • 24	INXS <i>3/Atlantic</i>
19 • 15	Damn Yankees <i>Damn Yankees/Warner Bros.</i>
20 • 13	Phil Collins <i>Serious Hits...Live!/Atlantic</i>
21 • 16	Guy <i>The Future/Uptown</i>
22 • 12	George Michael <i>Listen without Prejudice Vol. 1 Columbia</i>

23 • 20	Bell Biv DeVoe <i>Poison/MCA</i>
24 • 25	Garth Brooks <i>No Fences/Capitol</i>
25 • 31	L.L. Cool J <i>Mama Said Knock You Out/Def Jam</i>
26 • 22	Nelson <i>After the Rain/DGC</i>
27 • 21	Poison <i>Flesh and Blood/Enigma</i>
28 • 18	Ralph Tresvant <i>Ralph Tresvant/MCA</i>
29 • 55	David Lee Roth <i>A Little Ain't Enough Warner Bros.</i>
30 • 38	Trixter <i>Trixter/Mechanic</i>
31 • 77	Digital Underground <i>This Is an EP Release/Tommy Boy</i>
32 • 19	ZZ Top <i>Recycler/Warner Bros.</i>
33 • 34	Harry Connick, Jr. <i>We Are in Love/Columbia</i>
34 • 44	Queensryche <i>Empire/EMI</i>
35 • 23	Warrant <i>Cherry Pie/Columbia</i>
36 • 27	Clint Black <i>Put Yourself in My Shoes/RCA</i>
37 • —	Queen <i>Innuendo/Hollywood</i>
38 • 50	Keith Sweat <i>I'll Give All My Love to You Vintertainment</i>
39 • 48	Carreras-Domingo-Pavarotti <i>Carreras-Domingo-Pavarotti in Concert/London</i>
40 • 35	Slaughter <i>Slick It to Ya/Chrysalis</i>
41 • 26	Cinderella <i>Heartbreak Station/Mercury</i>
42 • 28	New Kids on the Block <i>No More Games/Remix Album Columbia</i>
43 • 39	Jane's Addiction <i>Ritual de lo Habitual/Warner Bros.</i>
44 • 70	EPMD <i>Business as Usual/RAL</i>
45 • 88	Roger McGuinn <i>Back from Rio/Arista</i>
46 • 32	Deee-Lite <i>World Clique/Elektra</i>
47 • 29	Soundtrack <i>Pretty Woman/EMI</i>

48 • 91	Oleta Adams <i>Circle of One/Fontana</i>
49 • 37	Ice Cube <i>Kill at Will/Priority</i>
50 • 41	Candyman <i>Ain't No Shame in My Game/Epic</i>
51 • —	Alexander O'Neal <i>All True Man/Tabu</i>
52 • 52	Peter Gabriel <i>Shaking the Tree—16 Golden Greats/Geffen</i>
53 • 49	Tony! Toni! Tone! <i>The Revival/Wing</i>
54 • 74	Urban Dance Squad <i>Mental Floss for the Globe/Arista</i>
55 • 42	Yanni <i>Reflections of Passion Private Music</i>
56 • 100	Steelheart <i>Steelheart/MCA</i>
57 • 60	Black Box <i>Dreamland/RCA</i>
58 • 43	Scorpions <i>Crazy World/Mercury</i>
59 • 33	The Cure <i>Mixed Up/Elektra</i>
60 • —	Timmy T. <i>Time After Time/Quality</i>
61 • 55	Stevie B <i>Love & Emotion/LMR</i>
62 • 46	Vaughan Brothers <i>Family Style/Associated</i>
63 • 78	Father M.C. <i>Father's Day/Uptown</i>
64 • 36	Traveling Wilburys <i>Vol. 3/Wilbury</i>
65 • —	Chicago <i>Twenty 1/Reprise</i>
66 • —	Enigma <i>MCMC A.D./Charisma</i>
67 • 45	Jon Bon Jovi <i>Blaze of Glory/Young Guns II Mercury</i>
68 • 82	Bad Company <i>Holy Water/Atco</i>
69 • 66	Winger <i>In the Heart of the Young/Atlantic</i>
70 • 93	Surface <i>3 Deep/Columbia</i>
71 • 71	Garth Brooks <i>Garth Brooks/Capitol</i>
72 • 59	Too Short <i>Short Dog's in the House/live</i>
73 • —	Styx <i>Edge of the Century/A&M</i>
74 • —	O'Jays <i>Emotionally Yours/EMI</i>
75 • —	Divinyls <i>Divinyls/Virgin</i>
76 • 94	The Charlatans U.K. <i>Some Friendly/Beggars Banquet</i>
77 • 58	Michael Bolton <i>Soul Provider/Columbia</i>
78 • 64	Johnny Gill <i>Johnny Gill/Motown</i>
79 • —	Another Bad Creation <i>Coolin' at the Playground Ya' Know! Motown</i>
80 • 47	Various Artists <i>Red Hot & Blue/Chrysalis</i>
81 • 54	UB40 <i>Labour of Love II/Virgin</i>
82 • 56	New Kids on the Block <i>Step by Step/Columbia</i>
83 • 65	Van Morrison <i>Enlightenment/Mercury</i>
84 • 63	Pebbles <i>Always/MCA</i>

85 • —	Reba McEntire <i>Rumor Has It/MCA</i>
86 • 51	Steve Winwood <i>Refugees of the Heart/Virgin</i>
87 • 79	Phil Collins <i>...But Seriously/Atlantic</i>
88 • 72	Freddie Jackson <i>Do Me Again/Capitol</i>
89 • —	King's X <i>Faith Hope Love by King's X Megaforce</i>
90 • 61	Julio Iglesias <i>Starry Night/Columbia</i>
91 • 80	Soundtrack <i>Dances with Wolves Associated</i>
92 • 92	Gary Moore <i>Still Got the Blues/Charisma</i>
93 • 68	Anita Baker <i>Compositions/Elektra</i>
94 • —	Susanna Hoffs <i>When You're a Boy/Columbia</i>
95 • —	Cathy Dennis <i>Move to This/Polydor</i>
96 • —	Jesus Jones <i>Doubt/SBK</i>
97 • —	The Kentucky Headhunters <i>Pickin' on Nashville/Mercury</i>
98 • —	Alan Jackson <i>Here in the Real World/Arista</i>
99 • 81	Eric Johnson <i>Ah Via Musicom/Capitol</i>
100 • —	Celine Dion <i>Unison/Epic</i>

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 February. The record company chart is based on the top 200 albums. The concert chart is based on Amusement Business Box Score reports for February 1991. All charts are copyright 1991 by BPI Incorporated.

Top Labels

1	Columbia
2	Warner Bros.
3	Atlantic
4	Capitol
5	Arista
6	Geffen
7	SBK
8	MCA
9	A&M
10	Epic
11	Mercury
12	EMI
13	Elektra
14	Atco
15	Reprise
16	RCA
17	Sire
18	Uptown
19	Def American
20	Chrysalis

Top Concert Grosses

1	Bell Biv DeVoe, Johnny Gill, Keith Sweat <i>Great Western Forum, Inglewood, CA/February 22-24</i>	\$1,101,513
2	ZZ Top, the Black Crowes <i>Palace of Auburn Hills, Auburn Hills, MI/February 21-23</i>	\$1,071,383
3	ZZ Top, the Black Crowes <i>Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, IL/February 15-17</i>	\$962,325
4	New Kids on the Block, Biscuit, Perfect Gentlemen <i>Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, Oakland, CA/February 23-24</i>	\$713,000
5	Frank Sinatra, Steve Lawrence & Eydie Gorme <i>Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center Arena, Long Beach, CA/February 10</i>	\$638,420
6	ZZ Top, the Black Crowes <i>Richfield Coliseum, Richfield, OH/February 11-12</i>	\$587,034
7	Bell Biv DeVoe, Johnny Gill, Keith Sweat <i>Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, Oakland, CA/February 15 & 17</i>	\$557,698
8	Sting, Kennedy Rose <i>Beacon Theatre, New York, NY/February 15-20</i>	\$541,710
9	New Kids on the Block, Biscuit, Perfect Gentlemen <i>Tacoma Dome, Tacoma, WA/February 13</i>	\$516,350
10	INXS, the Soup Dragons <i>The Spectrum, Philadelphia, PA/February 22-23</i>	\$475,860

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*In case you were reading to fast, we wanted to remind you that this ad is about UHF, not VHF wireless. QAs long as you are reading our ad this closely, we thought we'd tell you who they are: Yukinaga Koike, Doug Bryant, Takao Horiiuchi, Sissumu Tamura. fdlx is a registered trademark of Carillon Industries.



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KAMAN

Chris Isaak by Heart

By Roy Trakin

CONGRATULATE CHRIS ISAAK ON the belated success of "Wicked Game" and he'll compare it with his singing of "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" on long car rides with his family. "I think people realized, if they didn't make it a hit, we were just gonna keep releasing it until it was."

Mention the 33-year-old Stockton, California native's classically chiseled features, which have been captured for posterity by fashion photogs Bruce Weber and Herb Ritts, and by filmmakers David Lynch and Jonathan Demme, and he says, "I think I look goofy."

Ask if he's excited about his concert the following night at Hollywood's Wilton Theater, and he expresses amazement that 5000 people want to see him perform: "I hope

there's not some mistake and they think they're going to see Isaac Hayes."

Note that he's finally on the cusp of the stardom predicted by critics since the release of his 1985 debut *Silverstone*, and he laughs, "I've always said, as soon as you sell some records, they'll start sayin' stuff like, 'He's a pale recreation of the past. How often must we hear these tired, Orbisonesque lyrics?...'"

Suggest that the plaintive loneliness of his writing must be assuaged by women lusting after his body and you get the straight-faced reply, "People can't believe it, but I have no time for personal relation-

ships. My guitar player gets all the girls. They only talk to me to get to him."

Muse on what he's going to do with his beefed-up royalty checks, and he shrugs, "Pay the band. I guess. I have no desire for an expensive car, a fancy house or fancy

dent universe, longing for normalcy amidst the horrors of the modern world, while a palpable sexual tension bubbles underneath the surface.

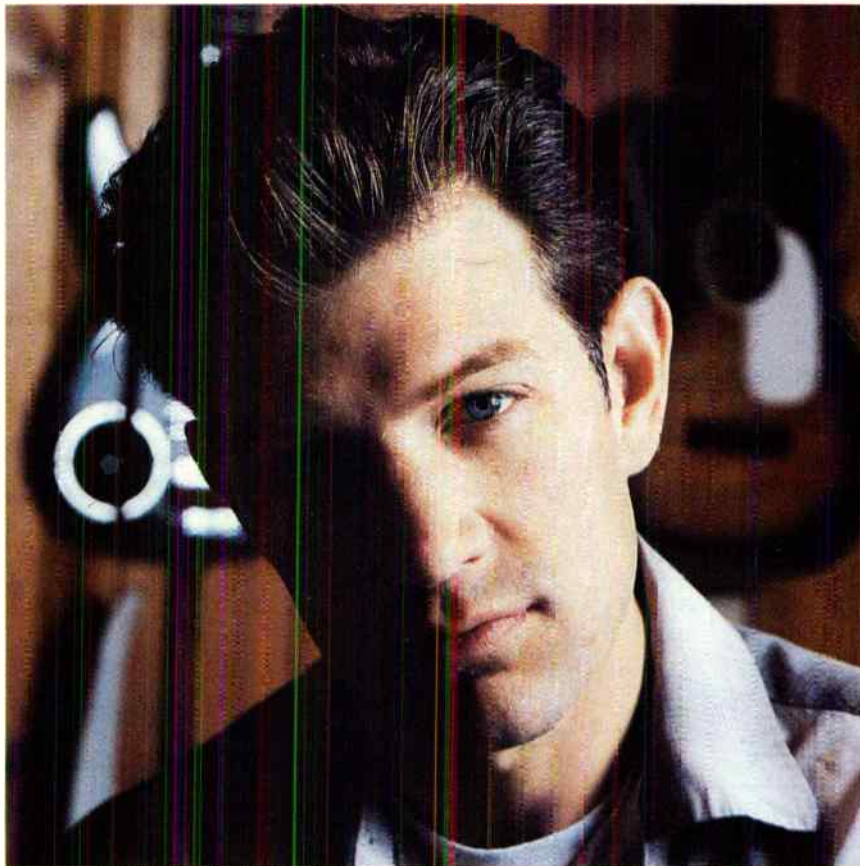
In one of those delicious pop music ironies, Isaak's "Wicked Game" became a

Top 40 smash nearly 18 months after its initial release on the album *Heart Shaped World*, when Lee Chesnut, music director at Atlanta's WAPU, heard the instrumental version in *Wild at Heart* and began playing it on his influential Power 99 Top 40 station.

"Hey, my life has been really good whether or not I had a hit," insists Isaak. "I had the best of all possible worlds. We played a lot of gigs and we had enough money to make the records exactly the way I wanted to make 'em. It was a fantastic existence. It wasn't as if I was beating my head

against the wall. When this record hit, my feeling was, 'Hey, this is great. I sure hope it doesn't change anything.'"

Suggest that there'll be fair-weather fans attracted to Isaak because of the hit, and he'll tell you he's used to proving himself in front of strange crowds. "I've played a great many places where people didn't come to see me. I've opened for different acts and we've played bars where the audience was just there to dance. I even played one bar where there was some guy shooting up at the front table and the back-stage area had no lights."



clothes. I love guitars and amps, but most of the ones I like are the cheap, goofball kinds, know what I mean?"

Is Chris Isaak for real? Or some innocent throw-back to another era? Certainly his ethereal voice and the haunting, other-worldly twang of longtime collaborator and guitarist Jimmy Wilsey sound simultaneously old and new, a hyper-romantic plea that feels cosmically timeless. Like director David Lynch, who's used Isaak's music in both *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart*, he's a wide-eyed manchild caught up in a deca-

**Thrift-shop
rock hits
the top**

For Isaak and the Silvertones—Wilsey, bassist Rowland Salley and drummer Kenney Dale Johnson—live performances have always been the group's strength. At their Wiltern show, Isaak won over the crowd by interspersing his hypnotic, romantic tragedies with wacky between-song patter that included asking the audience to raise their hands and rub the backs of the people in front of them. A request for any "party hippies freakin'" to join the group for a final medley of "Wooly Bully," "Spinning Wheel" and "Wild Thing" resulted in about 30

nubile young ladies rushing the stage.

For all his casual charisma, Isaak has always considered himself a loner. In high school he dressed in thrift-shop draped jackets, pointy-toed shoes and slick-backed hair; the height of fashion today, back then they made him an outcast. His obvious affection for '50s and '60s musical styles has led to some calling him retro, a charge which makes him bristle.

"It's like night and day," he protests. "It's real easy to cop sounds, anyone can do that. But if you really want to write songs, you

can't just go back and write somebody else's tune over again. I don't write songs about pink Cadillacs or stuff that's old-fashioned. I write about things that are happening in my life. I think people relate my stuff to that era because my vocals are on top of the mix and there's a real clear sound to Jimmy's guitar. I like the big notes and Jimmy likes to bend and twang. That's what we're trying to sell. The less you use, the more you can hear.

"But if you're going to be influenced," he goes on, "you might as well be influenced by the best. And most everyone would agree the best music came out of the '50s and early '60s. But I don't believe our albums stop there. My drummer uses a 1930 Slingerland, but we also use drum machines. I've played a real weird Italian guitar with a body that looks like a surfboard and pickups you could speak through. I use modern microphones and old microphones. I used to play through a Vox Westminster amp, which I had to fix every day. It was on this adjustable handlebar, which you could tilt or angle in any direction. I finally broke down and bought a Fender, though. I've had the same one for 10 years now. Fender is to amps what Chevy is to cars. There's a reason 20 billion people own one. They work."

With producer Erik Jacobsen, who worked on all the Lovin' Spoonful's hits and has been with the band from [cont'd on page 95]

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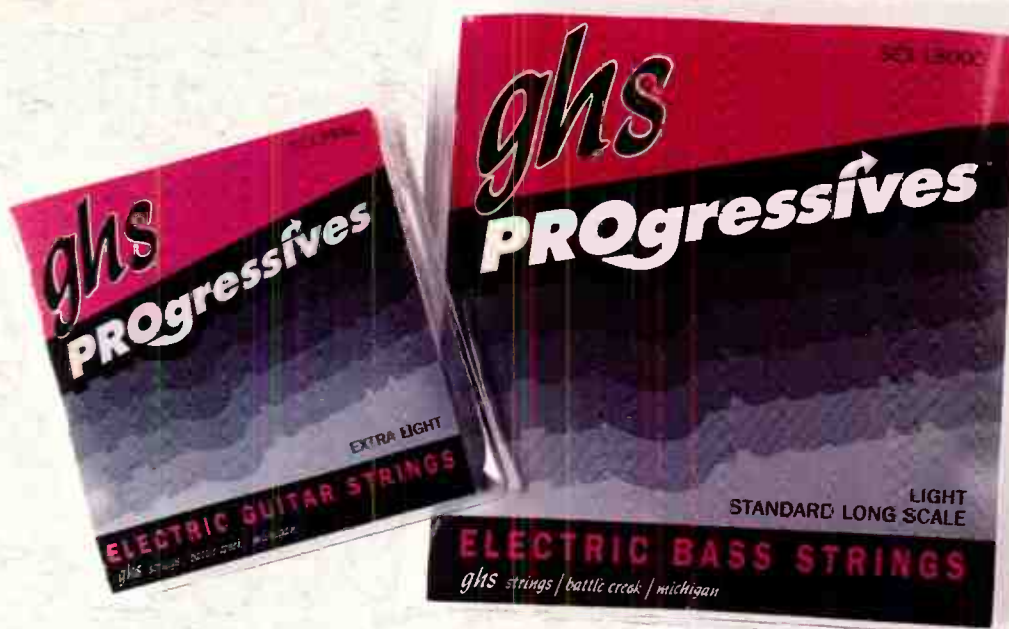
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Shirley Horn's Miles of Trials

By Tom Moon

JAZZ LEGEND HAS IT THAT ESSENTIAL wisdom is passed from generation to generation on the bandstand. Pianist and vocalist Shirley Horn encountered the advice that helped shape her career in an even more romantic place: the back of the Village Vanguard, some 30 years ago.

"I was sitting there, watching Miles with Wynton Kelly and Jimmy Cobb," she recalls, "with my mouth open, going 'wow.' After the set some idiot had the nerve to ask Miles why he played the same songs every night. It was the end of the set, and Miles walked right out the door. When he came back in, he made sure the guy wasn't around, and he said to me, 'You take one song and you take it to pieces. Think about how many interpretations you can get out of that one song.'

"It's really true. You feel like you're stepping inside the song, and people perk up their ears when they sense something new is coming. We play 'Meditation' and it gets to the point where it gives *me* goose pimples."

Horn has followed Davis' advice through boom times and lean times. Accompanying herself with rich, well-chosen piano chords, she cuts to the essence of the music, as though guided by Miles' harrowing bluntness and minimalistic sense of proportion. Her voice, full of girlish charm and womanly insight, is wholly incompatible with the clichéd phrasing and virtuoso flag-waving that have become common currency among jazz vocalists and instrumentalists. It is a burnished voice, timeless and fragile and at peace with the silent spaces between notes. Her vocals have been likened to late-period Billie Holiday, only with a fully functioning voice rather than a cracked and failing one.

Born in 1934 and surrounded as a girl by "all the best music—none of the Milli Vanilli nonsense," Horn is beginning to see the payoff. In her suite at the Mayflower Hotel in midtown Manhattan on a windy winter night, Horn drinks Drambuie with a Heineken-over-ice chaser, smokes Pall Malls and talks about her third Verve album, *You Won't Forget Me*.

"This is the first one I can stand to listen to all the way through," Horn says. "I still hear my clunkers, but everybody else played magnificently." By "everybody else" she means her steady and intuitive rhythm section—understated electric bassist Charles Ables and iron-willed, no-nonsense drummer Steve Williams—and guests Davis (in a rare straight-ahead appearance), Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Toots Thielemans, Billy Hart, Buster Williams and Washington tenorman Buck Hill.

All of the guests slip into Horn's patient vision as though they'd been approaching music with her simplicity and declarative assurance for years. Wynton uses a mute and a handful of variations on the blues scale to etch poetic counterpoint to Horn's "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying." "Soothe Me," another

underrecorded gem, belongs to Thielemans—"I knew he was the only one who could play that with the right feeling." Branford, who has said his approach to playing ballads changed when he heard Shirley Horn, charms a languishing-tempo "It Had to Be You" with effortless lines that recall John Coltrane's playing behind Johnny Hartman.

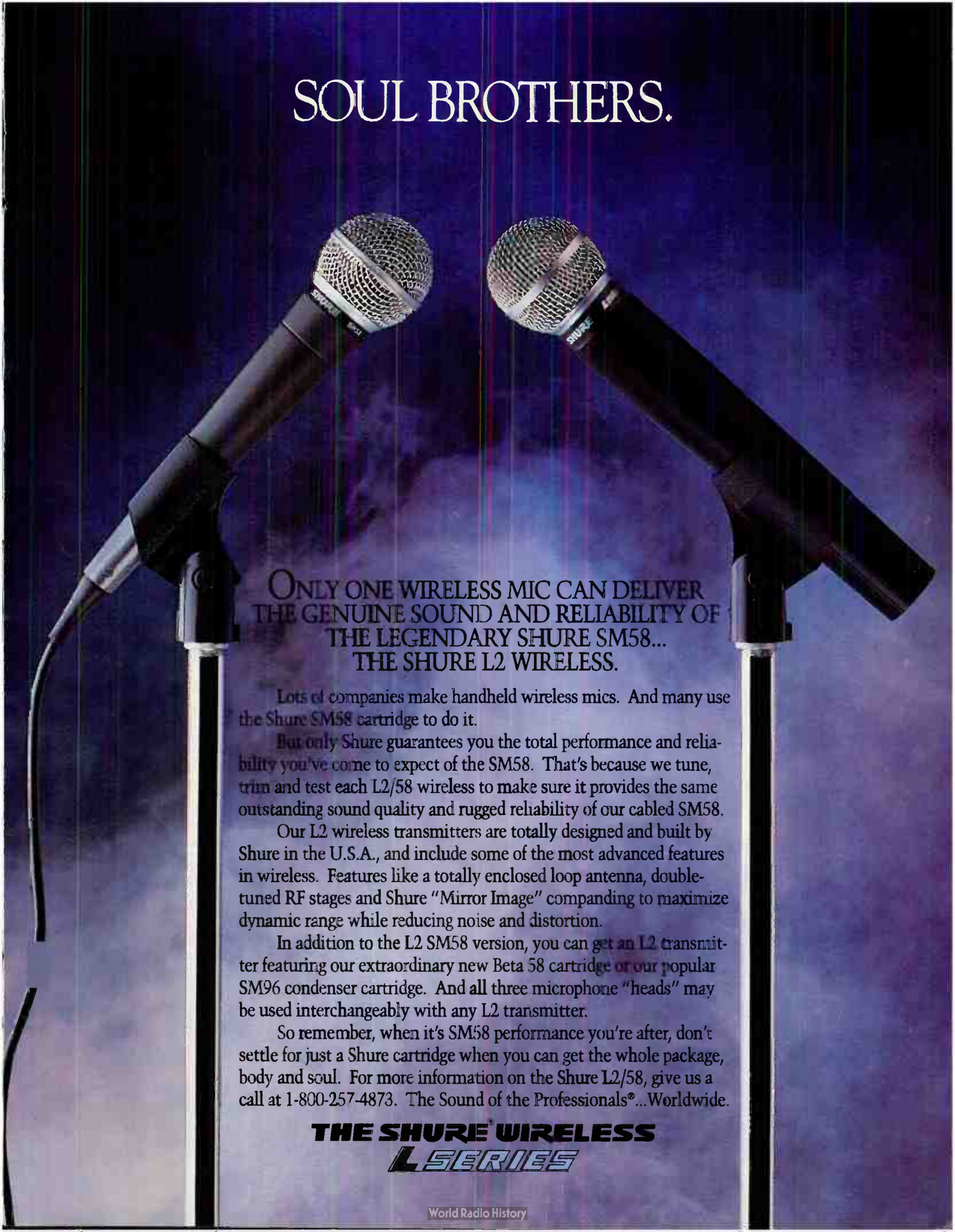
The collaboration with Miles was particularly tricky, logistically anyway. "I was running around the country and he was in the south of France somewhere doing a movie, and finally we got together and I told him I wanted him to do this song with me, and he said, 'You know I don't play that kind of music no more.' [*She imitates Miles' raspy voice.*] But then he agreed." Horn reports that the two have discussed the possibility of doing a ballad album, with strings, in the future.

After thirty years of detours, a singer hits high gear



Photograph: Christopher Hartlove

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Horn says that Miles gave her more than advice and musical inspiration: He helped launch her career. In 1960, Horn's debut LP *Embers and Ashes* was released on the small StereoCraft label. It caught Davis' ear, and he insisted that Horn be added to his upcoming run at the Vanguard. Horn remembers getting a call from Davis while she was at her mother-in-law's house in rural Virginia. "We were sitting around this big 12-foot table, eating greens and all kinds of goodness when the phone rang. To this day I don't know how he got my number. When I got to his house in

New York, his kids, who were still young then, were singing songs from the *Embers* album. It was his way of letting me know that he knew what I was doing."


Horn eventually landed a deal with Mercury in 1965. Quincy Jones, a staff producer at the time, wrote arrangements for *Shirley Horn with Horns*, one of two albums (the other was called *Loads of Love*) released that year. After a few years of touring, Horn began working on film scores in Hollywood; she's heard on 1968's *For Love of Ivy* and *A Dandy in Aspic*.

Then she stopped traveling in order to raise her daughter, Rainy. She played weekly at the One Step Down, a bustling boxcar of a club outside of Georgetown, for an audience she describes as "like a family." She recorded for Steeplechase from 1979 through 1985, though some of those records were easier to find in Europe than the U.S. By the mid-'80s, she was a presence on the European summer festival circuit, and in 1987 began her current recording arrangement with Verve/PolyGram; her catalog there contains the live *I Thought About You* and 1988's *Close Enough for Love*.

Horn says the decade of low-profile music-making taught her much: "I learned how not to panic, because I love to play. During that time I grew out of the idea that this is a glamorous business; now I know what it is, a hard-working dirty business. If I didn't have to have music like I have to breathe, I wouldn't be in this business."

If her listeners respond to the lustrous voice first, it's because Horn the pianist is carefully framing every phrase, anticipating every swell. Her succinct approach is often compared to Nat King Cole's; both rely on simple chord groupings and neat, unwavering rhythmic precision to buoy the vocals. But where Cole stopped his harmonic exploration shortly after bebop, Horn has been taking it all in: Her comping glances at Kelly's blues frills, McCoy Tyner's quartal blocks, Herbie Hancock's clusters—all the while using her vocal line as another layer of harmony, sometimes (as with conventional singers) on top, just as often insinuated somewhere in the middle.


When she's playing well, Horn says, she doesn't hear her comping, or Williams' ping-pong ride cymbal, as isolated activities. She hears—and works to shape—a total sound. "I don't hear the bass player or the piano and try to fit my voice into that. I just hear the overall sound. When I start hearing things separately, that means I'm not inside, I'm just listening, which means I'm on automatic."

"Sometimes you spend a whole night on automatic. It's good to know that your automatic is nice, that people like it, because somewhere along the line you've got to have an automatic—you're only human. But then you can't sleep at night and you're totally frustrated. So you go back the next night and try to be cool, be patient. And pretty soon you're hearing the whole sound. You're in the middle of an interpretation you couldn't have imagined 10 minutes before." 


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Willie Nile's Good Luck/Bad Luck

By Paul Nelson

BECAUSE HE'S BEEN AWAKE FOR what sounds like weeks putting the finishing touches on his first album in a decade, Willie Nile, now 42 but looking barely 30, is walking a fine line between the sublime excitement of talking about *Places I Have Never Been* and the mundane necessity of fueling up on food so he can get through the day without falling into what might be a troubled sleep. His schedule seems a hellish mixture of the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. First our interview, then a Christmas party, some last-minute shopping and finally a flight from New York City to hometown Buffalo to try to celebrate the holidays while coping with an impending divorce he describes as "difficult and tragic. Last year was extremely hard for me. I was lucky to make it through, to be honest with you. In a way, I feel homeless now, and at

the same time I feel that my home is the planet."

Although the innately optimistic Nile makes it clear that he considers himself fortunate in most things and that his humanistic philosophy is always spiked with doses of rock 'n' roll, the Marx Brothers and Zen, the segues between past and present—and personal and universal—show traces of the Buffalo high-schooler who, after reading about Shelley and Keats, found a link for himself. Without a trace of pretension, he says: "One of the books described Keats as just looking at shadows coming through the windows and stuff. And I thought, 'Well, that's what I do. I'm always staring at shadows and looking out windows. So maybe I'm a poet.' There's things about them I recognized. I'm not very good at business and

being efficient and manipulative. I'm more of a dreamer. Which makes it hard when you're trying to make a living and take care of some kids."

Nile's real name is Robert Noonan, and it says a lot about him that he changed it on one of those pick-a-number nights in the mid-'70s when an overly serious MC at the Bitter End droned on and on about the importance of having the right name. "Call me

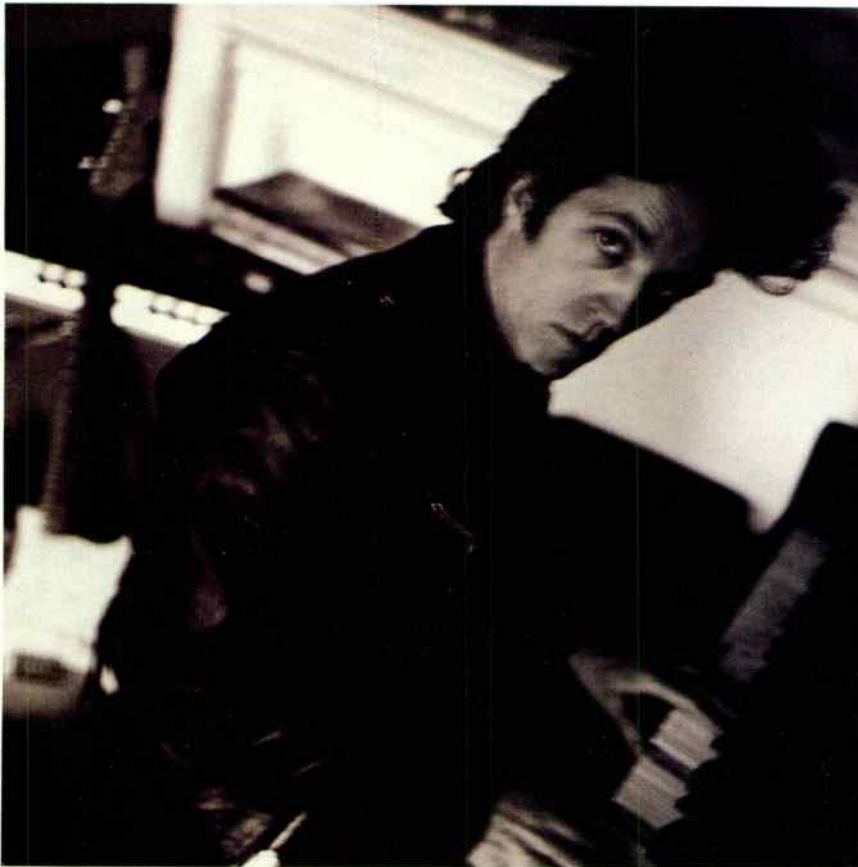
Happy ending to a 10-year layoff

Osgood Pequod," Nile said, and for months used one silly name after another "just to keep it light and remove the selfishness of the whole thing. I like rock 'n' roll when it's just natural and not so aware of itself that it's boring."

Nile describes his parents as "two of the sweetest people, very giving, hard-working, fun-loving and spiritual at the same time—a cool mix." Most of the Noonan clan—"a bunch of James Cagneys and Pat O'Briens"—were musical, and Nile studied classical music and took piano lessons. He loved rock 'n' roll, too, but couldn't make the two forms meet until he started writing poetry and playing Beatles songs on the piano.

After graduating from the University of Buffalo in the early '70s, Nile moved to New York "to try to make a record—never having been on a stage, never having played live at all! When I played a hoot at the Bitter End, someone from ESP-Disk wanted to sign me my first time on a stage." Columbia's legendary John Hammond liked him enough to make some demos, but Nile's ancient guitar threatened to explode after two songs. Nile recalls Hammond saying, "Well, you're good, but I don't think you're ready yet. Besides, we just signed someone from New Jersey."

Nile was working days and writing songs and hitting the clubs at night. His health suffered, he contracted pneumonia and he and his wife moved back to Buffalo. Recovery. New York again. Same scenario, this time with mononucleosis. Two years of recuperation in Buffalo. Back to New York. "I was lit-



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erally starving at the time," Nile says. "We now had two kids. I was selling my record collection. I had a Patti Smith single—'Piss Factory,' I think it was—and I took it to a record store and sold it for \$15 and they put it up for sale at \$85. Fifteen dollars was food for a few days. It was that kind of existence."

Then came Nile's first real break: Clive Davis signed him to Arista. *Willie Nile* was released in 1980 to generally favorable reviews. A tour with the Who followed, and *Golden Down* came out a year later. But the good luck/bad luck shuffle continued. Nile

was dropped by Arista and returned to Buffalo, where he worked at the post office, painted houses, borrowed money and kept on writing songs. "All the while, my writing was never affected," he says. "I didn't get bitter." Eventually, he got a publishing deal with MCA and, after what must have seemed an eternity, was signed to CBS.

I'd expected *Places I Have Never Been* to reflect much of the marital angst of Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*. It doesn't. For the most part, it's filled with upbeat and honest rock 'n' roll anthems that should rally those who lust

for music that's as alive as this but don't know where to find it anymore. "It sounds human," Nile says with great relief. "It sounds like a heartbeat to me. Somewhere, someone was smiling on the project. I didn't want it to be bitter and just bring a lot of bad news. My kids are on 'Everybody Needs a Hammer'; it was a ball having them with me this summer."

Of his songwriting, Nile says: "I just wing them, let them go. I write them from the inside out. It may be blissful naiveté or blissful ignorance. I'm a little dyslexic, and sometimes that works for me in a song. The words come tumbling out in funny ways. Then I'll work on them, but not a whole lot. I like it when they just come. I don't like to labor over them."

A mutual friend of ours has this theory about you, I say to Nile as we pack up to leave. This friend feels that you're the kind of guy who, no matter how much hard luck you're going through, will make a conscious—or unconscious—effort to *will* yourself to a place you hope you can get to. He says that if you fell down an enormous flight of stairs and broke your leg, you'd get right up and say, "Gee, I sure saved myself a lot of time by reaching my destination that way." Any truth to this?

Nile laughs: "Life's pretty tough, and there's a place for songs with arrows and dark stuff, but I don't want to write them. The Beatles are my favorite group because they brought such an up feeling to things and made me feel good." He laughs again. "I'm either really lucky or just very stupid. If I had any brains, I would have given up years ago and run a bowling alley." ☺

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SOURCES OF THE NILE

CUTTING *Places I Have Never Been*, WILLIE Nile played a '63 Fender Strat, a '68 Martin 00018, a '73 Rickenbacker and a Roland Alpha Juno I keyboard; he sang through a Neumann 47 tube mike. Co-producer/guitar man STEWART LERMAN played a '61 Strat, a Rickenbacker 360, a Gretsch Nashville and a Martin Shenandoah 2832; Lerman's amps were a pre-CBS Fender Super Reverb and a Vox AC30. He also used a Roland GP-8 multieffects processor. Bassist/co-producer T-BONE WOLK played Gibson Ripper, Fender Precision, left-handed Rickenbacker and Sadowsky basses with O'Addario strings. MICKEY CURRY played his Yamaha cherry wood recording set and Zildjian cymbals.

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World Radio History

Bum Rush the Locker Room

By Evelyn McDonnell

YOU ALL NEED TO STAY OUT OF MY dressing room," an exasperated Yo-Yo (Yolanda Whitaker) says, shutting the door on Ice Cube DJ Sir Jinx. Backstage at the Chicago stop of the Holiday Rapfest tour, the guys from the Lench Mob—Ice Cube's posse—keep dropping in on Yo-Yo, a black 19-year-old woman with blond braids and yellow-green eyes that sparkle across a crowded room. Never mind that Jinx and Cube produced Yo-Yo's slamming debut album, *Make Way for the Motherlode*—Yo-Yo wants to hang with the ladies right now. "It's kind of hard to blend in with the Lench Mob," she explains. "I love to kick with them, and Ice Cube, that's my dude. But just hanging out with 'em, after a while it gets on your nerves."

Nikki D remembers the day she finally got through to Def Jam Records head Russell Simmons. With L.L. Cool J, Public Enemy and the Beastie Boys in its roster, Def Jam was rap's leading label. Nikki (née Nichele Strong) had moved to New York from West L.A. in hopes of joining the lineup. Her friends in the L.A. Posse had given Simmons Nikki's demo tape, and one day they found a message on their answering machine. "That bitch," Nikki recalls Simmons' voice saying. "The tape of the bitch you gave me, she's dope, I want her. Sign her up."

Nikki D was the first woman Simmons signed to Def Jam. "He's real shaky about female rappers," Nikki says. "I found that out later. He told me, 'That's the only reason I got you is I finally heard a voice that I want. You got the voice to whine. It's like you demand something.'"

Women rappers frequently find themselves in strange relations with men. Rap, after all, is traditionally a form by which young black males—the group Ice Cube calls an "endangered species"—have asserted their identity and carved an economic niche for themselves. After "Rappers' Delight" brought rap out of the urban underground, it took six years for a woman, Roxanne Shante, to get a rap hit. Perhaps it

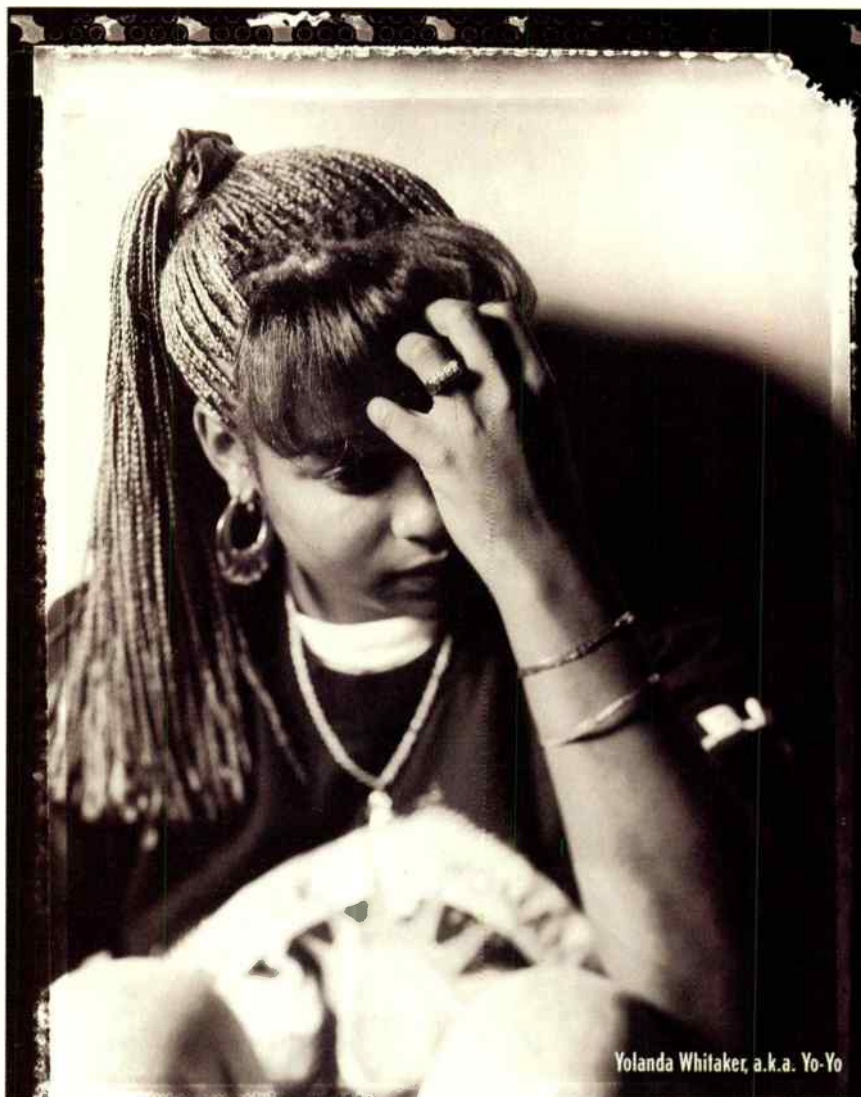
was inevitable that such high concentrations of testosterone would lead to the locker-room lore of 2 Live Crew, or the bitch-dissing of Ice Cube. Even when male rappers try to be gender-sensitive, they end up sticking women in male-nurturing roles, like Public Enemy proselytizing, "It takes a woman to make a stronger man."

Public Enemy's black nationalism has spurred a consciousness-conscious stream of Afrocentric hip-hop acts, from the Jungle

Bros. to Boogie Down Productions. Women have expanded this in a rediscovery of their own need for gender identity and liberation. In 1990, woman rappers turned the turntables on sexism. In 1991, they're taking the struggle to the streets. In "Gotta Up the Ante for the Panties," Nikki D raps: "Flash your drug money, watch me take it and run/I

don't mean pay me for my sexual pleasures/ But if you want to give it to me make me feel that it's better/Than any other stunt that I

Yo-Yo and Nikki D turn the turntables on sexist homies



Yolanda Whitaker, a.k.a. Yo-Yo

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humped in my past days."

Yo-Yo and Nikki D both started rapping because they saw it as a way of gaining power females didn't have. "I was only a tomboy 'cause I liked to do what the guys did and that was rap," Yo-Yo says. "I was definitely a tomboy," Nikki D says. "When all the little boys on the block were hopping on their bikes I'd get my bike and be rollin' with 'em. I just wanted to be able to do everything everyone else could do."

Yo-Yo was named the most popular girl in her South-Central Los Angeles high school,

she says, because she always won the school's talent contests with her raps. Her reputation reached Ice Cube, who had split with N.W.A. and was looking to start his own action. Yo-Yo made her debut on *American KKKa's Most Wanted*, the Ice Cube album notorious for the number of times Cube used the word "bitch." On "It's a Man's World," Yo-Yo cuts in on Cube and takes him to the mat: "Without us your hand'd be your best friend/ So give us credit like you know you should/ If I don't look good you don't look good."

Although Yo-Yo admires her female col-

leagues, she wrote the songs on *Make Way for the Motherlode* with Ice Cube and his ken in mind. "I listen to guys' lyrics and I just disagree on so much, it makes me want to write something back," she says. "Girl, Don't Be No Fool" has a moral; it's the kind of speaking-to-the-sisters rap that Yo uses when she speaks to high school students. "I try not to forget where I come from," Yo-Yo says. "I'm not going to say you're stupid for getting pregnant. I'm going to try to talk to them. Not you're a fool but don't be no fool."

Nikki D also directs messages to the ladies, but she does it in a more street style. Where Yo-Yo cautions women to "Put a Lid on It," Nikki doesn't mince words with songs like "Wasted Pussy." "If I said 'Wasted Body,' the street doesn't want to hear that. If I put it bluntly, you're more apt to listen," Nikki explains.

"A rapper and a songwriter are two different things," she continues. "Rappers can write rhymes all day long, but if you don't have a concept or a storyline, it's not really a song—until it has a beginning, a middle and an end." Her first single "Letting Off Steam" wasn't too much of a concept song, "but it did have a small concept in the fact that I was on Def Jam for three years watching all these other females come out. I was basically letting everybody know here I come."

Both Nikki D and Yo-Yo recognize the need for female solidarity. "Sisters don't have much love for one another," Yo-Yo says. "There could be a room of guys and another guy will come in and slap everybody's hand and everyone will slap his hand. And a girl will come in and stand in the corner and the other girls will sit there and talk about her," Nikki complains. "It's stupid that way." Yet Nikki and Yo-Yo both have raps about competing with other women for men. They're also willing to excuse their male colleagues for trashing ho's and bitches. "I don't have a problem with being called bitches," Nikki says. "At first I was offended by the five-letter words," Yo-Yo says. "But if you go on the road with me and see how many girls hang out, you'll say girl that's a shame. That's why we're disrespected."

Yo-Yo has started an organization called the Intelligent Black Woman's Coalition to raise women's self-esteem and grapple with issues like teenage pregnancy. "This groupie kept running after Cube," Yo-Yo says. "I said, 'Didn't you hear 'A Man's World'? He's the one who be calling us bitches and whores.' I said it wouldn't be nothing without a woman's touch. You need to be getting my autograph, not Cube's." ❊

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**FISHBONE
SWIMS
UPSTREAM
TO SPAWN ITS
PUNK-FUNK
HYBRID**

BY ROY TRAKIN

Photograph by Merlyn Rosenberg

It's only a rehearsal in a warehouse in a desolate section of downtown L.A. But Fishbone is playing for an audience of one as if their professional lives depended on it, essaying a full-blown rendition of the ska scorcher "Ma and Pa," from the band's last album, 1988's *Truth and Soul*. All of a sudden, mohawked lead singer Angelo Christopher Moore is maniacally skanking, sweating and shimmying out of his suspenders, tossing vocals back and forth with keyboardist/trombonist Christopher Gordon Dowd, while "Dirty" Walter Adam Kibby II holds a trumpet in one hand and a mike in the other, blowing and high-stepping furiously. Bassist John "Norwood" Fisher, resplendent in an Iggy Pop *Brick by Brick* shirt, and younger brother, drummer and group focal point Phillip "Fish" Fisher are holding down the fort with a rock-solid backbeat and telepathic communication while guitarist/keyboardist John Bigham, the group's newest member, tries to keep up with his opposite number, fellow guitarist Kendall Rey "Special K" Jones.

The young veterans of Fishbone, all of whom were in their teens when first inked by Columbia six years ago, aren't taking anything for granted anymore. They figure every move they make from here on in will be watched very carefully...so they're making each one count.

You do get the feeling that, finally, the band is on the cusp of something big. Their first full-length album in three years (and third in six years, plus three EPs), *The Reality of My Surroundings*, is about to be released and the record company is behind it all the way. The band has acquired strong management in Elliot Roberts, who represents Neil Young and Tracy Chapman. Toss in a "Saturday Night Live" appearance to coincide with the album's release and you have a textbook marketing plan to catapult Fishbone toward the sales stratospheres already achieved by such progressive peers as the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Living Colour, Jane's Addiction and Faith No More. No time like the present for a



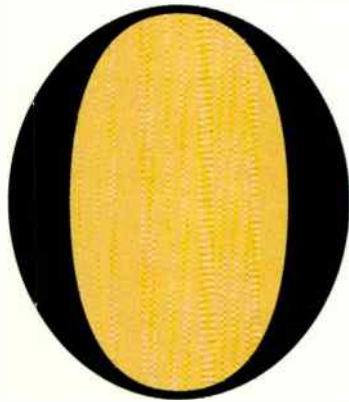
**FISHBONE (L-R): NORWOOD, KENDALL,
FISH, JOHN, ANGELO, WALT, CHRIS**

black prog-rock/ska/punk/funk/speed metal/soul band from the Valley by way of South Central L.A.

"We got the outlook of ballbusters and bandkillers," boasts big Walter.

"Basically, this is the first fully functional Fishbone record," says Kendall Jones, the band's resident theoretician. "There's been no skimping on the music and no compromises."

"It's also fully functional as far as the record company goes," chimes in Angelo. "The last regime at CBS pretty much had their heads up their asses."



FFSTAGE AS WELL AS ON, FISHBONE is the sum of its wildly disparate parts. In concert they're a series of interlocking and overlapping gears; in conversation, it's all call-and-response and give-and-take. Like a family shouting to be heard around the dinner table, they complete one another's sentences and finish each other's thoughts. The only way to make any sense

out of the individuals involved is to take them all on at once.

Pudgy Kendall Jones is the spokesman, a college-educated intellectual who's expert on black politics and history. Saxophonist/vocalist Angelo Moore, whose father played with Count Basie, is the perpetually moving, wise-cracking fashion plate of the band. The band's namesake and quiet leader, drummer Fish, doesn't like to talk much, but when he does, each word carries weight, just as his drumming is clean, precise, to the point. His older brother, goateed bassist John, is not exactly a conversationalist, but he'll chime in with the occasional observation that cuts straight to the bone. Chris Dowd is the wide-faced, wild-haired joker of the band, quick with a quip or self-effacing joke. Trumpeter Kibby is a fearsome sight, someone you wouldn't want to run into in an alley, though he turns out to be quietly sensitive, even cradling his horns as if they were babies. The new guy, John Bigham, hasn't quite figured out yet where he fits into this creative maelstrom, so mostly he doesn't speak unless he's spoken to but he's quick on the uptake and seems to have smoothly made the transition. To employ a much-overused cliché, Fishbone is a group—and that is how you must come to terms with them.

"I think the way the label feels now is, all these bands have come up doing what we do and they've sold a lot of records," says keyboardist Dowd. "They're saying stuff like, 'Shit, we've had Fishbone all this time and didn't even realize it!' Now they feel they have the

product. While I think they shoulda realized what they had five years ago."

"We were always the outcasts," says Kendall. "Nobody knew what to make of us. Nobody wanted to put their job on the line. They never really wanted to sign us in the first place, they just kept saying, 'This is some crazy shit.' I think, as a compromise they signed us, and then didn't give us any money."

"We were real ignorant," explains Angelo. "We were real young. All we were thinking about was being able to make a record. We weren't thinking about the intricacies of the contract. I mean, no matter who gets signed to a record label, you're gonna get fucked in the ass. It's just whether you get fucked with Vaseline or gravel."

Though Kendall figures the situation is improving: "We're actually getting some foreplay now."

Since getting together in 1979, and through various incarnations as Hot Ice, Counterattack, Diamonds & Thangs and Megatron, Fishbone has collided musical idioms like so many bodies slam-dancing together at one of their famed hyperkinetic live shows. Of course, this very eclecticism, particularly in the heavily formatted musical marketplace of the '80s, has also put a drag on their career. Just when you'd got a grip on the band, Fishbone would swim away to new waters. But while their newest record embraces such idiom-hopping, it also includes honest-to-gosh songs, with identifiable melodies and talon-like hooks. The first single, "Sunless Sunday," returns the band to its roots in progressive rock like Rush and Queen, with a monster massed chorus that recalls Argent's "Hold Your Head Up." The soulful anthem "Everyday Sunshine," on the other hand, manifests the band's love and admiration for the horn-

driven sound of Sly and the Family Stone.

"Of course Sly was an inspiration," says Chris Dowd, who wrote the tune. "But we did stuff like change the tuning around, so that our interpretation comes through."

"Actually, Chris told us he wanted a Screamin' Jay Hawkins/Circle Jerks feel to the song," cracks Angelo. "But you have to listen backwards to get that."

"Thank God you didn't compare us to Lenny

Kravitz," digs Kendall. "It wasn't like we methodically thought out a way to make the song sound like Sly."

"I spent a lot of time trying to make it *not* sound like Sly," insists John Fisher. "Because that's the way I kept hearing it."

"The chord progressions were even a little Beatlesque," adds

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS WHITE MUSIC—UNLESS YOU COUNT CELTIC FOLK MUSIC OR POLKAS."



An open letter to guitarists.

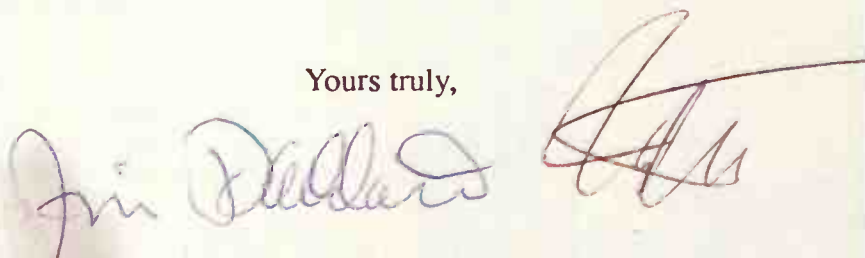
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Yours truly,



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John and Jim D'Addario", is written over the letter. The signature is fluid and cursive.

John and Jim D'Addario

**"Give me spots on my apples but
leave me the birds and the bees"**

Joni Mitchell ©1969

Chris. "The difference is, while someone like Lenny Kravitz tries to play bass like Paul McCartney, with us, it's completely unintentional."

"We're a band that abandons the philosophy that you can't serve two masters," explains Kendall. "We feel we can do whatever we want. There is no such thing as white music anyway—unless you count Celtic folk music or polkas or shit like that."

Fishbone has made its reputation, in part, by mocking any kind of black-white musical dichotomy. Its collective background—inner-city kids bused to all-white schools in the San Fernando Valley, where they taught their surf-punk classmates to dig Funkadelic while they were being turned on to everything from Zappa to the Dead Kennedys—was certainly more broadening than most. (Angelo is the only one who grew up in the Valley.)

"I didn't even like punk at first," recalls Fish, taking a break from watching female speed skating on TV to enter the conversation. "To me, that was people who didn't strive to perfect what they were doing. And I'm a perfectionist. Now I understand that punk was just stripping things down to the basics."

"Punk was the sport that coulda kept the Crips outta the streets!" chortles John. "At that time, I was listening to fusion stuff like Stanley Clarke, Chick Corea, Return to Forever and Yes. When I first heard punk, I thought, this shit has emotion and feeling where these people only had technical ability. Here were guys who were playing the shit out of their instruments and actually sounding like they were having fun!"

It was that mix of anarchy, outrageousness and over-the-top

energy which first put Fishbone on the map as a live band on the L.A. club circuit in the early '80s. After being signed by CBS, the band released a six-song EP which included the acclaimed video clips for "?(Modern Industry)" and their theme, "Party at Ground Zero." It also marked the beginning of their stormy relationship with producer David Kahne, who'd originally brought them to the label, became their mentor, producer and a virtual band member in the studio.

"The reason I did so much is because we had very small budgets, and I could engineer and play as well as produce," explains Kahne, now Columbia's chief A&R executive. "I did a great deal on the first EP and the first album, *In Your Face*. By the time of *Truth and Soul*, I was doing much less and that's the way I wanted it. For this album, we had more money and the recording was spread out. I worked a great deal on this record and I'm very happy with the level of my involvement."

In that sense, the new album marks Fishbone's final declaration of independence, with the majority of tracks produced by the band members. But few revolutions are fought without a little blood being spilled, and rumors were rife in the L.A. rock community that one or more members of Fishbone literally came to blows with Kahne—a charge the producer doesn't altogether deny.

"I don't consider there to have been any more friction on this album than there had been in the past," Kahne says, carefully weighing his words. "There are six, now seven members in the group and none of them are just passive observers. We all hassled

ontana

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with one another, but there has never been any real negativity. The creativity has always been accompanied by chaos. And that's one of the things I enjoyed about working with them. Did I ever feel threatened? If this were the Bangles, I could give you a firm yes or no. But sometimes with this band, things get physical, especially between members of the group."

Kendall agrees the Fishbone recording process can indeed be volatile. "We love each other," he says simply. "That's why we can fight."

"It was difficult to make David understand that we wanted to do this record by ourselves," says Angelo. "There was a great deal of paranoia about it on the label's part."

"There were some extremely tense moments," nods Kendall. "Some that went completely out of control. But the actual playing went a lot smoother. It felt like more of our soul was coming across."

Speaking of soul: While the new record should expand their following among the MTV crowd, it has to frustrate Fishbone that they have yet to attract a significant black audience.

"Black radio's just very conservative," responds Fish. "I mean, even rap doesn't get much airplay. Basically, you have to play for those who are in your congregation, and ours is still growing. We're doing what we can to reach our people, too."

In the old days, Fishbone would open for rappers like Run-D.M.C. and Whodini at local venues and completely confuse the audience.

"It was like, 'Who dem crazy muthafuckas?'" cackles Angelo. "They good, but they crazy!"

"There's a racial dichotomy in this country we have to deal with,"

Kendall says. "We're now starting to see a few progressive blacks come to check out our shows. Black people are becoming more educated. We're networking with rappers, filmmakers and actors."

Ironically, while Fishbone has collaborated with the Jungle Brothers and Public Enemy's Chuck D. in the past, their music has mostly stayed away from orthodox hip-hop, although elements of rap certainly pop up in such tracks on the new album as "So Many Millions" and "Behavior Control."

"We don't want to be followers," John declares.

"The way I see it is, we are some different muthafuckas," echoes Angelo. "We're the innovators. Let everybody else rap. We make up our own way of doing things."

"Besides," adds Chris, "I personally would feel like an asshole trying to rap."

"We're more like George Clinton or James Brown," points out Walter Kibby. "We wanna give the rappers something to steal. Let them steal from us."

It's already happening: George Clinton used the opening guitar lick from their "Voyage to the Land of the Freeze-Dried Godzilla Farts" for "Mixmaster Suite" on his R&B *Skeletons in the Closet* album, then Eric B. & Rakim went ahead and—not knowing it was from Fishbone—swiped it from there for one of their own tunes.

"We sample, too," says Kendall. "But we don't just take somebody's song and make another song out of it. We prefer using phrases and crazy, weird sound effects like jets, pigs, cows and zippers. For those people who don't give credit where credit is due, it's an abomination."

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But like what Public Enemy did in 'Welcome to the Terrordome' to 'Psychedelic Shack' was just a complete reinterpretation."

The Reality of My Surroundings pays testament to the band's sense of both musical and social ethics. While many fans still view Fishbone as a party band rather than a political party, chief philosopher Kendall suggests the two aren't as far apart as you might think.

"Black people in the most extreme adversity have always found ways to free themselves from everyday problems," he says. "That is why our culture has enriched

this nation so much. I'm not here just to sell a million records, I'm here to sell an experience of what we collectively see going on out there. I want people to understand where I'm coming from. And if they want to talk to me about it, I'm free and open. I ain't gonna be like Professor Griff and give out my home phone number. But I am available.

"We don't have to preach. We comment on what we think is wrong, but from a satirical point of view. We can't tell you how to react. But there's only one way I feel you're

gonna get things to change, and that's to educate people." M

FISHING GEAR

KENDALL REY JONES' "Rack o' Doom" includes two MESA/Boogie 2x12 cabinets with EV speakers, a Furman Power Conditioner and Light Module, a Samson Broadcast STD Series channel switcher with 10-channel capacity, a dbx 160X compressor limiter, a 32-band IEQ-ART MIDI-programmable EQ, a t.c. electronics 2290 digital delay and effects controller, two Eventide M-3000s, including the SE with the "real cool crazy psycho-effects." His axes include a 'S7 Strat reissue he's gutted and rebuilt with Seymour Duncan live wire pickups and a Floyd Rose tremolo. He uses a Switch 2L for all the amp and MIDI switching and running two MESA/Boogie Mark IVs in stereo. His other guitar is a Tom Anderson Pro-Am custom-built in Sylmar, California, with Stay-in-Tune strings. He also uses a Jim Dunlop Cry Baby wah-wah pedal and "various secret stomp boxes I can't tell you about."

JOHN NORWOOD FISHER plays a Warwick thumb bass with a bubinga and wengewood body, a fretless Fender bass and an Alembic bass, with Dean Markley Blue Steel strings, through an EBS-1 preamp and a Trace Elliot MP-11 mini-programmable preamp and an Eventide H-3000 SE Ultra-Harmonizer, with a Rockman Mini-Octopus for the switching. He also uses EPS-600 and Trace Elliot RA-500 SuperX power amps and two SWR Goliath speakers. In addition, live he uses a Musictronics Mu-Tron 3 envelope filter/effects box, which "gives him a bow-wow bass sound just like Bootsy Collins."

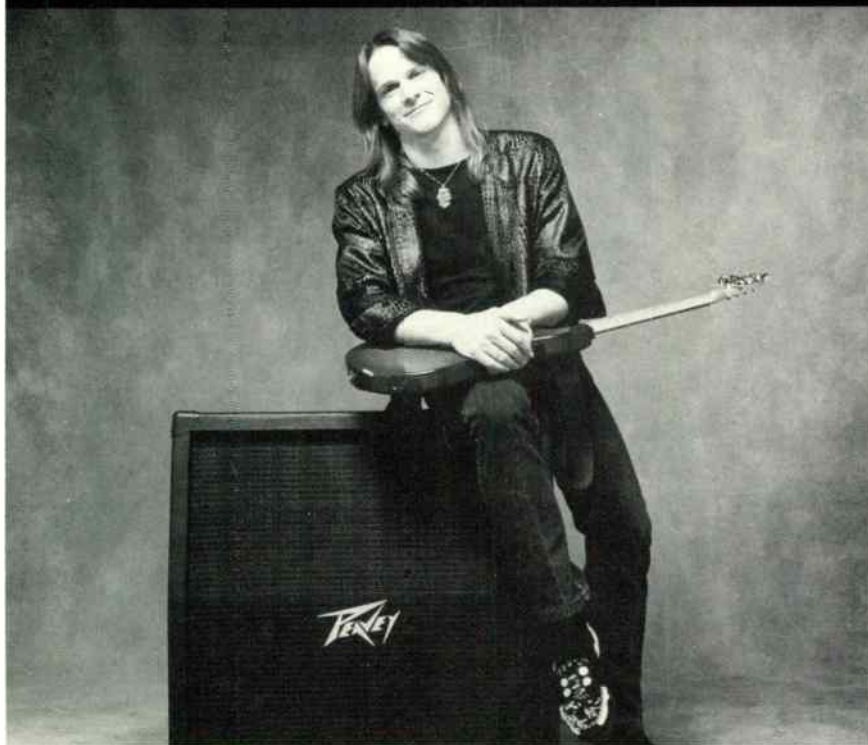
FISH plays a custom-made Drum Workshop kit with a varying number of pieces, including a bass drum, kick snare, a hi-hat, a rack tom, a floor tom, Zildjian cymbals and an LP timbale. "I pick the tone and the timbre myself. It's really like being in Africa, cutting down a log and choosing the tone." His "Fishsticks" are customized for him by Promark. He calls his setup "my yellow Corvette." "I prefer not using synthesized percussion because the whole feel of playing real drums is more dynamic."

CHRIS DOWD plays a Hammond B-2, a MIDI portable synthesizer, an Ensoniq VFX-SD organ, a Roland D-50 linear synthesizer, a Roland JX-8P keyboard and an "old-school" ARP Omni II.

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Goin' Back with the BYRDS

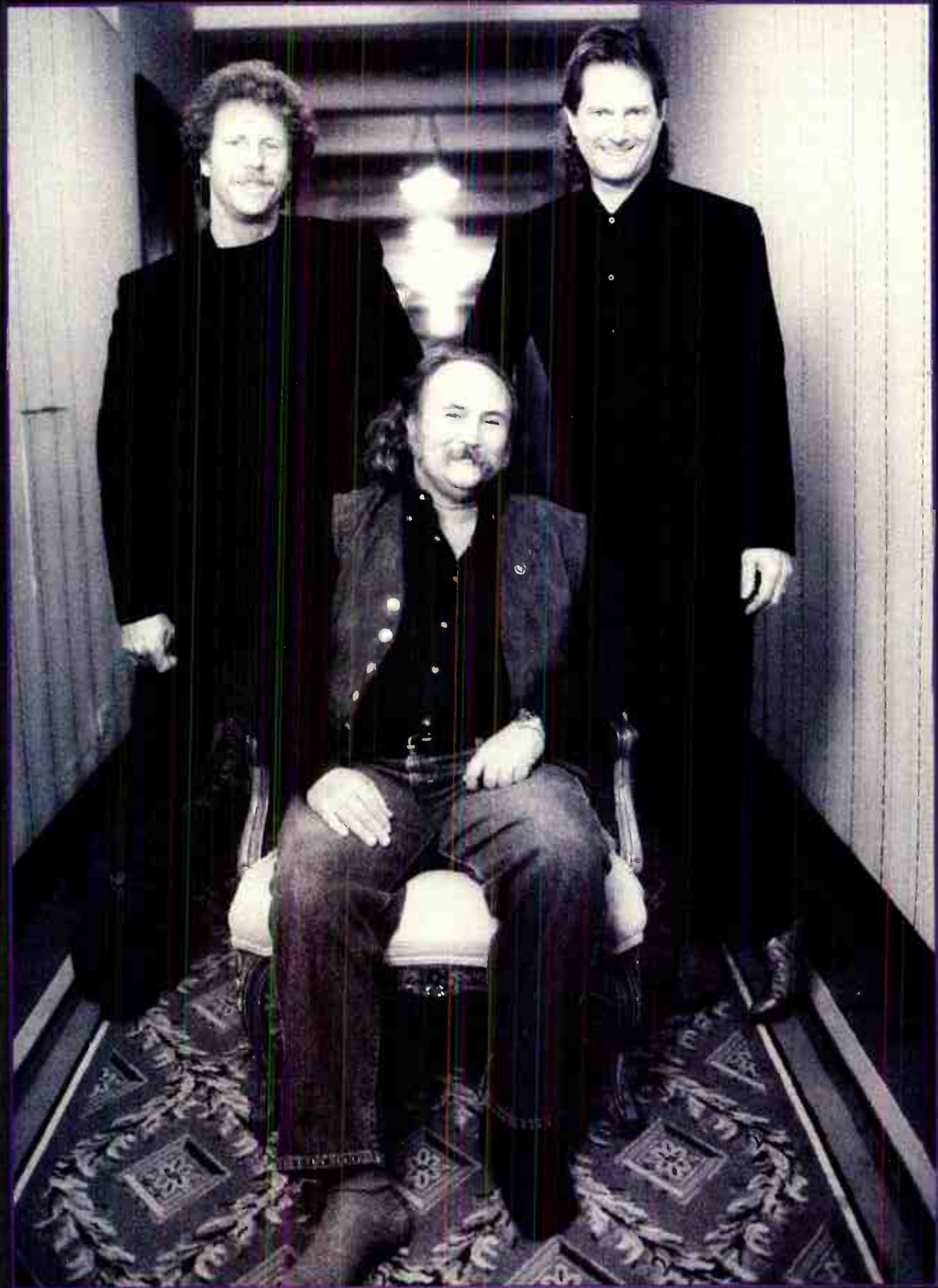
MCGUINN, CROSBY AND
HILLMAN TOUCH DOWN
IN NEW YORK FOR
A LITTLE ADULATION

The Byrds were the people who inspired me to write about rock 'n' roll. Back in '67, to promote the single "Lady Friend," the band appeared on "The Tonight Show." With obvious disdain, guest host Bob Newhart read the Byrds' stock introduction off cue cards and added, as Roger McGuinn and David Crosby strummed the opening bars of the song, "I think I hear them tuning up now."

Unfazed, Crosby leaned into the mike and countered, "We tune because we care."

Yours truly was incensed that the button-down comic had dissed my favorite band and immediately fired off a letter, explaining the Byrds' blend of rock, folk and country, and recommending that Newhart check out *Younger Than Yesterday*. Imagine my surprise to receive a response a few months later. Newhart wrote that while he appreciated my point of view and did in fact like some pop, citing the Supremes, he found the Byrds to be "cacophonous."

By Jon Young *Photography by Deborah Feingold*



Between getting a response from a big TV star and learning a new word, writing seemed like a pretty promising pursuit.

Tuesday. Although McGuinn, Crosby and Hillman have worked together on and off for the last few years, they still act like long-lost frat buddies who haven't seen each other enough. Apart from the Hall of Fame dinner, the *Musician* interview is the only thing the guys are doing together. They've split up the press duties, in part to spare Crosby, who's confined to a wheelchair after a motorcycle accident.

The scene: Crosby's hotel suite in the Waldorf-Astoria. Hillman is throwing a mock tantrum. "So Bob Costas didn't want to talk to me? Fuck him! I don't like his sportscasting. Got that on tape? Good. Anyway, David and I are going to be on 'Good Morning, America.'"

Asked about the significance of the Hall of Fame, Crosby shrugs, but moments before he was speculating on the chances of being the first person to be inducted twice, when Crosby, Stills and Nash become eligible. McGuinn says, "It's a nonprofit organization formed by heads of large record companies, which could make you suspicious. Is it a legitimate honor or is it like the Hard Rock Cafe putting your guitar on the wall? Everybody says it's *the* most prestigious honor in rock 'n' roll, but that's kind of a contradiction in terms, isn't it?"

The talk turns to acceptance speeches, though the trio is more interested in venting their wrath on drummer and ex-mate Michael Clarke, whose use of the Byrds' name with a pickup band has caused much aggravation.

Hillman: "I can just imagine Michael onstage tomorrow. [*In a goon voice*] 'I'm just as important as any of you guys. I play drums and all that shit!'"

Crosby: "And now, ladies and gentlemen, the only drummer to switch the beat back to front three times in one song!" And he adds with a smirk, "It was an accident when Michael fell off the stage at the Hall of Fame. I swear to God I didn't do it!"

On a happier note, they're eager to talk about the good old days. McGuinn: "I met David in 1960 at the Ash Grove in L.A., years before the Byrds. I was 17 and he was 18."

Crosby: "I was in awe of Roger because he was an actual working musician. He thought I was a dork."

McGuinn: "No, I liked you. We exchanged guitar licks and became friends. I remember the day you taught me how to drive with a clutch in an old Chevy convertible. Then we went out to

Santa Barbara to see your mom and she made us lamb sandwiches with avocado. After that I moved to San Francisco and didn't see David for three or four years."

By then, McGuinn was back in L.A., writing and singing with Gene Clark. Crosby joined up to provide a third voice and his friend Jim Dickson, who would become the Byrds' manager, recruited Chris Hillman to play bass.

"I was a shy little kid from San Diego," says Hillman. "Roger and David were both very sophisticated and had been all over the U.S. I'd only worked country-and-western bars within a hundred miles." Laughs McGuinn, "We were originally gonna get David to play bass, but he didn't want to."

Crosby: "Hopeless! I couldn't play bass if you held a gun to my head. Playing bass and singing at the same time is like trying to dial a different phone with each hand."

McGuinn, deadpan: "Don't let him fool you. Dickson swears that Crosby could have played bass, but he felt the urge to undermine Gene's confidence as a guitar player." Crosby howls.

The Byrds were united by a love for the Beatles. Recalls McGuinn, "The folk scene was on its last legs. The Beatles took folk changes and put 'em in hyperdrive. They had a mystique you could cut with a knife. The boots, the clothes, the hair—the whole thing was so heavy."

"We didn't know what we were doing," Crosby says. "We just saw them and said, 'I wanna do that!'"

McGuinn: "I want those

little girls to run after me!"

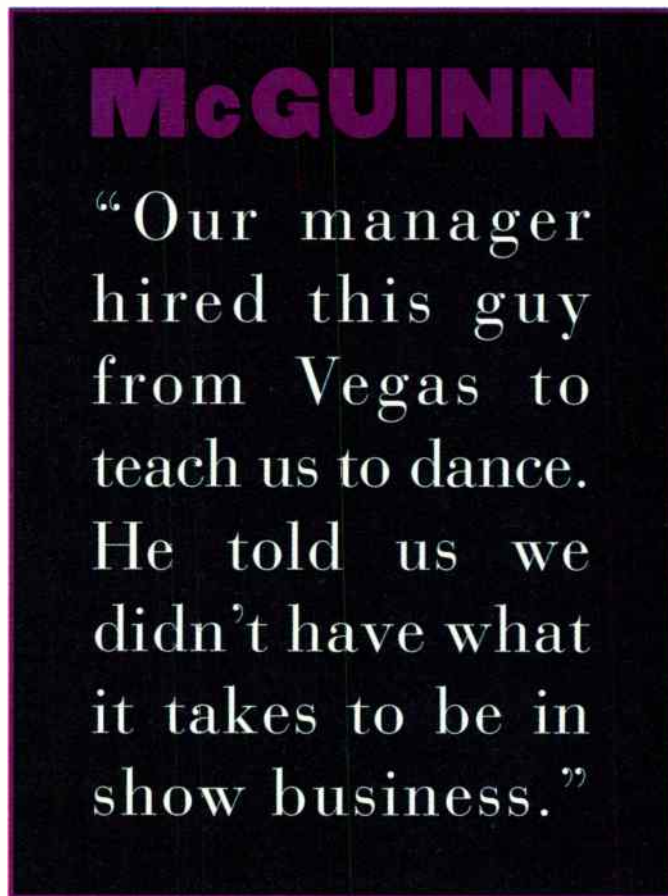
Easier said than done. There was a failed single on Elektra as the Beefeaters, lots of rehearsing and plenty of club dues. McGuinn recalls the breakthrough: "Dickson had hired this guy Jimmy from Vegas to teach us to dance."

Hillman: "Mr. Leather Hair!"

McGuinn: "We were gonna be like New Kids on the Block. He tried to show us a step, then threw up his hands, told us we didn't have what it takes to be in show business and quit. Right after that we started playing and a groove happened that hadn't happened before. We looked at each other and said, 'Ooooh, this is good!'"

"We worked as a dance band at clubs in L.A.," Crosby says, "and that firmed us up quick. If they couldn't dance to you, you were out of a job." Required to churn out four sets a night, the Byrds padded their repertoire with covers of "Money," "Tired of Waiting," "She's Not There," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," etc.

"Mr. Tambourine Man" resulted from Dickson's insistence that



they tackle songs with substance. "Roger spotted it right away," Crosby recalls. "I was still hung up on Dylan's version; I didn't like how he sang. I didn't get it until Roger came up with the arrangement."

McGuinn: "Remember when we played it back in the studio? I haven't had that experience since, where something turns out a billion times better than you imagined. It was so creamy and smooth."

Remembers Hillman, "A lot of stuff we weren't aware of at the time went down to get that single going. There was a deal with Bob Eubanks"—yes, the game-show guy—"the reigning DJ in L.A."

Crosby, straight-faced: "What'd we do?"

Hillman: "Gave him a percentage for a year, didn't we?"

McGuinn: "I think so."

Crosby, in mock horror: "Payola?"

Hillman: "Nothing abnormal for this business. Favors were done. Things were asked."

Though McGuinn was the only Byrd allowed to play on "Tambourine Man," the group successfully argued that they all be on the LP. Before long the Byrds were the hippest of the hip, endorsed by Dylan and the Beatles. The 1965 session for "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue," originally intended as a single and later scratched in favor of "Turn! Turn! Turn!," underscored their chic status.

"Yeah, we had some celebrities in the control room," laughs McGuinn. "Was it George and Paul and Dylan? I know McCartney was there because [producer] Terry Melcher told me he was taking notes on our equipment."

Hillman: "Weren't we cutting eight-track by then? They were still doing four-track."

McGuinn: "There was heavy pressure. It threw the mood off."

Hillman: "We weren't scared."

Crosby: "We were terrified!"

Hillman: "I was in the room with John Lennon once in England, and I hid, because I was afraid he'd spot me and get me!"

McGuinn, giggling: "John was like that. He'd say, 'What's wrong with McGuinn? Why is he wearing those little glasses?'"

Hillman: "It was like being in the front row at a Don Rickles show."

McGuinn: "David was the champion. He made fast friends with the Beatles."

Crosby: "I was stoned, so it was okay."

McGuinn: "You taught them how to play Indian music. They didn't know anything about it."

Crosby: "I just played them Ravi Shankar records."

McGuinn: "No, I remember playing guitars while we were sitting in the sunken tub of a home in Benedict Canyon. That's when you taught George how to play sitar."

The Byrds continued to make waves with the mind-bending single "Eight Miles High," inspired by heavy doses of Coltrane and Shankar, along with classic albums like *5D (Fifth Dimension)* and *Younger Than Yesterday*. Then McGuinn and Hillman fired Crosby.

Says Hillman, "There's one common misconception. Roger and I didn't have any trouble with David over 'Triad' on moral grounds."

"I think I can clear that up," smiles Crosby. "I spread that one around to make them look bad for throwing me out of the band. The real reason was that I was an obnoxious asshole, but I needed an excuse so I accused them of being prudes. Sorry about that, guys."

"No problem, pal," answers Hillman sarcastically. "And thank God he's not obnoxious anymore!"

How long did it take to reestablish contact after the split? "I was going over to David's house right after we stopped working together," says McGuinn. Adds Crosby, "Six months later I was in Crosby, Stills and Nash, so there was nothing to be mad about."

In the late '80s, at Hillman's suggestion, they reunited for a benefit to relaunch the Ash Grove, one of their L.A. haunts. "The club never reopened, but we got to play together and it was fun. This was prior to any hassles over the name," says Hillman.

Crosby remembers, "After the first time, we were eager, because it was surprisingly good. Very vigorous, not jaded at all. It felt good." When Mike Clarke started gigging with some fake Byrds, the three played more shows to stake claim to the

name (a subject still under legal dispute) and subsequently appeared at the 1990 Roy Orbison tribute, joined onstage by Dylan. The circle was finally completed last August when McGuinn, Crosby and Hillman cut four new tracks in Nashville for the boxed-set retrospective.

Says Crosby, "It was like falling off a log. We went into a small studio and just sang songs to each other. In my 15 years of recording I've never had as easy a time. I'd jump at the chance to do it again."

Any last reflections on the Byrds?

"If we'd continued in the direction of 'Eight Miles High,'" Hillman speculates, "I think it would've been real interesting."

Crosby: "I think we would have ended up a very powerful band."

McGuinn: In spite of not being a megaband that played stadiums, I think we did okay anyway."



Wednesday: At the Byrds' mini-press conference preceding the Hall of Fame ceremony, the Byrds look unreal in tuxes. At the dinner they're joined by Gene Clark

and Michael Clarke, who'd missed the press session, and all five original members team up for the inevitable jam, playing "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Turn! Turn! Turn!" and "I'll Feel a Whole Lot Better." Nobody pushes Mike Clarke off the stage.

"It was a bit like being honored with your ex-wife," laughs Hillman a few days later. "Michael was soused, so it was uncomfortable. I mean, David's a big AA guy now. At the end of the evening, I heard him say to Michael, 'If you want to stop drinking, I'll be glad to help you.' Of course, Michael had the standard comeback of 'I don't drink that much.'"

"It was a seriously flawed evening," says Crosby, in a separate conversation. "First the president declares war and then Mike Clarke was drunk on his ass. It was very awkward. I'm certainly not in any position to sneer at him," he adds, referring to his own well-publicized substance difficulties. "He just wasn't any fun to be around."

Concludes Hillman, "I feel a chapter is closed. I'm not saying I wouldn't work with David or Roger again, but the Byrds I knew from 1965 to 1967 are laid to rest with honors. I've got other things to do."

Thursday: McGuinn takes care of business with a performance at Tower Records' uptown branch. Promoting *Back from Rio*, his first new music in a decade and best effort since his first solo LP, nearly two decades ago, the set spotlights future classics like "King of the Hill" and "You Bowed Down," along with the expected Byrds hits. While the album features guest appearances by Tom Petty, Elvis Costello and others, McGuinn's one-man band more than does justice to the songs: When he gets up a head of steam, that big Rickenbacker has the power of a symphony orchestra.

Friday: "I find the past depressing," Roger McGuinn says. "I don't live in it." But history follows him around like a shadow; everyone he meets seems to have their own take on what the Byrds meant.

After a decade of playing solo club gigs without a record contract, McGuinn and his wife-manager Camilla have developed a few simple rules for survival. Among them: no early-morning interviews, which is one reason Hillman and Crosby do the live "Good Morning, America," while McGuinn has opted to tape a "Today" appearance at a civilized hour. Right now he's got a taping with Danny Fields for a syndicated radio show. Armed with an acoustic guitar in case he's asked to play, McGuinn sits in front of a mike in a small midtown Manhattan studio and serves up sound bites like a master. He discusses the feeling of freedom during his prolonged absence from the big time, saying it seemed like the right time to resurface in the wake of Byrds progeny like Tom Petty and R.E.M.

Music-biz vet Fields reminds McGuinn of an interview they did way back in '66, prompting a revisionist overview from the artist. "There was always an element of fear then, like we were in danger

of getting cut off in space," he muses. "We were really out there. I feel more comfortable with life now." So much for nostalgia.

Interview done, Roger picks up his unused guitar and joins Camilla for the limo back to their hotel. When the tape isn't rolling, McGuinn downshifts into neutral and stares off into space, conserving his energies. Back at the hotel, he tapes another radio interview. He explains that Costello intended "You Bowed Down" to be a cross between "My Back Pages" and "Positively 4th Street," and slips in kind words for departed friends Bobby Darin (an ex-boss) and Clarence White, the great guitarist of the later Byrds.

In passing, McGuinn mentions the classic sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet*—which I happen to have in my shoulder bag. Cosmic, or what? I show the tape to McGuinn after the interview, but he responds with a noncommittal "hmmm," having already disengaged from the moment. Besides, he's more interested in a tape of his guest-host performance on a VH-1 video show, taped earlier in the week. Rapt, McGuinn studies every flickering nuance intently; though he probably wouldn't know Celine Dion or James Ingram from Adam in real life, McGuinn hypes their clips with breezy good cheer. The man's a pro.

After a brief phone interview, Camilla hands him a fax from Elvis Costello, offering congratulations on his Hall of Fame induction. Big smile. Then he's off to another floor of the hotel to tape the "Today" segment. Interviewer Rona Elliott is also a '60s vet with vivid memories of the early Byrds. McGuinn fields the historical queries with aplomb; while readily discussing the past, he again refrains from celebrating it. Between takes, Elliott jokes about ravaged brain cells and remarks about how far out people

went back then. "And some of them didn't come back," notes McGuinn, softly.

But he doesn't preach, soft-pedaling the born-again Christianity that followed periods of drugs, divorce and financial difficulty. "Today," he says, "I have an inner peace that carries me through whatever happens on the outside, and what's happening right now is pretty good."

"You're a good talker, honey. We like those good talkers," laughs Elliott. McGuinn would like to play, too, but again he's disappointed. That will change at the next appointment, a "Late Night with David Letterman" taping.

During the ride to Letterman, McGuinn seems farther away than ever. I ask if he wrote a lot of songs during the '80s. "Just a few," he murmurs. "'Take Good Care of That Smile,' 'Sweet Memories,' a song about a personal computer. It was good stuff, just not rock 'n' roll."

At the Letterman show he finally gets to crank it up and rock. In rehearsal, Paul Shaffer's band nails "King of the Hill" on just the second take. McGuinn sounds great and looks relaxed. No wonder he doesn't want to live in the past: There's plenty going on in the here and now. As McGuinn said earlier in the day, "I look at guys like John Lee Hooker. Whatever it is he does, that's what I want to do. I want to keep going till I die." M

BYRDS OF A FEATHER

ROGER MCGUINN strums (what else?) a Roger McGuinn model Rickenbacker electric 12-string and a Martin 12-string acoustic. Last year, says DAVID CROSBY, "rather than going back to a Gretsch, which I used in the '60s, I played what I usually play now, which is a Westwood Strat made of a spruce body, instead of a maple body. I also use a very old stock Strat, an Alembic 12-string and a koa Les Paul." Reports CHRIS HILLMAN, "When I played with the Byrds last year I used a Rickenbacker bass—in the old days, I played a Fender. In Nashville I also played a G & L bass and a Martin D28. It was a real odd feeling to pick up the bass again, because I hadn't played one in years. With the Desert Rose Band I use a Gibson J-200 acoustic with pickups."



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JAMMING

The war began two hours ago, his wife is at home in northern California nine months pregnant, and Steve Morse is standing backstage in a Malibu nightclub hoping just to get through the day. Two out of every three great guitarists are poor, and of those two, one is just making it. ■ Morse flew himself in for the gig in a prop plane paid for over time with Morse band airfare allotments; Edward Van Halen and Albert Lee came down the canyon road. This is no joke to Morse, whose wife is getting ready to go into labor, and Albert seems content just to have a quiet place to sit, but it's all fun for Ed, whose own pregnant wife just wants to go. ■ Word is that no one up in Ed's front office was particularly thrilled about his

WITH II

STEVE MORSE, ALBERT LEE AND THE EMPEROR VAN HALEN

taking part in any extracurricular jamming that could signal interest or attention outside his big-bread-and-butter day gig with Van Halen the band. To Ed's credit, he insisted on joining this overnight supergroup to play at *Musician's* annual concert at the NAMM convention—and plug Ernie Ball's new Edward Van Halen guitar. More important, it's a chance for Van Halen to breathe some fresh creative air. ■ The Malibu gig is a warm-up, and Eddie can't stay put. He's circling the club like a dervish, jumping onstage to check his sound, jumping off to make nice with his wife, jumping into conversations with small gatherings of guests and jumping out mid-sentence. Ed suddenly appears near the dark

EDWARD

STORY BY MATT RESNICOFF

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAREN MILLER

corner table where Morse has been warming up. Eddie's face goes blank and grave as Steve's as he watches Morse's fingers do a stiff, quick dance over the strings of his guitar. He dashes off, leaving Morse to his intense ritual of practice.

When they join Albert and the rest of the band for soundcheck, Ed plugs himself into a bank of amplifiers and lays some familiar squeals across country tunes. Moments later, Albert and Steve lay country lines over Hendrix. It's one of those "fun" gigs that actually manages to entertain largely because the atmosphere is informal and non-competitive, and the soundcheck, like the dining room annex being used as backstage, is open to the world in four different directions. Even during the actual show, the first four bars of each guitarist's solos go unplayed for the exchange of delicate pinky-shakes or congratulatory high-fives. This is blowing time. This is country metal. This is Albert Lee's meat.

"Country swing," he smiles, "that's my favorite. I think that's what I'm best at, really. I'm just trying to keep up with these guys and all the *whoooo!*"

His wife and another couple laugh. Yeah, Big Al, trying to keep up. The guy's a fire hazard up there.

Someone else adds diplomatically that bombast just isn't Albert's style, and he shrugs and looks at his wife, who puts her hand on his shoulder. "I don't think you work hard at it, do you?"

"Well, no, I don't." The women start laughing, but Albert is neither joking nor apologetic. "No, I just don't have my rig set up for that kind of sound, to begin with. I love a real clean sound."

"You've got your own style, which is great." The second woman cocks her head. "You don't want to sound just like all the rest." He smiles politely.

"I used to be worried that I didn't sound like all the other players."

"You didn't worry for long," says Mrs. Lee.

"Tonight is about as far out as we've ever gone," Steve laughs. "And it's really a challenge. It's a humbling kind of gig, and that's important to do on a regular basis. To put myself in a position where I have nothing: no big rig, no control, nothing. I'm playing through those two little amps." He points to two small boxes that look like flashbulbs atop Edward's speaker wall. "It's like being out in a jungle with just a knife and finding your way back." Edward's a bit less metaphorical. He hops off the stage, sits down in the front row to hear the rest of the band howl away, then taps my knee and leans over: "I don't think my sound is right for this band."

But even if the most copied guitar sound in contemporary music isn't right for a bar band, there's still a place for it among friends. The band begins a second set and keyboardist Jimmy Cox sets everyone up; as the playing moves across the stage, from the right wings to the left, the three different lifestyles and approaches become most pronounced. Albert's soloing in the lower registers is as resonant as a piano; fluid and deep rolling country figures swerve around torn-off blues phrases. When he kicks into overdrive he makes mountains of sound. Steve builds his lines slowly but with complex unpredictability, inching his way through the changes, does a Hawaiian-style interlude, then plays lines on the same theme in double-stop harmonics, finally drilling it home with dizzying

speed-picking and screams. The place is stunned. Eddie takes the hint and eases into things patiently with nice, strong blues and a hint of wah-wah. He's having a great time up there, and he's so excited when they get around to playing "Fire" that he keeps coming in early with the guitar refrain.

Eddie has balls of brass for getting into what's basically an Albert Lee set of demanding hoedowns. Most of the time he rises to it, but he simply doesn't have the right hand to keep up with these cats. What he

can't tackle with melody he pounds out by hitting his whammy bar in time to the song, sticking to Hendrix themes and screams. Morse plays the life out of a slow one, squeezing some liquid lines that sound like a pedal-steel, and by the time the baton gets to Ed he knows his number's up—he's got a lot of assets, but being a sensitive balladeer isn't among them. When it's obvious he can't cut it in the first few moments, Ed resorts to the "elephant," a novel way of making a guitar groan by hitting three dissonant notes and swelling up the volume. The crowd responds accordingly. But when everyone starts

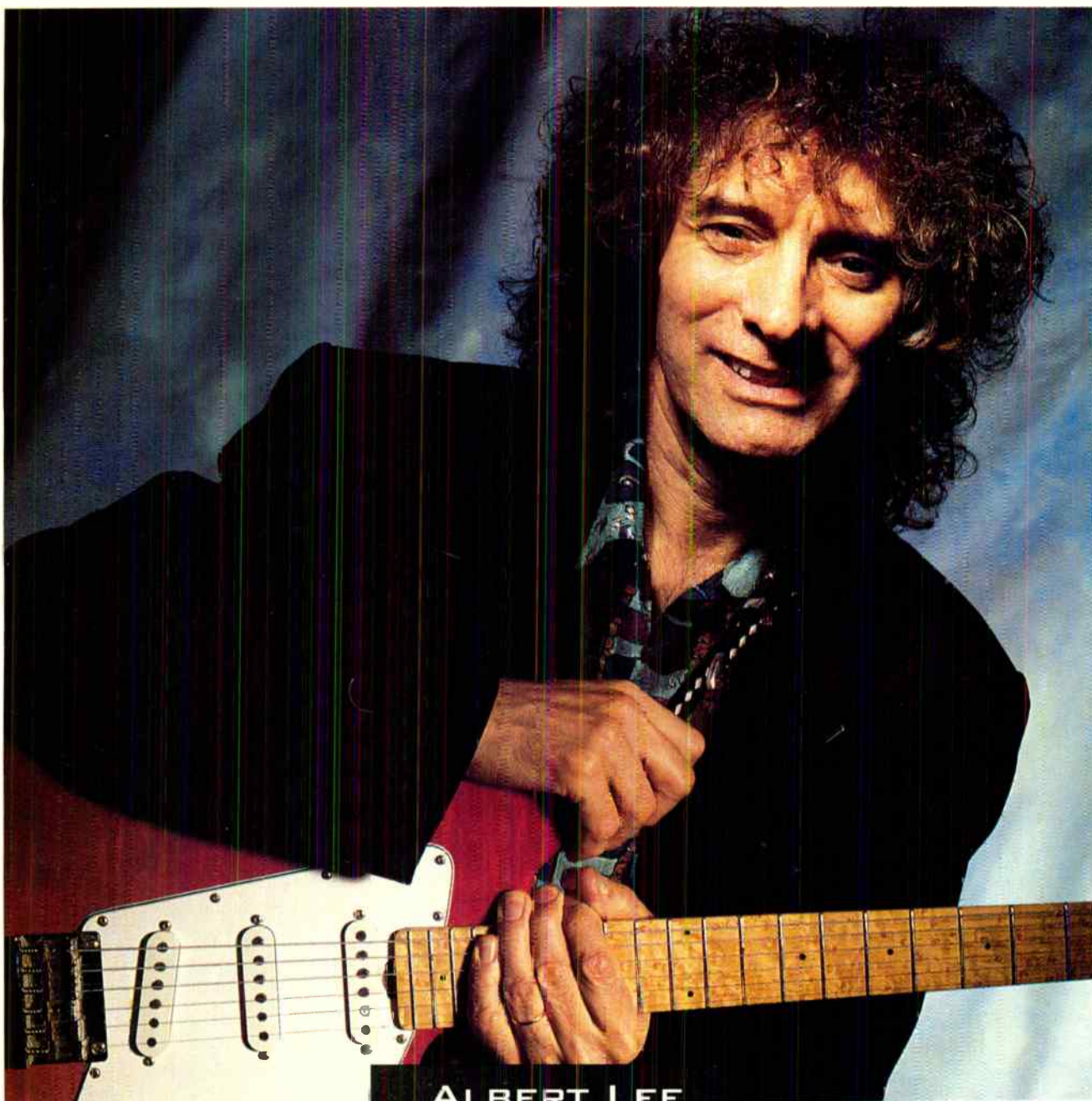
trading fours on a high-velocity country blues, Ed begs off and watches aghast as Albert and Steve burn chorus after chorus, Steve flailing arpeggios, Albert just simply, unbelievably Albert. The country boys really stick it to the city slicker this time; Ed's got the wind knocked out of him. He throws his head back and blows his cheeks out in disbelief.

The scene makes a troubling comment about music and celebrity, especially since the screams for the worst solos are as emphatic as the screams for the best. This doesn't slip by Morse. "That's part of anything," he says, practicing backstage after the set. "You ever notice those pictures of governments that you've never heard of, where they're having a parade and carrying a big poster of a guy wearing a headdress? He looks just like any of those citizens. But the fact that he's walking behind those pictures makes the people freak out. They wait for hours to see him go by, and they pray and they applaud and faint. It's part of the euphoria of rock music. Fame's a powerful drug, you know? Why do people pay to go to baseball games? It's not that exciting to watch. It's that they're close to what's happening, what they've seen only on TV. Just the fact that people recognize a song makes a huge difference, and they get into it more no matter what." Barroom chatter resumes its battle with televised news of war, and everyone is hugging one another and reliving the set. "I'm just here to add a little noise," Eddie keeps telling people. His wife, pregnant, hungry and impatient, grabs his wrist and drags him off into the night.

A DAY LATER, ABOVE THE WHOOSH OF FLUSHING TOILETS, Eddie calls out his half of the conversation from the urinal. His voice honks around the room as he describes some construction work being done at home, particularly the attendant studio makeover which he says is transforming the sonic essence of his new album with Van Halen. This is a public hotel men's facility, but the traffic coming through is bearable, and the few music conventioners who interrupt are polite about it—each courteously washes his hands before shaking Ed's. The idea of leveling one studio to put up



THE CAT EATING THE CANARY: ALBERT & JOHN FERRARO MAKE MINCEMEAT OUT OF JIMI HENDRIX



ALBERT LEE

another seems like a costly undertaking, Eddie.

"Naw, I didn't break it down, I added *to* it. Okay, put it this way: What I used to have was the size of one racquetball court, because that's what it *was*, and I put everything in it. And then I changed it. I didn't fuck with that at all, I just put in a new console and added another racquetball court. The first racquetball court was sittin' like that"—he puts a cigarette in his mouth and chops out the design on the sink with the side of his hands, one perpendicular to the other. "Then I added another one sittin' like that. We added a whole drum room, so I can get live drum room so it just blows my shit."

This is something new to the Van Halen recording ethos, which Eddie's been instructed not to discuss. "The only reason I don't want to talk about the record is because it's not *done*. You know, when it's done, *then* I'm gonna talk about it. I don't even know what to..."

Well, there's also a sense of curiosity about what you *want* to see

happen with the record—

"Can we wait, can't we wait with all that shit? I guarantee that I will give you an interview when the record is done.

"You know, put it this way—" "Put it this way," it turns out, is Ed's bridge between saying "I don't want to answer your question" and telling you whatever on his mind superficially resembles the topic he's been asked about. "The reason I hate all this shit is because if I start talking to *you* about it... 'Oh, why didn't he talk to *me* about it?' You know, it's just like releasing a single too soon to one radio station, and the other ones get pissed off. You know what I'm saying? I just think it's bad for me to do, I dunno."

Eddie talks about a lot of things—his new record, his new studio, his new guitar, his unwillingness to talk. Absolutely nothing about him suggests any interest in self-examination. He obviously drinks to steel his nerves, so he's asked if he smokes cigarettes for the same

reason. His tautological reply: “No, because I’m a smoker!” A sore spot on his mind—and he can’t stop picking at it—is his uncredited contribution to the design of the Floyd Rose vibrato-bar device. It’s faster if I explain: Floyd kept showing up at Van Halen’s early Seattle gigs with a prototype that didn’t yet feature knobs which allow for fine-tuning the guitar by hand; at that point it required cumbersome little wrenches. Over three years of Van Halen tours and Edward’s urging, Floyd refined the unit to where tuning required no wrench adjustments. “I never asked Floyd for anything for the help,” Ed says, “and I’d like you to print that, too.” He laughs. “I was very involved in development on that thing. I don’t care what he says. He kind of threw me a bone, but I’m a bit ticked.” Eddie started ticking even louder at this year’s NAMM convention, where the stalwart Fender Guitars announced their side of a lucrative new licensing deal—with Floyd Rose.

Ed’s dismay over the transaction registers as little more than the affront you might suffer at not getting invited to a lawn party. The biggest problem Floyd’s deal creates for Eddie is that when he called Floyd recently to get a couple of the units for testing, Floyd told him, “I can’t give you any.” I said, ‘What?!’ Ed groans, then taps off the tape recorder for the first of what will be several such episodes throughout the weekend. It’s interesting: Even if he’d gotten his pound of Floyd, he’d have to sell countless guitars just to make a fraction of what he’d have made from, say, a proper negotiation for his unpaid solo on Michael Jackson’s “Beat It.” That’s Eddie. At the moment he seems more interested talking about fine-tuners.

“Okay, so he showed up with a goddamn wrench! Now you need one for the front, and a different-size wrench for the strings to fine-tune. I’m goin’, ‘Ahh, that ain’t fuckin’ what I wanted.’ So after three years, he finally got it right and I said, ‘Okay, great. Now let’s...’ So that’s kinda like having something to do with it. don’t you think? You get involved with people where you think everything’s going to be okay, and all of a sudden...you know, it’s like...I don’t know. Put it this way—” A gentleman comes out of a stall, approaches Ed with an outstretched unwashed hand and says, “Just like to say how much I enjoy your music.” Edward doesn’t even think twice about it. “Obviously, the main thing I look for...”—he sips a beer—“is a sweet, warm sound that isn’t like someone chuckin’ razor blades at you. And something that’s easy to play. That’s why to make my new guitar, we copied the neck off my last guitar, because it’s been *played* for years. So when you pick up the guitar it’s like putting on some old favorite shoes, already worn in the way I play.”

So everyone who buys one will have an exact replica of what you like in a guitar.

“I used to play with just one pickup, now I play with two. I got a right to change my mind, don’t I? Put it this way: The way the guitar is is what I’m comfortable using. And who knows? In the future we might come out with *another* style guitar, you know? We might.”

There’s some discussion about you doing just that.

“Yeah, well, let’s not talk about it yet.”

Jeez, look, I don’t care if we...

“No, no, no. What I’m saying is, I’m coming out with another gui-

tar already, okay. real soon, but I don’t want to talk about it until it comes out.”

So if you had an opportunity to talk to Picasso *while* he was painting, you’d rather wait until he was finished and then listen to him tell you, “Oh, just look at the picture—that will answer your questions?”

“Okay, we’re building another guitar. All right, all right, all right.” (Ed turns out to be an easy mark after all.) “But the thing is, it’s a very important part of this new record that’s coming out. I’m using a bass, actually.”

A six-string bass?

“Yeah, okay, and we’re coming out with one, and until I get it sounding right, I don’t want someone beatin’ me to the punch. So I’d rather not talk about it until we have the prototype ready.”

Meaning someone else is going to invent a six-string bass and come out with an album with your style of playing?

“Yeah, come on! Hey—you know how many times I’ve been fucked? Every goddamn company used to make a Strat-style guitar with one pickup and one knob. That was not my idea, was it? I’d

just rather not say anything until it’s out there and people know it was my idea, just because...that’s the way I want it.

“Put it this way. I don’t like telling you I’m working on a song that sounds this way until I’m done recording it. For me to explain to you what I’m writing or what I’m designing or what I’m working on...serves no purpose until you can actually see it, hold it, touch it, play it.”

How about, “Buy it”? What you’re doing while you’re recording is part of the creative process. That’s what’s *interesting*.

“Matt, Matt, Matt! At the same time, a lot of times, if you ask me a question and it’s premature, it might not end up the way I’m telling you. And then people go, ‘Hey, this guy’s full of shit.’”

Okay, fine. When you play with guys like Albert and Steve, does it inspire you to play differently, give you ideas to go back and work with in your own music?

“I have no idea. Put it this way: You’ve heard me play before? Okay, you heard me play Thursday night. Did I play different?”

Than you usually do? No, but that’s because you’ve only played with them a couple of times. But does it affect you?

“No. I mean, nothing really affects me, unless I drink too much.” Ed’s grin makes it quite clear that he’s kidding. “Heh. No, I mean, obviously, everything you’re exposed to somehow... If you’re listenin’ to the radio too much and you hear a certain type of music, sooner or later it’s going to come back through you, you know what I mean?” He pauses. “I’m just nervous about this whole gig, seriously, since Thursday.”

Are you intimidated by guitar players who...

“I’m intimidated by myself,” he laughs. “I get like, sometimes...”

When you play with your brother and Michael Anthony you’re a harmony center. To keep the sound of that trio fresh, do you have to keep reinventing yourself every time you go onstage?

“Let me say this, okay? In a funny way, it’s questions like that that intimidate me more than anything, because to me, making music is a very from-the-heart-and-soul kind of deal, and I have no idea what I’m going to be playin’ tonight. That’s what I meant by, ‘I intimidate myself,’ ‘cause I have no idea what the hell I’m doin’; it’s like there’s



STEVE MORSE AND EDDIE VAN HALEN COMPARE NOTES ON JIMMY PAGE AT ANAHEIM.



STEVE MORSE

somebody up there pullin' the strings for me. It's not calculated, is what I'm sayin'. I don't know what the hell I'm doin'."

COUNTRY MUSIC, ACCORDING TO THE THUMBNAILED SKETCH OF AN English historian, is a derivation of English and Irish folk musics brought over to North America and popularized in the southern states. Albert is in the middle of this explanation while he, Ed and Steve get ready to pose for photographs. The band lie on their backs for the camera in a flower-shape pattern, legs out, and everyone sings and jokes at each other's expense. Morse is laughing as he practices.

Of the three star players on the bill tonight, Albert is the eldest by 10 years and by far the most reserved. Big Al's an English gentleman, one of country guitar's finest, and he's had an interesting ride indeed, jumping between solo projects and sideman tours with Eric

Clapton and the Everly Brothers. Is it tough to be a country guitarist born in the wrong country?

"I don't think it's been detrimental at all, really. I don't think it's alien for anyone who's British to like that kind of stuff. To me it's more natural than a British person liking the blues, you know? I've got a unique approach to country probably *because* I was born in England; I've given it that rock edge, whereas otherwise I would have probably ended up like Ricky Skaggs. I admire Ricky's playing, but I would have been so embedded in country that it would have been hard to break out. I played in an R&B band, but I never did play hard rock. When everyone was buying Marshall stacks I went the other way and was using a Fender Bassman; to me that was what a guitar should sound like, and I've always maintained that attitude. I love it loud, but above all, it's got to be really clean."

Like Morse, whose brief affair with the rock band Kansas in 1986

betrayed starvation for exposure as much as plain financial necessity, Al has hooked up lucrative gigs like the Everlys and Emmylou Harris to make the rent. Unlike Morse, he's often found himself in the company of mainstream names that threaten to supersede him by something far worse than sales: by placing him in a forum where his formidable abilities blend into a utilitarian backdrop. The crime isn't that people don't know it was him on "Lay Down Sally"; it's that the gig showcased but a fraction of a big, beautiful picture.

"There were good and bad things about that gig with Eric," Al admits after a long pause. "It did hold me back musically in a lot of respects. But I had fun. Plus, I was earning good money. Eric is a dear, good friend of mine—we met in '65, '66. When he asked me to join his band I knew it wouldn't be stretching me, but it was terrific fun and I could learn a lot from him, and he maybe learned something from me. I don't know if he did, though, because he's so traditional; the blues is everything, and he doesn't like any slight deviation off the course." The integrity of Clapton's blues is a separate shouting match; what could Lee possibly learn from him? "I did learn how to relax, get the most from the least amount of notes," says Albert. "That's never been my forte. I mean, if there's a chance to play a dozen notes, I'll play 'em. And obviously it's going to go over a lot of people's heads, but I've never played for other people anyway. I've always just played to enjoy myself, really."

"You can have an elegantly simple melody that's very fast, too," Steve Morse adds. "Eric Johnson's song 'Cliffs of Dover' is arpeggiated. If you take the top notes of the arpeggio, it's a simple melody, but

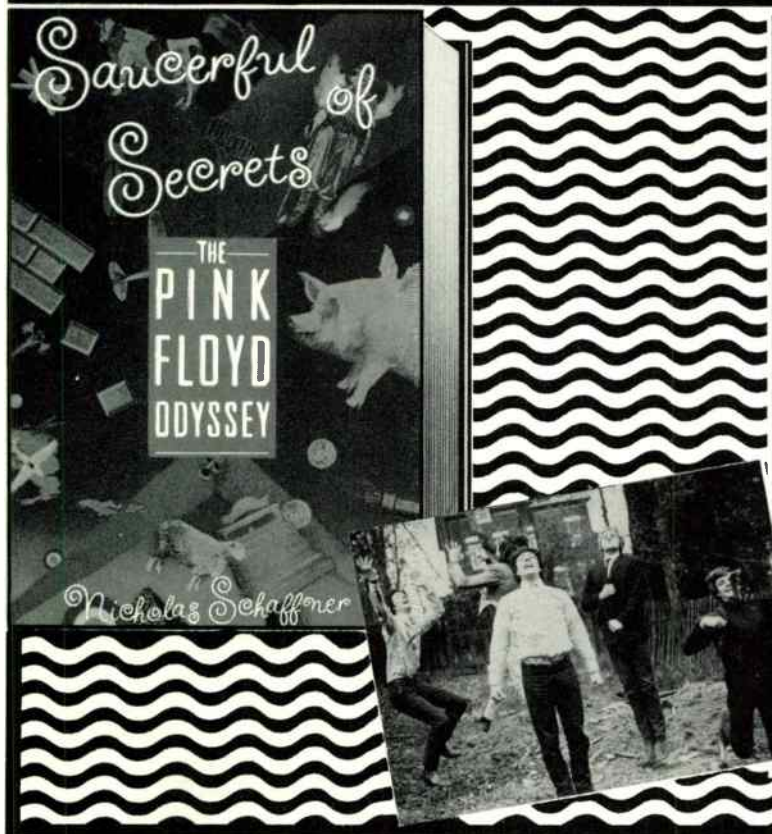
if you break it up, it's a complex part. Simplicity can be implied, or just simply played out. But some part of it, from a distance, has to sound simple. Like that song by Focus years and years ago?" "Hocus Pocus"? Steve is sung the long, complex line, and he points out the first note in each phrase. Then he sings those notes back. "That's the melody," he explains, "but it was broken up into arpeggios. There are ways to have a lot of complexity in a simple tune."

Steve is a little bit country, a little bit rock 'n' roll. "And I love both styles," he says. "I love the bending and beautiful stuff Albert does, and Eddie kind of defines rock guitar these days. And shit, I don't know what the hell I am. I'm not jazz, I'm not rock, I'm not country, I'm not anything. So I feel a little identity-less onstage," he laughs.

Steve is also a little bit too self-deprecating for someone so damn good. Some might say too good, which usually makes life difficult in a market quick to affix labels and slow to chew on anything it doesn't immediately recognize as "product." "You ever notice in a live show, the guitarist will be playing all night and then the bass player takes one little solo and the audience just goes nuts? Because it's different. People like the change of pace, just as they like the idea of a famous person being close by."

But that's only a conclusion you come to after years of being a focused artist without being rewarded with that kind of attention. "When you're in front of an audience, you *have* that audience," he explains. "When you release a record and they're playing all the big things on MTV and on radio, they're not going to put you on just because you're different. If I was put in front of an audience I would

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obviously—*obviously*—have more success. I wouldn't be the big-time superstar because I'm not going for that real common denominator thing. That's why rap music is barely even singing; it's the denominator everyone can get into, which is *rhythm*. But when you take rhythm and add complexity on top of it and then weird composition on top of *that*, you're getting into more selective audiences."

In the areas of arrangement and composition, Morse's new *Southern Steel* is an abrupt turnaround from *High Tension Wires*, a very personal solo recording that summoned everything he ever touched: rural twang, passionate excess, lofty structure, raw speed. Never self-indulgent, it was a masterpiece that spoke as much about the artist as it did the virtuoso. There's no mistaking *Steel* for a Dregs record, though a cynic could perceive its rock focus as tailored for the mass market Morse has yet to tap.

"Our marketing plan is the same as it's ever been," he says. "They're not going to do any videos, we're not going to be on Letterman, so what does it matter when we tour? It would help if we could tour with another guitarist who had a different audience, but I don't hold my breath. The only way I've survived is by being self-sufficient, and that's the way it always will be. It's rare that a break happens. And as far as big breaks happening, I don't think they ever have."

Steve's used to putting his butt on the chopping block, maintaining complete control, which makes the all-star gig so intense. He built his studio; on tour he loads, drives and fixes the truck, and needs to be pin-sharp to fly the band's Cessna 310 after a long midnight haul. "People say, 'How can you own your own studio?' It's

simple: How can you give the money to *another* studio? People say, 'How can you own your own plane?' Well, people own cars to go to work. You just use the money you'd be spending. Things like that give you more control over your life. It adds stress, being further in debt, but if you're willing to accept that, you can have things you really can't even afford," he laughs. "Knowledge is power: The more you know, the more you see ways around problems."

"There's no tour support from the record company, no big advertising, there's nothing except what we do ourselves to get to those pockets of people who have been kind enough to keep coming back. That's my reality of the music business. What you're doing in *Musician* makes it possible to keep doing it at a certain level—it would be even smaller without that—and I really appreciate it. But the bottom line is, self-sufficiency gives me security in this business. Another way to have security is to have a lot of money and a portfolio. But this is a different way, and it's an okay way. I feel comfortable with it."

Morse is packing up to move from California to Florida, where he was born and where he formed the Dixie Dregs. He'd just finished setting up his elaborate garage studio when the deal closed on the house. "It's the only way to sell the place," he says with a shrug. "You know, if you want it to rain, you've got to wash your car."

PLAYING WITH ALBERT AND STEVE PRESENTS A DIFFERENT KIND OF challenge, wouldn't you say?

"Sure. Yeah. You're right," Ed says, taking a swig. "It is a different...it's a whole different ball of wax, uh, but I'm still kind of doing

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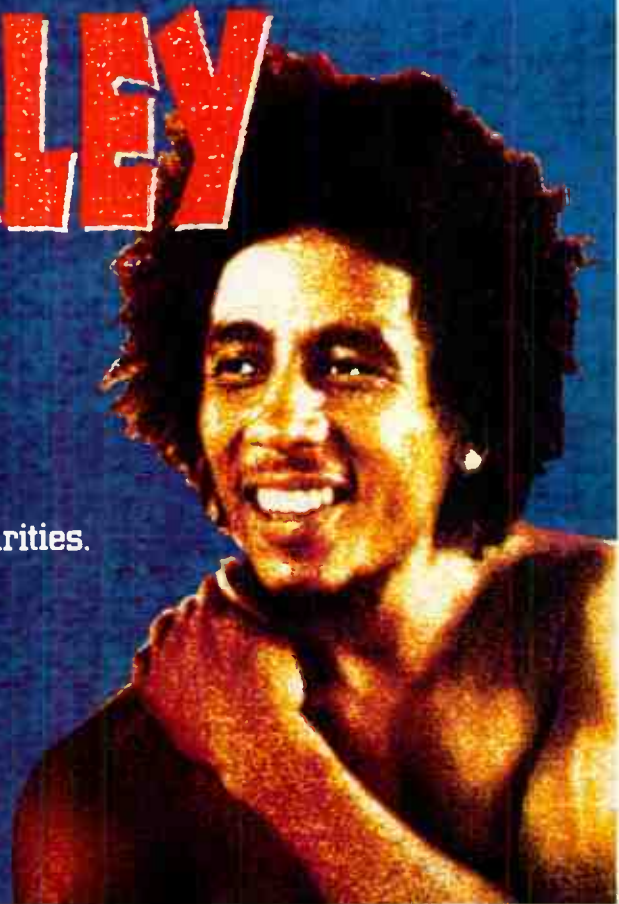
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my thing along *with* them.”

Are you refining “your thing”? Do you ever think of different colors to add to it?

“I’m a couch picker. I sit on the couch, watch TV and pick. And if my style changes, it’s very subconscious. I do *not* say, ‘Okay, now I’m gonna do this.’ I don’t even know what a pentatonic scale is. I seriously don’t. I’ve said this in the past, that my whole trip is falling down the stairs and landing on my feet—hopefully. Because if I counted the stairs and put one foot in front of the other, I’d probably trip.”

You had so much acclaim when you were young. A lot of musicians stagnate because when they hear, “That’s great, keep doing it,” they feel people don’t *expect* them to grow away from the formula.

“I think I’ve changed in *lots* of ways, man. I’m playin’ a lot more keyboards, I think I’m writing better music. See, I’m not just a *guitarist*; I write songs, you know?”

Why don’t you do a solo album? It could be incredible.

“Well, I’ll answer that right there. Every record I *do* is a solo record, because it’s all my music.”

I’ve always thought that if you were working with a better rhythm section—no offense to your brother...

“Oh, oh, oh, oh.” Edward leans back and turns away, almost bracing himself. “You say that one more time, we’re stoppin’ this right now. My brother is the baddest motherfucker on the planet on the drums.”

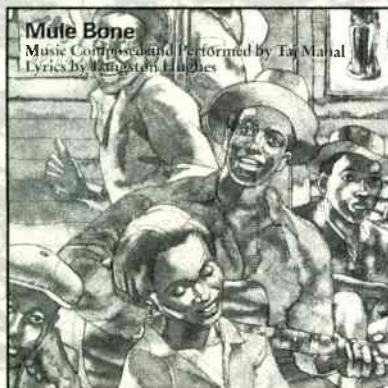
Okay, but let’s be honest, Eddie. If your bass player allowed you and your brother to attack more interesting music, it might push you as well. I know Michael Anthony’s your pal, but there’s...

“What’s the point to being pushed?”

Well, if you’re not fighting your way out of a jungle, Ed, you’ll never know. So let’s go ask an objective outside authority on Van Halen. “What happens is a necessary process.” David Lee Roth is wandering around his home as he talks. Dave likes to keep moving; it helps the flow. “Good musicians generally pick one or two kinds of music they like, and that’s all they listen to and that’s all they play! Great. We live in the age of specialization. The positive side is that as you become increasingly sport-specific, you develop abilities you otherwise wouldn’t. But the downside to specialization comes in the definition: You learn more and more about less and less until you know absolutely everything about nothing.”

Roth is more diplomatic than you’d expect, considering the lashing he took from the Van Halen camp—even from new vocalist Sammy Hagar, who didn’t even *know* Roth—when he and the band split after their breakthrough *1984*. “It’s not something you have choice over,” notes Roth, “once you’ve been in a band you ‘grew up with,’ à la Van Halen. We started off making a living for the first time off of music, and you learn a lot in that phase. What you learn and experience there affects your music and your character as a human being. And you can’t replace that virgin experience. Once you’re no longer with that grouping, one person has to become musical director.”

Van Halen Mach 2 has for the last several years functioned because, at least commercially, their careers as individuals and as a collective have been encouraged to operate inside an impenetrable bubble. But unnatural insularity can be self-destructive. Roth sighs,



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admitting he probably wouldn't even recognize today the personalities he shook hands with six years ago, but his reflections about what once motivated his old band strike a telling contrast to the present. "We would alternate. With Van Halen, you got all five sides of the coin, whereas most musicians intentionally flatten it into a one-dimensional image: easily palatable, instantly digested. So in essence, here is the 'mean' band"—Dave affects a deep, mean drawl—"Hey, you big bully.' You can tell he's a bully from all the belts. And here's a band who is socially conscious and sticks with one sales pitch. We never did that in Van Halen. You would have elements of brooding and great celebration, often in the context of the *same song*, so that you could reinterpret infinitely what you were hearing. Were we *angry*? Were we *happy*? Were we *happy to be angry*? Well, yeah, we all feel all three of those things, but you very rarely get to the third level in most big rock contexts. And it has to happen musically, as well as lyrically."

"YOU DON'T CARE A-ABOUT ME, I DON'T CARE a-bout that..." Someone is doing a damn good Hendrix à la John Wayne through the P.A. at soundcheck for the big Saturday gig. Steve runs through the heads of some of his new songs, then he and Edward compare shots at the solo break from "Whole Lotta Love." A call from the floor implores Ed to "Do the elephant!" and with the wattage he's packing, the empty ballroom shakes as if under siege from a passing herd; Ed shows Steve the right notes, but Steve's Lilliputian amp setup is just too weak for the elephant. While they wait for Albert, they work through other chestnuts: Zeppelin's "No Quarter" gets a rise out of the crew, and Morse kills it. Drummer John Ferraro cowbells the intro to Van Halen's version of "Dance the Night Away" and Eddie chimes right in with the tapped harmonics from the recorded guitar break.

Guitar etymologists need only compare the verse arpeggiations, sliding barre chords and overbent notes in "Good Times, Bad Times" to Van Halen's parts in *Fair Warning's* "Unchained"; young Ed may have had his fingers doing Clapton, but he was *hearing* Page. Those are the nuances that make Eddie great, more so than his showing on a vehement stop-time rendition of Albert's "Country Boy," where his creative use of trademark hammer-on lines

raises eyebrows even among seasoned hoedowners like Big Al and Morse. There are times in the set when you know he's just riding his amps where he once might have had something fresh to say, back when he used speed as a release rather than a recourse. Other times, he's almost appealingly primitive against the NAMM backdrop of his more practiced, less inebriated imitators. Eddie still rips it up, but as good as he is, you'd hope that after so many years he would organize it a little more cohesively.

There's terrific pressure on Ed to be a superhuman soloist, and he wears it in the way he's so scattered, so insulated even within an insider-only environment where everybody loves and respects him not only as a music hero, but as an unlikely industry kingpin—sort of the way the inventor of Teflon might be treated at a cookware convention. He's not a shroud-me kind of star except when his personal safety is in jeopardy; fact is he's probably the most guileless person in high-level rock, which makes it painful to see how his talent is hoarded by

Just when you think you've heard it all, someone comes along whose talent transcends the barriers of a given instrument. On his new album, "Sammy Says Ouch!", Randy Coven pushes the boundaries of what a bass guitar can do to dizzying new heights. And since ordinary conventional pickups are no match for his fertile imagination, Randy has equipped his "Sammy" (his bass guitar) with the Sustainiac sustain system from ASI. This unique patented onboard system allows Randy to fully express his creativity by putting unlimited sustain and total harmonic feedback control at the flip of a switch.

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imitators, by his "people" who discouraged him from appearing with Albert and Steve and who fear he might communicate with a journalist for any purpose except that which serves expressly to move product.

But Ed's been caught up in the machine so long they've even got *him* rused: he expects the same tired questions, responds to his band with the same tired solos, and everything becomes strict black and white. This may sound like insider quibbling, but there's an artistic price paid when the motivations of a talented musician—and as

instrumentalists go, rock has *very* few—are swayed by "people" who respect his music as if it were no more valuable than, say, a Teflon crock at a cookware convention.

For that reason he also doesn't get to mention Allan Holdsworth, whose formative influence on Ed indirectly makes him the second most copied guitarist in rock. Ed and Allan have been casually friendly since jamming years ago in L.A., and in a sense, their relationship mirrors the spiritual connection a star like Clapton has with Buddy Guy, that Stevie Vaughan had with Albert

King. All three pairs have jammed, exposing the indebtedness to a small audience; all bore notable referencing on pop records, from verbatim Albert licks by Stevie on Bowie's "Let's Dance" to the Holdsworth whammy-bar dips in "Panic Station" that not only became much of Eddie's acclaimed "Dreams" solo, but a staple of the younger player's style. The parallels are endless here. In thinking of them, it's hard not to flash on a scene that takes place every sundown, when the soup line gathers just outside the mission directly across from the Waldorf-Astoria hotel.

RIGHT NOW EDDIE IS IN HIS MOST ENVIABLE position yet this weekend. He's in an unlocked room crowded with strangers and only four people, those whose meals are getting cold a few feet away, are gawking at him uncontrollably. Make that five—with her seventh visit to the table, our waitress has just undone what could have been a convincing stab at professional attentiveness.

"I'm not one of these kind of guys who's out to change the world," Eddie proclaims. "I'm just doing what I *do*. And I'm having fun doing it. You know what I'm saying?"

But you choose who you work with.

"Yeah, yeah. And to me, it's like family. I'm not into divorce or putting my kids up for adoption," he laughs. "*You* would like to see me, probably, explore different avenues. Well, I'm not into it. I'll explore whatever avenue I want to explore at the time. It's like...let me turn this off just one second." Eddie clicks off the recorder again. He seems to do that solely as his honest version of a politically correct gesture, as he only does it *after* saying something that just borders on being volatile, and follows up with unrecorded, off-the-record comments too innocuous to be even remotely incriminating to anyone. This time it's about not really wanting to play with other musicians.

If you like the idea of falling and seeing if you land on your feet, I say when tape rolls, getting in with players who challenge your creative abilities might find you moving into more interesting areas.

"The challenge to me is just doing what I do," Ed says. "I'm playing with these guys because they're buddies, you know, it's a lot of fun. I'm not doing it to *raise my consciousness musically* or anything. I don't care! I'm a musician by *luck*. I do what I do because I like it and I happen to make money at it, and I'm grateful for that, but I do not plan the shit."

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"But at the same time, I am just a medium, man. The shit's coming from somewhere. I don't sit down and really think! I just get in this mode and I do what I do. That's why I hate doing interviews, because people ask me, 'How do you do what you do?' I don't know!"

I didn't ask you that, Edward.

"No, I know. I mean, you're hintin' to it."

I just asked if you ever thought about playing with a different band, that's all.

"No, no. I mean, my brother and I started from day one, and when you hear this next record, you're gonna go, 'Holy shit.' You're gonna rethink the whole rhythm section. Because there's one thing about playing live, and another thing about capturing it on record. And I'll tell you, man, this new record is like drums from hell." Ah, Eddie turns out to be a *really* easy mark after all. "This is Al and [producer] Andy Johns really cookin' together and getting what Al perceives as being the shit. We've never captured on record what the shit is, really."

The shit is a live thing, then? So technology is getting to where...

"No, it's not necessarily technology, it's being recorded right," Edward laughs. "Flat-out, stone-cold simple."

But that means putting down your tracks separately, where you lose that live interplay. I guess your production procedures are pretty natural, but for the first time since the new band, you're recording guitar parts while standing behind the console. Which seems like the opposite of what a player like you would want to do.

"That's what I'm doing, yeah. But the thing is, I can see my brother, and...I don't know. Actually, every track, I've played behind the console."

Every track on this new record?

"Yeah, yeah."

And the band interplay is there anyway?

"No, well."

Do you feel it's possible that the performance will be affected by the method of recording?

"Oh, yeah! But the way we're recording now is the way, because the way it sounds is three people playing at the same time. Obviously we're overdubbing the vocals, and actually, a lot of 'em are live, too. Sammy's in the control room singin' through a Peavey hand-held mike," Ed laughs. "A lot of it

works, a lot doesn't; some of it, we need those old German Neumanns, and this and that. To get the sizzle, depending on how many guitars I overdub. You've got to be able to hear everything."

How did you usually do the drums before you built a drum room?

"Close-miked. you know, and Al used to use a Simmons bass drum, which is kind of bullshit, but it worked for the time."

But the drum sound you guys had was a trademark.

"Oh, you're talkin' about Al's snare; that's

the way he *tunes* the fucker. Oh, yeah. Put it this way: Between Alex and Andy Johns—I mean, Andy Johns, he's a cartoon, he's the greatest, man. He did 'Stairway to Heaven,' all that shit. All the best Zeppelin stuff, in my mind, and our stuff sounds *very*, very much the way Alex and I always imagined it to be. All the tone that comes out is on record now, as opposed to where before, we sounded very thin on record, and it sounded good live. And now, it's going to be hard to sound like this live. It's fat, it's thick, it's 'big stick,' you know what I mean?"

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ALBERT CLOSES HIS EYES AND LAUGHS QUIETLY as one of his all-star cronies drops his pants and shoots him the moon through the veranda window. This time, backstage is the cruel combination of a ground-floor hotel suite without a bathroom, lined with nothing but stacks of beer cases. Eddie has to penetrate a crowd of fans just to take a leak.

Someone who obviously overheard the combination code for the suite's door squeezes by and asks Steve if he was the one who did the hogs—a simulated pack of pigs snorting—at the end of an inbred Dregs

tune called "Pride o' the Farm." Morse tells him no, that was the road crew, they're good at that sort of thing. The room is packed with guitarists—Yes' Trevor Rabin smiles and mingles aristocratically, Toto's Steve Lukather bearhugs everyone in range. Eddie is bouncing off the walls.

All Albert sees through the glass is indistinct confusion. The last three hours have been pretty good for him; the next few years stand to be even better if he makes the right decisions about where to take his music. "I was a real popular guy in the '70s in country

rock when Emmylou was at a peak, and then it tapered off. I was on the road with Eric, and I guess people forget about you. But it seems to have gone right around again. A lot of people call me, and it's fun."

But Al's still kicking himself. The response to his playing, particularly among the hairdo crowd, has been tremendously positive. It's criminal that after 20 years of stunning audiences, he's still got to prove himself every time he steps onstage, every time he's got to overcome a bigger "name." He must feel it. *I* feel it, and I'm not even up there. Ed sure feels it; running from the suite to the stage between sets, he keeps telling Al how *amazing* he is. "I get such satisfaction doing a whole set on my own, singing and playing," Al reflects. "I finally feel I've had a chance to *play* when I get off-stage. I didn't really know how much I was missing until I actually did it."

So there's no bitterness about being so good yet not appreciated for it?

"I thought about it a lot. I've been on the road since 1960 and a lot of my friends become millionaires, guys that I just played with, like Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton and Steve Howe. But I have no regrets, really, because if I haven't made any money in this business, I have nobody to blame but myself. *I have* the ability but chose not to go in that direction. That has held me back, but I've enjoyed it, I really have. I think my playing is getting better and I seem to be working more, so I can't complain. If it just carries on like this, I'll be happy."

James Burton, basking in legend, is inside talking to Morse. "Everything you played made *sense*," Burton tells him. "There's a bit of confusion with players that want to play exceptionally fast; I mean, Van Halen has his style, but there're so many copy guys playin' that particular style, it has no real identity. A lyrical melody makes more sense. Van Halen's a good friend of mine; I love what he does, but after hearing so much of it...I mean, it's all over as far as I'm concerned. This"—James shakes his hands, miming frantic air guitar—"is not where it's at. If you want to sell records."

And if you *don't* want to sell records? "Then you're out of the business," says Burton. "Then you're doin' it for fun. I don't like to tell someone how to do things, 'cause it's their music and they have to do what they enjoy, but there's one thing you can bet on: If you're going to be in the business, you have to play what people can understand. Hope-

fully, we make the choice to play the kind of music they can accept and they'll buy. But the great thing is to be able to play simplicity, to know where to put the notes. A guitar solo is so important. Like this guy..."

Burton puts his arm around Steve, who had turned away briefly to sign an autograph. Burton repeats what he said about simplicity's power to sell records, and somebody asks Morse if he thinks that's true.


"To sell records?" he laughs. "Well, I wouldn't know."

"He's in the bathroom!"

A group of people spot Ed en route to another toilet, follow him in and look under the metal partitions for his sneakers. He's got them lifted off the floor and against the stall door to repel intruders. He's chased by throngs as he leaves.

ONE MONTH LATER, KEVIN JAMES MORSE IS wailing in his mother's arms as Steve comes in from a morning spent soldering wires for an equipment rack. Outside the kitchen window he watches the first long-overdue rainstorm of the season begin its attack on a harsh regional drought. His wife returns the baby to the nursery, and Steve is beaming even through his exhaustion. Kevin is going to be proud of his dad, who's getting ready for a run of solo gigs he's booked—fly in, unpack the gear, mix the sound, perform with tapes made in the garage, pack up and fly home, then start the whole thing over a few hours later. It's a shower of challenges, playing without a net, just making it through the day. Emerson would be proud too: right here among us is an artist, a bastion of self-reliance. He may not hang platinum on his garage wall, but he's got something better.

"I'm actually very aware of what it takes to make it big," he says. "I know the business well enough to know exactly what it takes. It takes a bit of luck on top of setting yourself up for it. You have to be lucky. But the reason I haven't set myself up for the big image is I just can't do it with a straight face," he laughs. "But that's okay—it's okay to be different. Music is supposed to express what you are, and not everyone wants to be the corporate head, you know?"

Corporate heads rest on corporate shoulders—they're stuck in one place and can't look around. "Well, I'm not," says Morse, "because I don't depend on anything. I just do what I want musically. So right, marketing-wise it never can happen. But who cares? There's other ways to make a living." 

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GUITAR

NILS LOFGREN GETS HARMONIC

The herald
angel pings

By Peter Cronin

I'M HAPPY TO SAY THAT AFTER five years of promises and delays, I'm finally releasing a new solo album." The hardcore fans packed into New York's Lone Star Roadhouse greet Nils Lofgren's announcement with wild applause, and Nils responds by reeling off a series of what he calls "bouncing harmonics," arpeggios with pinging, rapid-fire high notes, producing a sound closer to an angel's harp than an acoustic guitar.

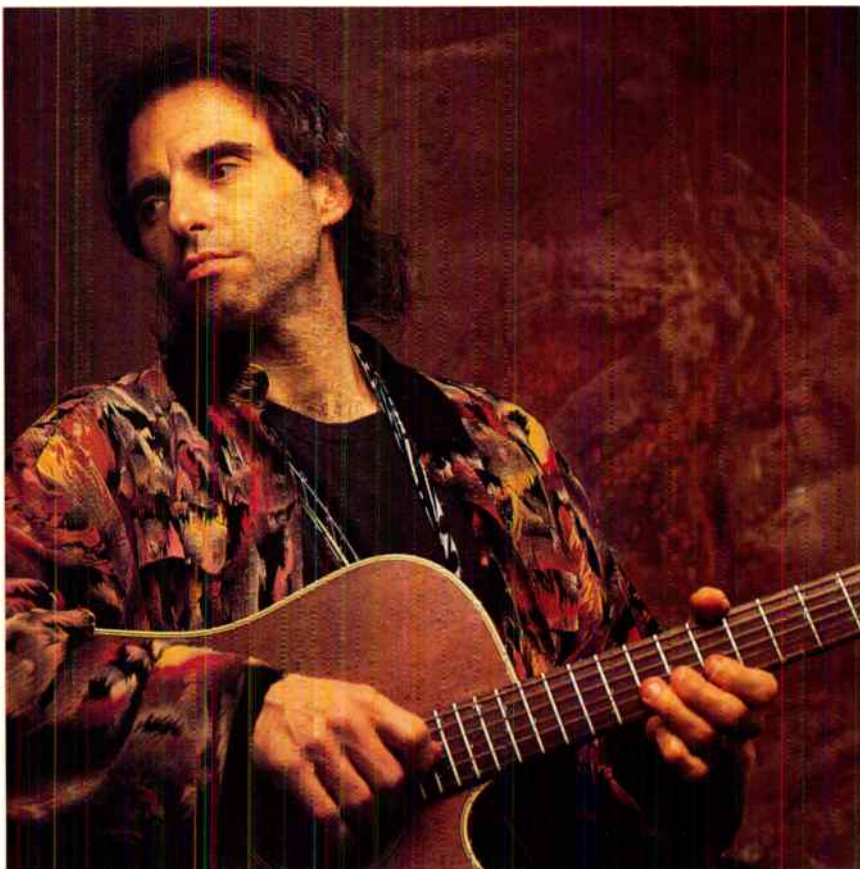
When it comes to his solo career, Lofgren has always been a stubborn kind of fellow. Over the past two decades he's stuck resolutely to his songwriting and solo recording between tours and sessions with Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen and Ringo's All-Stars, and in the process carved out his reputation as one of rock's most lyrical guitarists. When Lofgren finds something good he sticks with it. Take his pick. "I had a thumbpick when I started playing my Dad's old beat-up guitar, so I've never played with a flatpick," he says. "It's as stiff as a board, so it took me quite a while to learn to play rhythmically with it. Other guitarists said, 'Man, you *have* to use a flatpick, that's the cool thing to do,' but I'd spent eight months learning how to use that damn thumbpick and I wasn't about to start all over again."

That bullheaded logic would eventually work to Lofgren's advantage when it came to

producing harmonics. "It started back in the late '60s when I got to be friends with Roy Buchanan," says Lofgren. "Roy got the most pure, bell-like harmonics I'd ever heard, and he showed me how he did it with a flatpick."

In Buchanan's method the tip of the pick and the flesh of the thumb combine to squeeze a harmonic from the string; Lofgren was looking for a way to combine those super-high notes with speed and accuracy.

To hear how a natural harmonic should sound, check out Steve Howe's intro to Yes' "Roundabout" or Jimmy Page's opening notes on Led Zeppelin's "Dazed and Confused." These are open-string harmonics, where the left hand barely touches the string directly over the 12th fret while the right plucks the string; harmonics also sound over different frets. Because Nils' thumbpick leaves his right-hand index finger free to do the job of the left, he can create those crystalline notes all over the neck. He demonstrates with a G chord at the third



GERI ALLEN'S KEYBOARD KONCEPTS


The new jazz star is
a thinker at the piano

By Gene Santoro

fret. "On each string, one octave higher, follow the chord with your right index finger," he explains, shadowing the fretted G chord by lightly touching the string just over the fretwire with his index finger; his thumbpick sneaks up from behind to strike the string. And here's the added attraction: "With the thumbpick, I can strum down with the harmonic and back up with the normal note and jump octaves at a quick speed." Voilà—bouncing harmonics.

Accuracy aside, happy harmonic accidents have inspired some of Lofgren's most fiery playing. "Sometimes I'll play lines where I'm not worried about getting the true octave harmonic," he says. "My fingers are fluttering off and on the string and I'll get an overtone because I'm *not* exactly in the right place. If you have a clean sound it has to be precise, but if you get it really pumpin' with overdrive, you can hit different parts of the string and get wild overtones and undertones."

Nils hit all the right places in his harmonic-laden solo on Springsteen's "Tunnel of Love." "Bruce is not one to structure things to death," says Nils. "He's into emotional stuff, so that day I tried to catch something real quick before it went by."

Lofgren's grown used to bouncing between solo artist and sideman, but with his new LP *Silver Lining* and an upcoming tour, he's looking forward to being his own boss again. "When I have an opportunity to play with Neil or Bruce or Ringo, I'm gonna take it, but right now I've got a record I'm really happy with, and I can't wait to make the next one. It's gonna be better." 

THUMB FUN

LOFGREN uses Herco thumbpicks exclusively, but he's flexible when it comes to guitars. His acoustic is a Takamine EN-10C and his electrics are Fender Strats. He still plays the Martin D18 that Neil Young gave him during the *After the Goldrush* sessions, and the Zemaitis guitar that was bequeathed by pal and late Pretender James Honeyman-Scott.

His strings are D'Addario, his amps MESA/Boogie. On his Strats, Lofgren has installed Bill Lawrence 450 pickups. "The new ones have a bit more body," he says, "and they're the quietest pickups I've found that have that Strat bite." After killing all his old Guild Rotoverbs (a bizarre chorus device from the '60s) Lofgren entered the digital age with a Roland GP-8.

THIRTY-THREE-YEAR-OLD Geri Allen is working her piano pretty hard these days. Take a listen to her recent album, *The Nurturer*, her earlier releases as a leader, like *The Printmakers* or *Twilight Time*, or any of the swelling catalog of recordings she's made as an increasingly in-demand sideman, like Paul Motian's *Monk in Motian*, or Motian and Charlie Haden's *Etudes*. What you'll hear—part of what you'll hear, anyway—is a prodigious technique, carefully honed; what you won't hear is an egotistic celebra-

tion of chops-for-chops'-sake.

Allen's a reflective talker. The product of long schooling—she started her serious keyboard work at Detroit's famed public high school, Cass Tech, continued through Howard University and picked up a master's degree in ethnomusicology from the University of Pittsburgh—her notion of technique is very different from that of the folks who'll bend your ear about speed and breath control and string bending.

She begins, "I've done transcriptions of Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, Bud Powell and a few others as well. I've actually tried to



Photograph: James McGoan

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perform them, by playing the skeleton of the transcription and then improvising. I think that learning and playing transcriptions is very beneficial. That's been a major part of my technique, by letting me step into the shoes of the greats and see what it felt like. But even though you can play Jelly Roll's notes, there's something else there that's just as important—the force of his personality, his expression as an individual. I think that's the major key for me finding a suitable technique. All the people I've talked about knew themselves very well and knew what they

wanted to achieve. Then they found a technique—including the harmonic approach, the rhythmic approach, the melodic approach, the function of getting around the instrument. For me, all those are one thing."

Like a lot of players her age, Allen didn't start with Jelly Roll and Fats, but with Herbie Hancock—specifically, the Hancock of *Headhunters*. "From there I backtracked to his time with Miles, and just kept following the piano—Wynton Kelly, Red Garland—until I wound up back at my father's record collection." And the figures she calls "the

core people" she'd grown up hearing—Duke, Bird, Bud and Monk—hit her harder the second time around.

It's Ellington's influence in part that makes it hard for Allen to discuss her piano technique apart from her overall approach. "I don't see what I do on the piano separately from my composing," she repeats regularly. And yet there are also Ellingtonian slants to her keyboard work that can be specified: the spare, astringent comping, the deceptively simple phrases that open into motivic forces during a solo.

Musicians from Eubie Blake to Tatum to Hancock all play their roles in Allen's music: her compositions on paper or in air (the instant composition we call improvisation). "For me, different pianists, different composers project different aspects of life. I'm not trying to fit all these things into a particular scope—one solo, one piece. But I need them the same way I need food."

The influence of Thelonious Sphere Monk, however, looms larger than most. "One person that really hits me is Monk—his individuality among a generation of individuals. He's completely himself, and that is the greatest challenge there is. There are so many things about what he did: the touch, the whole approach technically that made a lot of people think he couldn't really play. The flat way he holds his hands, for instance, is like nothing I've ever seen anywhere else. There are what some people call 'crushed chords'—Monk's flatted seconds, for instance. I have my own versions of those, which are different, because between Monk and me there are people like Herbie Hancock.

"Then there's Monk's concept of space, the concept that silence is as important as sound. I sometimes like to lay out and not play. It's shocking to people because it's not done much. It makes them uncomfortable. I like to pull things like that from odder corners of the tradition, so I listen hard to people like Monk, Herbie Nichols, Andrew Hill. There are still a lot of things I don't understand about what Monk does, like how he actually bends notes. But there's a world in this instrument that I'm still learning and

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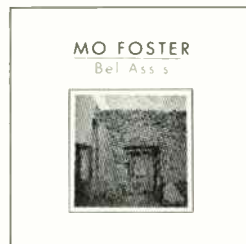
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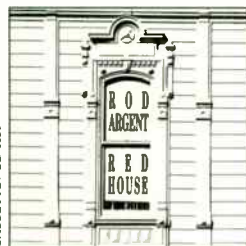
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MU91

he's one of the masters."

Nor is Allen reluctant to credit masters of traditions outside what we call jazz for their impact on her playing and composing. As a high-schooler, she leaned for a while toward a career in Western classical music; though she decided on jazz, she remains "very much in love with the Western classical music I studied. There's a discipline of dealing with this thing"—she gestures across the keyboard—"on a day-to-day basis, mapping out what your short- and long-term goals are.

"So what I try to do, in terms of my own technique, is use a combination of Western classical technique that I've accumulated through the years. That includes Brahms, Beringer, Chopin's *Études* and Bach—music that I find very challenging and intense in different ways. Some piano technique is very closed and other technique is open. Bach, for instance, is a more closed technique—five voices for two hands, say, in the *Fugues*. An example of a more open technique would be Debussy, perhaps, in the sense that there's more arpeggiation, the

music is more spatially oriented. But Bach, especially in the *Preludes* and *Fugues*, is more scale-oriented; what he does happens over a more closed interval."

How Allen combines these accumulated attacks is, as you'd expect, not exactly mechanical. But it does have some guiding principles. "A lot of my inspiration for a performance comes from the moment of access: all the energy that's going on in the space and the positions, the feeling the musicians are projecting. That happens once in a while so strongly that you lose it, and you go into somewhere where some things can transpire that you don't understand yourself. But the control aspects of it are very specific. Take the ideas people have about the use of tonality. I like to try to find a balance between what people think of as consonance and dissonance. It's a balance that follows closer to dissonance than consonance, but I try to give it the same kind of familiarity that consonance has. So it's not there for shock; it's just part of the vocabulary. I mean, I am trying to challenge myself and push out the bounds, but I like to think of that as more incidental, in a sense—if it happens, that's good.

"That points to my notion of harmony. I don't think in terms of stacked chords, but more incidentally—the different lines the instruments are playing interacting. I guess you could call it more of a polyphonic approach than a harmonic one. I look at rhythm that way too: I like to see odd things juxtaposed against each other. I think very much in terms of each instrument being a layer, so to speak. That's an African sensibility, actually. I like to make that connection—not just as an African-American, but with that continent's traditions. So I look at the traditions of marimba and harp, things that could be translated into a piano orientation. The drum tradition is a very important part of how I look at my music, that sense of polyphony. But then again, I've been inspired too by the polyphony of different folks like Bach."

As a sideseper, Allen has to adapt to the demands of other musical perspectives—something she says she's accomplished now, though not without some heavy soul-searching. "My rhythmic interests, for instance, are very specific," she continues, "and in most contexts I'm able to infuse them in my own playing. But I like to feel the drums and the bass in certain ways, and I can only do that in my own bands.

"But as a part of a rhythm section in a straight-ahead band, there are still things I

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can pull off. Sometimes I feel like people at first aren't sure if I can really play—what I'm doing isn't what they expect. I like to play across the bar line, I like to provide a real freedom within the confines of the rhythm. But there can be a lot of tension when you're trying to extend time, even though you're very conscious of the time. It's a challenge, because I want it to swing too.

"So within the context of playing with other people, what I try to do is find a center

of gravity that allows everybody to relax in the situation. More specifically, I like to be able to free up the time with the time still being intact—the pulse is still going, but we're tilting over it. Let's look at it this way: It's like a zoom telephoto lens. You can see something very specific from a great distance or you can look all around the periphery. That's a basic element I like in my playing: juxtaposing opposites, then moving across the gradations between them." 

BASS

BOOTSY COLLINS EFFECTS THE FUNK

Scouting bass hyperspace,
speaking without words

By Gene Santoro

FEW BASSISTS HAVE HAD BOOTSY Collins' kind of career. Not many players get their first break at age 14 with James Brown, move on after two years, bump into master funk wizard George Clinton and fuel the cartoon psychedelia and dancefloor polyrhythms of an oddball but visionary Mothership like Parliament/Funkadelic. Next came his own pioneering offshoot, Bootsy's Rubber Band.

But few bassists have either Bootsy's chops or his sense of sound development. His twangy, rubbery, butt-thumping bottom can suddenly zoom into the stratosphere and turn vocalic or spacey or both, in a way that recalls tone-painting pioneer Jimi Hendrix.

That's no accident, according to Bootsy: "He changed the way everybody heard. He influenced my whole idea of the Mutron and all, because he was gadgetized. He had this magic thing—the look, the sound, all that kept pulling me. Black radio was only telling you about the Temptations. The whole message about Hendrix—the look, the sound, 'this is a guy who's got airplanes in his music'—was that you can't be flying that high. For me it was like, Damn, why're they telling us this magic's no good? I'm looking around and people are getting off, but radio's saying *naaah*. Once P-Funk got going and they started telling us *naaah*, I figured, 'This is the way they go.' I never was looking to get

play from radio, so I wasn't surprised—until I did get some. We were way off to the left, but the world needs something this off-centered. They're trying to make us all straight, but that'll never work. Even a robot's gonna

go nuts on you."

But even before he heard Hendrix, young William Collins was drawn to bass possibilities besides bottom and beat. "James Jamerson was my main influence coming up," he says. "I just wanted to know who that Motown bass player was. Even though they didn't have the popping and pulling, his lines were classics. He never played anything that shouldn't have been there. What he did stood out from the records. They were melodies; they flow. They were simple but when you try to play them they're deep, and that took me away.

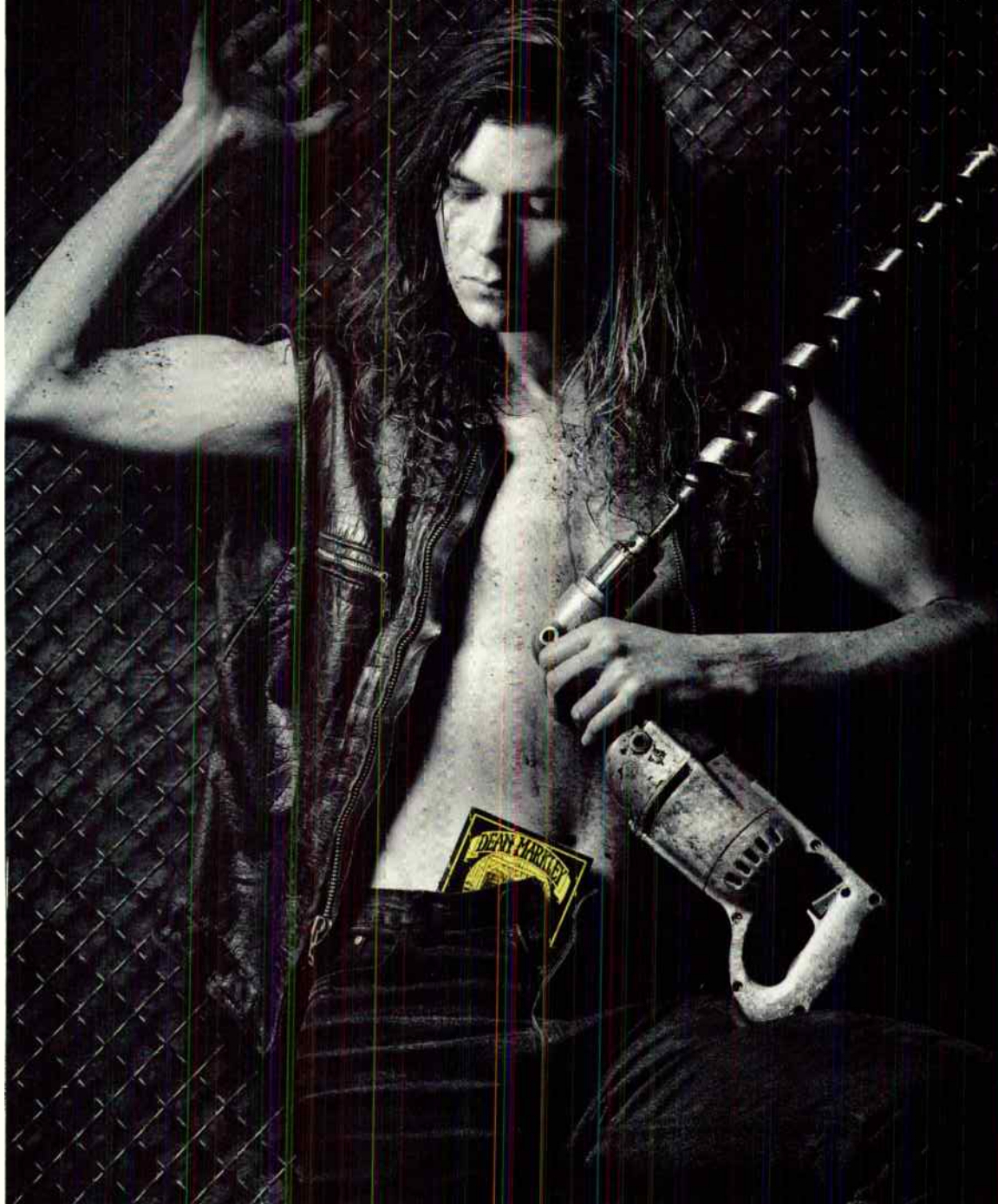
"Working with James Brown changed what I did," he continues. "It slowed me down to make me play bass. When I got with him, it was, 'We need a bass player, here's the one.' So he disciplined me. It was during the time of acid and love and peace; Jimi was on the scene, and I was trying to play all these different melodies and sounds I was hearing, on bass. So I toned it down; I learned to hold the bottom down. When I got the chance to dance I just acted a fool.

"James' voice is the rhythmic center of the band. When he would come up for different ideas—like after the gig, on the bus—he was usually fly about something, then he'd start doing his vocal thing and his



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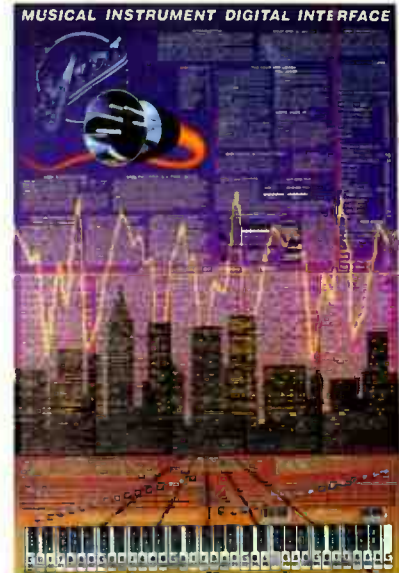
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movements. Then we'd go straight to the studio and hit it—no rehearsal, no nothing—with my version of what I thought James was saying, my brother Catfish [a guitarist] with *his* version. We'd all hit and that was it. We learned a lot from the way he'd hum stuff, his body movements. We picked up on all of it."

Of his bass attack, Bootsy says, "Besides Jamerson, Larry was my biggest influence." "Larry," of course, is Larry Graham, the bassist credited with the thumb-popping innovations that power so much funk and its offshoots. Says Bootsy of his own Graham-influenced approach that has in turn influenced so many others, "Everything starts off pretty simple, on the one, and then gets more syncopated. It started off being the backbone, the bottom of the music, but since P-Funk it's got a more open-ended role. Even then, bass was becoming more of a lead instrument. Now it's being put in the background, but I think the time for it to be featured is coming around again."

"My thing is built around a couple of basics. There's the two-fingered technique: That plucking is a big part of the funk groove. It's aggressive and powerful, makes the beat

MUFFS 'N' MUTES

BOOTSY'S rig is far from simple. "On the pedalboard I've got all the old stuff: three Mutrons, one Big Muff, a Yamaha distortion, an old rackmount digital MXR, the small Boss DD-3. I've got a few new Digi-Techs for rackmount: the Time Machine 4000, the Smartshift Bass Harmonizer, a stereo Rat, an FX-500B. I'm using Roland Space Echo—of course. I've only got two Electro-Harmonix Bass-micro synths left, and I can't find no more. At least I've got a million Mutrons and Big Muffs!

"My amps are the QSC 4000: They run my two sets of subwoofers, which are four 18"s in each cabinet. On the mids I've got four cabinets, each with two 15"s, two 12"s and a horn; the highs are four 12"s and a horn. All my speakers are Celestions. The amps running the mids and highs are two Yamaha 2000As and one QSC 4000. I'm still going with three old Alembic preamps, which gives me that warm, clean sound; they're running my highs, mids and lows. I use that for the Bootsy Rubber Band; for Deee-Lite I lighten up. Oh yeah—always the Space Bass. But I'm starting to get into five- and six-string basses, and even fretless, since I've been working with Bill Laswell."

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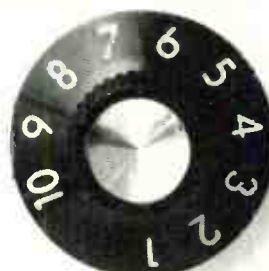
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TERRY BOZZIO GOES FOR IT


Using chops without sounding like a fusion drummer

By Rick Mattingly

pop in your face. It pulls people in and kinda freaks them out. Then there's the thumb. I came along while that was being developed. Larry was the first one being noticed for it by the time I started coming on. I took some of what he was doing and made it more—I guess you could say commercial, at that time. I added the sound effects, for instance, played it in my own style. I made it simpler: People picked up on it easier because the music was danceable and had lyrics—silly/serious-type stuff—and because of my image. But it brought them in."

He's talking about Parliament/Funkadelic, naturally. "We changed the way people hear funk," he says with no trace of bragging. "I brought along the JB thing. [Keyboardist] Bernie Worrell was all over the place with melodies; he was schooled for that and bought into the funk. Eddie Hazel brought the rock. So it was a melting pot for totally confused musicians. And George brought the concepts: He came in with a distance that told him this could be a big thing. No matter how much people bashed us, we conceived no walls around it: We could act a fool on it.

"My role was pretty fluid in P-Funk. I got to play all the things I'd been thinking about: bass, drums, guitar lines, joking with the voice. I got a chance to experiment. I was always in Manny's [music store] checking out new stuff. Today, the things all sound the same. Back then, different gadgets had different sounds. But the Mutron was the one. I use it for talking without opening my mouth—letting the speakers speak for me. It's about the way you hit the string, the mood you're in. It's a conversation going on between me and it and the world. And then there was the Big Muff: It was raw and rowdy and loud, it'd irritate anybody—*gnnnahhh!* It got back my momma and everybody else who always told me to turn that damn guitar down.

"I had 18 speaker cabinets on the set then, with four super-clean Crown amps, three Alembic tube preamps and all that shit on the floor to give me the dirt. It was a big wall of sound, and I got off on it. Black bands at the time would have the cheapest equipment onstage; the singers'd be singing and the band'd be real hush-hush. I was so tired of that, I figured I was on a mission: Seek out and deploy emblems of the funk." Working now with a revived Rubber Band and rappers like Deee-Lite, he's still scouting hyperspace with that goal in mind. 

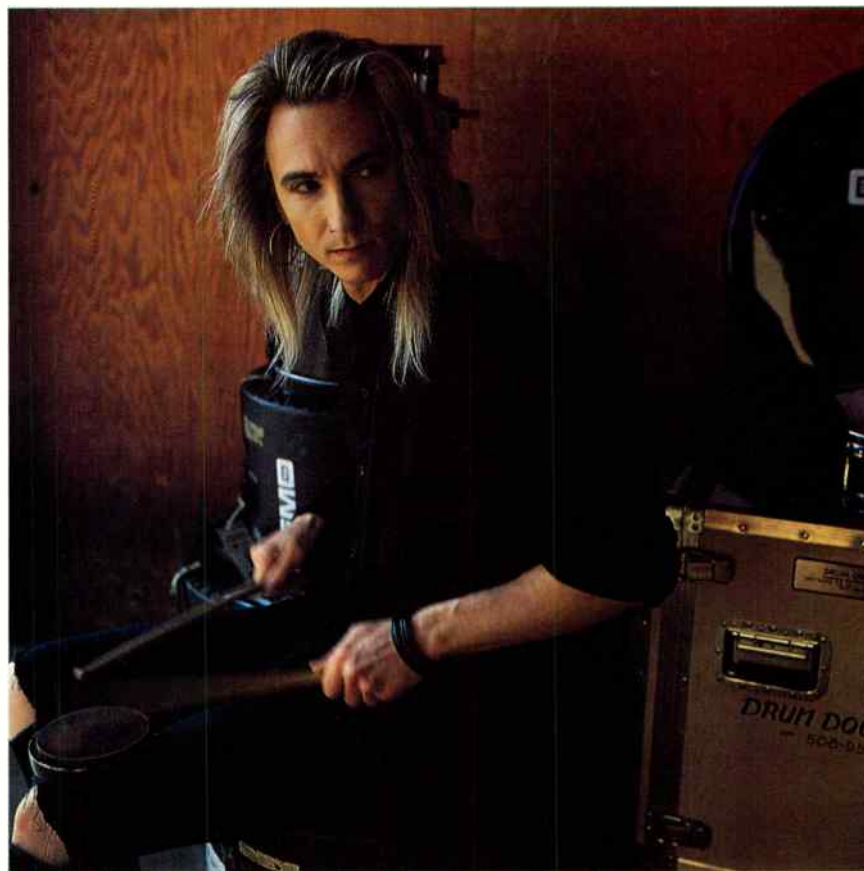
I HATE HEARING MUSIC WHERE a drummer just takes a traditional approach," Terry Bozzio says, "when there is a chance for doing something with the art that makes it different. I always think in terms of what I can get away with. How can I blaze a new trail? How can I uniquely be Terry Bozzio as opposed to any session drummer?"

In his work with Frank Zappa, U.K., Missing Persons and Jeff Beck, Bozzio has managed to leave his thumbprint on the music: You know it's him. The identifying character-

istic often has to do with Bozzio's formidable technique, as he inserts blazing tom fills, intricate polyrhythms, odd-metered beat patterns and deft double-bass rolls that are simply beyond many drummers.

Despite his considerable chops, Bozzio has never been mistaken for a jazz drummer trying to play rock—often the case when a drummer strays too far from simple backbeats. "I guess we're really talking about developing the virtue of discernment," Terry says, "knowing when it's appropriate to do what."

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rock, Bozzio says, is to maintain a strong pulse underneath anything else that's going on. "You have to give people what they want, but once you do that, you can do whatever the hell you want. In Missing Persons we had a song called 'No Way Out' that had sections in 10 and 11, and there were a lot of technical things thrown in. But there was always this solid 4/4 feel in the bass drum that the audience could tap their feet to."

Bozzio will often reverse the procedure when he wants to use busy double bass. In those instances, he might be keeping straight quarters on the hi-hat and a solid backbeat on the snare. "That was the technique I used on 'Sling Shot' on *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop*," Bozzio says. "On a Missing Persons song called 'Rock 'n' Roll Suspension' I kept a sort of '60s Motown four-beats-on-the-snare groove thing happening while I played random bass drum fills. Then, on another part of the song, I kept four-on-the-floor with the bass and straight eights on the hi-hat while I played polyrhythms on the toms. And on 'Mental Hopscotch' I played a basic punk pattern, but in between the main stabs of the beat I did a melodic thing with my cymbals, hi-hats and a little bell."

"So one basic approach is to designate part of the drumkit to hold down the groove while another part has some surprises. That way, the listeners have a sort of umbilical cord to hold onto, but there are also things happening to keep them guessing."

TERRY'S TRAPS

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A lot of the songs on the Beck album show another of Terry's methods for incorporating technique. He'll play a basic backbeat pattern through most of the song, saving the chops for fills; the contrast between simple beats and complex fills makes each stand out more. "Technique is much more meaningful if it's used with some reserve. I've been very influenced in that regard by Wayne Shorter. Some of the stuff he did with Miles Davis was like a jar full of butterflies flapping their wings: constant motion and myriad colors. Then when he was with Weather Report, he played very few notes—but they were so meaningful. And when his technique did come out, it was really special. He used it so sparingly."

In the same way, Terry often makes you wait for the pyrotechnics. But unlike some players with a lot of chops who can't play simple licks with conviction, Bozzio slams out the most elemental pattern with the power and attitude of someone who's using every bit of technique he has just to play a backbeat. Or, as a former colleague from the Zappa band—percussionist Ed Mann—once described it, "Terry has that 'every note I play will be the last thing I'm remembered for' style."

With all his chops, has Bozzio ever been bored holding down a simple rock groove? "Never," he says, "because it's part of who I am, and honesty is very important in music. You can't fake it on any level. Rock 'n' roll isn't so much about the technique and music theory that we learn from studying. It's more about expressing who you are."

But while he believes in the power of a simple beat, Bozzio keeps an eye out for every possibility to get away with something special. "That's where discernment comes in," he says. "You have to balance what's best for the music with what's best for you to play. There are times you have to pull technical things from yourself that you might think are beyond you, because that's what it takes to make the music happen. But there are other times when you have to do the reverse and avoid being technical because that's what's best for the whole."

"Experimenting is the only way you learn. You can discipline yourself into a corner—you'll stunt your own growth by being too concerned with things like that. You have to take a certain amount of chances. Of course," he laughs, "when you take those chances, you might get told you're playing too much." 

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On his latest album, *Drastic Measures*, Michael Manning opens up a whole new territory for the electric bass. From the hot chops in his solo rendition of Chick Corea's "500 Miles High" to the signature tapping and cool lyricism of "Red Right Returning", *Drastic Measures* doesn't just stretch your perception of the instrument, but expands the outer limits of your imagination. Music like this doesn't happen without taking *Drastic Measures*.



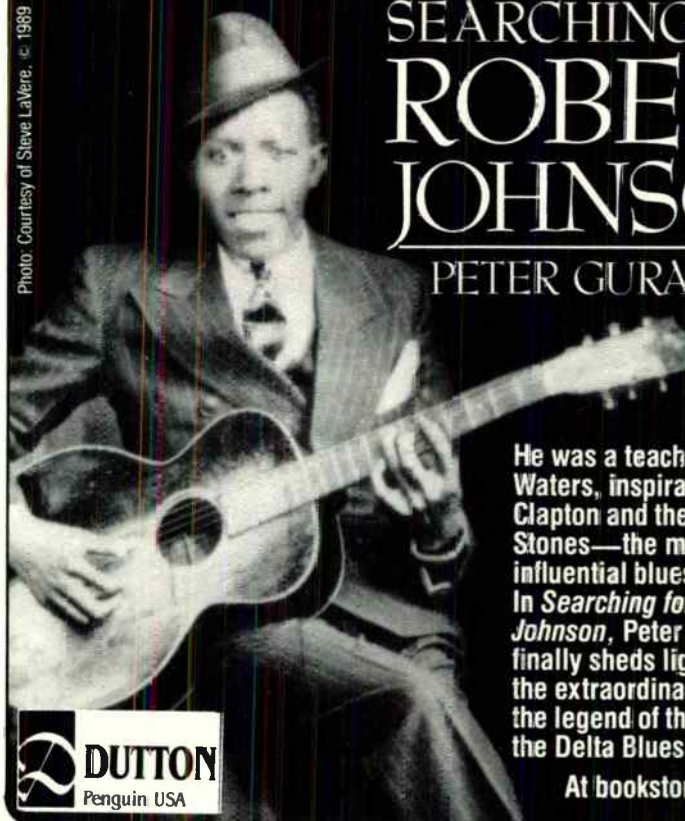
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GETTING BOOKED AT ROCK CLUBS

Dos and don'ts from the home of Purple Rain

By Martin Keller

THE NIGHTCLUB FIRST AVENUE in downtown Minneapolis recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The 1200-capacity club—with its “little room” the Seventh Street Entry next door—has booked Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs & Englishmen and U2, King Sunny Adé and James Brown. Prince, who staged surprise concerts at the club throughout the '80s, helped turn First Avenue into a tourist attraction by shooting most of his *Purple Rain* film there, while the Entry served as a launching pad for the Replacements,

Hüsker Dü and Soul Asylum.

The people who run First Avenue have an opinion or two on how to land yourself a club gig. The following collection of guidelines, anecdotes and inside tips was drafted by the First Avenue staff.

“We're Kinda Like R.E.M., Anthrax and Joni Mitchell”: Know what kind of music you play, the audience you're after and which clubs are home to your audience. This helps clubs pair you with the right bands on a bill, and will help steer your band in a realistic direction.

Don't Believe the Hype: Don't generate it, either. Club owners and booking personnel can cut through the crap pretty fast. They've heard how so-and-so with its \$1000-a-week publicist is the next Living Colour. Talk is cheap. The proof of how good you really are is in your tape, your show, your press clips and your attitude.

Who's in Charge Here? It's a common myth that club owners and managers do all the booking. Often they don't, so don't bug them for gigs. Bother *other* musicians. Your fellow musicians are not your competitors, they are your allies. Many headlining acts get to pick who opens for them. So hang out in live music bars, get friendly with your “rivals.” Be seen on the scene. Owners and bookers listen to their headliners and their working staff, especially sound people.

“Quichyerbitchin”: Don't complain about how hard the business is, especially to other people in it. Everybody has a hard time making it—even Nelson.

Build an Audience: Get 200 friends, fans or next-of-kin to come to your gigs before you go after media coverage or spend money on a cassette. This will increase your visibility among other music types and the bean counters upstairs watching who comes through the door.

Plan Ahead: Send tapes and press materials to radio stations, print media and stores you know will stock your music, at least three weeks before booking a gig at a club. Find out who should get what, then make sure it gets to them on time. Finally, let the club know that you did the promotional groundwork.

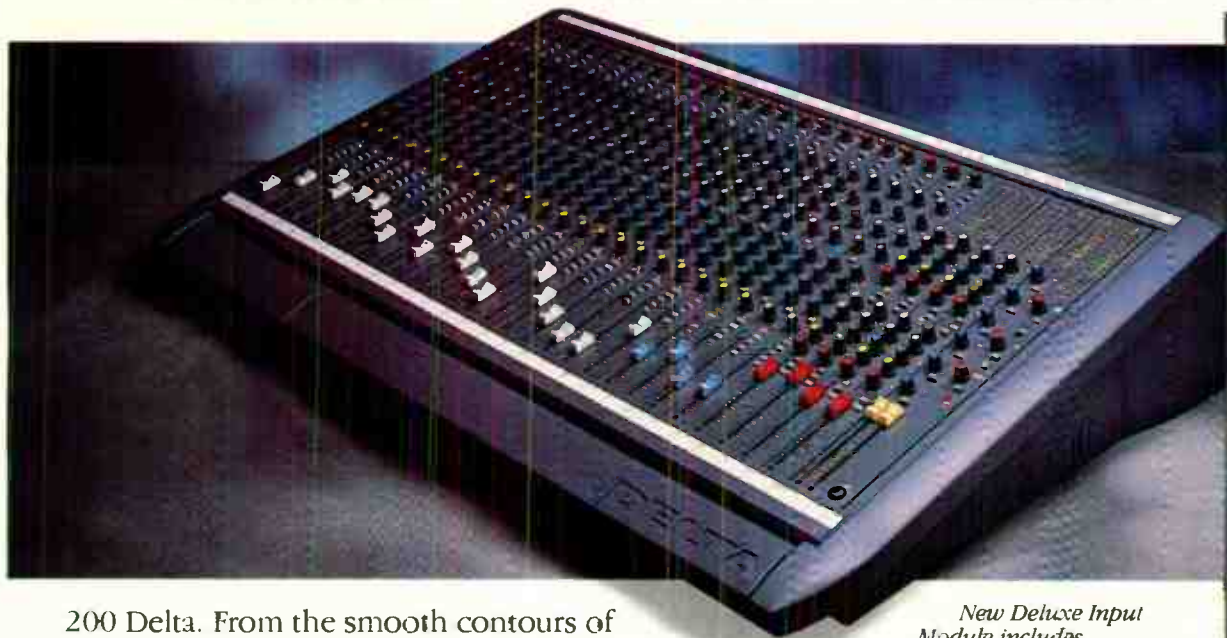
Avoid the Taste-of-the-Month Club: Many bands tend to describe themselves by saying, “We're the next (Name of Really Hot Attraction Here).” Be original: There are already five new Replacements in south Minneapolis this week!

Have Demo Will Travel: Make a good one and give it to any headliners you work with or to anyone who wants to hear it: owners/managers, media, record stores.

Good Press Doesn't Equal a Good House: Hey, some American rock audiences don't read very gud.



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Promises, Promises: Never trust a promise from anybody, whether it's about making up a lost date at a hot club or getting an audience with David Geffen.


Know Where You're Going: Don't change your music to keep up with trends. Established speed metal groups often have a difficult time making the transition to metallic pop. Same thing with funk bands who want to become rappers.

Learn to Love the Concept of "Product": As soon as you charge admission, your music and band become product. If you can live with that, you shouldn't have any problems learning how to market what you do. Remember that clubs sell "live product," no matter how awesome your recorded stuff is. Make sure you can pull it off live before you start looking for a club date.

Don't Have a Cow, Man: If something's not going right in any of your dealings with a club, sit down and work out the problem. Motörhead's Lemmy Kilmister couldn't get into the club for soundcheck, so he kicked in the front door.

If You Need Really Big Towels (For Whatever Reason), Bring Your Own: George Clinton's bass player asked for big bath towels but when the club couldn't provide them, he raced back to the hotel, returned with a supply and quickly shaped one into a big diaper that he wore onstage. A good gig starts in infancy...and works its way to the stage.

Don't Get Upstaged: If you're gonna insist on headlining, don't let the opening act blow you away. This causes animosity between performers—and between audiences and club management.

Remember the Golden Rule: The people you meet on your way up are—that's right—the same people you'll meet on your way back down. Be civil to club owners and their booking agents. And be really especially good to club staff—sound techs, bartenders, door personnel and others. They all have memories like elephants—but more importantly they're the closest contacts between you and the club and you and your fans. They help influence decisions about bookings based on what they see and hear, not only for clubs but for other bands, too. 

PERFORMANCE

CLAPTON FAN'S DREAM, SOUND MAN'S NIGHTMARE


By Dan DeLuca

BUDDY GUY'S ONSTAGE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL, AND HE'S ON FIRE. HE'S STRUTTING and bobbing behind the mike, dive-bombing the audience with his guitar. "It's your time right now, baby," he's singing, "but it's gonna be my time, my *time*, my time after a while." It's a delicious moment, but Robert Collins is cringing. Eric Clapton's chief sound engineer, Collins has got problems. "The Albert Hall just isn't built for an amplified rock 'n' roll band," he groans; "it's built for an acoustic orchestra and choir." But this affair is more complicated still. Tonight is the first of six loosely planned Eric Clapton Blues Band nights, the most eagerly awaited portion of Clapton's 24-night Albert Hall stand. Besides Clapton and Guy we've got Jimmie Vaughan, Albert Collins and Robert

Cray: five world-class guitarists, each with different styles and demands to be met. With one rehearsal and a soundcheck, Collins has no idea what'll happen next. Now Buddy's singing from 15 feet behind the microphone, playing it sweet and soft one moment, ripping away as if he were auditioning for Megadeth the next.

The night had begun smoothly enough, with "our Eric"—as Clapton's babyboomer fans over here call him—playing a 50-minute set with Vaughan on second guitar that pretty much fulfilled one's if-only-he-would-play-the-blues wish list—"I Got My Eyes on You," "Standin' Around Cryin'," "Key to the Highway," more. The second set brought Johnny Johnson out on piano, and hit stride with Albert Collins. Robert Cray sang a "Reconsider Baby" to die for, and finally Buddy tore the dome off the sucker.

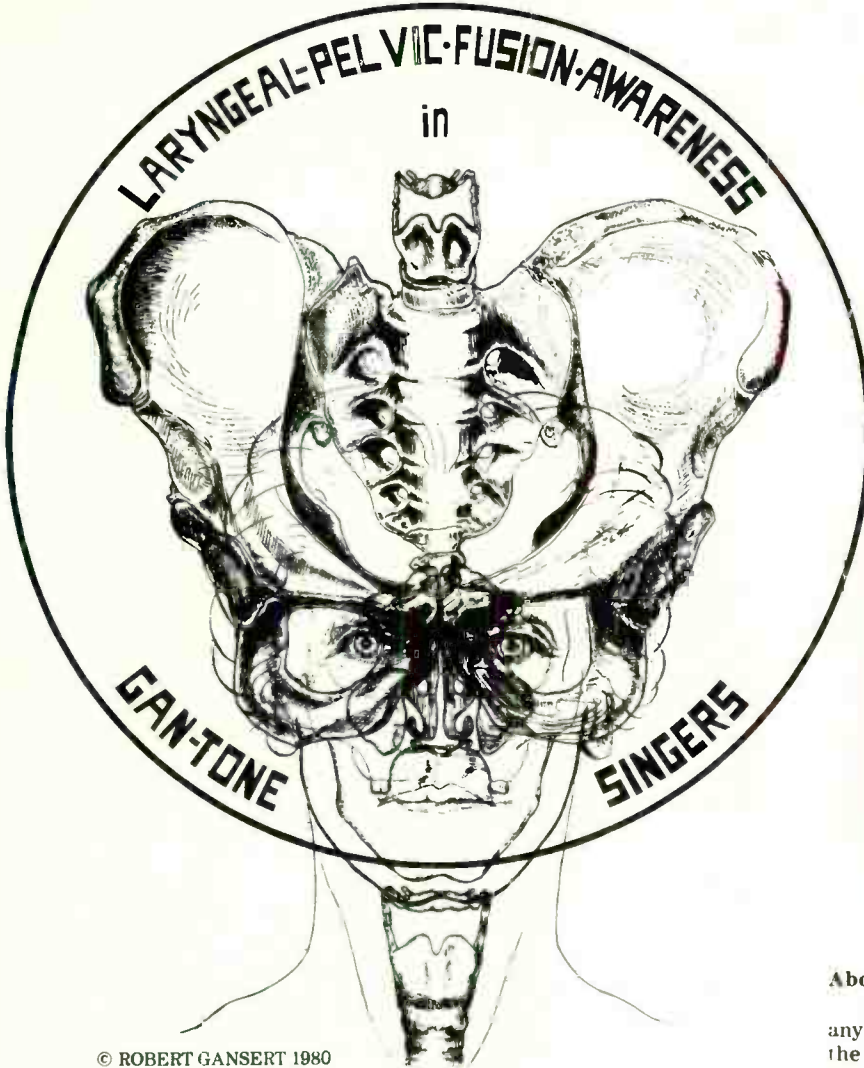
Guy didn't know he was closing the show until he arrived at the hall. "Eric said I was going last because they couldn't trust me to get my parts right," he laughed the next day. "Then he looked at me to say, 'This is yours, do what you want.' Eric goes out of his way to make sure the blues gets heard. I am here to learn, to play together, but this is what I always want: To play for all these people and have 'em say, 'Who the hell is that? Where the hell has he been?'"

Rob Collins, meanwhile, is hoping Buddy doesn't have too many surprises in store for Blues Night Number Two. (As it turned out, he didn't, and the second night was much smoother, and far less riveting.) Maybe Collins is looking back fondly to the earlier quartet nights (three of which featured Phil Collins on drums) or the half-dozen evenings when all he had to worry about was how to get a nine-piece rock 'n' roll band to sound right at home in a circular Victorian auditorium. And though the blues nights are not a picnic, he's *really* not looking forward to the final segment of the stand. That's when the nine-piece band returns, along with Michael Kamen and the entire National Symphony Orchestra, playing something called "Concerto for Guitar," plus the likes of "White Room," "Cocaine" and "Sunshine of Your Love." "Put an orchestra up there," says Collins, pointing to the modestly proportioned stage, "and you've got one thing. Put a rock 'n' roll band up there with them, and you've got one hell of a problem." 

WHO
Eric Clapton
& Friends
WHERE
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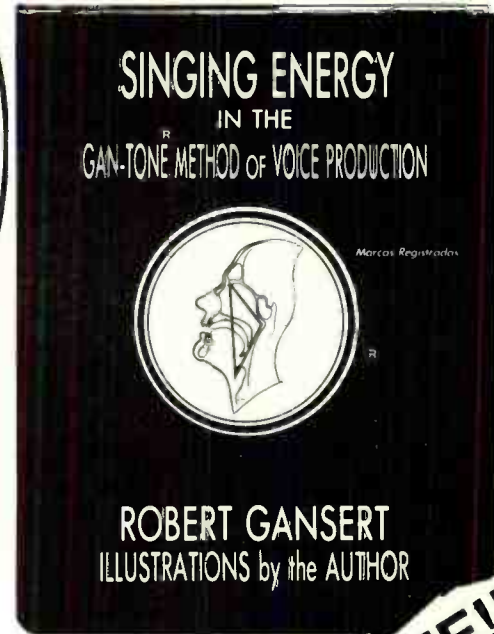
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OPERATION NAMM PART II

The equipment blitz
continues

By Alan di Perna

W

HEN WE LEFT OFF LAST month, musical instrument manufacturers were showing scaled-down, recession-style new product lines at the Anaheim NAMM show. The big exception was Roland, who unleashed their usual orgy of solidly designed products. My personal fave was the JD-800, a fully modern synth with (gasp) real-time sliders for controlling pitch, filter and amplitude envelopes, LFOs—all that good stuff you used to be able to just grab and wiggle in the dear old days of synthesis. But don't be fooled: The JD-800 is thoroughly '90s, with full multitimbral capabilities, built-in digital effects and 108 PCM waveforms for building sounds (extra waveforms will be available on cards). Hey, maybe electronic music will start to be fun again! Elsewhere in Roland's vast display room was a slick entry-level synth called the JX-1, with 64 editable, Roland D-Series-style sounds. Also new was the S-750, an afford-

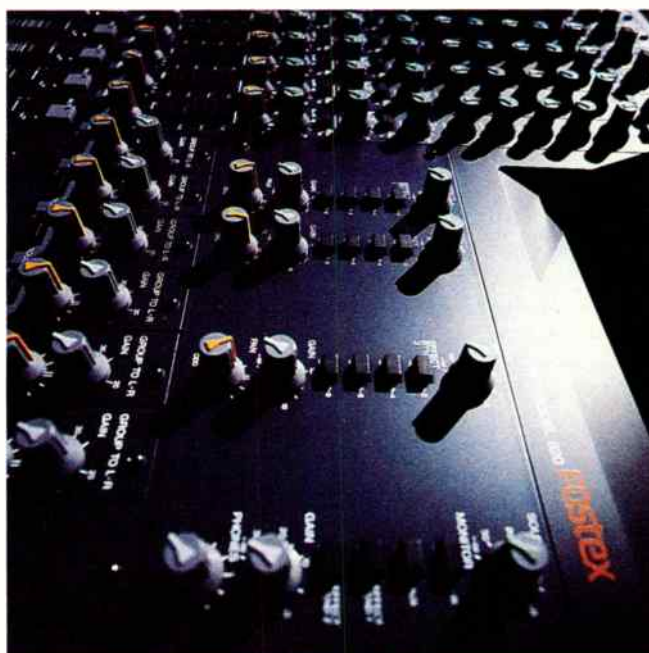
able version of the mighty D-770, and the RSP-550, a studio-oriented digital stereo effects processor. Before leaving Roland's boudoir, let's not overlook a new little half-rack tone module called the SC-55 Sound Canvas and a companion half-rack sequencer called the SB-55 Sound Brush. These are the first products to use Roland's new GS Standard format. Future GS modules will always have the pianos, drums and all other instruments on the same program

numbers so the same sequence can drive many different GS modules with consistent results, and without having to mess with mapping, sys ex messages and other MIDI muddles.

Passport Designs set off their own high-tech bombshell with their new AudioTrax program for the Mac. How about a full-blown Mac sequencer with two tracks of digital audio recording capability for just \$200? Okay, so the digital audio is only bare-bones eight-bit and 22 kHz. Who'd gripe at this price? Especially since AudioTrax requires no extra digitizing hardware; it uses the onboard sound-

chip on the new Mac SEs. Could this be the Portastudio of digital, the affordable thrill that gets everybody hooked on a new home recording technology and leads them on to the bigger stuff?

In other NAMM news, a bleary-eyed John Entwistle shocked journalists by actually showing up at an early-morning press conference to take delivery on the first of Soundcraft's new Spirit mixers. These nicely priced, pro-level in-line boards are just the thing to get the parsimonious Who bassist out of bed before noon. A Soundcraft for the home! The eight-buss Studio series looks pretty cool for residential recordists: 16- and 24-channel boards priced at \$3995



FOSTEX MODEL 820 MIXER



SOUND CRAFT'S SPIRIT MIXER

and \$5650, respectively. The Live series comes in eight-, 16- and 24-channel configurations, priced between \$1295 and \$3495.

Mixers, mixers everywhere. Fostex introduced a 20-input, eight-buss mixer, the Model 820, with three effects sends, three-band channel EQ and switchable phantom microphone power. A mere thousand bucks will get you the Model 485, an eight-in recording mixer with two effects sends, two-band EQ and phantom power.

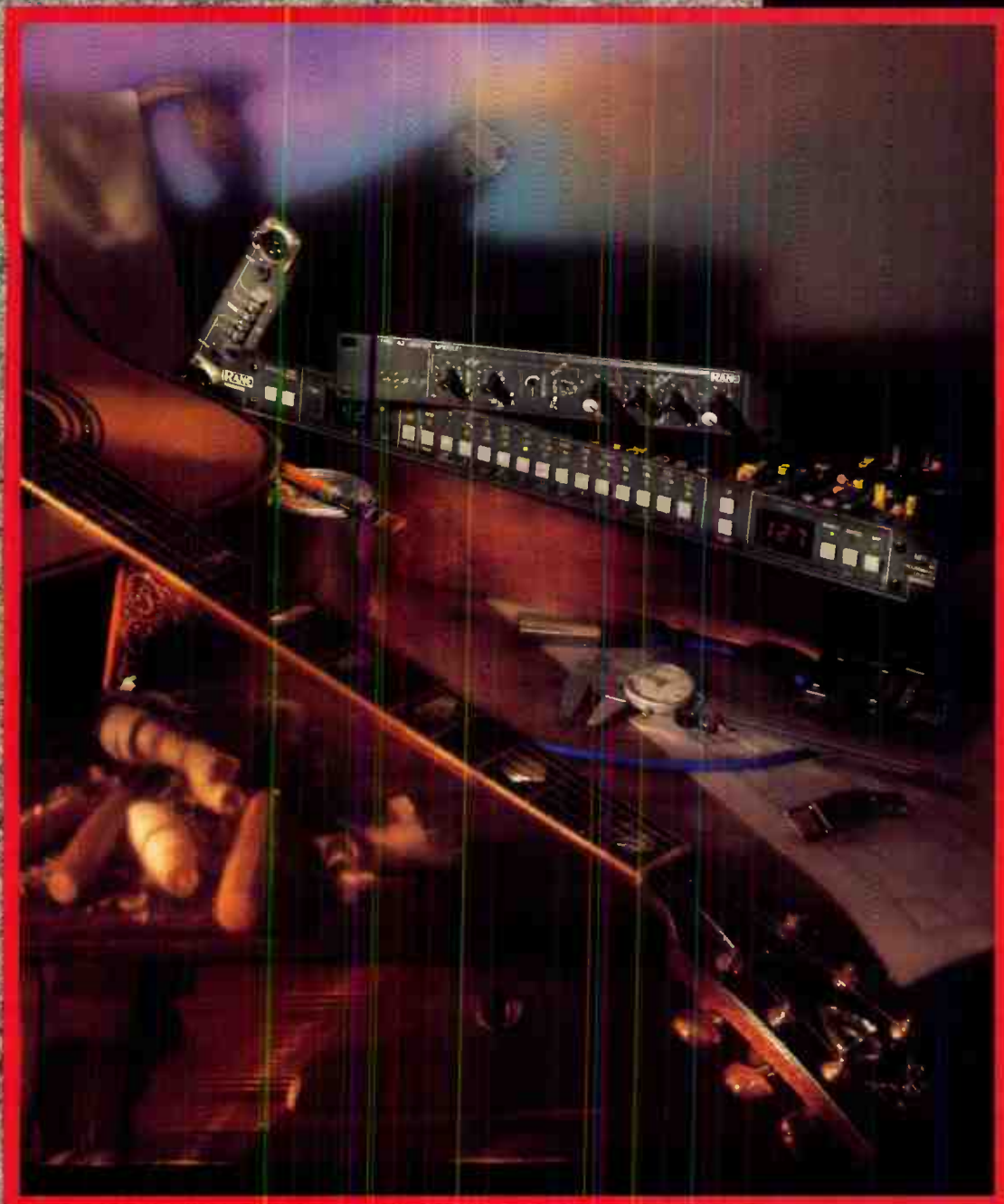
But of all the product categories at NAMM, guitar amplification made the biggest noise. First came the news that ace luthier John Suhr will be teaming up with rack system maven Bob Bradshaw to create what promises to be the next big thing in guitar amps. Then there was a whole deluge of great-sounding rackmount preamps with

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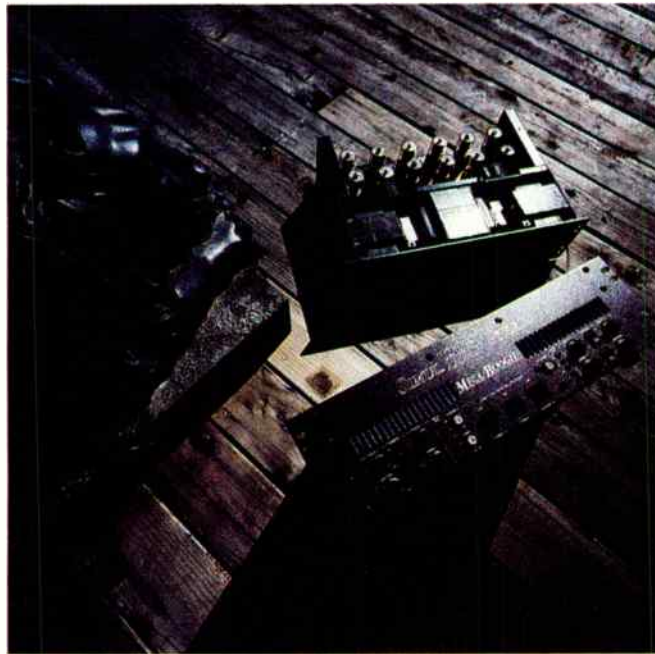
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MESA-BOOGIE TRIAX AMP

outboard gear. The ART SGX-2000's got real live 12AX7 tubes inside. You can use these for distortion or opt for solid-state overdrive or clean preamplification. It's MIDI-controllable and you can string 12 of the onboard digital effects together. The SGX Nightbass offers essentially the same package, voiced for bassists. DigiTech has its own new two-12AX7 preamp-plus-effects scream thang,

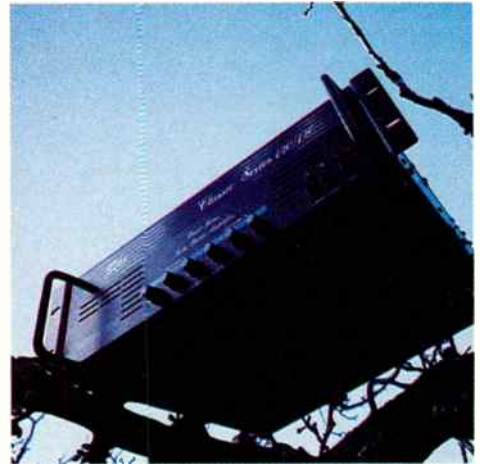
the Twin Tube. The company's first fling with tubes will let you gang seven digital effects together and dominate the whole thing via MIDI. In the non-tubular domain, DigiTech has upgraded the GSP-5 and called it the GSP-7; it still has digital simulated tube distortion, plus four new distortion programs, more programmability, 128 memories, MIDI and the ability to chain up to seven effects. But the preamps keep coming. MESA/Boogie debuted their new Triax preamp, with five 12AX7s, MIDI and 128 memories. Also out of

the lab for the first time were Boogie's new Simul 395 Stereo and Strategy 500 power amps. An interesting feature here is a new "half drive" mode that lets you overdrive the power stage—something that happens naturally in a combo or head and is part of the reason combos and heads have an elusive "something" that rack systems often lack.

It looks like "sensitive," "responsive" guitar power amps are a rising trend. Peavey's new Classic 120/120 power amps (all-tube, stereo, 120W-per-side) are equipped with a resonance control that matches the amp's damping characteristics to the resonant frequency of


whatever speaker cabinet it's plugged into. Don't be skeptical; it really makes a difference. And players who usually run their amps direct into a board—i.e., with no speaker cabinet—will definitely want to check out Marshall's new SE100 speaker emulation unit. The basic technology was licensed from Groove Tubes' Aspen Pittman, who has

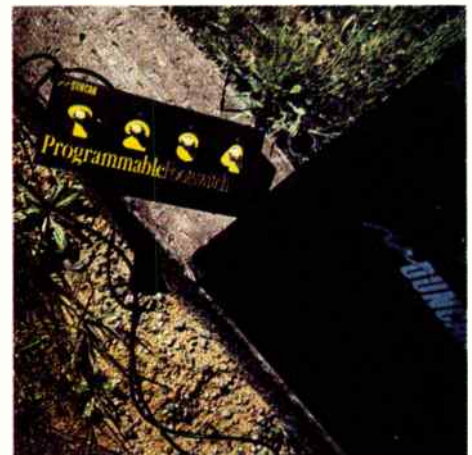
long made one of the few truly reactive load devices on the market (as opposed to passive EQ circuits or "dummy loads"). But the design is all Marshall's own, and includes options for simulating closed-back or open-back cabinets, and even the



PEAVEY CLASSIC 120/120 AMP

sound of different microphone angles on a cabinet. Rack dudes can use it too, to get some of that aforementioned elusive combo or head-and-stack "breathing."

But guitarists who would rather just use a combo could find plenty to get their rocks off at NAMM. This includes Seymour Duncan's 84-50, an American-made upgrade on Duncan's Korean-made 84-40 tube combo. The company also has a new tube power amp, the KTG-2100 with—you guessed it—a dynamics control for varying amp/speaker responsiveness. Hughes & Kettner rolled out their ATS combos: 60W and 100W all-tube amps priced a little more accessibly than previous H&K gear. And with that, it's time to roll out of here. 



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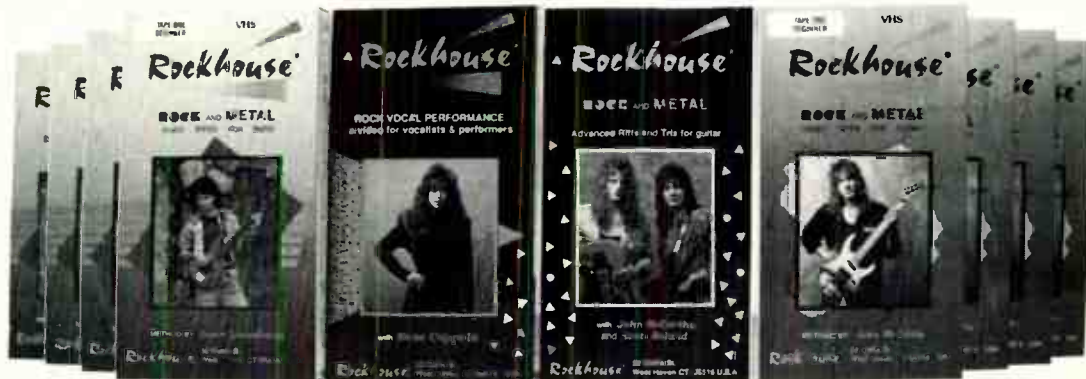
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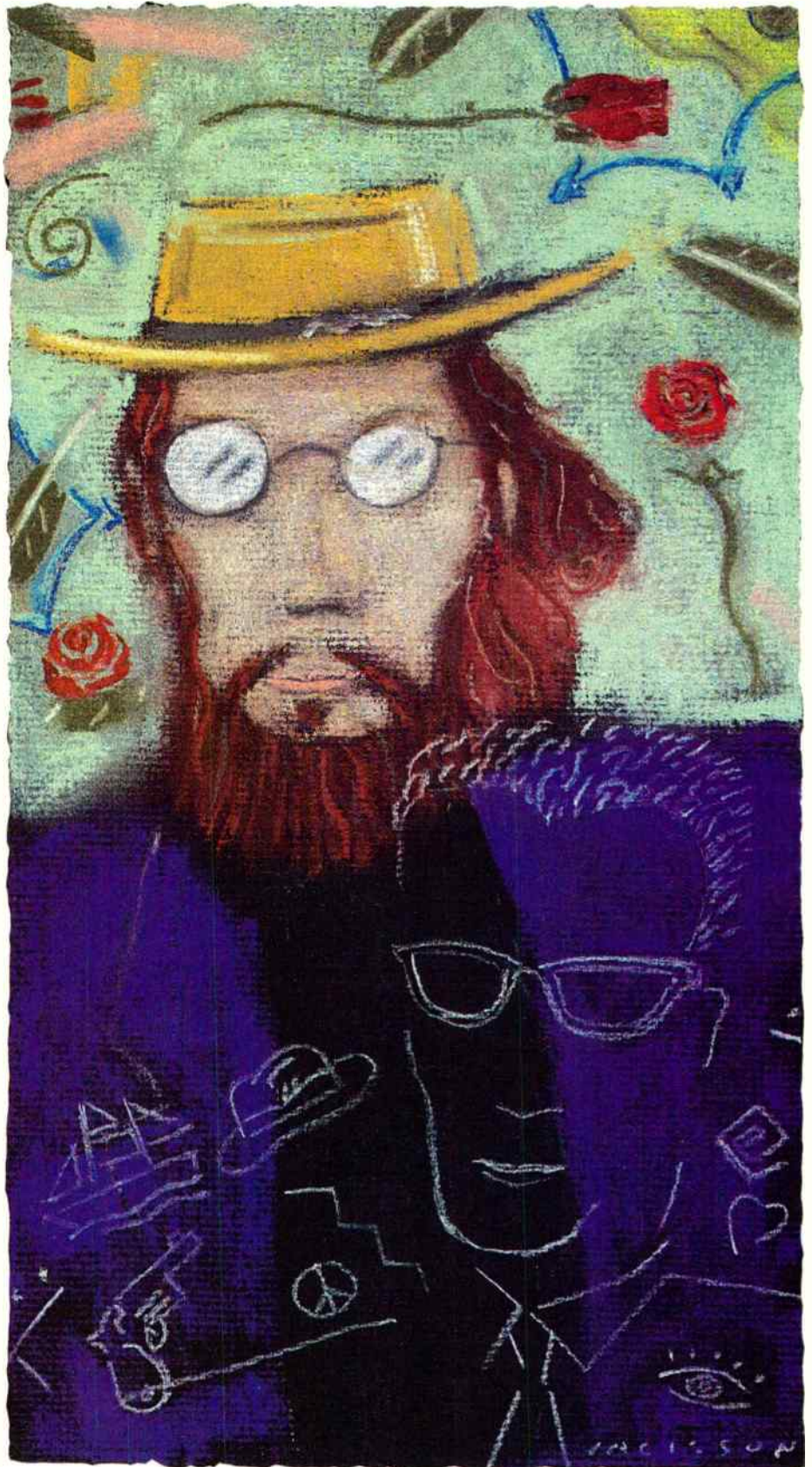
Elvis Costello gets his dander up

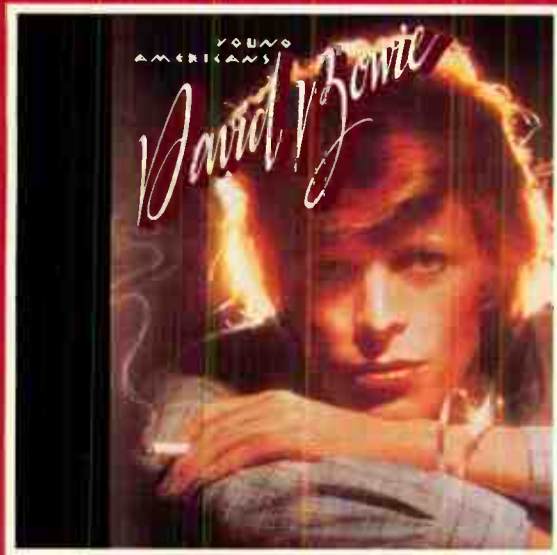
Mighty Like a Rose
(Warner Bros.)

A SIGNIFICANT MOVE FORWARD for Elvis Costello, *Mighty Like a Rose* is also a mass of contradictions. Sprawling and dense musically and lyrically, it at once contains some of Costello's punchiest melodies since *Armed Forces* and some of his most convoluted ever. Lyrically, it features surprisingly specific, accusatory barbs directed at common cultural icons—and deeply personal messages to people he loves, hates or simply dismisses out of hand as meaningless. It is not an easy record to listen to. A dozen spins with lyrics in hand and you'll maybe start picking out the underlying themes. They're doozies: Death, despair, failed lives, broken dreams, fatally flawed relationships, submission and, finally, self-loathing are here in abundance. Faith, hope and redemption are not.

It's probably his best record in years.

Mighty Like a Rose recalls Costello's finest album, *Imperial Bedroom*, in terms of its varied musical ap-





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proach—no single song or arrangement sounds like any other—and its focus on matters and relationships deeply personal. But there's one striking difference: *Imperial Bedroom's* emotional bottom line was "I fucked up"; *Mighty Like a Rose*, almost from beginning to end, says "You fucked up" (the one time it doesn't—on the hypnotic dirge "Broken"—is on a track written by Costello's wife).

The bouncy opener, "The Other Side of Summer," deceptively sets the scene with the first of many contradictions: an upbeat melody contrasting with its lyric, which ends "Goodnight/God bless/And kiss 'goodbye' to the earth." Midway through, Costello asks, "Was it a millionaire who said 'imagine no possessions'?", then muddies the water with references to several other characters (a "poor little schoolboy," "rabid rebel dogs," a "pop princess") whose identities aren't as easily discerned (Roger Waters? David Bowie? Madonna?) as John Lennon's; Costello the wordsmith has rarely been this imprecise.

Likewise the next track, "Hurry Down Doomsday (The Bugs Are Taking Over)," written with Jim Keltner, which posits a "giant insect mutation" swooping down "the white man's burden/Starting out with all the sensitive ones." The verse ends with "Look out there goes Gordon," which is either funny (if we're talking Sumner) or frightening (if drummer Jim), depending on Costello's intent—which, again, is less discernible than usual. What makes this imprecision bearable is the music's emotional hysteria: Nothing is halfway felt, everything's a sucker punch. If we don't get to see Costello's sparring partner, at least we get to see his bruises.

Throughout, the musical backing is superb, featuring ace players James Burton, Marc Ribot and Rob Wasserman, and a trio of keyboardists (Larry Knechtel, Benmont Tench and Mitchell Froom) who can play Steve Nieve on command—and, oddly enough, do. Two tracks Costello wrote with Paul McCartney may be the best and worst the pair have penned. "So Like Candy," with its obvious McCartney chorus, fits in wonderfully; "Playboy to a Man" sticks out like a sore thumb, however appropriate its lyrics. And it is the lyrics, ultimately, that make *Mighty Like a Rose* one of the most overwhelming albums about sexual politics ever crafted.

The despair running rampant through this album at times recalls Marvin Gaye's *Here, My Dear*, and more often Leonard Cohen's *Death of a Ladies' Man*—two even better albums, I think, than Costello's, but two albums that have also been misconstrued as patchy aberrations in otherwise sterling careers. I think *Mighty Like a Rose* will be viewed similarly in years to come—when, and if, it is thoroughly digested by its intended audience. Whomever, of course, that audience may be.

—Dave DiMartino



Various Artists

Soul Hits of the '70s—Didn't It Blow Your Mind
Vols. 1-10
(Rhino)

THE FIRST 10 ENTRIES (THERE ARE AT LEAST FIVE more in the works) in Rhino's mammoth retrospective on '70s R&B are a much-needed if occasionally irksome consideration of the soul landscape in the aftermath of Motown's '60s hegemony. While the Rhino compilations do contain bona fide number one hits (by the likes of Brook Benton, King Floyd, the Honey Cone, Jean Knight, the Persuaders, Joe Tex, the Staple Singers, the Chi-Lites, Joe Simon and the O'Jays, among others), the emphasis here is on a variety of lesser-known genre artists, one-shots and (naturally enough on a Rhino album) novelties. This broad view, skillfully charted in the liner notes by *Billboard's* maven of musical minutiae Paul Grein, provides the listener with a summation of the cross-currents at play during the tumultuous years of 1969-1973.

Beyond conventional dance tunes and love balladry, the series presents a wildly diverse proliferation of styles: post-Norman Whitfield/Sly Stone psychedelic soul (the Chi-Lites' "[For God's Sake] Give More Power to the People"), soft-core porn-soul (the Chakachas' "Jungle Fever," Sylvia's "Pillow Talk"), blaxploitation R&B (Isaac Hayes' "Theme from Shaft," Mayfield's "Superfly"), reggae incursions (Dave & Ansil Collins' "Double Barrel," Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now" and "Stir It Up"), Latin dance music (Malo's "Suavecito"), proto-disco (New York City's "I'm Doing Fine Now"), even gospel (the Edwin Hawkins Singers' "Oh Happy Day").

There's much to be admired on the set, and a good deal of pleasure to be derived from a rehearing of songs by such underrated singles artists as Bill Withers. Ditto terrific singletons such as the Persuaders' ultra-bizarre "Thin Line Between Love & Hate." But the set may be best appreciated by non-obsessives with a programmable CD player. Songs like the Jimmy Castor Group's moronic "Troglydote" and Timmy Thomas' excruciating "Why Can't We Live Together" have not improved with age. It's also hard to rationalize the amount of space allotted to such ephemeral talents as the Chairmen of the Board and the Friends of Distinction.

Ultimately, though, with a little careful pruning by the discerning auditor, *Soul Hits of the '70s* is a

serviceable and welcome overview of a neglected period in R&B history.

—Chris Morris



Lenny Kravitz

Mama Said
(Virgin)

ONE OF THE HORRIFYING THINGS ABOUT THE present age of total media is that nothing will ever go away again. The replicant offspring of the original models who form the backbone of popular culture will revive, remake and replay the past ad infinitum. Appropriationist Lenny Kravitz is just such an artist. His Woodstock-generation influences are easy to spot: Sly Stone, Stevie Wonder, Curtis Mayfield, Earth, Wind & Fire, Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon.... It's a stellar group, but like fellow replicant Terence Trent D'Arby, Kravitz synthesizes these references into an academic exercise that comes across as hollow and inauthentic. There was a heavy, healing power to the best music of the '60s, something mysterious and really big; in Kravitz's hands, these musical motifs add up to little more than a mash note from a naive fan.

Kravitz is partial to the glitzier aspects of '60s music. He borrows liberally from the psychedelic trick bag—the wah-wah pedal, cosmically treated vocals, surreal shifts in rhythm, weird, orchestral production flourishes—but like elaborate icing on a flavorless cake, that trip only serves to expose Kravitz's undeveloped songwriting. (For a truly inventive updating of psychedelia, the Butthole Surfers have Kravitz beat by a mile.) His critically acclaimed debut LP of 1989, *Let Love Rule*, was Kravitz's peace manifesto; *Mama Said* is, purportedly, a harrowing personal song cycle motivated by marital strife with wife Lisa Bonet. He describes the record as "very raw and maybe a little hard to deal with" but that's wishful thinking—no flesh-and-blood personality emerges from Kravitz's vague tunesmithing.

The music is not without charming moments; "What Goes Around Comes Around" (which seems modeled on the Sly Stone classic "Family Affair") is a sweet tune, though it's flawed by an extremely annoying sax solo. But that's typical of the whole record. Kravitz saddles his songs with more goop than they can comfortably bear; they're elaborate cathedrals of sound, built on no foundation.

—Kristine McKenna



Kronos Quartet

Witold Lutoslawski's String Quartet
Astor Piazzolla's Five Tango Sensations
Kevin Volans' Hunting: Gathering
(None such)

WHAT'S THIS? A RELEASE OF THREE SEPARATE CD "singles" by a classical ensemble? Oh, I see. It's the Kronos Quartet, up to their old tricks, bashing conventions and generally behaving like naughty gadflies in a staid tradition. For some purists, the Kronos embrace irreverence for its own sake. But in this case, the concept makes perfect sense. As crusaders for pluralism, the group has always presented a patchwork repertoire to their public. Here, that diversity is channeled into three distinct trains of musical thought—Lutoslawski's knotty, atonal chamber sound, Piazzolla's rich tango-phonic sensuality and Kevin Volans' quasi-ethnic tone poem.

Polish composer Lutoslawski's *Quartet*, written in 1964, is a two-movement piece which shifts liberally between the improvised and the written note. Spontaneous passages link composed lines, giving the piece a fleshy vibrancy that transcends its basically dissonant writing. With harmonic language less accessible than many of Lutoslawski's works, it poses the most "difficult" (i.e. intensive and cerebral) listening experience of the three CDs.

For a more openly seductive aural experience, proceed directly to the Piazzolla. The Argentine king of the "nuevo tango" rightly came into vogue in the '80s. As both a bandoneon (tango accordion) player and composer, Piazzolla keeps a running balance between his head and his mojo on *Five Sensations*. What you won't find in the emotional index of this piece—with musical impressions entitled "Asleep," "Loving," "Anxiety," "Despartar" and "Fear"—is revelry. Piazzolla's bandoneon, the lead voice around which the Kronos dance and comment, sings the blues eloquently, in the robust cadence of tango time.

The least-known composer here (and the most deserving of wider recognition) is the South African Volans—whose *White Man Sleeps* was the title piece of an earlier Kronos album. Like that performance, *Hunting: Gathering* is loopy and lovely, the most mesmerizing of the three CDs. Volans is a white composer pulled in many directions—by the beauty and cultural depth of his native Africa, by European classical conventions and by some unnamed alternate musical parallel

between the two. Here the three movements neatly define that strange other world, of simple harmonies set against the relief of post-minimalist sophistication.

Heard in series, these three works (each roughly 25 minutes) fulfill the Kronos mandate of covering divergent ground. Heard apart, each could find its specific audience. Smart marketing, smart aesthetics. Buy three. They're small. —Josef Woodard



Peter Holsapple & Chris Stamey

Mavericks
(RCA)

IT'S BEEN NEARLY A DECADE SINCE PETER HOLSAPPLE and Chris Stamey recorded together in the dB's, but do they sound happy to be reunited? Nope. *Mavericks* emits some of the darkest vibes this side of the deep blues, and not just on the sad songs. Even an affectionate bauble like "The Child in You" inspires more apprehension than pleasure. When Holsapple sweetly croons, "Keep your innocence intact," you just know he'll end up disappointed.

This woeful aura makes for weird, spellbinding listening. Studied oddness isn't new for the boys, of course. The dB's originally took power-pop conventions via Alex Chilton and twisted 'em almost beyond recognition: the incessant cleverness could be mighty cloying, however. Today, Pete 'n' Chris are easier to take, coasting on lighter, more acoustic grooves that seem less forced. "Taken" and "She Was the One" could be café conversations picked up in midstream, or perhaps soliloquies—it's easy to picture Holsapple and Stamey anxiously rehearsing lines in front of the mirror before plunging into the social fray.

Not to suggest the lads portray nerds or losers. But the delicate acoustic guitars and reedy harmonies, stronger on character than steady pitch, epitomize callow uncertainty, especially on the hypnotic "I Know You Will" and "Geometry," which has the featherweight charm of Gary Lewis and the Playboys. (That's a compliment.)

Cover material can be telling. Unfortunately, the nicely forlorn reading of the Byrds' "Here Without You" underscores Holsapple and Stamey's limitations. This Gene Clark classic expresses profound adult longing, while less-noble sentiments like resentment and anger simmer in the originals. Note in particular the creepily lethargic "I Haven't

Got the Right (To Treat Me Wrong)" and "I Want to Break Your Heart," an ominous big-beat thriller. Only a fool would cross these cats: They may seem wimpy, but they've got a nasty streak. And that's what makes *Mavericks* so intriguing. You keep waiting for the convoluted melodies and repressed passions to erupt, and they never do. It's downright unnerving. —Jon Young



Mr. Fiddler

With Respect
(Elektra)

P-FUNK WAS NEVER A BAND, REALLY. IT WAS A PROCESS, a sensibility, a way of making music that relied as much on cooperative chemistry as individual vision. George Clinton may have discovered P-Funk, even built a few bands around it, but P-Funk was never his alone. Bootsy's records have had it, as have Fred Wesley's and Bernie Worrell's.

And now, Mr. Fiddler has the P-Funk.

It's no surprise, really. Both Joseph Amp Fiddler and Thomas "Bulz" Fiddler are alumni of various post-Parliament Clinton projects, as are session mates Blackbird McKnight, Michael Hampton, Eddie Hazel and the P-Funk horns. Clinton even does a bit of backup singing.

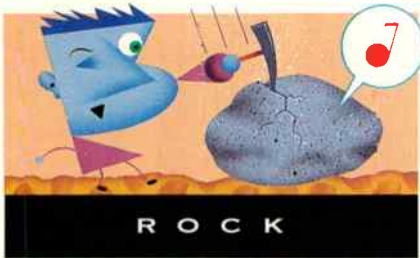
But there's more to *With Respect* than its personnel sheet would suggest. Despite obvious echoes—"Blackout," for instance, strongly recalls "Flash Light"—Mr. Fiddler's sound is very much its own. Most notable is the surprising jazziness of the tracks. The Fiddlers aren't terribly overt about it (apart from a Charlie Parker reference in "Blackout"), but there's a lot of harmonic complexity tucked into these grooves, so that "Starvin' Like Marvin"—which on the surface seems like a straight-up soul ballad—coasts along on surprisingly sophisticated changes.

Still, the heart of P-Funk has always been the communal strength of a sturdy groove. Despite not a lick of live percussion on the album, these songs swing, and swing hard. Some, like "Cutie on Duty" or "Henpecked," build from the riff up, while others—"So You Wanna Be a Gangster" and "Cat in the Hat"—seem more sturdily melodic; yet all pack the same punch. When it comes to rhythm, this band hits harder than Mike Tyson.

And isn't that what we expect from P-Funk?

—J.D. Considine

SHORT TAKES



BY J. D. CONSIDINE

NILS LOFGREN

Silver Linings [Bykodisc]

His voice is soft and understated, his solos lean and tasteful; all told, Lofgren is so unassuming that it's easy to underestimate his strengths. Don't. On top of solid songs (the tough-but-tender "Valentine," the bluesy title tune) and stellar sidemen (Bruce, Ringo, Levon), this album conveys an intimacy rarely found in big-time rock 'n' roll.

AL GREEN

One in a Million [Word/Epic]

No matter how highly true believers might praise Green's recent work, there are still many who refuse to bring gospel music into their hearts. Fear not; salvation is at hand. This best-of offers only the cream of Green's early-'80s albums, performances which not only extend the great Hi groove of the '70s, but take them back to the source. Better still, most have improved with age. But then, why do you think they call it soul music in the first place?

AMY GRANT

Heart in Motion [A&M]

No matter how highly true believers might praise Grant's recent work, there are still many who refuse to bring gospel music into their hearts. In this case, they're entirely justified.

GREAT WHITE

Hooked [Capitol]

As the lyric sheet testifies, the guys in Great White never met a cliché they didn't like, but that's almost beside the point. These songs aren't about good times, bad boys or broken hearts; they're about blaring guitars, bluesy

vocals and a Chuck Berry beat jacked up as high as it'll go. Which is why Great White does basic rock 'n' roll better than any big-time band since early Seger.

THE BRAND NEW HEAVIES

The Brand New Heavies [Delicious Vinyl]

Where would the '70s have been without soul? And what would the '70s revival be without a few neo-soul bands? Hence the Brand New Heavies, whose jazzy horns and chicken-scratch guitar offer a clever gloss on the Mandrill/Kool & the Gang/AWB groove. But these guys (and gal) aren't entirely retro; as "Never Stop" suggests, they may have an old-fashioned sense of soul, but their pop smarts are thoroughly up-to-date.

ANOTHER BAD CREATION

Coolin' at the Playground Ya Know? [Motown]

BBD for pre-teens? Could be, but when these half-sized homeboys drop the New Edition-style harmonies and get into some hardcore hip-hop, you realize that these new kids have more going for them than mere cuteness—they've got soul. Ward to *whose* mother?

GEORGE THOROGOOD

& THE DESTROYERS

Boogie People [EMI]

If Thorogood ever gives up guitar, he should get into the tire business. Nobody gets more mileage off retreats.

ERIC LEEDS

Times Squared [Paisley Park]

No need to guess how much of this is Leeds' work, and how much the doing of mentor/employer Prince; detailed recording credits keep this from becoming another Madhouse of speculation. Which not only keeps the spotlight on Leeds, but gives him credit where due for his (not insubstantial) keyboard work. If only his fusion licks were as interesting as his funk...

THE TRAGICALLY HIP

Road Apples [MCA]

Because Gordon Downie's voice carries the same acrid edge as Peter Garrett's, it's easy to liken this Canadian quintet to Midnight Oil—even if the comparison doesn't exactly work to the Hipsters' advantage. Still, many of the same strengths apply, from the songs' sly politics to the gritty, twin-guitar attack that drives them.

CHICAGO

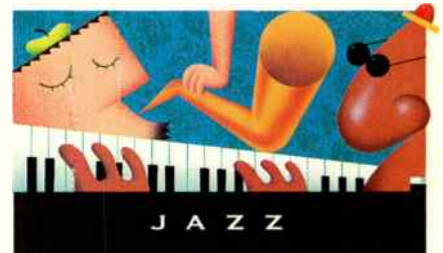
Twenty 1 [Reprise]

Some bands just don't know when to quit.

BOOTSAUCE

The Brown Album [Next Plateau]

More funk than punk, this dance/thrash trio is one step ahead of the Chili Peppers; they've got soul, and they know how to use it. Which means that even when the songs don't cut it, the energy level carries the day. It may be a brown thing, but you'll understand.



BY CHIP STERN

SHIRLEY HORN

You Won't Forget Me [Verve]

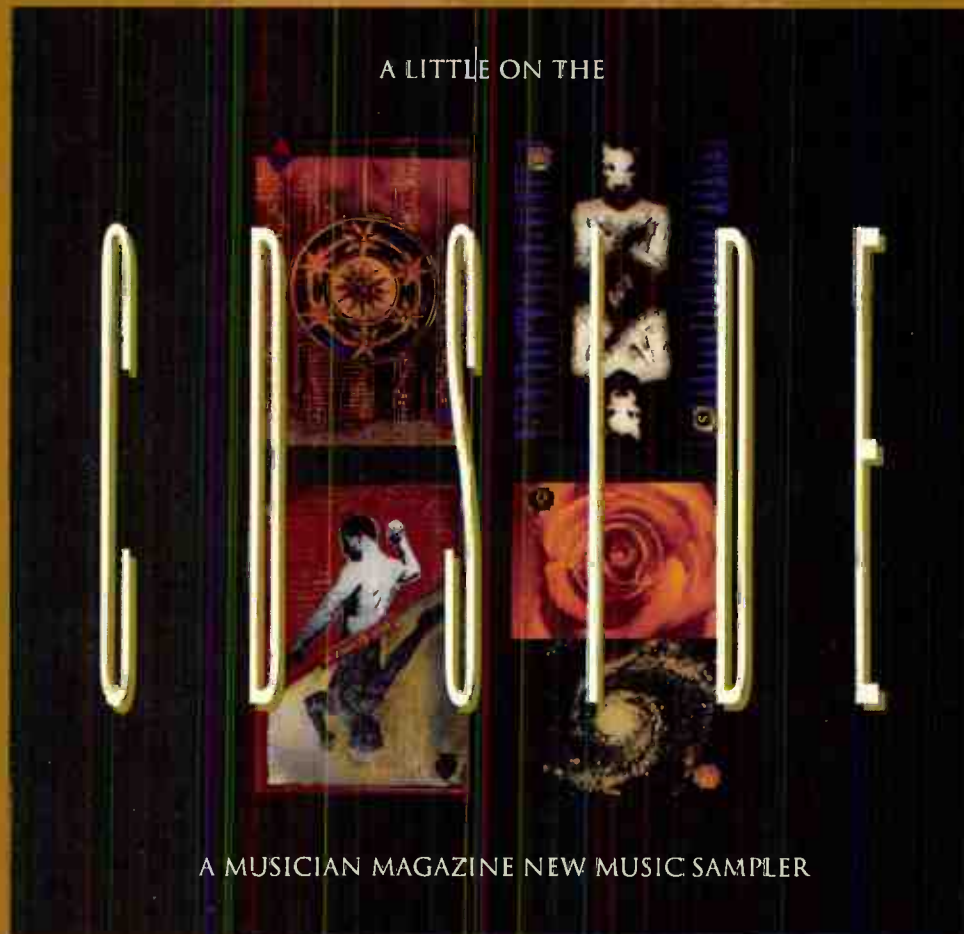
Not just sappy love songs, but grand poetic soliloquies on the kind of swinging, mature love that endures. Not just a collection of ballads and blowing vehicles, but a unified perception of voice and piano quite unlike anything you've heard—by turns serene, vulnerable and assertive. Shirley Horn is an innovative song stylist who simply doesn't sound like any other jazz singer. Above all, she's a superb storyteller, and the relationship between Horn's dramatic phrasing and the warm dynamics of her piano creates a lyrical/harmonic tension that turns each song into a thespian event, with its own musical means and ends. Guest stars Miles Davis, Wynton Marsalis, Branford Marsalis and Toots Thielemans provide effective costume changes (particularly Davis' coy counterpoint on the title tune), but in the end it's the songs you'll remember, and I can't recall the last time I felt that way about a vocal album. Wow.

JACK WILKINS

Alien Army [Musicmasters]

Jack Wilkins has always been bad, but with *Alien Army*

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he enters the realm of the certifiably slick. Long admired as a chord-melodist of the first rank—able to translate the most supple and elusive of Bill Evans harmonies to the guitar—Wilkins' last effort for Musicmasters (*Call Him Reckless*) found him waxing bebopish over the fleet filigrees of drummer Mike Clark and bassist Steve LaSpina. On *Alien Army* he demonstrates a new level of relaxation and keen sense of form and development to go along with his formidable chops, yet never whips it out simply for the sake of technical display. As a result, his forays into what is certainly a very tasty brand of jazz-fusion are bumptious and lyrical, harmonically surprising and authentically funky (thanks in large part to the drumming of Mike Clark, one of the few jazzers capable of simultaneously swinging and vamping without falling into lame boogaloo clichés). On a tune like "Chess," Wilkins, bassist Mike Formenak and keyboardist Mark Purcelli show just how far you can stretch the kind of funk that defines contemporary jazz radio.

BIRELI LAGRENE

Acoustic Moments [Blue Note]

We are happy to finally note the arrival of the Bireli Lagrene on these shores, after a couple of accomplished but unfocused false starts. From the hyper-fusion stylings of "All the Things You Are" and "Impressions" (swinging along in the manner of Weather Report) to the affectionate crunch of "Metal Earthquake," Lagrene's feeling for contemporary forms will continue to nonplus traditionalists, who long for the Djangoish abandon and innocence of his work as a 15-year-old *enfant terrible*. What makes *Acoustic Moments* different is that Lagrene has finally devised a context in which all of his notions of contemporary and traditional roots can come together. His affection for the style and writing of Jaco Pastorius is obvious throughout (particularly on "Three Views of a Secret" and "Bass Ballad"), and distinguishes the busy interplay between his overdubbed electric bass guitar and acoustic six-string flights. Of course, the unaccompanied title cut is the body and the blood of this recital, what with Lagrene's lush romantic tone and long fluttering lines.

TOM HARRELL

Form [Contemporary]

We've entered the '90s, and still the hype about an unprecedented gush of "Talented Young Jazz Musicians" continues unabated. Without denigrating the talent and hard work of all these jazz tadpoles, it's instructive to note that there are numerous precedents for youthful prodigies (they've just never been marketed before, you dig): Oh, say, Tony Williams with Jackie McLean at 17, and trumpet titans like Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, Booker Little, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw, all of whom shook things up as teenagers. Which brings us to Tom Harrell, who has been one of the best young trumpeters in jazz for so long that I guess he's now an elder statesman. With his tart, brassy tone and beautifully detailed lines, Harrell epitomizes the exploratory verve of the post-bop generation. But it's his engaging arrangements, a special rhythm section (Charlie Haden, Paul Motian and pianist Danilo Perez) and the lovely interplay with tenorist Joe Lovano that make *Form* such a sweet experience.

JONAS HELLBORG

The Word [Axiom]

Jonas Hellborg is a virtuoso bass guitarist, but please don't hold that against him, because he's much more than an off-brand Jaco. With *The Word*, Hellborg serves notice that he has more interesting things in mind than harmonics and flash solos. Best known to Americans through his work with one of John McLaughlin's last versions of Mahavishnu, overtones of the Mid, Near and Far East permeate Hellborg's accomplished writing for strings (the Soldier String Quartet), not to mention a kind of Jimi Hendrix-meets-Bela Bartok abandon in his improvising and in the furious rhythmic dialogues with Tony Williams (in fact, this may be some of Tony's freest, most unhinged drumming since the early days of Lifetime, allowing as it does for his unabridged creative and dynamic expression). Hellborg performs on a Wechter acoustic bass guitar, reinforcing the warmth of his writing, bringing out the *tone* of the drums and strings, and giving a fresh resonance to his lyrical conception. The mystery of "Bei and All Became," the dancing abandon of "Poets" and the ritual splendor of Hendrix's "Cherokee Mist" highlight Hellborg's suite and fill one with hope that the bass guitar is capable of something other than dancing bear tricks.



VARIOUS SOUTH AFRICANS

Flying Rock: South African Rock 'n Roll [Global Village]

This may be the ultimate in cross-cultural feedback: Africans imitating an American musical style derived from Africa. The mind reels, but wait till you hear the results. These vintage recordings are superficially hilarious to Western ears. Beyond that, the use of light-textured rhythm sections imparts a swing any band would envy. The "rock 'n' roll" quotient varies, but mostly this is one space-and-time-warping collection. (Box 2051, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025)

—Scott Isler

JOAN LA BARBARA

Singing Through John Cage [New Albion]

Given vocalist Joan La Barbara and composer John Cage's imposing resumé as an avant-garde avatars, the first pleasant surprise with *Singing Through*—Joan singing the music of John—is the album's wistful beauty and sensual immediacy. La Barbara realizes several of Cage's simple and haunting vocal pieces, many of which sound like ethnic folk traditions turned inside out. Liturgy bumps into depravity on the "Sonnekus," in which Cage's quasi-sacred melodies intertwine with Erik Satie's sly cabaret songs. And, yes, that is a bona fide pile driver shattering the calm of "Solo for Voice 67." La Barbara sings through Cage with a pristine clarity, allowing the gentle radicalism of his writing to emerge without undue force.—Josef Woodard

THE PERFECT DISASTER

Heaven Scent [Fire]

Whenever an album credits someone for "infinite guitar," you should know what to expect. This one does, and delivers on the expectations: big choral guitars, thick feedback guitars, heavenly country guitars, grungy Joy Division guitars, stinging bluesy guitars, morse-code Pete Townshend guitars, they're all here. If you're a tone nut and up on your equipment, this is for you; if you're more into tunes, it may disappoint. Lead singer Phil Parfitt would like to be the British Lou Reed but can't quite conjure up the darkness. Though he and Dan Cross do pen a couple nice ones, notably the elegant "Little Sister (If Ever Days)," the compositions tend toward monotony. But all those guitars... (Fire Records USA, c/o Dutch East India Trading, Box 800, Rockville Centre, NY 11571-0800)—Mac Randall

JOSH ALAN

Famous and Poor [Four Dots]

"Can't sing. Balding. Dances a little" is said to have been the verdict at Fred Astaire's screen test; for some reason that piece of apocrypha is what popped into my mind on hearing this surprising album. Josh Alan doesn't sing so great, writes good songs and plays *really* good guitar; he's a fluent if somewhat tense Kottke, Jr. As Josh Alan Friedman, he collaborates with his brother Drew, America's most brilliant young cartoonist, on memorable, sick comic strips. Under this Waspier tag he's a Dallas-based musician who's got the inspiration and chops to go for, and get, an acoustic "Stone Free." This could be the coming of Geese Farts II. (Box 233, Denton, TX 76202)—Tony Scherman

BROWNIE FORD

Stories from Mountains, Swamps and Honky-Tonks

[Flying Fish]

A genuine singing cowboy whose life has been filled with as much adventure and romance as the traveling folk tunes that are his stock-in-trade, Ford is a treasure, his voice as warm and leathery as an old saddle. Half the tracks here are self-accompanied, the other half boast the assistance of Cajun guitar masters D.L. Menard and David Doucet. Nick Spitzer's profile of Brownie's colorful life is itself worth the price of this disc, but so is the timeless quality of Ford's music, from Western laments like "Streets of Laredo" to Harlan Howard's country classic "Gone Gone Gone." (1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614)—Mark Rowland

NICO

Hanging Gardens [Restless]

Some lines from Wallace Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West" remind me of Nico: "As we beheld her striding there alone/knew that there never was a world for her/ Except the one she sang and, singing, made." Nico was like that, and you either loved or hated her. *Hanging Gardens*, purportedly the late chanteuse's last recordings, won't change any opinions—same guttural voice, same keyboards, same old Nico. But as it's probably the last trip we'll get to her particular world, consider this a pilgrimage.—Thomas Anderson

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Polka Comes to Your Haus! [Restless]

Liner notes for this rock-meets-polka collection, obviously written by some poor soul with an irrational fear of

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major labels, hard rock, rap and daisies, spouts such opinion as "musical hyphenates seem to be among the few places to look for real post-post-modern energy" and "the notion of a 'new polka sound' is more alluring than ever before."

As long as it's clear that no way am I giving up my De La Soul and Faith No More LPs for polka-as-the-new-punk, it'd be safe to clue ya that *Polka Comes to Your Haus!* is a nifty fun bunch of tunes with surprising personality quotient. Polka perennials/new music faves Polkacide and Brave Combo contribute a few cuts—yet they're lame and pseudo-post-modern (whatever that means) compared to the other bands here. The Wallels from Minneapolis confuse me a bit with their rock-the-skyways "Big City Polka"—my impression after reading "How to Talk Minnesotan" is that everybody is of Swedish descent there. Das Furlines' "Nichts Nein Frankenstein" is gurl group dirty (polka) dancing for lotsa giggles. Even better than that (really!) is Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper's "Polka Polka." Only one question: Where the hell is Camper Van Beethoven's "Balalaka Gap"?

—Jill Blardinelli


ISA AK

[cont'd from page 20] the first album, Isaak has forged an identifiable sound that echoes the past, yet at times achieves almost an avant-garde, trance-inducing minimalism. But above everything is that voice, aching with the pain of unrequited love.

Isaak admits that "Wicked Game" and several other of his torch songs are not about some abstract vision of perfect womanhood, but about a very real individual—someone who apparently did quite a number on the guy. "You get what you give," he says, suddenly very serious. "People say she sounds really mean, but that's not really the whole story. This person is always on my mind and probably always will be. It was a wonderful relationship. When we were together, it was great.

"So you think about that and compare it to everything. In many ways, I've made it in my mind into a situation where, y'know, there'll never be another summer like that one. It's hard to let that stuff go. But I don't think she'd be able to listen to these songs and get that much out of them. She's not really into that."

Gez Chris, don't you meet *anyone* who loves you for who you are?

"I don't believe you can be loved for the wrong reasons," Isaak replies with a grin. "It's like Floyd Tillman once said, 'If I can't have the one I want, I'll take what I can get.'" 

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The offices here at *Musician* are deluged daily with astounding amounts of mail. Marriage proposals, job offers, postcards from prison pen pals—all arrive and are promptly discarded. Most curious have been the numerous requests for personal advice. As most of the staff here are overwhelmed with neuroses of our own, we hardly feel comfortable making proclamations on the behavior of others, but the requests have been so fervent, even fevered, that finally we cannot refuse. Fortunately, we have in our Rolodex the phone number of the most

level-headed, sensible group of people in the music business—the Red Hot Chili Peppers. So sit back and let Anthony Kiedis, Chad Smith, John Frusciante and the man they call Flea take over where Ann and Abby fear to tread.

—Sean O'Neill

Q. My mom is 40 and divorced. Recently she's been seeing an 18-year-old shop clerk. My friends make fun of me all the time. How can I convince her to stop seeing this kid?

A. FLEA: *I think this girl should f*** her mom. That'll keep the old lady at home.*

Q. My best friend is raising her two-year-old son alone. He's got a bad habit of biting other kids. He gets in trouble at school, and none of the other kids will play with him because he always bites them. My friend has tried grounding him, spanking him, and once she even bit him to let him know how it feels. But little Bill keeps biting people. Any suggestions?

A. FRUSCIANTE: *Sounds to me like they have a healthy relationship. All this spanking and biting is great.* SMITH: *If you could get me her number I'd really appreciate it.* FLEA: *I think this is terrible. This kid's going around biting people, he's not being very tender and gentle, he's obviously got a vicious mean streak in him and it's something that needs to be dealt with. If he was my kid, I'd probably hang him upside-down in a closet for a couple of weeks.* KIEDIS: *You know what I usually find is effective with kids like this? Stuffing their fingers into a food processor.* FLEA: *That's a good idea.* KIEDIS: *It usually straightens 'em right out.* FLEA: *Last week my daughter spilled some juice on my new rug, so I locked her in a closet and haven't fed her. I'm gonna bring her out today.* KIEDIS: *She was*



Red Hot Chili Peppers Agony Column


making a lot of noise for the first few days, but we haven't heard anything lately. FLEA: *I think she's learning her lesson. She's being quiet. Last week, I was trying to watch the Laker game and I heard her in there crying and begging for food. These kids today, they're so spoiled.*

Q. One night a few months ago my five-year-old daughter saw a mouse in her room, and she's been scared ever since. Every night she cries unless I let her sleep with me. I've told her that mice can't hurt people, and when I took her to the pet store to see the fluffy white mice she went hysterical. How can I solve this problem?

A. KIEDIS: *I have my own way of dealing with that, which is, you get about 10 mice and you brutally murder all of 'em, and you form 'em into a mobile and hang it above the bed of the small child.*

Q. There's no way I can state my problem nicely, so I'll just go ahead and be blunt. I'm a very beautiful woman, and I'm married to a short, ugly man. He's a great guy, a wonderful husband and father, but when we go out in public we stick out like a sore thumb and men are constantly trying to pick me up. I don't know how many times I've heard the words "How did a woman like you end up with a loser like that?" when my husband's back was turned.

The problem is, I'm starting to believe these people. At parties I find myself fantasizing about tall, handsome men, and sometimes I think about them when I'm in bed with my husband. My husband is a good man, and I don't want to hurt him, but sometimes I wonder if we were really meant to be together.

A. KIEDIS: *I think Flea just got out of a very similar relationship.* FLEA: *I had a big beautiful wife, and me being a short, skinny guy—well, it was really rough for her. But I sympathize with the little guy. My advice to him is—join a band, go out on tour, and cheat on your wife.* 

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