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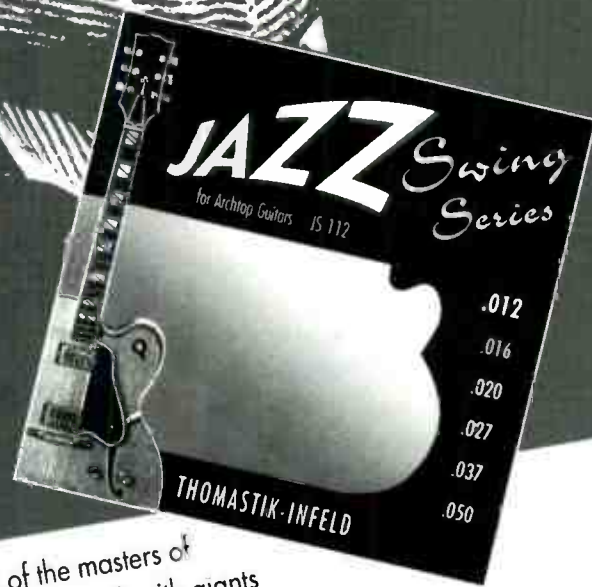
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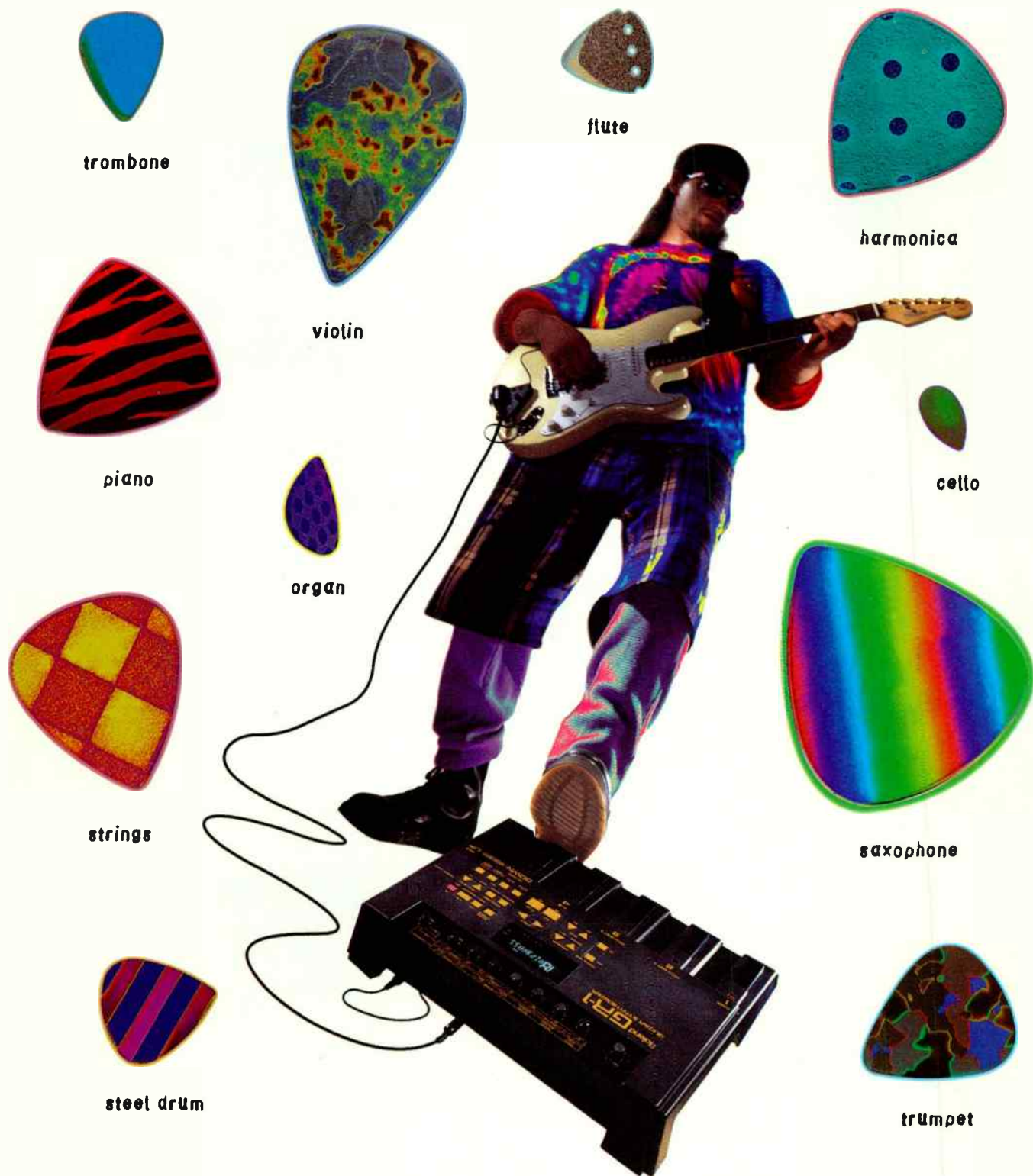
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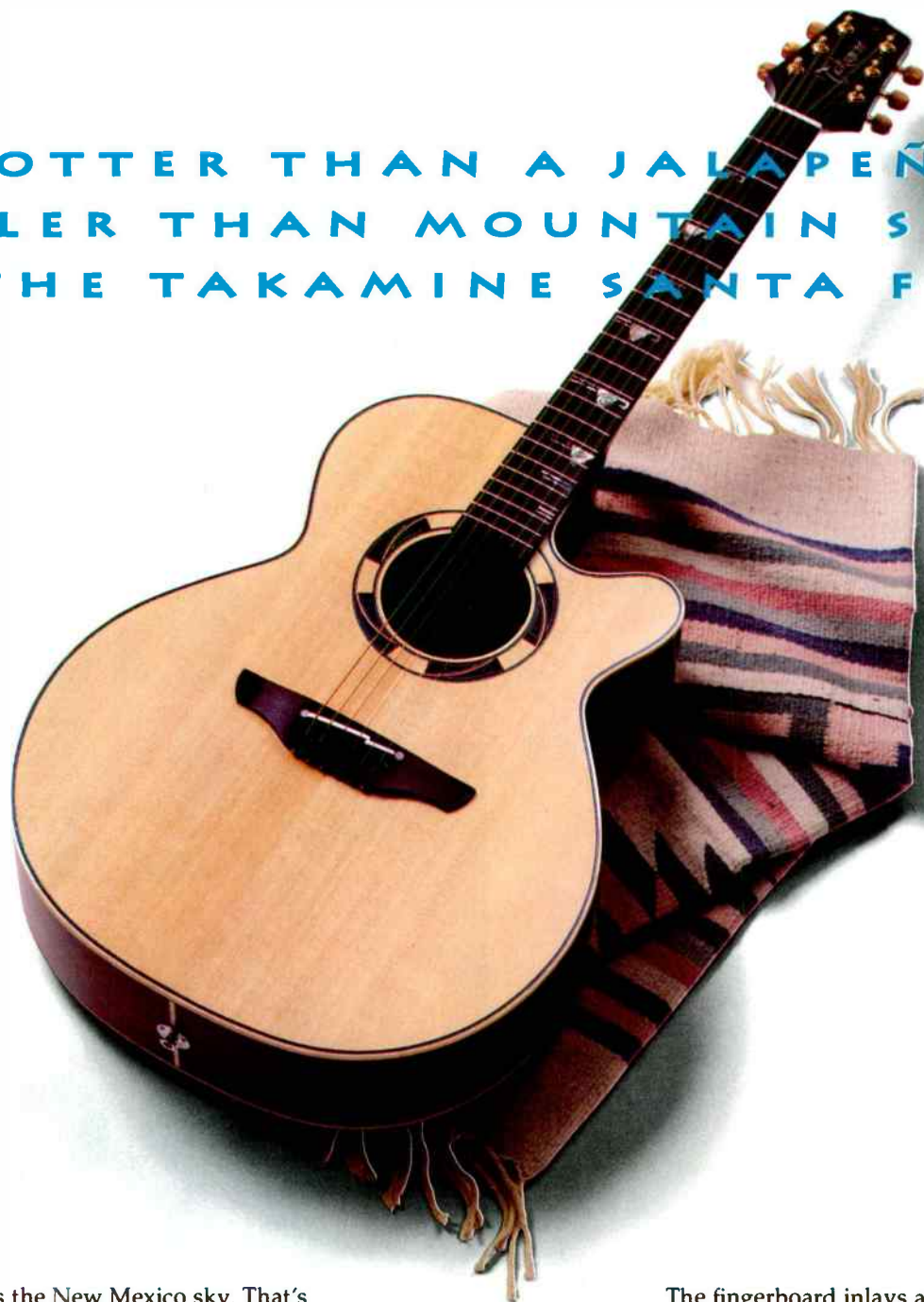
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BY VIC GARBARINI





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For you, how does Longing in Their Hearts differ or break new ground from Nick of Time and Luck of the Draw?

Twelve new songs. [laughs] I think it's more raw. There's vocals on here that are funky and I didn't even pronounce the words, and live takes from the first time I sang or played the songs for the band. Not because we think we're so cool—it just didn't need to be fixed. If it's starting to happen in the living room, you stay in the living room. You don't even get to the bedroom, you know what I mean? I feel like this record was made on the couch.

I've got this really great team of people that I play with now, Don Was and Ed Chemey and Dan Bosworth, our engineer, and [bassist] Hutch Hutchinson and [drummer] Ricky Fataar are as crucial to the sound of the records as my voice. So it was really spontaneous and everyone was more comfortable because of the validation of the last few times. The attitude is, we must be doing something right. So it was total freedom. It's always been up to me to pick the songs, but the validation makes you even more present in your own magical moment. It's ultimately a zen experience when you make a record and you don't have to worry about the money or the way it is received. I don't have anything to worry about except, you know, how twisted my mind is. That causes me a lot of problems. [laughs]

A lot of the songs here seem to come from the perspective of the morning after the big dance.

Yeah, like on *Longing in Their Hearts* they got married but there's still this longing. Or "Cool Clear Water," which is the deepest one for me, that existential longing to be part of the big thing. The longing to be swept away, and the fact that married and sober love, and adult mature life, you don't get swept away like when you were 20 and you and Jose Cuervo were thinking some band was the greatest thing you ever heard when it was only the moonlight, you know?

So is this your post-contentment record?

Well, I've never been content. I've had a long-term fear of being complacent and bourgeois since I was a little kid. But life does get pretty steady even if you are Miss Benefit and Miss Rhythm & Blues. I think a lot of this record was that I didn't go on the road last year—the first summer I haven't toured in 22 years. If you take away partying and affairs and being bad and all that stuff and then you take away rock 'n' roll too, then what are you left with? Situps and songwriting—oh, whoopee. [laughs] It is satisfying to make a record. It's just that the year you spend doing it is not as fun as the year out on the road playing those songs.

You would think that marriage and commercial success would make someone more content and there are a lot of things about it that are more comfortable. But the bigger longing, I don't think it becomes apparent to you until you are a certain age. It'll be interesting to see what Paul Simon is writing about when he's 70.

When you get that interested in somebody's music, it tends to eradicate categories like "good" and "bad."

It's like breathing in and breathing out. You don't always have the cataclysmic moment. Dylan singing "wiggle wiggle wiggle like a bowl of soup" [laughs] is just as profound for that moment. And then, I look at this woman Liz Phair—she's unbelievably great. And Arrested Development, the Dis-



BONNIE RAITT

able Heroes... I have more empathy for some of the troublemakers in their early 20s now—it must be where I'm at, or it's that great "bad attitude." Chrissy Hynde must be sitting there going, yeah, we did make a difference. I'm sure Liz Phair didn't listen to me. But I bet she listened to Chrissy Hynde.

You seem to be writing more songs these days yourself.


Well, none of the songwriters I used last time had stuff I could use except Paul Brady. It wasn't that they weren't good, they just weren't in my style or didn't say something I wanted to say.

You audition a lot of songs, though.

Oh, that's where the work comes in. I go through maybe two entire hefty bags full of cassettes a month—two or three hundred, at least. And the volume that are coming from Nashville that sound exactly like something I already did or like they think I'm too stupid to figure out where the slide guitar would go—the minute I hear slide I throw it out. I have this thing: I drive around in my car with a bag full of cassettes, and within two or three lines I can tell whether it's going somewhere. Then I listen to the first chorus and if it's worth hearing again, it goes behind the passenger seat. If I can't use it, it goes behind the driver's seat. And I have little cassette players all over the house. Now that I'm "big business" people are writing in the formula that they think I am. It's really offensive. But I figure for all the blessings I have, I have to do a little work. So, that's it. MARK ROWLAND

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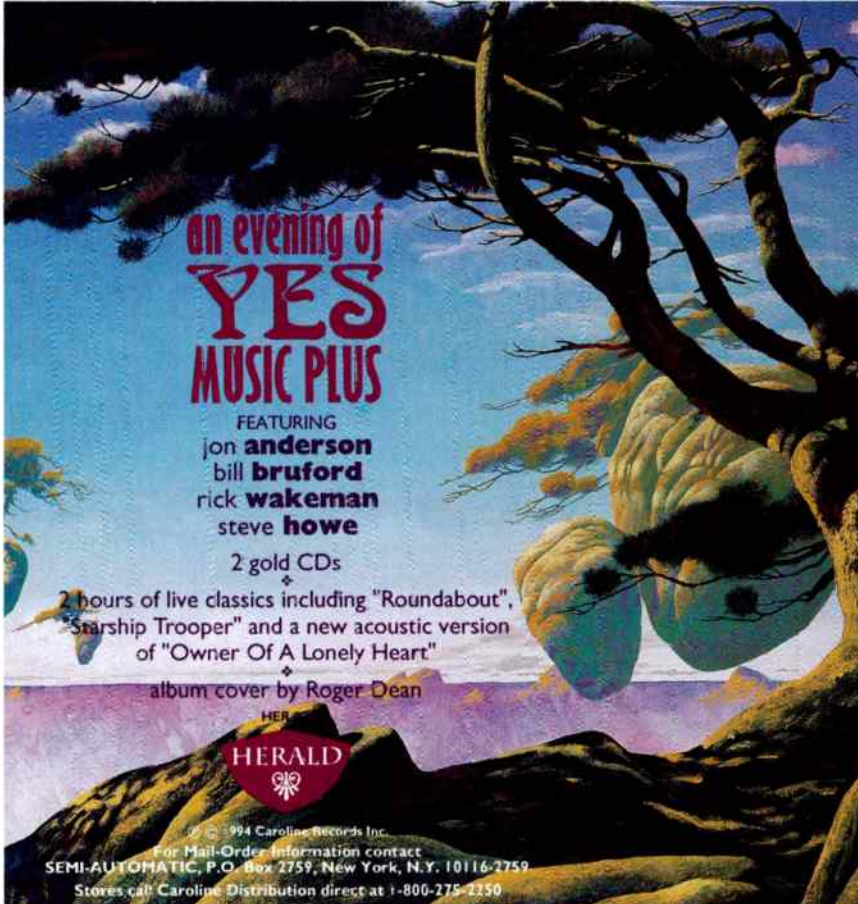
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LETTERS

RED HOT

Thanks for those pictures of Flea in the January '94 issue. They made me so sick I had to throw it away the first day. Together with the issue with Nirvana that's two out of six. One more and you can forget about me extending my subscription.

R.N.

Oh where, oh where has John gone? The man I am speaking of is the ex-Red Hot Chili Peppers guitar player John Frusciante. He was by far their most effective guitar player ever. They can't seem to find the right man for the job, and that's probably because they already had him.

Ryan Balis
Streetsboro, OH

It's reassuring to see how Flea has cleansed his body—aside from the pot smoking. Perhaps he was smoking some buds when he referred to the Jesus & Mary Chain as "those pasty-faced little English bastards." Close, but they're actually Scottish bastards. Don't worry, I get stuff mixed up when I'm stoned.

Eric Andrew
New York, NY

LOVE BOAT

I don't think it was fair to print all those negative Nirvana letters (Jan. '94). It's okay to have some criticism, but you also need some positive letters too. I personally loved the article—it also had a lot of great pictures. I empathize with Kurt and his stomach problems and any problems with the media. And about taking heroin to ease the pain. I see nothing wrong with that. If I had a real bad pain, I would probably take about anything if it would help, including heroin. Hell, I would probably take heroin for the hell of it, it sounds cool. All the cool people do it or did it. Kurt Cobain and Anthony Kiedis are the main ones.

Ranae Jones
Anniston, AL

What is this? Mr. Unknown says he is refreshed from reading about *true professionals and decent musicians* (sounds like Tipper Gore talking there) and then he goes on to say Cobain should get a shave, haircut and new clothes. Is this attitude the most obvious evidence of the existing corporate society that ties even the open-minded to conformity? Music doesn't

mean professional and decent: It means self-expression. That's the bottom line.

Chris Skinner

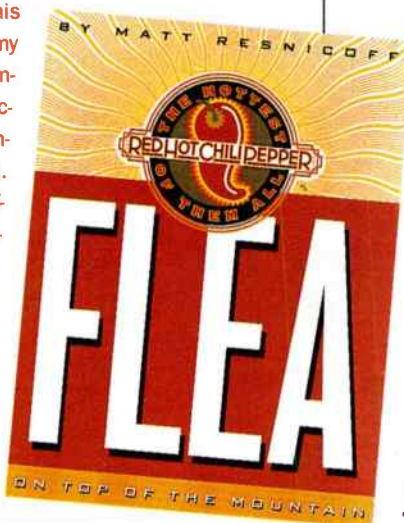
ALTERNATE ALTERNATIVES

As a 34-year-old white male attorney, I've grown immune to seeing my demographic used as lazy shorthand for all that's wrong with music or music fans. But if I ever feel that my musical priorities are becoming irrelevant, I'll be sure to re-read January 1994's "Has Success Spoiled Alternative Rock?," by Alan di Perna. Really—all this hand-wringing over whether an artist is "alter-

We are returning this issue (Jan. '94) because we find the photography unacceptable for our standards. I know that when reporting one has to depict or explain people and situations as they really are, but maybe this type of exhibition does not need international "exposure." Even though this group and their music is not to my liking I found at least one comment by Flea concerning the acceptance of situations one encounters in life commendable. However, I found the pictures offensive, and not in the best interest of informing the public.

I do not expect any compensation. I am merely sending it back as a form of protest against our downward spiral of neglect in reporting in a dignified and tasteful manner.

A Disappointed Subscriber



native enough." All this whining about "give us our music back." I'm just thankful I've reached the age where I buy what I want to because I like it. I *thought* that's what your December issue celebrated: that we've reached the point where it doesn't matter what label (musical or corporate) the music bears, but what's contained in the grooves (oops, showing my irrelevant age again).

I wonder what happens to the CD collections of dyed-in-the-wool alternative fans. Is there a semiannual review of their collections to determine what's "alternatively correct"?

Stuart Rosen
Upper Montclair, NJ

When Alan di Perna wrote "Has Success Spoiled Alternative Rock?," he didn't think about people like me. I'm 15 now, and when I was 12 there was no music I could really say I liked. Then I heard R.E.M. Before I knew it, I owned albums by Depeche Mode, Nine Inch Nails and U2. Now I have

a collection including Curve, Stereolab, James, Certain Distant Suns, Flaming Lips, Acetone, the Breeders, and Nirvana and Stone Temple Pilots.

What I don't think di Perna realizes is that they're really smart bands. It also insulted me when he generalized all the teenagers in the Midwest as metalheads. I'm from Chicago, and I own albums by Moonshake and the Cranberries, and proudly don't own any by Guns N' Roses. He should remember that Billy Corgan, Urge Overkill and Liz Phair wouldn't like that statement. They grew up here, didn't they?

John Ziemba
Chicago, IL

NAME GAME

I noticed that in the November issue of *Musician*, Brian Eno is made to sound dissatisfied with the adventurousness of Polydor. As you know—see your own review section—the *James* record under discussion is not a Polydor project.

Davitt Sigerson
President
Polydor Records

James is not on Polydor as we mistakenly mentioned, but Mercury, a different PolyGram subsidiary.—Ed.

GIVEAWAY WINNERS

The following *Musician* Holiday Giveaway winners both win a portable CD player and CD boxed sets: Mike & Sally Schendel, Lincoln, NE and Bill Sunderland, Champaign, IL.

ERROTA

The January 1994 issue refers to the Gretsch address and phone number incorrectly. The correct address is Box 2468, Savannah, GA 31402.

Fred Goodman's Jerry Wexler interview was excellent. I know, though, he'd have been unhappy if you had left off his byline, which is what you did with mine for *The Rhythm and the Blues*. Also, Jerry was never president of Atlantic—that was Ahmet—only executive vice president.

David Ritz
Los Angeles, CA

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I LOVE L.A., PART 2

We called Randy Newman in January, just as an aftershock rocked Los Angeles, and asked if his home came through the earthquake okay. "Oh yeah, I'm fine, absolutely," Newman said. He paused and added, "I trampled a couple of the kids trying to escape, but other than that I'm fine."

"I'm bigger than they are, although they're pretty quick," he explained. Then he added indignantly, "It's my house!"

You gave them life, we sympathized.

"Life and plenty else!" Randy amended.

PURPLE PAIN

Says Weird Al Yankovic, who's been given permission to parody songs by Nirvana, Michael Jackson and others, "The only person who's turned me down consistently is that...uh...I don't even know what to call him, 'cause he's like a symbol now, or an odor or something. That short guy from Minneapolis."

That guy, a.k.a. Prince or "the symbol," may be rethinking his position after recently closing the doors on Paisley Park Records, whose hip roster of artists, including Mavis Staples and George Clinton, unfortunately sold far fewer albums than Weird Al. Meanwhile, Prince himself is recording again for Warner Brothers, despite a previous declaration that he was retiring from music. "He retired from recording as Prince," his publicist explained, adding that he will continue to record "under his new name." Oh.

EXPERT WITNESS



THE FAB 5: Pete, Chris, Glenn, Keith and Paul



ROUGH

INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY ROBBERY?

A precedent-setting class action lawsuit was brought against CompuServe, the national computer network, by music publisher Frank Music. Frank alleges that CompuServe violated copyright law through the actions of an online subcontractor, MIDI Forum, which distributes arrangements of songs—among them "Unchained Melody," a Frank property—in the form of standard MIDI files. When these files are downloaded, no fees are collected for the

composers, arrangers or copyright owners.

Frank Music filed suit on behalf of itself and 140 other music publishers affiliated with the Harry Fox Agency, an organization that grants licenses and collects the attendant fees. According to Harry Fox president Edward P. Murphy, "This is a landmark suit brought by music copyright owners to protect their rights against serious erosion caused by the irresponsible implementation of new technologies."

Elton and Me



Squeeze Tour Diary

by Chris Difford

ON TOUR in America for the twenty-first time in 15 years, most days traveling what would be the entire length of Great Britain. This tour is a real test for Squeeze, just when you thought all the tests were through. Supporting our twelfth album we find that we have to do

just as much work as we had to with the previous ones, if not more. No surprise, really.

Glenn Tillbrook and I first met in 1973, almost 21 years ago. We have come through the years and survived many turbulent times. As I cast my eyes across our history book I see a catalog of great songs, and many long tours like this one. Along the way we've been compared to Lennon and McCartney and Rodgers and Hart. Very flattering. Our personal life very rarely intrudes into our professional life: We give each other space. That might be the secret to our long marriage. On this tour, like most others, we spend

long hours by each other's sides, and we seem to be getting on better than we ever did. Sitting in on drums this tour is Pete Thomas of the Attractions, a man who likes adventure and loves the whole world of touring. Pete's drumming has brought a keen edge to the band: Each song is nailed to the floor, not one beat unnecessary. Bassist Keith Wilkenson has been with Squeeze for 10 years now, a full member of this melodic club that manages to survive the ever-changing trends around it. Keith brings balance to our equation, and his own talents as a songwriter are blooming.

Arriving in Atlanta I look at the map of America, and with my finger I follow the itinerary all the way around. It looks like a long journey. A giant [cont'd on page 94]



MIX

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMIE K. WILLIAMS

ANGELS OF MERCY

The readers have responded! In our January issue we reported on the plight of songstress Sara Hickman, whose third album was shelved by Elektra when she was dropped from the label. At the time Elektra was demanding \$100,000 for the rights to the masters of the album, titled *Necessary Angels*. Negotiations brought the price down to \$25,000, and Sara (thanks to you) raised a whopping \$40,000 in direct donations. Some of the extra money will go toward remixing some of the songs; the bulk will be donated to the Romanian Orphan Fund, which Hickman helped found. Look for the album, coming out on Discovery, in the spring



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM HERRINGTON

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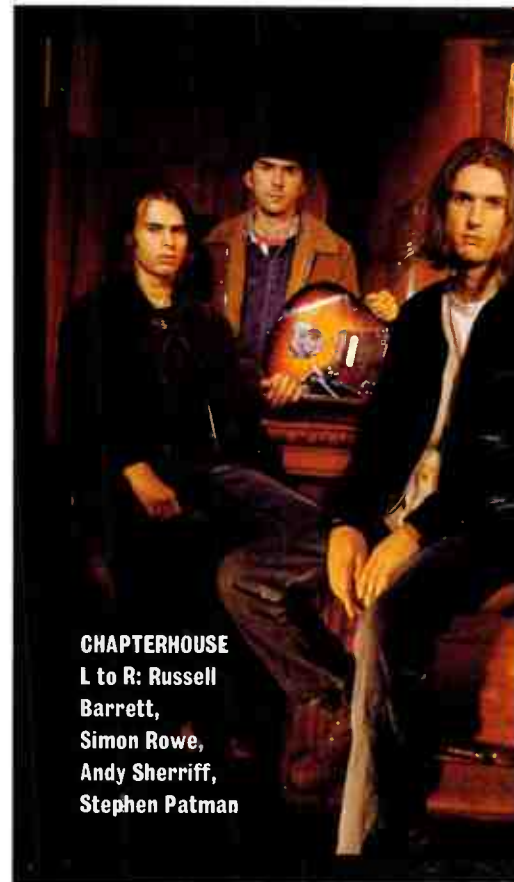
ROUGH MIX



SUSAN SCHWARTZENBERG

UNCAGED AGAIN

More than any contemporary composer, the late John Cage embraced the sound—or silence—of surprise. Now a tribute CD on Koch International titled *A Chance Operation*, featuring compositions of or inspired by Cage by such talents as Frank Zappa, Oregon, John Cale, Ryuichi Sakamoto and Laurie Anderson, has employed that philosophy in an ingenious fashion. The double CD's 23 compositions are divided into 91 separate "bits": Just put your CD player in "random" mode and you'll hear a different set of "compositions" every time. We suspect Cage would have approved—even though he never owned a record player.



CHAPTERHOUSE
L to R: Russell Barrett, Simon Rowe, Andy Sherriff, Stephen Patman

If you think these reviews sound good,



"Alex will find its way into a lot of studio and live performance racks."
George Petersen
Electronic Musician
July, 1993

"...SOUNDS THAT KICK-ASS ON MANY HIGHER-PRICED UNITS...THERE'S NO DENYING ALEX' EXTRAORDINARY SONIC VALUE."
JOE GORE
GUITAR PLAYER
SEPTEMBER, 1993

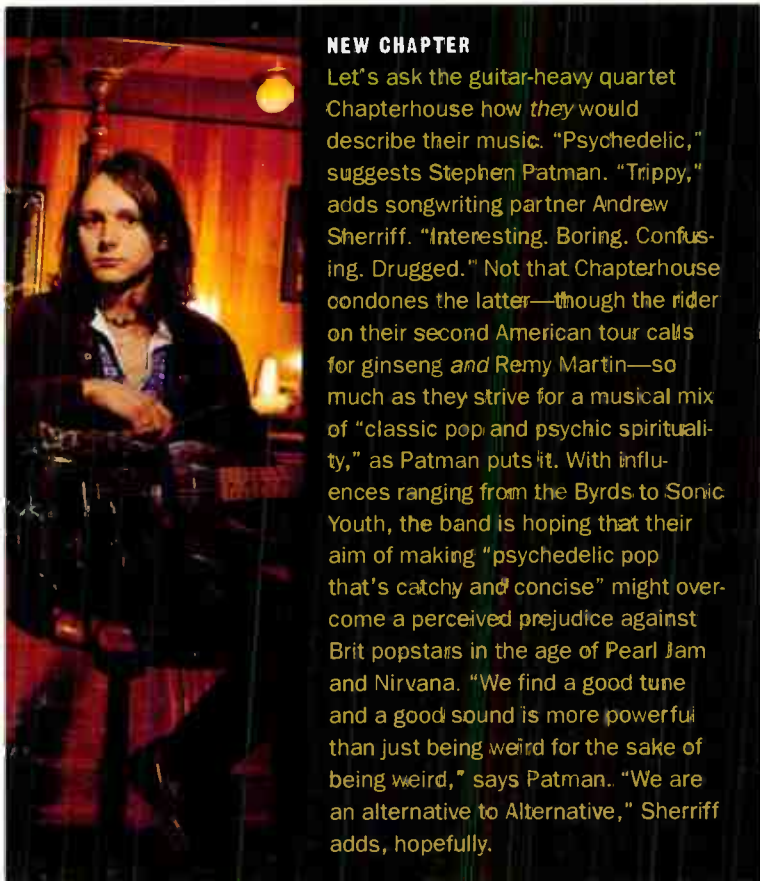


"A \$400 box that sounds good enough to use as a main reverb."
Nick Batzdorf
Home & Studio Recording
October, 1993

"We may not be able to put our fingers on the all-important difference that "makes" a Lexicon sound the way it does, but we know *its something special* — and Alex is definitely something special."
Ian Masterson
Home & Studio Recording (U.K.)
June, 1993



"We can recommend it for use in any recording or live performance rig for anything that needs *crystal-clear processing.*"
Mark Vail
Keyboard
November, 1993



NEW CHAPTER

Let's ask the guitar-heavy quartet Chapterhouse how *they* would describe their music. "Psychedelic," suggests Stephen Patman. "Trippy," adds songwriting partner Andrew Sherriff. "Interesting. Boring. Confusing. Drugged." Not that Chapterhouse condones the latter—though the rider on their second American tour calls for ginseng *and* Remy Martin—so much as they strive for a musical mix of "classic pop and psychic spirituality," as Patman puts it. With influences ranging from the Byrds to Sonic Youth, the band is hoping that their aim of making "psychedelic pop that's catchy and concise" might overcome a perceived prejudice against Brit popstars in the age of Pearl Jam and Nirvana. "We find a good tune and a good sound is more powerful than just being weird for the sake of being weird," says Patman. "We are an alternative to Alternative," Sherriff adds, hopefully.

PIRATES WALK PLANK

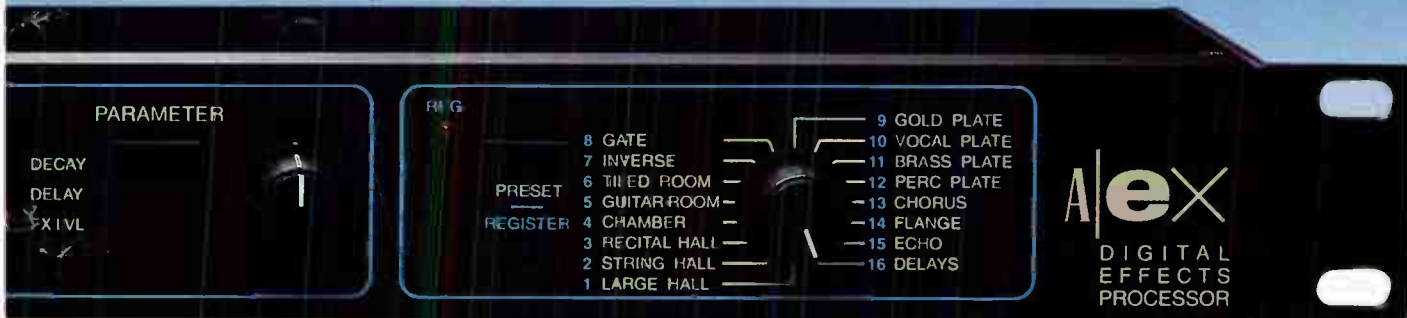
The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), those intrepid gumshoes of the music business, have released their year-end statistics on the seizure of counterfeit cassette tapes and other recording-related materials. For the first time in five years seizures actually declined—approximately 2 million cassettes were confiscated in 1993, down from 2.5 million in 1992. RIAA officials credit improved confiscation programs, as well as decreasing numbers of street vendors and producers.

Other highlights:

- The single largest confiscation ever—over 17 million counterfeit insert cards grabbed in Los Angeles.
 - The first joint venture between the RIAA and Mexican record company officials, resulting in the seizure of 100,000 tapes.
 - The highest number of convictions ever—144 recording pirates tossed in the brig in 1993.
- The report also revealed the shocking news that the New York metropolitan area led the country in counterfeit activity—52 percent of total seizures.

This month's Rough Mix was written by Bill Flanagan, Page Lipman, Ken Micallef, Keith Powers, Mark Rowland, Dev Sherlock and Josef Woodard. Jon Young was inadvertently left off last month's list.

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Michael Cooper
MUSICIAN
October, 1993



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David Lockwood
RECORDING MUSICIAN
(U.K.) June, 1993

"There can be few recording enthusiasts who won't jump at the chance of owning a genuine Lexicon reverb unit for this low price, but don't all rush at once, I'm at the front of the queue!"
Paul White
Sound On Sound (U.K.)
April, 1993



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LYLE LOVETT

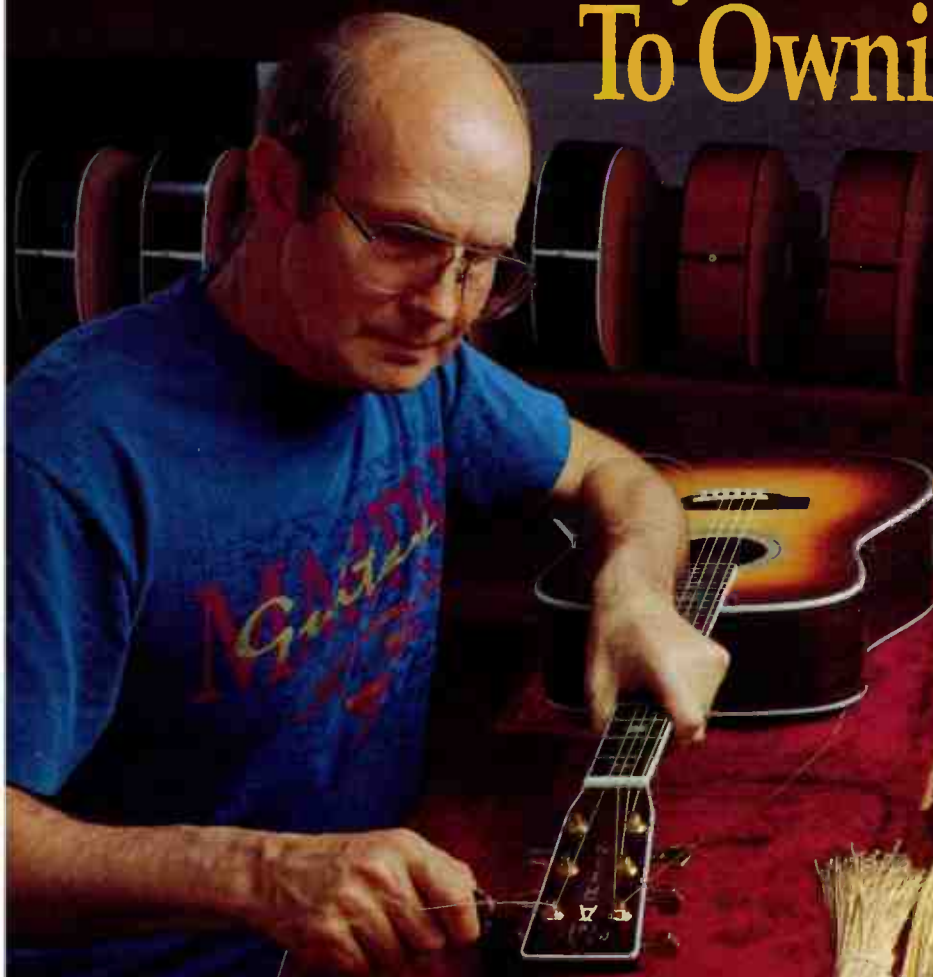
GETS LUCKY

IT SEEMS A LITTLE UNREALISTIC TO SUGGEST THAT MARRYING JULIA ROBERTS might be a tough break for a musician. And as Lyle Lovett is clearly a man in love, no one could deny that getting married was the right thing for him to do. But it is ironic that after working his ass off for eight years to achieve success on his own terms, one of the best singer/songwriters of his generation would find himself—at the moment when his hard work was finally paying off—rocketed to the outer orbits of international checkout counter celebrity by the fame of the woman with whom he fell in love. ★ NOT THAT Lovett's complaining. He takes his new *National Enquirer/People* magazine/*Hard Copy* profile with the same good grace and deadpan sense of humor that have made his warmhearted songs about retired killers, vengeful boyfriends, poisoning undertakers and children who choke on peanut butter sandwiches accessible to a far broader audience than usually goes for such stuff. I would not claim to know Lovett well enough to guess what makes him tick, but since *Musician* started writing about him five or six years ago, I have picked up the distinct feeling that he is one of those genuinely nice people who is not genuinely nice naturally. I suspect that nature and intellect conspired to create in Lovett a real biting, lacerating cynic, but by sheer strength of character he has willed himself to be a gracious and generous gentleman. ★ MORE POWER to him! Anyone can



BY BILL FLANAGAN

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JOHN HAGEN PSYCHEDELIC CELLIST

IT WAS A CONFRONTATION the likes of which no rugby stadium had ever seen: Football rowdies pitted against one lone cellist. A face-off between cranial crash-cases and a man who can spell "spiccato."

The place: Cardiff, Wales. The contender: John Hagen, onstage with Lyle Lovett and His Large Band.

"I can remember getting heckled carrying the cello out there," Hagen says. "There was this one group...and I can tell that they're all focused on me, just pointing their fingers and yelling and jumping up and down."

Pointing and yelling?

"Yeah, and laughing. I had to bear with their abuse through a couple of songs where I really do the typical cello thing until we got to 'You Can't Resist It,' where I could get it off my chest. I think I played a very aggressive solo that day."

Call it *Revenge of the Rosenkavalier*. "The first thing you have to do is get the audience's attention," Hagen says. "That's when I start doing some kind of...um...screaming on the harmonics, and some harmonic glissandos interspersed with some Doppler-like minor third trills." If nothing else it's a show-stopper, proof that cello can out-shriek a Strat—provided the right guy's wrapped around it. And Hagen's so right, fans have dubbed him the "psychedelic cellist," a label he's not sure he understands but says he can live with. "The cello basically has been a classical instrument, it hasn't been used to its full potential in pop music. I mean, there's a lot of uncharted water out there. I'm just trying to fit the cello into the context of the song."

And that's apparently what separates him from much of the string-playing pack. Hagen spent his postgraduate years dragging damn cello into clubs all over Austin, maybe someone'd let



him sit in. "Most people said yes, 'cause they were just curious." He listens to jazz masters and baroque composers, John Coltrane and...well, okay, maybe some of the moderns, too—Bartok, Prokofiev, Shostakovich. But back out the middle, lose the romantics. "That's right. All that *sturm und drang*, all these guys spilling their guts all over the page, take it outta here." Instead, factor in Wyoming: He was raised there, is intimate with the concept of space, aural and otherwise.

Tote up the influences and experiences, and you've got an amalgam—Dan Post boots with a Hugo Boss suit, a mind that's tuned unconventionally. Or as he puts it, "It's in the ear. Generally speaking, the classical tradition emphasizes a lot of vibrato, a kind of intensity with every note. Sometimes you have to back away from that in pop music and just kind of lay low."

DEBORAH BLOCK

"I saw him on television a couple of times and I just thought he was a great character. I was writing this thing about the baker in *Short Cuts* and I just didn't want to put a regular actor in it. I wanted someone where I didn't know what it was I was going to get."

Altman's first attempt to finance *Short Cuts* fell through after he had recruited Lovett. The director instead made *The Player*, and kept Lyle on board.

"I thought, 'Well, I'll give him a try out,'" Altman explained. "I made that part that wasn't very demanding in *The Player* and gave him a chance to work around the crew a lot, around us, and just kind of break him in. I didn't believe what he was, because I thought nobody could be this good. I thought this guy's gotta be an ax murderer or something. But he is who he is."

I talked to Lyle on the phone last June, just after he'd seen an early version of *Short Cuts*. "When I went to the screening I had to remind myself that I actually got to be in this movie," he said. "It seemed like a supernatural experience to me. And to be in the middle of doing a scene and you look across and there's Andie Macdowell and Bruce Davison, and you look over and there's Altman behind the camera,

you think, 'Oh my God!' It's really extraordinary. It's the farthest thing from being a part of my normal activity or something that I've gotten used to. It's like bottom of the ninth and you're down by a run and there aren't any pinch hitters left and the manager looks up in the stands and points at you and says come on down!"

I told Lyle that Altman had reminded me that this was a person who regularly performed onstage, taking people through a wide range of emotions every time. It was not like taking some monkey off the street and putting him in a film.

"But you know," Lyle said, "it's a very different thing, because onstage I get to go out and be myself. I just try to be more entertaining than usual. Being on the set and watching these real actors work gives you a whole other level of appreciation for them. You watch them turn somebody else's words into something with feeling. My last year in high school I decided I was going to play football. I never had. So the second half of my junior year I went through spring training. I suited up and did the whole deal so that I could play my last year. And needless to say after spring training I told the coach, 'Coach, this is crazy. I can't do this.' But it really gave me an appreciation for those

guys—how every time somebody ran into me there was actual physical pain. It's just nice to get a first-hand look at how complicated something that doesn't necessarily seem like it would be complex really is."

Lyle went on about how great actors are and how hard they work. I remember that conversation very well, because it was just before Lyle got married and while I had no idea he even knew Julia Roberts, he was also making a big point out of how happy he was and how great everything was going. He said we had to hook up when he got to New York

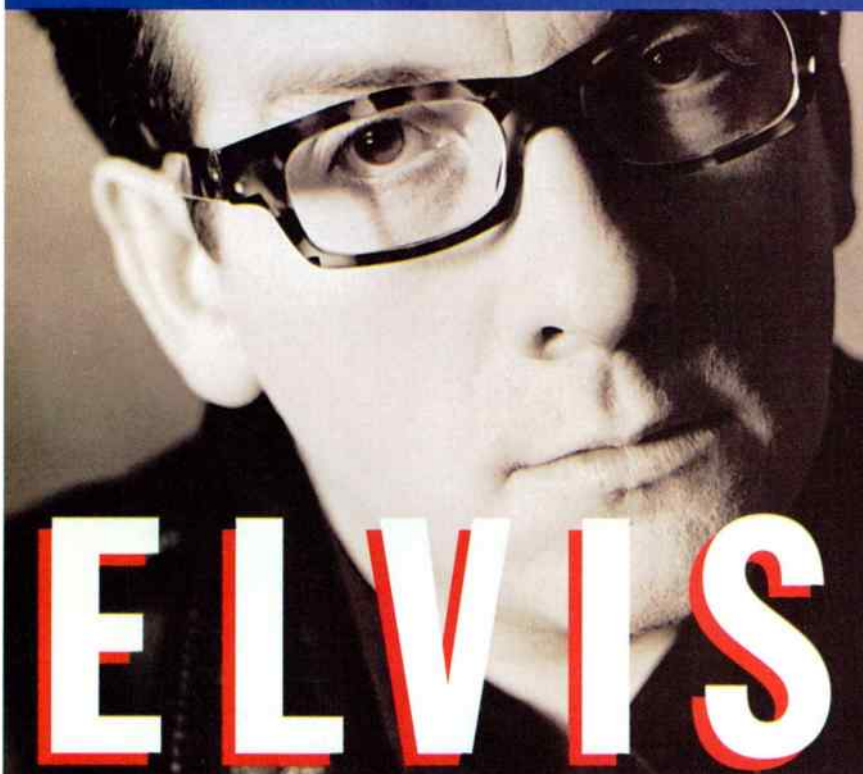
to play at the Paramount later in the month and I said sure, I wouldn't miss it. That was the night that Julia came onstage dressed as a man and introduced him and no one knew what was going on. They got engaged that day and married a few days later.

After his wedding, tabloids were offering Lyle's relatives, friends and bandmembers thousands of dollars for any dirt on him. Lucky for Lyle there wasn't a whole lot of dirt.

At the Paramount show it was clear that Lovett was breaking big on his own terms. It was a hard-won victory. After some early

success on country radio, he had continually run up against the barriers of the country music establishment. Lovett moved to MCA's pop side, based in Los Angeles, with his brilliant 1992 album *Joshua Judges Ruth*. It was like starting back up a hill he'd already climbed. There was no place for Lovett's skewed sensibility on a pop radio divided between grunge and hip-hop, nor on MTV. So Lovett got on the tour bus and worked. He'd play a city once, knock out the audience with a brilliant concert, and come back six months later to sell out a bigger place. The word of mouth was great, and regular appearances on "The Tonight Show" with both Car-

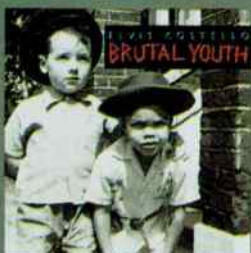
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CREEP SHOW

Onstage I'm playing new guitars that Bill Collings has made for me," Lyle Lovett says, referring to the Austin guitar maker who's been filling Lyle's orders for many years. "I play an 18" arch-top, the same size as a Gibson Super 400, with a pickup made by Kent Armstrong, the son of Dan Armstrong from Danelectro. I have a dreadnought-shaped flat-top and a Gibson advanced jumbo-shaped flat-top made by Collings. On this record I played a 1940 Gibson J-45 with a mahogany top, which is unusual. During the war years some of them had spruce tops, some had mahogany. On some of the tracks I used a 1930 Martin OM28, an Orchestra Model. It's the shape and size of a Triple-0 but it has a longer fingerboard: 14 frets instead of 12." He also still has his first guitar, an old Rickenbacker six-string.

Lyle does not use amps—he injects direct. He uses D'Addario medium-gauge, phosphor bronze strings. On the road he uses Shure mikes. In the studio he used a Neumann U67, restored to factory specs by Klaus Heyne, for his vocals and a vintage AKG C24 on his guitar. *Creeps Like Me* was recorded direct to tape without any reverb—but passing through consoles, EQs, limiters and preamps made by GML, George Massenberg's company.

"I play with a thumb pick and three finger picks. I like National thumb picks." Lyle's finger picks are all sorts, usually found in emergencies and then flexed and bent into shape until he's reluctant to replace them. The result is a different brand on each finger. "Béla Fleck told me he once spent two hours after a show looking in front of the stage for one of his fingerpicks because he didn't want to have to break in a new one. He said he found it."



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years of great guitar strings."*

-Johnny Winter

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son and Leno helped him overcome the resistance at radio to music that fit no obvious demographic.

So, as I said at the top, it's great that Lyle married the woman he loves, but there may never have been a case where a musician spent so much time and energy winning a large audience on his own terms, only to then get world-famous on the terms of the paparazzi. Maybe this is how it was for John Wilkes Booth; all those years of Shakespeare and then what does everyone want to talk about?

LYLE BEGAN playing out when he was a journalism major in college, and seems to have been directly affected only by the local stars of the Texas singer/songwriter scene—Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark and the other musical missing links between the '70s folkies and the '90s New Country stars. Lyle's style grew up in a self-contained musical environment that had little to do with what was on any record charts. Lovett once told me he had never heard a whole Bob Dylan album, and asked if I could recommend one for him to start with.

He managed to avoid the obvious influences in developing his own voice.

At the *Creeps* sessions I asked him to explain how in the world any singer/songwriter coming up in the '70s and '80s could have missed Bob Dylan. "Of course I'm familiar with the Dylan songs that were played on the radio," Lyle said. "I really admire Dylan, the songs I know by Dylan are really great. But when I was a freshman in college I got involved in booking the student coffee house. We would have auditions every Monday night and everybody played a Dylan song! So for me it was a thing of, if you want to be different don't play a Dylan song. Of course, it's like saying you want to be a Christian but don't want to be too influenced by the New Testament."

Whenever I've been sure I've caught Lovett with an influence showing he's denied it. For the last few years Lovett has been pals with Rickie Lee Jones. They've toured together and sung on each other's albums. So I was sure Lyle was paying homage to Rickie's line, "When the police come, don't say nothing/Don't say nothing and the police will go," when he sang, on "Simple Song," "You'll have no answers to their questions and they will have to let you go."

"Oh, wow," Lyle said. "No, I don't even know that song. I'm sorry. 'Simple Song' is another old song. I wrote that one in 1977." Long before Rickie Lee's. I asked Lyle how come all these old tunes he digs up are so good. When did he write his bad songs?

"You know, I've written bad songs all the time," Lyle said. "'Simple Song' was one that I didn't play for years. When I wrote that one I thought I was trying to be a little bit too broad, a little too deep. I didn't play it for a long time. I wrote it out of feeling really terrible about a girl I knew, and trying to work through feeling I had done something against somebody that I couldn't recover and couldn't explain. I had handled myself poorly in a situation and wished I hadn't. That song was therapeutic."

Sounds pretty bad. I got Lovett to tell me about the unforgivable thing he'd done.

"I'd gone to breakfast with this girl. We weren't dating or anything. I was friends with her from high school. She was a year ahead of me in school and had dated a friend of mine. I really thought she was smart and looked up to her. She was a very traditional kind of girl who would let you open the door for her. Other girls that I knew at the time didn't want you to, so I was conditioned to

BACK, JACK, TO DO IT AGAIN

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that. I had enough money with me to pay for my breakfast and no more. I was 18 or something. It became apparent to me as we were leaving that she was expecting me to buy her breakfast. I felt really embarrassed and rather than just say to her I don't have enough money to pay for your breakfast, I pulled this gender, politically correct *You don't expect me to buy your breakfast do you?* routine on her. I felt really terrible about it. So that's what that song's from. You know, she was really genuinely offended. We never spoke again. To this day."

You can get out "Simple Song" and listen to it frontwards and backwards and you will get barely an inkling of anything like that story—just a passing reference to disenfranchised revolutionaries. Like any good artist, Lovett uses his life for emotional fuel to create work that can touch people whose experiences are completely different from his own.

"I think it's easier to deal with something in the past tense," Lyle said. "If it is confessional. Sometimes it does take a little time to think about what happened without being really mired down in the actual emotion. The

main thing, though, is if it's a really good song. I don't feel like I write songs strictly as a therapeutic exercise, but they can be therapeutic and if it's a good song then I'm happy to play it.

"You have to start with an idea. If I'm writing a song and I start with a guitar lick or I start with just a hook line or a title but I don't really have an idea of what I'm trying to say, then it really comes out like half a song. It comes out like I just wrote some words around a hook line. The songs of mine that I like best are the ones where I get closest to expressing my original intent, my original idea. But sometimes you paint yourself into a corner. Then you do have to veer off from your original idea and sometimes it's a compromise. I might start out writing something that is confessional, but I can't quite make it come out right. So then you change it and turn the person in the song into a character. That can make sense within the context of the song, even though it veers off from being completely confessional."

I asked Lovett if that happened with "She's Leaving Me Because She Really Wants to," a Lovett song that apparently starts off sincerely and then flips country convention on its head with the title line.

"That was a real situation," Lyle nodded. "I could see things heading that way. A lot of times I'll write a song like that before the story in the song takes place in real life. I remember playing that song for my girlfriend and we both had a laugh about it but, you know, we both sort of knew. In relationships, songs can be a way to communicate."

A few years ago I had lunch with Lovett in New York after his longtime girlfriend had left him. He was feeling rotten. It had been a pretty serious relationship. (I once ran into them after they returned from a trip to her hometown to introduce Lyle to her parents. Lyle had gotten a big kick out of her dad, who said, in reference to his then-extreme haircut, that Lyle seemed "pretty level headed.") Almost every time I saw Lyle—in the studio in Nashville, at a homecoming show in Houston, at a record convention in Los Angeles, at concerts and receptions in New York—she was with him. So I had been surprised when I ran into him at the Grammys and he told me she'd split. At the Grammy parties famous, beautiful and glamorous women were falling out of their gowns to tell Lyle how great he was, but that did not seem to make him feel any better.

The next day we met for lunch and he said

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nothing good had come out of her leaving, he hadn't even gotten a song out of it. There was no bright side. We sat there commiserating for a while and then he said that he had a cassette he wanted to give me and suggested we go back up to his hotel room to get it. When we got there an extraordinarily beautiful young woman was in the room waiting for him. I did a double take and Lyle whispered, "It's part of the grieving process."

Not to turn into *Esquire* here, in the time I've known him women have always thought Lovett was a doll. The babes follow him down the street. Last year Mary Chapin Carpenter had a country hit with the song "I Feel Lucky" in which she fantasized that "Dwight Yoakam's in the corner trying to catch my eye and Lyle Lovett's right beside me with his hand upon my thigh." (When asked by Jay Leno if that song embarrassed him Lovett said that he took it as an invitation, when introduced to Mary Chapin Carpenter, to try to feel her up.) He told me at the time that the tribute had really impressed his pals back in Texas.

"My buddies at home that only listen to country radio really don't know about my music," Lyle said. "Maybe they've seen a promo for a 'Tonight Show' that I was going to be on, but they wouldn't have actually seen the show. But Mary Chapin Carpenter's song was all over country radio. They said, 'Oh, you must be doing alright!'"

It's typical of the shortcuts taken by TV and tabloids that when Lovett and Roberts got married the instant taglines were all variations on PRETTY WOMAN MARRIES STRANGE-LOOKING COUNTRY CULT SINGER. As if Lovett were some rat-faced soprano in Jim Jones' temple choir. You couldn't help thinking that if Roberts had eloped with Dustin Hoffman or Jack Nicholson (or Garth Brooks) the gossip media would not have been so confused—because those are celebrities who register in their little world. But Lyle Lovett was as obscure to them as Miles Davis, Lou Reed, Quentin Tarantino, Martin Amis or any of a thousand other famous, accomplished artists who are not famous in *Entertainment Weekly* and "Entertainment Tonight." So in the best tradition of the Boobisee they reacted to what didn't fit their numbskull notion of the Natural Order of Things by making fun of it.

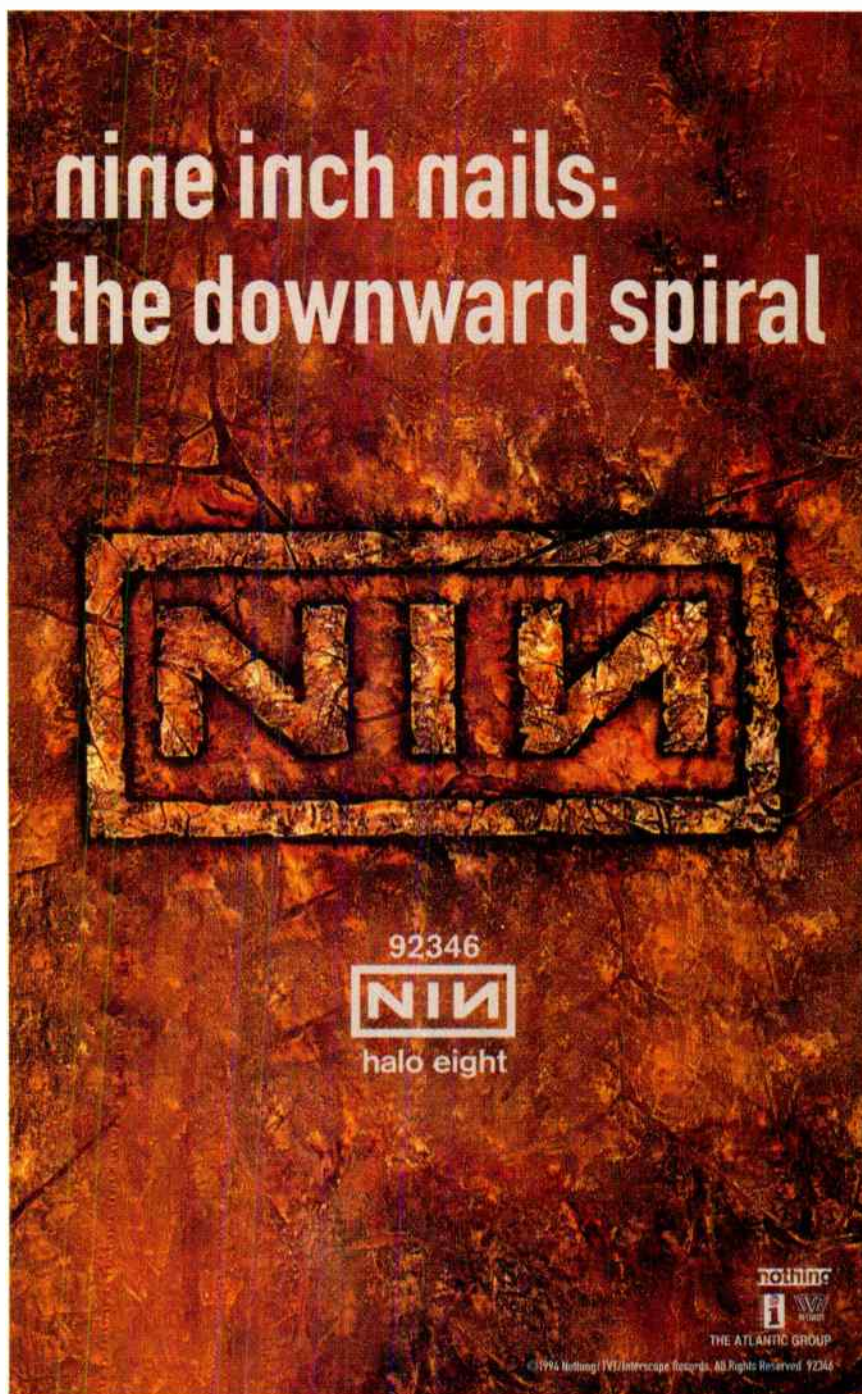
It had to be a big kick in the ego to Lyle when it happened, but he relaxed about it after a while.

"You know," he said, "They would ask those questions about whoever she was married to. It's all about her. It's not like R.E.M. where everybody wants to know the latest thought Michael Stipe has had. They're not really probing me, so I don't really feel on the spot. Julia handles all that stuff so well and I just try to be supportive of her."

"Being a party to the paparazzi and that kind of attention but not having the attention really be on me makes it all pretty manageable. It's really fascinating to watch, to just be there and see how that works. It's all about

business. A picture of Julia can sell a magazine or a newspaper. Like this latest thing—they talked about her being pregnant. It made two big news days! The first day was when this was reported. And it was completely made up! That's another thing that's amazing—how much purely made-up stuff there is that's not based in anything. She didn't have a cold and go to the doctor. Nothing. But all of a sudden there's a story, and the next day there's another: Oh, we got it wrong! So there's two stories!

"*Current Affair* did a [cont'd on page 94]



photographs by frank ockenfels 3

soundgarden

hyperventilate and

see stars



the godfathers of grunge

go psychedelic

“LOOK AT THIS THING,” smirks Soundgarden bassist Ben Shepherd. “Evidently people have offered over a million bucks for it. If it were mine, I’d sell it to ’em quick.” He turns around, raises his eyebrows far above his sleepy pupils and whispers, “Reeeal quick.”

The mural that encompasses an entire wall of Electric Lady studios might have pleased one-time owner Jimi Hendrix, but after 25 years it does look pretty damn cheesy. It’s a sprawling galaxy as seen through the eyes of aliens traveling on the deck of a spaceship—all the splashy colors of a command module contrasting with the inky depths of the universe. The captain and crew look like lava lamps with heads, drawn by a bad Peter Max imitator.

by jim macnie

Though the graphic is hokey, Shepherd might dig the idea of the painting: new mysteries of experience always there to be fathomed. Soundgarden is driven to explore new terrain, from pits of depression to peaks of ecstasy. In their music, vivid colors of fierce guitar rock contrast with emotional black holes. For these Seattle vets, friction and intrigue are irresistible. They investigate both on their new record, a tour de force called *Superunknown*.

It’s a week after Thanksgiving, and along with the rest of the band, Shepherd is taking a break from listening to producer Michael Beinhorn’s remix of “Fourth of July,” a rumbling, near-ritualistic track. Like the best of their songs, it has its disturbing qualities, especially when you hear isolated elements come lunging out of the monitors one by



“I think we have more in common with

one. Upstairs in another studio, Beinhorn presses a button and only Kim Thayil's guitar is heard. The riff is a sludgy growl, and Thayil wants him to put some extra warmth into it. After some tinkering, they boost the blood count and move on to Chris Cornell's vocal. Vocals actually—there are three of them, each with enough delay to echo forever. The blend is what's important, and Cornell's intent on each voice coinciding. For a few minutes it sounds like a Lee Perry outtake, an evil-assed dub incantation with a killer bottom. Drummer Matt Cameron has fashioned a severe back-beat for the song, and it bolsters the menacing atmosphere. Soundgarden is rethinking their usual processes, not only tweaking the details of their music, but running with new ideas. By the sound of it, they've come up with a richer strain of grunge.

“It's our diversest album,” offers Cornell, quickly questioning, “is that a word?” No, it's not, but he's dead-on regarding the album's breadth, which plays the line between safety and peril. “I'm the wreck of you/I'm the break and the fall,” wails Cornell on “Limo Wreck,” setting the tone. Pistons of guitars and voice have been the band's trademark since back in the mid-'80s, when a SubPop EP called *Screaming Life* earned them national attention. These days, the band has taken on an appealing agility, learning to probe as they pump. The effect is often dizzying, as if their tensile roar has caused the musicians to hyperventilate and see stars.

“That's true,” says Thayil, “a lot of it is quite different than stuff we've done on our previous albums. There's real depth to it, you can put your hand into it, fish around and get something. It's less bombastic than usual. I hate the term ‘maturing,’ it's a record company term that means 12-year-old girls will like your stuff. But in this case there is a degree of maturity at work. You can hear it in our decision not to rev the engine so high. In the end I think it's more powerful.”

Badmotorfinger, their last record, revved the engine. It went gold, got nominated for a Grammy and secured Soundgarden big-league status. They've toured with Guns N' Roses, led the Lollapalooza pack with their home-town pals Pearl Jam, and earned industry respect. But there was something stiff about the album that did it. Their stock-in-trade has always been the almighty riff, and though the tunes on *Badmotorfinger* offered their share of memorable guitar signatures, they sometimes shackled the spirit of the performance. It was a linear affair: everything racing in one direction, occasionally to numbing effect.

Superunknown is wide open. A variety of musical lines intersect to form a labyrinth of remarkable detail. Thayil describes it as “an M.C. Escher kind of thing. It would be wild if you could stand in one place and hear one thing, then move to another spot and hear something new that was still connected to the first part. That's the kind of continuity that we're aware of in some of these songs. It was happening



acid rock than we do with heavy metal.”

while we were recording them, and with all the layering that's taking place, we don't want to lose it.”

Producer Beinhorn, whose rep for untying musical knots began over a decade ago with his production of Bill Laswell's Material projects, concurs: “In any production, things usually define themselves, create their own framework, and that goes for texture as well. On *Superunknown* we were lucky because we had textures that worked well together on many levels: contrapuntally and in sonic terms as well. Take the end of ‘My Wave.’ The free-form aspect offered about a million ways to play itself out. But we struck a balance on it. Kim's doing a backwards tape thing, and, in reality, he had no way of knowing where the down-beat was. He just sort of navigated by a sixth sense—or in his case, sick sense—and it turns out when we flipped the tape back over, there was this gorgeous melody created. He completely hit it.

“That's indicative of the whole record. There's more freedom, less rigidity. This is not the prototypical Soundgarden disc; it's more like what these guys are capable of. To a degree, I think they were in danger of becoming how they saw Soundgarden the entity, rather than being the sum total of four creative individuals.”

Cornell, who was the drummer in the band early on, is sure that it's a confluence of styles that makes Soundgarden's identity unique. “As guitarists, Kim and I are opposites,” he points out. “I come from a

slashing, arhythmic point of view, and he's more of a swirly guy. And because Matt's so good, I can almost play anything and not trick him up. I don't care if I fuck up on guitar, but when the drummer loses it, that's bad. All in all, we're very cohesive on this record—much more so than before. Ben changed the bassline on one song, and it amended the whole feel, opened it up tremendously. The record's not all that complex; the difference is that everyone's participating.”

“Fell on Black Days” is the tune Cornell's referencing, but he could say the same about many songs. At the end of “My Wave,” the band form a sonic web thick with roaming basslines, intricate guitar bleeps and a circular vocal. The result is so extravagant and heady that writers should be abandoning the '70s references they've used on the band since day one, and drop back a decade. The group who initially personified the G word are embracing the P word, psychedelic, and doing it impressively. Sounds like a turning point.

“That's what we think, too,” concurs Cameron with a confident smile.

“I don't necessarily like most of the music that I would consider in the same genre as Soundgarden,” offers Cornell. “Most of these late-'80s Metallica-ish metal bands—you hear their records and you can tell that all they listen to is other metal bands. It's the same in the interviews: ‘Yup, Deicide still rules.’ But then you read a Hetfield interview and he says his favorite guitarist is the guy in the Butthole

Surfers, and it's 'Okay...yeah...that makes sense.' That's why Metallica have some depth; they look around."

Cameron takes it a step further: "I don't think we've changed that much, just refined elements which have always been in our stuff. If you ask me, the psychedelic vibe has always been there to a degree. Before I was in the band, when these guys were a three-piece, they struck me as being a full-on psychedelic trip-out, head fuck band. We're investigating that a bit on the new album."

"We've always had weird uses for arpeggios and the rest of that guitar stuff," Thayil adds. "Maybe it's more pronounced now, and that's why you're talking about psychedelia. I think we have more in common with acid rock—not the black light stuff, but the psychological/emotional ideas—than we do with heavy metal, that's for sure."

WORK ON *Superunknown* began after Soundgarden finished the '92 Lollapalooza Tour, but slowly. Ten months of volcanic rocking can wear you out, and once home from the grind, the band took a breather.

"Every time you come home from a tour, you have to



At the board (l to r): Matt Cameron, Ben Shepherd, Kim Thayil; (top): Thayil, Chris Cornell, Cameron; below: Thayil and Cameron

remind yourself how to act normal." Cornell grins. "You don't know what's changed back in town. Pets have run away, friends have moved. I was home for about eight weeks this time and they told me my great-grandmother died. She was 103, and they forgot to tell me. Plus, people always mess with your things, borrow your stuff. 'Oh, he won't be home for a while, I'll take this and bring it back later...' My brother once gave away our dog."

Up in the offices of A&M Records, the band is checking out hilariously bad shots from a photo session and recalling how the record came together. When I mention that a *Superunknown* listening party a few days prior found one fan expressively picking along with a particularly nasty cut sans instrument, Thayil immediately perks up. "Someone was playing air guitar?" he asks. "If they do that on the first listen, it's a good sign." Kim can't keep it together. He didn't sleep much the night before, and not only has he got the giggles from the silly pictures, but a case of "hot eyes."

"I'm coming down with something," he says, "you know how it is when your eyes are warmer than the rest of you."

Not really, but Thayil's a pretty individualistic guy. When he comes across another contact sheet where the photographer has captured Cornell at his bent-body worst, he bursts into laughter. "You know him from the film *Freaks*," he points at his pal.

"These shots will kill off your sexy boy persona," I tell Cornell.

"Whaddayamean," counters Chris, "that's totally erotic."

Cornell has recently cut his trademark tresses; his hair-in-the-face whirl had become a Soundgarden logo as much as any grungy riff. Now he looks like just another devilish schmo, wisecracking without a grin while scoping out the hallway for a coffee urn.

"These days Seattle has a slew of bands with stupid names," he announces.

"Should we get into that subject?" I wonder.

"It's a whole bag of worms," says Cameron.



"You mean can of worms," counters Cornell.

"Right, Bag of Worms is one of those bad Seattle names," launches Thayil. "One of those carpetbagger bands."

If that comes off as a snipe, understand what a boomtown the city has become. The film *Singles* attempted to capture the vibe of the '80s



mating ritual in the local music scene; Cornell had a moment or two under the creative eye of director Cameron Crowe's cameras, and *Superunknown*'s "Spoonman" wafted through the background of the soundtrack. Since their first encounter with *Musician* back in '89, where Thayil described the then still-congealing Seattle sound as "heavy muddle," the style has been formalized, the unlikeliest of stars have been launched and many, many checks have been cashed. Grunge is now as identifiable as rockabilly or Motown, with its own tenets, attitudes and history.

At this point every primary band from the '80s Seattle scene has been recorded. The first days of '92 found Nirvana selling more records than any other artist in the country. Pearl Jam did the same in '93. In between, a scad of groups have put a personalized spin on the general blend of punk and metal that are the building blocks of the genre. Screaming Trees recently hit a zenith with *Sweet Oblivion*, a pop record wrapped in hard rock armor. With *Inhaler*, Tad continues to place a tenacious roar on the top of their priority list. Mudhoney investigated the pliability of gnarled funk lines on *Five Dollar Bob's Mock Cooter Stew*, and with *Hoodini*, the Melvins have concocted a slag-heap of recalcitrant art sludge. With new bands like Seaweed coming out of the Northwest, the scene is still fertile.

But not perfect.

"You can tell from a band's bad name that their lyrics are going to suck," says Cornell. "If they can't think up one to four words that create a vision, how are they going to write a song?"

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"Seems like their music's going to suck too," deadpans Thayil.

"Who came up with the carpetbagger tag?" I ask.

"Five hundred bands moved there in the last two years," Thayil says authoritatively.

"The latest count has over 1000 bands in Seattle," agrees Cameron, "and about 200 clubs. It's getting close to a pay-to-play situation. That's our prediction."

"It wasn't like you woke up one morning and found out that it was happening," says Cornell. "If you were living in Michigan, looking at magazines that all of a sudden were covered with Seattle groups, it might have seemed abrupt. But we're there, and we heard all the groups and watched 'em make great records, and we knew something was going to happen. It was a hotbed for a while. We figured it was real and that it would go forward. When you're in the trenches, that the kind of thing that keeps you going."

"Are you guys viewed as big brothers these days?"

"Has-beens," smiles Shepherd, "dinosaurs."

"Butt-rockers," concurs Cameron.

"Mark Arm once called us the Rush of Seattle," nods Cornell.

"Bands starting out in town see us as part of a paradigm," Cameron says, "but they're missing the whole point of how the scene started: friends getting together and writing original music. You hopefully got a show at the Central or the Rainbow, and then went to see your pals in their bands. The idea was to be happy with that, and not stake out turf for the big claim."

"We had a lifestyle as much as we had a band back then," says Cor-

nell. "No one thought we'd be making records for a big company. It wasn't like going to college to get a degree in Seattle Rock so we could be stars, like some of the bands do now."

Yet it couldn't have been all horrible. There must have been some kind of upside to the inundation of bands and A&R people.

"Simply in the bands being able to do what they'd wanted to do for years," says Cornell, "have a voice, and a career. I think it would be tragic if someone like Kurt Cobain couldn't write songs for a living. If he had to be a logger instead, and we never heard his stuff. It makes it worth putting up with the down side, because all the carpetbaggers will be gone after a while. They'll be part of the Tulsa scene."

"And how has the exposure changed the scene's principals now that they each have made a major label record or two?"

"Well," reflects Cornell, "they shouldn't be judged by the fact that it's a major-label record. Take Pearl Jam's *Ten*. You have a perspective on it one day, and then you go back to it a year later and your view has changed simply because so many million people liked it. That kind of sucks. I remember seeing a picture of the stick figure guy on Pearl Jam's first single—it was painted up all over town when it was released. There was this huge swell behind them because of the tragedy of Mother Love Bone. They made something cool of it. Great. But a year later all the stick figures had a circle and red line through them. It became so big you couldn't own it anymore. It was the same record with the same songs—the music didn't change. But everyone's perception changed. My favorite Nirvana album is the one they did on SubPop, but I definitely like the newer records a real lot, too. [cont'd on page 44]

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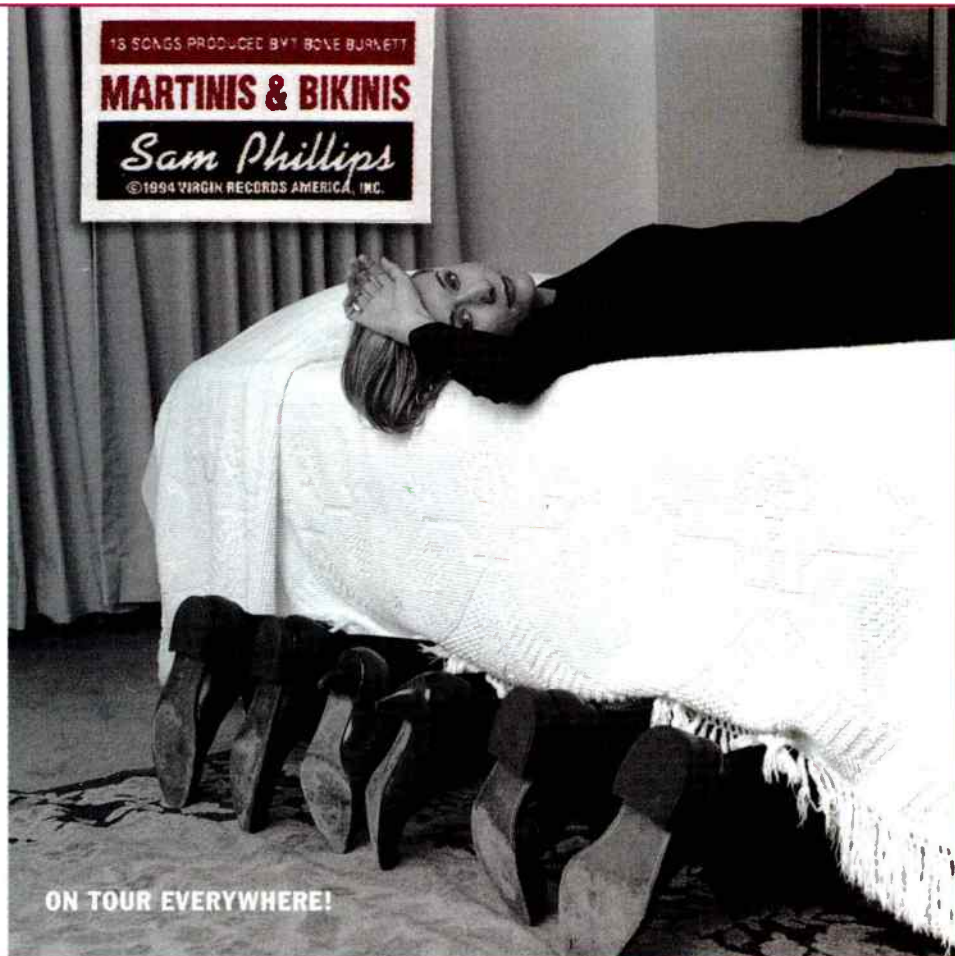
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GARDENING TOOLS

CHRIS CORNELL used to have long hair; he also used to play Les Pauls. "I quit them," he explains. "They sound good, but they don't sound that interesting—too well made, I think." On he moved to Gretsches, a Rock Jet and a Chet Atkins. An old Fender Jazzmaster and a Telecaster sometimes saw action as well. He admits to digging the gear. "I'm into vintage stuff. The Jazzmaster has a lot of personality; it makes things sound less slick and more fun. It makes an electric guitar sound like an electric guitar without distortion or overdrive. Most Fenders are like that. On 'Head Down' I played an old Gibson acoustic from the '50s." He uses Ernie Ball Super Slinky strings. A Peavey Rockmaster preamp and Peavey Classic 6080 drive MESA cabinets with four 12" speakers. As far as effects go, "the Boss wah-wah pedal is cool. It doesn't sound like others; it has a really wide sweep. But it's fragile. I've broken three of them." In the studio, Chris' gargantuan voice went through Neumann U-87s, sometimes playing havoc. "I went through seven of them actually. Seven wouldn't work with my vocal style. Someone modified the final one, gave it different specs so it could handle what I was doing."

KIM THAYIL gives me a Homer Simpson "Doht!" when he hears that we need equipment lists. "I know what I use, but I don't know much about the whole deal," he confesses. "As long as it doesn't suck, I'll use anything." Things that don't suck are MESA/Boogie Rectifiers and Peavey VTM 120s, which drive Peavey and MESA/Boogie 4x12. His guitar is a Guild S-100 Delux.

"They reissued them last year when a photo with me and the guitar generated a lot of calls. I'm endorsing it. I also use a diet Les Paul, they call it slim line or something. And I used a Gibson Firebird on the record, too. I think this tour I'm going to haul around a Telecaster as well." His strings are Ernie Ball Super Slinky. To keep ideas organized "I remember them in my head, or play them into a Dictaphone." For effects Kim keeps it simple. "I used to use a Cry Baby wah-wah, now I use a Vox. A stage tuner, the kind you step on to turn off, and a Boss Chorus pedal that I use for feedback and harmonics. If you think the guitars on the record sound richer, it might be the way Michael recorded it, turning up the signal coming through the board. Running it high and using compression."

BEN SHEPHERD's not sure of the model number on the MESA/Boogie amp he uses, "I bought it because it had a purple light on it." But the sound of his basses—Fender at all times—does come through four 10" and two 15" MESA bottoms. He uses Dean Markley flat-wound bass strings.

MATT CAMERON plays a "basic," six-piece set of of Drum Workshop drums, a 24" kick, 12", 13", 14" toms and a 16" floor tom. They're surrounded by a "bunch of new and used Zildjian cymbals," and in the center is a Keplinger snare drum, "because I'm friends with the guy that makes them." You can hear the snare manufacturer help out with the percussion fade at the end of "Head Down."



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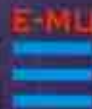
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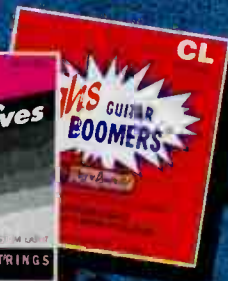
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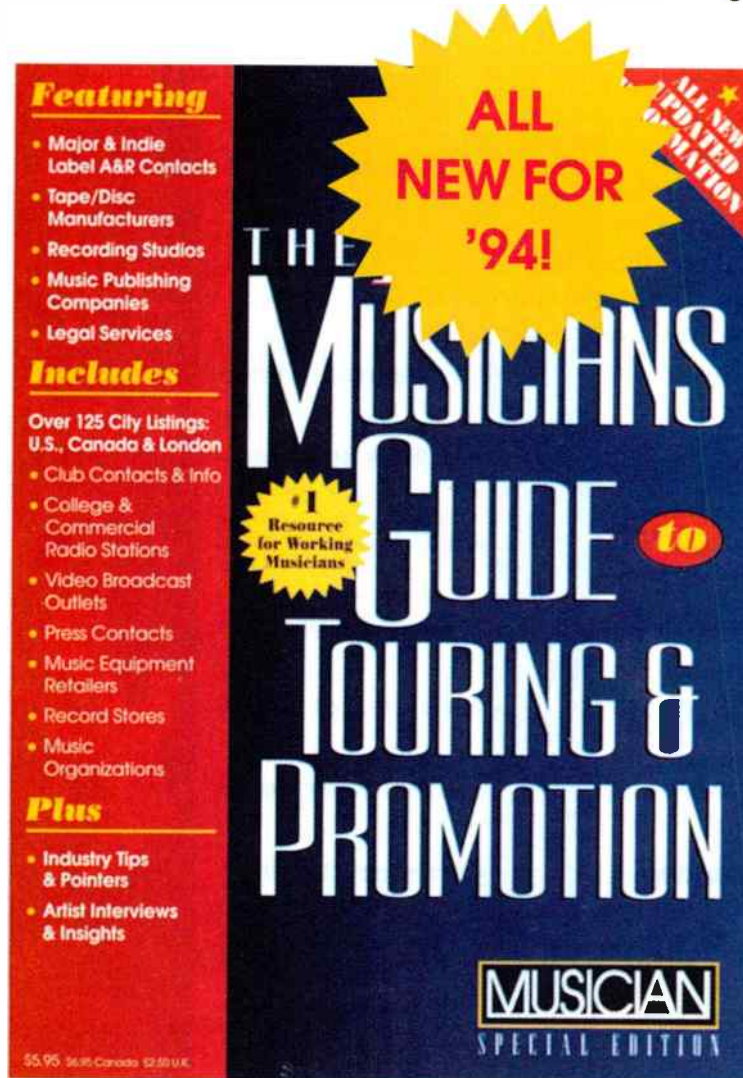
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When people talked about "Triple A" years ago, they either meant a division of minor-league baseball or the auto agency that sent help if you broke down on a remote highway. Now there's a fresh new meaning that has the record industry scrambling aboard another bandwagon. Triple A now refers to "Adult Alternative Albums," a growing

radio format that means anything from the Counting Crows, Tori Amos, the Cranberries and the Crash Test Dummies on the young end of the spectrum, to John Hiatt, Bruce Hornsby, Sting, Jackson Browne, Peter Gabriel, Richard Thompson, Melissa Etheridge and Van Morrison on the older end.

"Triple A? You mean Adult Alternative

ADULT ALTERNATIVE RADIO

A FAST GROWING
FORMAT
OFFERS MIND OVER
METAL

BY STEVE MORSE

Aardvarks?" Hiatt quipped recently. He was only kidding, because the Triple A format—now used by about 80 radio stations nationwide—has been a vital jump-start to his career. He's become a leader of Triple A (also called "Progressive Adult Radio" in some trades) with his album *Perfectly Good Guitar*, which has since crossed over to other formats and enabled him to add extra concert dates on his latest tour.

"Tell Hiatt that the aardvarks are charging!" said Kid Leo, vice president of album promotion for Columbia Records. "This is

going to be one of the biggest growth formats in the next year."

The term Triple A may be the butt of jokes, but its eclectic, open-minded playlists have evoked memories of the glory days of '60s radio before corporate honchos worked their narrowcast voodoo on the scene. Many record labels are now hiring Triple A promotion experts, because the labels know the format appeals to previously disenfranchised listeners—many in their 30s and 40s—who have grown fed up with the rigid divisions that rule today's airwaves. About the only thing the Triple A sound doesn't embrace is heavy metal and rap.

Although no commercial Triple A station yet exists in New York or Los Angeles, the format, which evolved at KBCO in Denver in the last decade, has caught on in most other major cities. The likely candidates for the switch have been jaded mainstream AOR, classic rock and modern rock stations looking to diversify for survival's sake, and conservative adult contemporary stations looking to spice up their sound. Some major players in today's Triple A field include WXRT in Chicago, KFOG in San Francisco, KMTT in Seattle, KSGR in Austin, WRLT in Nashville, WBOS in Boston and WKOC in Norfolk.

And many have enjoyed burgeoning ratings—Denver's KBCO has often been number one in the 25–54 adult demo. Boston's WBOS was recently number four, Nashville's WRLT was number six (their best ever), while Seattle's KMTT and Norfolk's WKOC (alias "The Coast") were also number six.

"We evolved from a classic rock/adult contemporary station," said Lauren MacLeish, program director at WKOC. "But you can only force-feed classic rock for so long. We've become more contemporary, playing groups like the Counting Crows and Gin Blossoms. We still play some classics, but not the hits that everyone

has burned out on. We'll splash in the Cure, Replacements and maybe even some Dire Straits. But we don't have a lot of attitude about it. Our audience tends to be college-educated and very lifestyle-orient-

“VERY FEW formats will play female artists—just look at AOR. But a balance is important at AAA.”

ed. They're into bicycling, jogging, and are concerned with fitness and with the future in general. The music is that way, too."

The Triple A format is sometimes mistakenly viewed as a folk or acoustic format, but that's hardly the case at WKOC, which leans toward modern rock, said MacLeish. It is more the case at Boston's WBOS, where singer/songwriters like Shawn Colvin, Patty Larkin and David Wilcox have been featured. "We're a more conservative Triple A station," admitted WBOS spokesman Adam Klein, though his station also plays newer rock acts like the Samples and Sheryl Crow.

"The key thing is that Triple A is not a cookie-cutter format. Everybody tries to customize it to their own city," said John Bradley, a former KBCO staffer who two years ago started the genre's top consulting firm, the SBR Radio Company (now based in Boulder, Colorado) with

Ray Skibitsky and David Rahn. "And let me give you a couple of examples. Austin's KSGR might play more blues or country-rock because that's the region they're in, while KFOG in San Francisco might play more of the San Francisco sound of Santana and the Grateful Dead.

"Some people think this format is all the Indigo Girls and mellow singer/songwriters," Bradley said. "But you also can have the Rolling Stones, Peter Gabriel, U2 and R.E.M. It's a rock 'n' roll format, but it's for people over 25 and 30 who want the more lyrical side of the music. It's not for people into the latest commercial schlockmeister."

The format tends to divide this way: About one-third of the acts played are new, while the other two-thirds are veterans either with new product or catalog songs rarely heard. "Take Rod Stewart," said Bradley.



BRUCE HORNSBY

DEEBO UCHTEL/OUTLINE



"These stations probably wouldn't play 'Maggie May,' because that's been overlaid on classic rock and AOR stations. But they might play 'Gasoline Alley' or 'Reason to Believe,' which haven't been played to death."

Another laudable trait is that Triple A stations delve into deep album cuts, not just the latest single. "My last record was a bit adventurous," said Bruce Hornsby, alluding to his jazz-inflected *Harbor Lights*. "It wasn't the most radio-friendly thing, but Triple A was very supportive of it. Unlike other formats, they played six and seven tracks off the record, including some of the far-reaching experimental things. They didn't just ask, 'What's the single?' Really, I think it's the most open-minded format around. Where else can you go from R.E.M. to Delbert McClinton?"

"If you're not into metal or grunge or rap or Top 40, then you'll like Triple A," said Emil Adler of the New York-based October Project, a dreamy, subtly textured rock act currently getting a boost through the format.

October Project features singer Mary Fahl, which brings to mind another Triple A trademark—the format actually plays female artists! "Outside of Top 40, very few formats will play a lot of female artists," said Kid Leo. "Just look at AOR. That's a very male-dominated chart. But a balance of male and female artists is important at Triple A."

The format has suddenly become a "great catch-all for artists who might not get played anywhere else," said Hornsby. "Record companies think, 'Well, Triple A will play it. Let's give it to them.'"

Indeed, Triple A has become a bona fide means of breaking acts. "It's a flexible format and has been an excellent place for us to begin," said singer Brad Roberts of the Crash Test Dummies, the quirky Canadians who have become format darlings with their tracks "MMM MMM MMM MMM" and "God Shuffled His Feet." Added Roberts: "We're left of mainstream, so we had trouble getting on other formats at first." But Triple A success provided them entry to alternative rock stations, some AOR stations and to heavy rotation on MTV.

"I THINK it's the most open-minded format around. Where else can you go from R.E.M. to Delbert McClinton?"

Proponents boast of the acts broken by Triple A radio, but the chief negative to the format lies in how many actual record sales can be generated if the act doesn't cross over. "I'm not sure it generates much

album sales by itself," said Capitol Records executive Judi Kerr, whose label markets such format faves as Crowded House and Richard Thompson. "You still have to work to cross these artists over to other formats."

"Your average Triple A success, if an act is in the Top 5 on the format, is about 50,000–60,000 SoundScan units sold," said Capitol's Greg Seese, the label's national director for progressive adult radio. "That's partly because the stations may play many cuts from an album. To get bigger sales, the audience needs to focus on a single. And that comes when a record crosses over. You can look at Triple A as your front-line offensive, but then you've got to hope for multi-formats."



CRASH TEST DUMMIES

"I also think Triple A stations need to be more aggressive," said Seese. "Right now they're preaching to the converted. They need to do more promotions and billboard campaigns. They need to make more mainstream promotional endeavors like these. It's not enough to attach a station's call letters to a Nanci Griffith or John Hiatt show."

There, of course, is the rub. If these stations become too aggressive, then they're likely to reduce their open-mindedness and fall into the same corporate quagmire that destroyed so many progressive stations back after the '60s.

"This is radio that really puts art before commerce," said Kid Leo. "It's a fact of life that you have to make money as well, but this is a real musical format made by people who actually love music. Music is not just numbers to them. I'd hate to see that attitude get lost again."

And so would many musicians.

"This format has really been helpful to us," said Johnatha Brooke of the Boston-based folk-jazz group the Story. "Even though some days I'll think, 'We just want to play some music now, no matter what people call it.'"

GRANT LEE BUFFALO

is three: singer/guitarist Grant Lee Phillips, drummer Joey Peters and Paul Kimble on bass. It's evident, after only moments with the band, which roles they take: Phillips is the slightly spaced, ethereal artist of the group, the guy who writes the songs and lives in a world of dark imagination. Kimble is a sensible Midwesterner who also produces and engineers the band's recordings, and waxes eloquent on subjects like the range of sound frequencies and the brain's capacity for sonic information. Joey Peters, who has drummed for John Lee Hooker, among others, contributes comic relief à la Ringo, ever ready to deflate tensions or pretensions generated by his bandmates.

We're at a Hollywood bistro the morning after a sold-out gig at the famous Troubadour, where G.L.B. burned down the house with their distinctive blend of folk and grunge. The Troubadour, once the bastion of the L.A. folk scene before becoming a heavy metal haven, proved an ideal venue for the band, who cover all ends of their sonic spectrum on almost every song. Their range of dynamics, only hinted at on their debut album *Fuzzy*, is astounding to hear live, as each song leaps from acoustic calm to electric fury and back again. These dynamic shifts suit the varied textures of the songs themselves; declarations of American angst such as "Fuzzy" and "America Is Snoring" combine the simple structure of pop, the lyrical intimacy of folk and the pure passion of punk.

It's a fusion of styles Phillips has envisioned since he was a kid growing up in Stockton, California, absorbing mid-'70s glam-rock along with his grandmother's collection of country 45s and 78s. "I was listening to artists like Bowie and Kiss on the radio," he recalls over a plate of pasta, "and at the same time I was loving the music my grandmother loved—singers like Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. So my vision of the ideal band at the time was kind of like Bill Monroe meets Alice Cooper. I dreamed of banjos and mandolins and fiddles and all, but with a lot of explosions."

Sounds like a fair description of his band, which builds upon the simple geometry of bass, drums and acoustic 12-string guitar. The explosions come when Phillips and Kimble step on their respective

distortion pedals, introducing a frenzy of pure overdrive and feedback into the mix. "That came out of accidents which gradually became a style," Phillips explains. "I started out on electric—I played a Les Paul for years and years. And in the last 10 years I realized something was lost in the translation between what I wrote at home on a 12-string and how it sounded when I played it with the band. Then I discovered the kinds of noises you could make *with* the 12-string.

"The 12-string is uncharted in a way, so it's real dangerous. I'm still learning what it can do, because it's really temperamental. I think that's good, though, to never feel that you've got your instrument pinned down and harnessed. It's a delicate balance between having control over it and putting it into captivity. It feeds back in a unique way every time that I can't really predict."

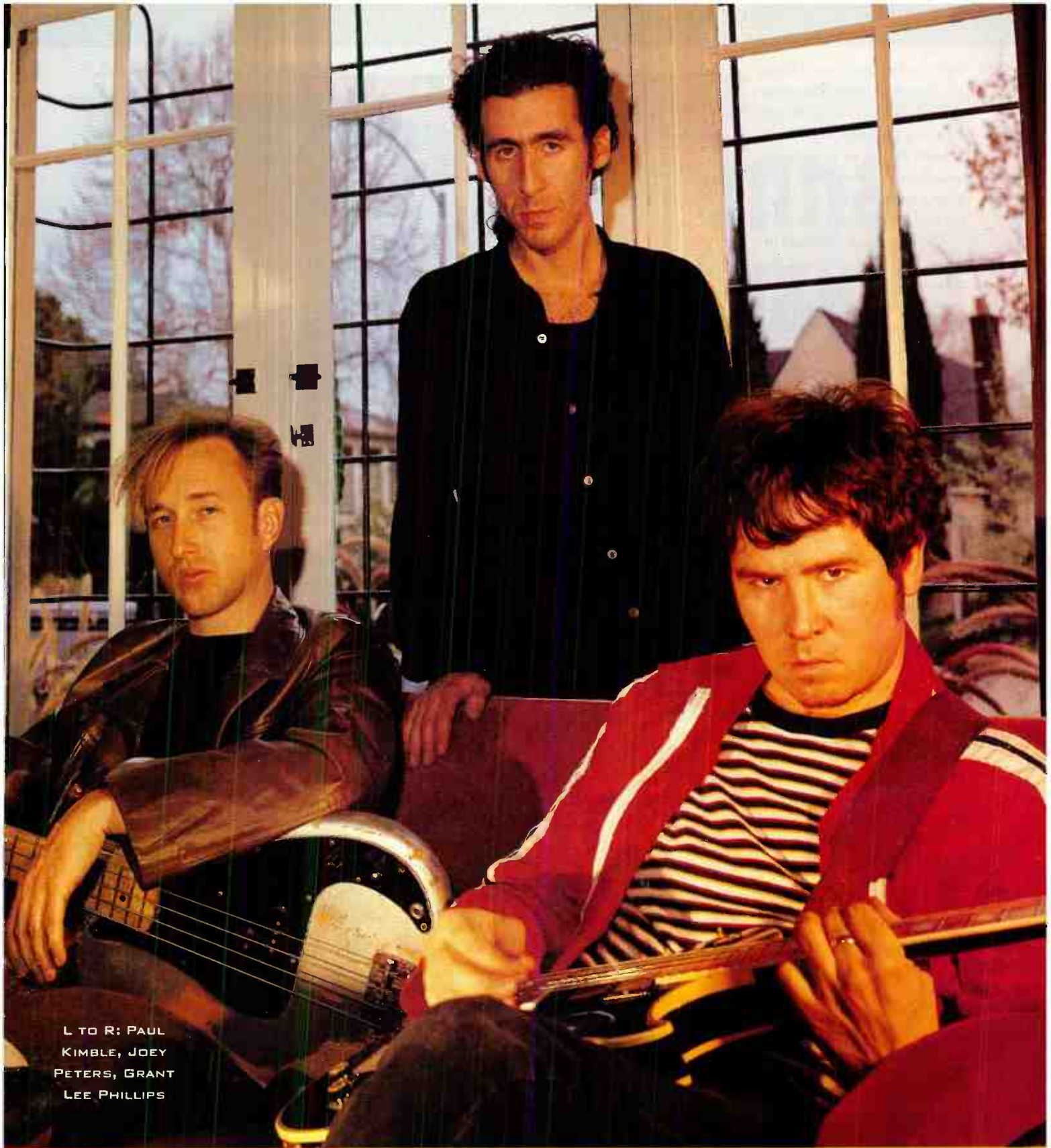
Like the Police before them, Grant Lee Buffalo exploits electronics to achieve an expansive sound that seems to be much bigger than a trio's. Much of that is due to Paul Kimble's furious bass playing, which often combines repeating pedal tones on open strings with moving basslines. When he and Phillips shift into overdrive at the same time, the result is cataclysmic. "It's a big ungodly noise," Kimble agrees, with some satisfaction. "Because when the bass tones get distorted combined with the 12-string tones that get distorted, you have this huge frequency range of distorted tones all stacking together."

"It's like a complete change of scenery when that happens," Phillips adds. "Suddenly, out of nowhere, we've got on new costumes, and there's different lighting."

Phillips, who looks like a cross between a grown-up Eddie Munster and a slimmed-down Pete Rose, talks onstage between songs in breathless bursts of passion, as if he's just parachuted to earth. Offstage he projects surprising calm, and he gives long, often convoluted answers to simple inquiries. When asked about the origins of the band's name, he offers this: "The name of the band comes from juxtaposing things that don't really have a relationship, but if you put them together they create a relationship. The Grant and the Lee have to do

P H O T O G R A P H B Y M O J G A N B . A Z I M I

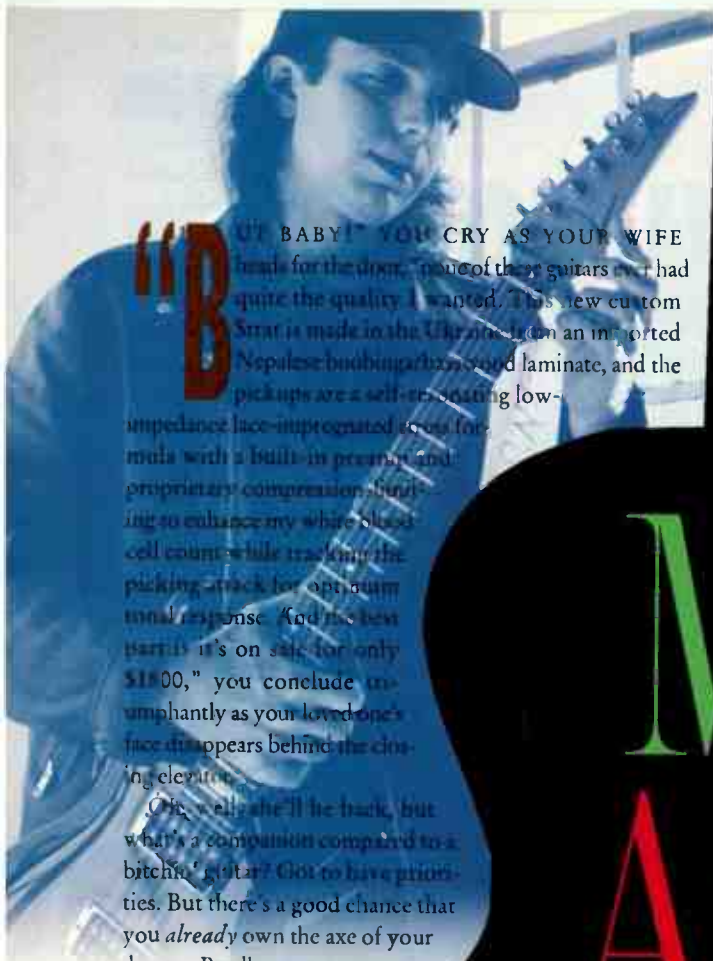
GRANT LEE BUFFALO BORN



L TO R: PAUL
KIMBLE, JOEY
PETERS, GRANT
LEE PHILLIPS

OBLIVION BOUND FOR GLORY

BY
PAUL
ZOLLO



"BUT BABY! YOU CRY AS YOUR WIFE head for the door, none of these guitars ever had quite the quality I wanted. This new custom Strat is made in the U.S. from an imported Nepalese toning wood and laminate, and the pickups are a self-developed low-

impedance lace-impregnated series formula with a built-in preamp and proprietary compression blending to enhance my white blood cell count while tracking the picking attack for optimum tonal response. And the best part is it's on sale for only \$1,500," you conclude triumphantly as your loved one's face disappears behind the closing elevator door.

Oh, really, she'll be back, but what's a companion compared to a bitchin' guitar? Got to have priorities. But there's a good chance that you *already* own the axe of your dreams. By all means, get more guitars if you have the bread; quality instruments are a good investment. However, for a lot less money you could unlock the musical potential of your current guitar with a good professional set-up.

The relationship between you and your strings—and how your instrument intonates—is predicated on the delicate interplay between the fretboard and the neck, the nut, bridge and tailpiece. The nature of this balance and the relative tradeoffs we make between action and sonority are at the heart of what makes each guitarist so unique.

"Every instrument needs a tune-up once in a while," Roger Sadowsky, master luthier, says. "Some instruments need it twice a year; some need it every couple of years. It all depends on how stable the instrument is, and how much it moves when seasons change. The wood definitely responds to humidity. The humidity in a New York apartment can drop to as low

as five percent, and that's drier than it gets in Arizona most of the time. So what happens is the wood shrinks, and that's when acoustic guitars crack and that's when necks usually bow in a forward direction, causing stiff action. On acoustics, the tops can shrink and cave in from dryness, so the action can drop from dryness as well. Conversely, in humid weather necks tend to backbow, so you get buzzing in first position; and tops can

swell on acoustics so the action gets too high. So they're moving in both directions: Necks are moving up and back, acoustic tops are moving up and down, and set-ups are primarily to compensate for these seasonal changes.

"To me, set-ups are routine maintenance; my rule of thumb is to get your guitar properly set up one time, connect with how good it *can* feel, then when it doesn't feel that good anymore it probably needs a tweaking. But the truth is that anyone who buys a new guitar probably needs to get it set up as soon as they get it! Even if it did leave the factory properly set up, from the time it got shipped, to the time it's been hanging in the store, to the time you buy it, it probably needs to be set up all over again.

IN MY junior year of college I saw Segovia one spring weekend and the Mahavishnu Orchestra the next...the following weekend I quit college and bought a secondhand Johnny Smith Gibson for 500 bucks. Man. It was an arch-top jazz box made of solid maple, with a carved spruce top. She sounded splendid, but played like a Kalamazoo hangover.

Fortunately for me, back in the mid-'70s the legendary luthier James L. D'Aquisto had a shop in Farmingdale, Long Island on Route 110. Coming of age under the tutelage of master luthier John

My Axe, Your Neck

A professional set-up can save your guitar **By Chip Stern**

**“Players
must learn to
overcome
their
instrument.”**

JOE SATRIANI





**“Manufacturers
have abdicated
responsibility for
properly setting up
instruments to the
retailers and the
players.”**

D'Angelico, this street-hardened Stradivarius is the king of the arch-top acoustic guitar. Twenty years ago he was still doing set-ups and repair work, and getting \$2500 for one of his magnificent custom instruments, while today he gets \$25,000 a guitar, with a six-year wait for delivery, thank you very much. Which is not surprising considering how much older D'Angelicos and D'Aquistos have appreciated on the collector's market. Anyway I brought Dr. D'Aquisto my instrument, he kind of looked it up and down, scoffed at its shortcomings, tsk-tsked at simple manufacturing oversights and told me he could set the world right with a fret job for \$85. Having strummed a couple of D'Aquisto's completed guitars, I knew I was in the right place. A few weeks later when I took it home it was like night and day—in tune from top to bottom, incredibly fluid and warm.

But there were still a few funny spots on the neck where it kind of buzzed and fretted out when I dug in. When I called Jimmy to tell him, he got slightly irked. “I’ll give you a hundred phone numbers, and you won’t find one guy who’s had a problem with one of my fret jobs. Ninety-nine percent of the time that buzzing is from bad strings.” I got flustered. “Look,” I said. “I’m not questioning your workmanship. I don’t know from strings or frets. All I know is I’m getting some buzz.” Jimmy sighed. “Bring it down and we’ll have a look at it.”

He laid it on his workbench. Sprang. “That’s a string.” Sprang. “That’s a fret.” So he tapped and filed away, tweaked the truss rod, put on some fresh strings, and what a difference (that night my wife asked me to turn down the amp—but I wasn’t plugged in). The guitar now played and intonated so beautifully that when given a new home... sigh... it paid for my daughter and our first Manhattan apartment.

All of which is meant to say that despite your instrument's relative shortcomings, you can save money in the short term and increase its value in the long term if you'll just invest in its playability. Replacement pickups, custom parts, revolutionary vibrato systems, hot new amplifiers...cool—go for it. But while you're luxuriating in gadgets and gimmickry, think about how much better your guitar could intonate and resonate. The secret is to invest in a good set-up.

“There are no secrets,” counters Roger Sadowsky, dismissing the

notion of cryptic mysteries known only to guitar techs. “If you basically like the sound and the feel of the guitar, then we can take it the rest of the way. But let’s put it this way—you can do it. There are a lot of things you can do if you’re inclined. The most basic thing most people could learn to do is to keep their neck adjusted. But it’s more intimidating for people than you’d imagine.”

“Well, some people are intimidated by anything mechanical,” points out virtuoso guitar hero Joe Satriani. “The type of person who doesn’t understand cars or VCRs is going to have the same reaction towards a guitar. The thing about being a beginner is that you’re so mesmerized by experiencing music, and you’re so ignorant as to what a good instrument is and what a bad instrument is, that you just plow ahead out of love for playing.

“So I really didn’t know for many years until other people started picking up my guitar and going, ‘Wow! How do you play this thing?’ And I didn’t have an answer for them. I said, ‘I don’t know, it’s just the one I’ve got.’ I would just do it all myself: read magazines and learn how to tweak it, raise and lower the action. I had no money to spend on guitar techs and luthiers. I don’t even think I knew what a luthier was until I was 15. It’s funny. If you really like doing something, you just do it and don’t mess with the particulars.

“It’s unfortunate,” Satriani adds, “but for many manufacturers, if they were to dedicate the amount of time to properly setting up instruments in the factory that they do to making them, then the cost of instruments on the street would be more than most people could afford. So in a real sense they’ve abdicated this responsibility to the retailers and the players. It’s something that really disturbs me.”

Recently I checked out a Fender Stratocaster 12-string in a shop on Manhattan’s 48th Street. Visions of Lonnie Johnson and old Byrds records ringing in my head, I had the money in my pocket, but chickened out. The price was right. She played beautifully but then I got unsettled by the notion of tuning it...and there was this strange wobble and buzz on the A strings that distressed me. The salesman acknowledged that she needed a set-up, but I didn’t know if it was structural or something simple (and he wouldn’t swing with the case), so I walked. Conscience, cowardice or common sense?

“It’s a tough call,” Sadowsky admits. “It certainly says something



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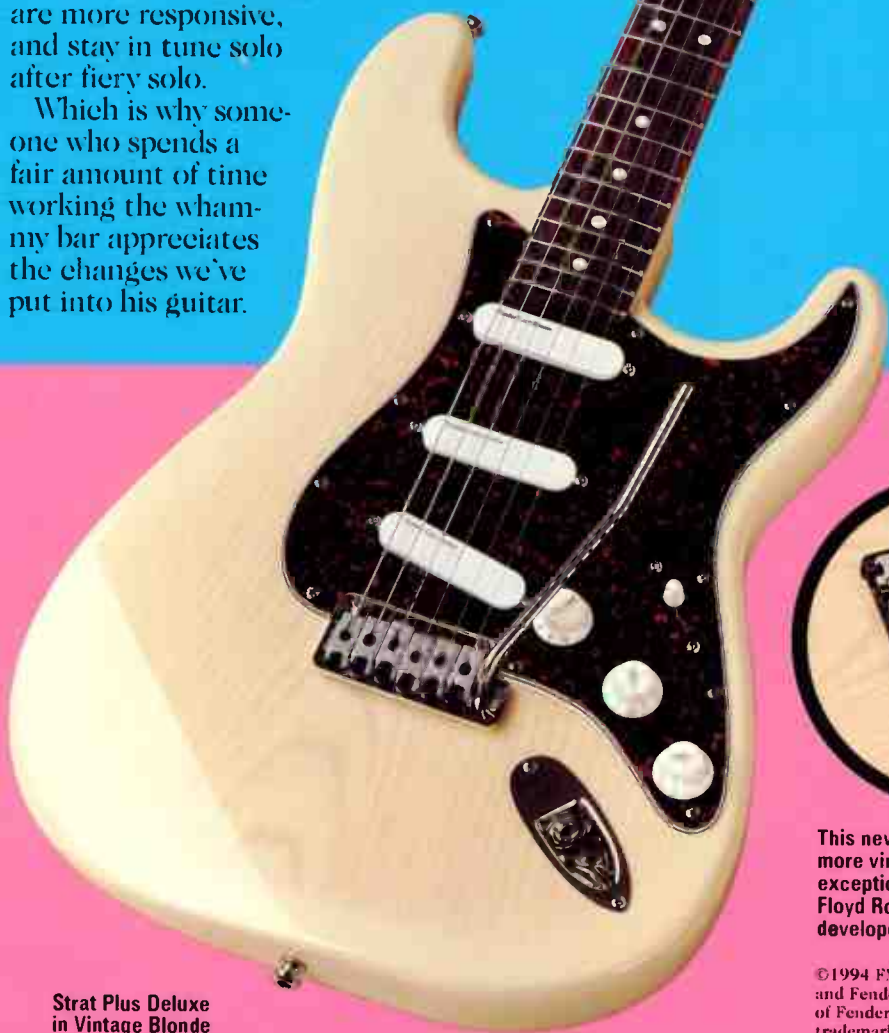
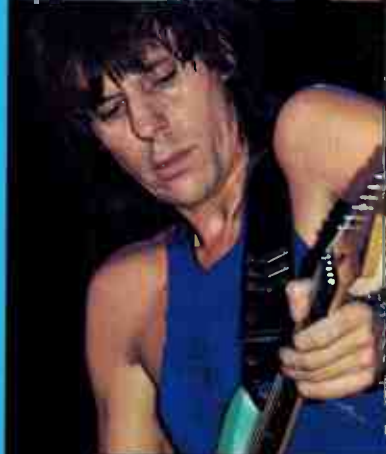
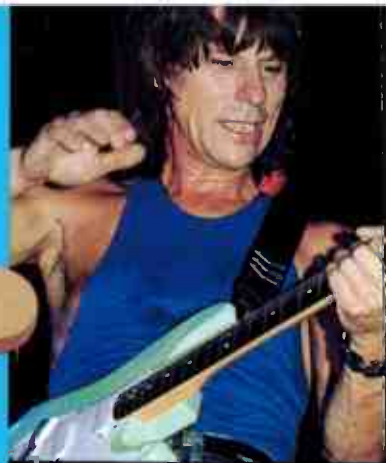
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The Gibson L-4 is a fancy ES-175, with a laminated mahogany back and sides, but instead of a pressed maple top, the L-4 has a solid carved spruce top. It's a very warm, sweet-sounding acoustic box, but the way I had mine set up it was terribly stiff and fretted out when I played, even with high action. To illustrate what a guitar technician looks for when assisting a player with his or her set-up, we brought our L-4 to Roger Sadowsky's Manhattan shop for a good once-over. I wanted to lower the action and reduce string tension, but still keep that acoustic sparkle. I was fully prepared to invest in a neck and fret job when I brought Roger the guitar, but as things turned out....

There was an excessive amount of relief in the neck, that's the main thing. As a result, you had a bit of a high spot, especially in the bass register around the 12th-15th fret, that was causing a lot of buzz. So the first step is to adjust the neck with the truss rod. Once that's done, it's a matter of adjusting everything else in relation to that: getting the bridge at the right height; fine-tuning the nut height; and then adjusting the pickup height. But the first step is that the neck has to be properly adjusted to accommodate the string gauge you're setting up the instrument for—in your case .011-.049.

Everything else is a function of the neck adjustment; although we'd improved it significantly, there was still a little bit of a high spot in the upper register in the bass range. With a normal attack it plays clean, but if you dig in a little harder it gets a bit buzzy. If we're going to keep the action as low as we can, the only solution is to pull the frets out of the fingerboard, sand or plane the high spot in the neck out, get the neck as straight and true as possible and then refret it.

With collectible guitars the issue is to have the guitar as close in every way to the original specs as possible. If you told me that you hated the sound of it, I would not advise you

to put any more money in it. If I wasn't confident that I could help you achieve the feel you're going for, I wouldn't let you put three or four hundred dollars into an instrument.

So a lot of your craft is in making sure that you're on the same page as the player.

How Roger Sadowsky Fixed My Guitar



Absolutely. But I'm going to take one more shot at this instrument and how I adjust the neck, to see if you really need a fret job. What I'm doing is adjusting the truss rod to make the neck a little straighter, which might level out this high spot here.

Well, I'm just a hacker, and I have a real strong right-hand attack. I'm not a complete ape, though; I employ different dynamics, but there are times when I feel it stronger so I play harder.

But any instrument, even properly set up, is going to want to buzz if you play really hard. You can't set up an instrument to handle your hardest attack, and have it be comfortable for 80 percent of your other playing. This neck is really quite straight, and I think with this kind of

attack it's still going to get buzzy, even if we were to refret it, especially with .011s. I'd probably encourage you to try .012s before we do anything. It's possible that the way I adjusted the neck before it still had a bit more relief than you require. But in terms of it getting buzzy in this area, I think that the specific amount I tightened the neck pretty much took that out. Tell me if you find it a little buzzy in the first position.

A little.

Now that's the tradeoff. In pulling the neck back a little to make this better, then this got a little too flat. If you're going to play it acoustically as much as plugged in, you can get away with .011s, but you're certainly going to get more [cont'd on page 62]

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"Guitar wizard Richard Thompson, who's played with Fairport Convention and his own solo groups, is the main focus. Seeking to "create something more organic than the usual guitar video," he talks and demonstrates while curled up in his kitchen, his living room and back porch, while footage of various guitar greats is spliced in. He explains Chuck Berry licks, plus open and modal tunings, pentatonic and blues scales and such tricks as string-bending and dampening chords.

Rolling Stone guitarist Ron Wood demonstrates slide guitar and several sonic tricks with his tremolo bar. Heavy metal ace Michael Schenker explains his flashy guitar solos, while studio pro John Wilson demystifies his guitar synthesizer. A very impressive video." — BOSTON GLOBE

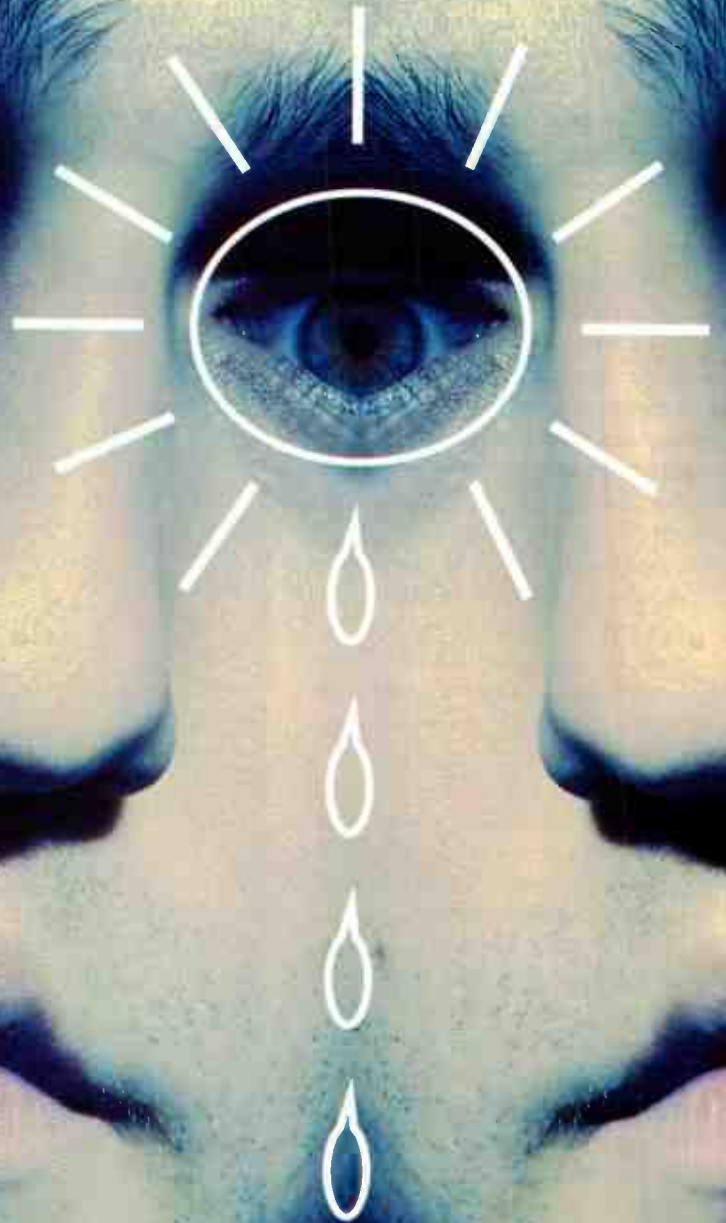
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GREG DULLI OF THE AFGHAN WHIGS TAKES THE

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN BRAA



BY JAMES HUNTER

PH SHOTS AND DISCOVERS

BEARD AND STUPID

“I GET TO DRESS UP

and play assassin,” goes an Afghan Whigs tune. “It’s my favorite/It’s got personality.”

Drama compels Greg Dulli. When he first moved to Los Angeles from his native Ohio, it was to pursue acting and filmmaking, and as the singer and songwriter of Cincinnati’s excellent Afghan Whigs, he retains a cinematic view of things. “Shot on location in Memphis, Tennessee at Ardent Studios,” reads a credit on *Gentlemen*, Afghan Whigs’ major-label debut.

Setting the scene for the album, Dulli describes an immediate, sometimes difficult suite performed by someone all by himself thinking, talking out loud and frequently raging. “We wanted that 3 a.m. sound,” he says. “The one thing that every song has in common is that the narrator is alone. It’s like after you’ve come home from a bar: Maybe you’re drunk or maybe you’re not, but you’re always inside your own head. You’re listening to a Billie Holiday record and trying to find where you stuck that last shot

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT ANHER

of tequila. And you can't find it. You're pissed off. And sad."

An introspective yet flashy '90s rock record that finds little solace in metal yet is hard as nails and romantic through and through, *Gentlemen* isn't necessarily the start of a great band. That was more or less apparent when the Afghan Whigs released *Uptown Avondale*, a 1992 EP that featured unusual covers of Freda Payne's "Band of Gold" and the Supremes' "Come See About Me," and then 1993's *Congregation* album, both on Sub Pop. Dulli thinks of the EP as the bridge between the two albums, with the band's other independent releases as places where he learned to play his instrument and, in general, merge rock and narrative.

The Afghan Whigs' R&B interpretations (an interpolation of the Spinners' "I'll Be Around" creeps into *Congregation*'s "Turn on the Water" during concerts) are not just anyone's embrace—reverent or otherwise—of black classics. They manage a stark lushness, as Dulli terms it, and they slam in a bracingly articulate way.

"I love the genre," Dulli says of R&B, "and I love to immerse myself in the whole culture it comes from. The fact remains that I am a white man. The thing that did attract me about changing those songs—and they are very much changed when we get done with them—is the words. The words are incredibly sad. It's kind of subversive and insidious, in a way, to listen to those songs. I always thought that they were kind of David Lynchian, these really painful words that, to get you to swallow it, are wrapped around this sugary kind of pop song.

"I wanted to deconstruct those songs to make the music more sympathetic to the lyrics. This meant taking them from a major key to a minor key, slowing them down from a bounce to a dirge, basically turning one light off and turning another harsher light on, but with complete reverence and respect, which is kind of tough to do."

The Afghan Whigs are a first-rate ensemble of bassist John Curley, lead guitarist Rick McCollum and drummer Steve Earle, and Dulli, who puts himself "probably in fourth place in terms of musical ability." On *Gentlemen* the music twists and turns, flows and halts, constructed so as to allow the intricacies of his characters' mental states to grab you. "I'm not above doing a little grandstanding to get my point across," he says.

When rockers find drama this stimulating, some always cry "melodrama!," and so I ask Dulli about that. "Melodrama," he says, "to me means that somebody is willing to go way out on a limb, like the Who's *Quadrophenia* or Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. There are parts of *The Wall* that make me say, 'C'mon, pal.' But I have to admire how far Roger Waters is willing to go to make his point of how much pain he was in. It's either brave or stupid. Sometimes you have to be brave to be stupid."

That beats having to be stupid to be brave, doesn't it? But although the Afghan Whigs may succeed at drama without going the spangled way of Meat Loaf, Dulli's most important point about rock as narrative involves the recognition that *something* needs to drive music. Here is a band who wouldn't roll tape in Memphis during the *Gentlemen* sessions until after sundown ("Maybe it was like Method recording, or something," Dulli laughs), an outfit who in the prelude "If I Were Going" and in the dynamic single "Debonair" conceive of the emotional separation between a couple as a full-fledged character: "It's in our heart," Dulli explains, "it's in our head/It's in our love, baby/It's in our bed."

Dulli seems hardly a full-time villain or depressive. The most quoted line from *Gentlemen*, the ironic "I got a dick for a brain/And my brain is gonna sell my ass/To you" ladies' address that begins "Be Sweet," he remembers swiping from a bombed friend who was over at his house talking about recent romantic misfortunes. He's someone

who sees a brutal film like *Santa Sangre* as "very lyrical, a movie that sings to me and flows like a song," and listens to stories spun on airplanes and barstools. "I draw from people," Dulli says of his songwriting. "Sometimes, strangers will really open up to you, say they're sleeping with their sister's husband, or whatever, because they know they're never going to see you again. Sometimes, they could be lying. The thing, for me, is to mix the sarcastic with the sincere and, therefore, confuse the enemy."

Country music, or at least some of it, compels him. "Patsy, Merle, George Jones," Dulli says, "that stuff is *high* drama. Somebody's always fucking somebody they shouldn't be, or leaving them, or breaking somebody's heart. Take away the 'white trash' angle, and country is as real as the nose on your face." And, as he knows, country artists don't think twice about treating their stories operatically. It just seems like the real thing to do. 🎸

GENTLEMEN: START YOUR AFGHANS

GREG DULLI plays Fender Telecasters. Both of his Teles are off the shelf except for the Seymour Duncan Hot Rail bridge pickups, which drive the amp a little harder and are less prone to the evil Fender amp squeal. Greg alternates between a Fender Super 210 and a Musicman RD 210. In either case he never fails to use his trusty second cabinet, a Super Twin. For distortion Greg uses a RATT and sometimes a Big Muff. He hates it when someone tapes his pedals down. Tuner is an Arion Stage Tuner. Vocals: Shure Beta 58.

RICK MCCOLLUM prefers his Fender Jazzmaster to his Stratocaster even though he put Jazzmaster pickups in the Strat. Rick's pedals: a Blue Tube preamp, an Arion Stage Tuner, a Cry Baby wah-wah, Turbo RATT and a Digitech four-second rack delay prior to amplification. That task is performed by the Musicman 100RD head connected to a Fender Super Six cabinet which, in contrast to his colleague's, still contains the amplifier section.

JOHN CURLEY plays a Musicman Sting Ray bass and a Rickenbacker 4003 (four strings, thank you) through a GK400 amp connected to a Sunn 610 cabinet with six 10" EV speakers and Owens Corning insulation. "Sometimes I'll use a Blue Tube but the GK gets a warm overdrive sound on its own. I patch a DBX 160x compressor through the insert jacks of the amp to help control the volume onstage. A Sabine Rack Tuner compensates for tone deafness. Backing vocals through a Shure Beta 58 which does not."

STEVE EARLE prefers Wild Turkey 101, Pearl drums with RIMMs System mounts and Zildjian cymbals. He uses Remo Pin Stripe heads on the toms, Remo Ambassador on the snares. Snares, you say? One is a 1977 Ludwig Black Beauty 5"x14", the other is a Yamaha Maple Custom 5 1/2"x14". DW pedal and Regal Tip 3B sticks. Sizes of the drums: 22"x16" kick, 12" and 16" toms.

For keyboards, Afghan Whigs have a Yamaha PF 100 played by guitar tech Doug Falsetti, MIDI'd to a TX81Z, which drives another Blue Tube for a Hammond-like sound or DI'd straight for the piano and electric piano sounds.

Longtime soundhead Steve Girton has a heavy rack wit Alesis 3630 and DBX166 compressors, BSS and Valley Oates, Yamaha SPX990 and SPX90, DBX 1531 EQ and Yamaha D1500 delay. Mikes are EV308 & 408 on the toms. A TM63HE on the snare, D112 on the kick, 57s on the amps, Countryman DI and 421 on the bass and Shure SM61s on the hi-hat and overheads. Vocals are Shure Beta 58s.

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GRETSCH BRIAN SETZER GUITAR

Just as Brian Setzer's music blends the old and the new, the Brian Setzer Nashville guitar from Gretsch combines '50s style with '90s features. Available in two finishes, polyurethane (\$2995) and lacquer (\$3350), its pickups are specially wound to duplicate those in Gretsch's 1958 Nashville Western. Setzer's specs also call for Sperzel locking tuners, composite graphite nut, three-way adjustable bridge, bound maple body, bound ebony fingerboard on a rock maple neck and—the crowning touch—volume and tone knobs shaped like dice. ♦ Gretsch, P.O. Box 2468, Savannah, GA 31402; voice (912) 748-1101, fax (912) 748-1106.

FAST



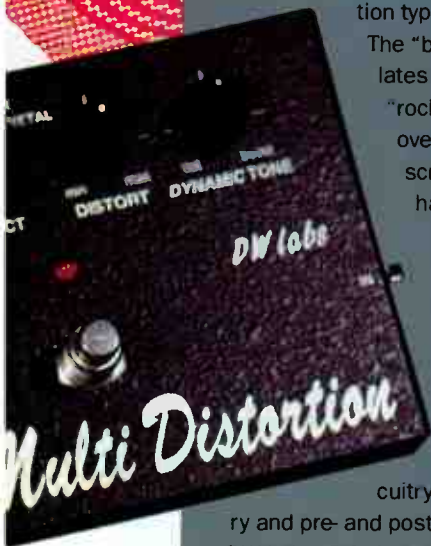
KURZWEIL PC88 MASTER KEYBOARD

The master controller is the most overlooked part of any MIDI rig, but there's no substitute for the flexibility one can provide. Kurzweil's PC88 (price TBA) combines an 88-key, weighted keyboard with a 32-voice digital piano featuring grand piano, Fender Rhodes, Clavinet, harpsichord and orchestral strings, plus onboard digital multieffects. The 50-lb unit provides four overlapping MIDI zones for splitting and layering plus pitch and mod wheels, front panel sliders and switches, continuous and switch-type pedal inputs and an arpeggiator. A General MIDI option is available. ♦ Kurzweil, 1336 Alondra Blvd., Cerritos, CA 90701; voice (310) 926-3200, fax (310) 404-0748.

DW LABS D3P MULTIDISTORTION

The D3P MultiDistortion (\$135) from DW Labs offers a choice of three analog distortion types plus a preamp. The "blues" setting emulates an edgy tube amp, "rock" piles on meaty overtones and "metal" screeches with enhanced highs and lows, while the pre-amp provides a boost for clean sounds. Switching among them simultaneously changes input gain, distortion circuitry, tone control circuitry and pre- and post-distortion EQ.

♦ DW Labs, P.O. Box 882, Millburn, NJ 07041; voice (201) 376-8453, fax (201) 376-3857.



SABIAN PRO SERIES CYMBALS

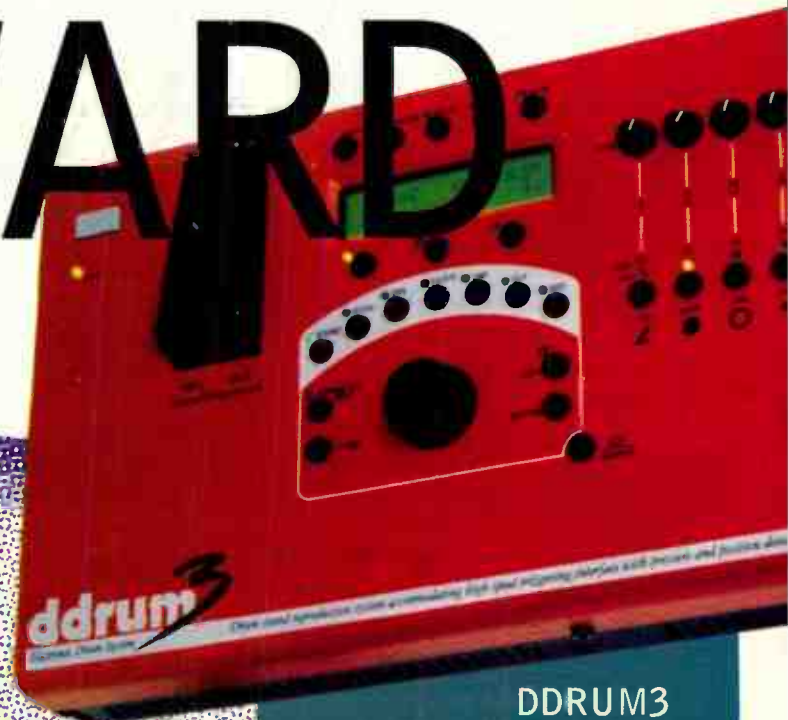
Designed to deliver the quick attack and biting tone prized in rock drumming, Sabian's Pro-series cymbals are the first to use a proprietary hammering method that allows for high-precision tuning. The new models include 13" fusion hats (\$171 per pair), 16" and 18" crashes (\$123 and \$141) and a 21" dry ride (\$168). ♦ Sabian, Main St., Medford, New Brunswick, Canada E0H 1L0; voice (506) 272-2019, fax (506) 272-2081.

FORWARD



AMPEG SVT CLASSIC BASS AMP

The SVT has been a staple of Ampeg's line since the original model was introduced in 1969. Now they've resurrected the look and design of the original while adding cutting-edge features. New protection circuitry minimizes damage from a tube short, and bias is user-adjustable, making it easy to tweak the tubes for maximum performance. ♦ St. Louis Music, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63133; voice (314) 727-4512, fax (314) 727-8929.



DDRUM3 ELECTRONIC DRUMS

It's ironic that drummers have been hurt by the electronic revolution; the affinity between MIDI and percussion ought to have made them the greatest beneficiaries. ddrum's response is the ddrum3 (\$4850), a hi-fi sampler/trigger (ten trigger ins, eight audio outs) that boasts 3-ms response time, 1000 dynamic levels and real-time DSP that mimics the response of acoustic drums. Sounds can be loaded via MIDI, S/PDIF and SCSI. New PrecisionPads complete the kit (\$1995 for three 10" toms, 12" snare and kick). ♦ ddrum, 300 Long Beach Blvd., Stratford, CT 06427; voice (800) 882-0088, fax (203) 380-1780.



Bean, from D'Cückoo, whose new "Umoja" CD is on RGB Records.

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THE NEIGHBORS say I jam too loud," sing L7, and breathes there a rocker with soul so weary that he's never voiced that plaint? The guy pounding on your door with a hammer screaming

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MAYBE YOU don't like opening up your computer and fiddling around with slots and cards. Maybe you're a cheapskate, and the thought of paying several times the price of your computer for digital-audio add-ons yanks your chain. Or maybe you're like me, enthralled by the notion that one day soon all of those boxes, peripherals and add-ons will disappear into the motherboard of your CPU.

Our day has come. Apple, Atari and Silicon Graphics Inc. (SGI) all offer computers that feature built-in 16-bit digital audio. That is, you can record, edit and play back without any additional hardware. Slowly but surely software is appearing that takes advantage of these features. These machines aren't ProTools killers quite yet. But if you're looking for a random-access answer to the cassette multitrack and have between \$3000 and \$6000 in the bank, keep reading.

MACINTOSH GOES MULTIMEDIA

Last August marked the debut of Apple's current Macintosh speed champions, the 25-MHz Quadra 660AV (\$2289 for the CPU, with eight megs of RAM and a 230-meg hard drive) and 40-MHz Quadra 840AV (\$3619 with the same).

Based on the Motorola 68040 processor, they add to the Macintosh architecture a 55-MHz AT&T 3210 DSP chip that performs real-time video capture and display along with hi-fi audio recording and playback.

The first software product to take advantage of this audio firepower is OSC's Deck II (\$299), the original mixing interface for Digidesign's audio hardware. Despite the relatively low price, Deck II pretty much does it all: nondestructive editing, moving-fader automation, visual waveform editing, SMPTE synchronization, synchronous playback with MIDI sequencers and playback of QuickTime video clips. The current version supports four-channel recording and playback from a hard disk; a newly announced revision promises eight tracks.

Alaska Software's DigiTrax (\$349) offers a comparable feature set with six tracks of hard-disk-based audio and the ability to control CD-ROM drives for importing material from audio CDs. And look out for Opcode's forthcoming StudioVision AV (\$595), which sports the overhauled interface of Vision 2.0 (one of the more popular MIDI sequencers) along with two-channel audio editing.

The Mac AV models aren't without pitfalls. Number one: You have to record and play back through the computer's built-in, RCA-plug stereo A/D/As, which may not be entirely satisfying to audiophiles.

What's more, there's no way to get in and out of the AVs in the digital domain, unless you buy a NuBus card like Spectral Innovations' NuMedia (\$695), which kind of defeats the purpose of buying an AV. A number of developers are working on stereo S/PDIF interfaces that plug into the GeoPort modem serial connector, but don't expect them any time soon because Apple has yet to publish the GeoPort spec.

Finally—and this applies equally to the systems discussed below—the Mac AV hardware is not designed to resolve to an external clock. That is, if you're trying to sync to faulty timecode that's wavering, you'll lose sync. (Alternatively, you can digitize your video source through the Mac's built-in video port and sync your audio to a QuickTime movie.)

The good news is that you can buy an eight-track digital-audio editing system for under \$3500—make that \$4500 once you add a one-gigaByte hard drive (which you're likely to do sooner rather than later). Plus Apple has announced its intention to provide a PowerPC upgrade for the AVs starting at around \$700, so you won't be totally left behind when the PowerPC chip finally enters the marketplace.

THE ATARI ALTERNATIVE

If \$3500 to \$4500 is too rich for your blood, then how does \$3000 sound? That's the figure when you add the price of an Atari Falcon 030 (\$999 with four megs of RAM), a one-gig hard drive (\$1000) and Cubase Audio (\$999) software from Steinberg/Jones. You will need a monitor, but the Falcon allows you to plug into your TV

if that's all you have. And it includes built-in MIDI ports. Cubase Audio for the Falcon achieves eight-track playback from hard disk plus MIDI sequencing and the other features familiar from the Mac version. It also comes with a clock chip that plugs into the back of the computer, allowing it to record at 44.1 kHz (which, curiously, it won't do on its own). Fortunately, there is a way to get digital audio in and out—Steinberg offers a \$599 stereo S/PDIF interface.

A new generation of computers comes with high-fidelity audio recording and playback built in.

BY TED PINE



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- 70 8/84 Peter Wolf, King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
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- 104 6/87 Springsteen, The Blasters, Keith Jarrett
- 111 1/88 R.E.M., George Michael, Year in Rock
- 112 2/88 McCartney, Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
- 113 3/88 Robert Plant, INXS, Wynton Marsalis
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- 146 12/90 Slash, Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
- 147 1/91 Robert Johnson, Bruce Hornsby, Soul Asylum
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- 156 10/91 Dire Straits, Jesus Jones, Paul McCartney
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- 158 12/91 Miles Davis, Robbie Robertson, Massive Attack
- 159 1/92 Super Deals!, Nirvana, Earl Palmer
- 160 2/92 Fear of Rap, Eric Clapton
- 161 3/92 The Edge, Dizzy Gillespie, Harrison/Clapton
- 162 4/92 Def Leppard, k. d. lang, Live
- 163 5/92 Drugs & Creativity, Lovett, Mike Special
- 164 6/92 Guns N' Roses, Metallica, Genesis
- 165 7/92 Led Zeppelin, Faith No More, Burnett/Phillips
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- 176 6/93 Speech/Curtis Mayfield, Soul Asylum, Chris Isaak
- 179 9/93 Steely Don, Tanya Donnelly, Kim Deal
- 180 10/93 Nirvana, Jeff Beck, Depeche Mode
- 181 11/93 Pearl Jam, Counting Crows, Liz Phair
- 182 12/93 Future Shocks, Year in Music '93
- SP1 Best of the Beatles and Rolling Stones
- SP2 Masters of Metal, Metallica, Def Leppard, more

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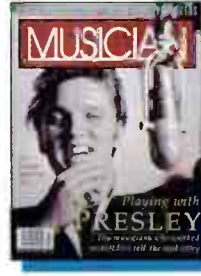
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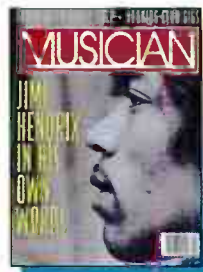
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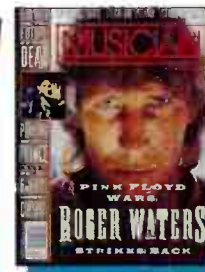
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FAST FORWARD



CESAR ROSAS' HO

World Radio History



FOR LOS LOBOS' Cesar Rosas, convenience is the mother of invention: "None of us in the band lives close to Hollywood, and it was always a chore to get there to record. I always wanted to have a little studio." Now he's putting one together in a converted garage space, and although it's a work in progress—a collection of vintage Fender and Vox amps are closeted in the soundbooth and a water heater is strapped to one corner—it has already been pressed into service for several Los Lobos projects, including TV themes and an upcoming album of Mexican folk songs for children, *Music for Little People*.

Sounds enter the system through an **AKG Tube** mike **1** and a bevy of tube preamps culled from old mixing consoles; these include five vintage **Seeman V72As** **2** (once the Beatles' preamp of choice), three **Quad 8s** **3** and two **Neve 3104s** **4**. He's also fond of his **Tech 21 SansAmp** distortion unit **5**, a rackmount version of the stomp box he's been using on the road for years: "If we're doing some '50s thing but we have a fancy microphone on it, the SansAmp gives it that kind of distortion." Reverb and other effects are supplied by a **Digitech TSR-24** **6**, **Roland DEP-5** **7** and two **Yamaha SPX90s** **8**. A trio of compressor/limiters round out the selection of signal processors: a **DBX 162** **9**, a **Teletronix LA-2A** **10** and an **RCA BAGA** **11** "used by radio stations in the old days for high-power transmission, so they run real hot. I like anything with tubes in it. Digital is a little cold-sounding, so I try to get as much through the tubes as possible before we get there." When it's time to enter the digital domain, Rosas favors a pair of **Alesis ADAT** recorders **12** (the third is borrowed). "It'll never be as warm as the analog, but it's true to the sound—no hiss."

His two **Mackie CR-1604** 16-channel mixers **13** were used to record live tracks for Los Lobos's recent 20th anniversary CDs. For playback, Cesar goes with a **Denon AM/FM** tuner **14**, **Yamaha CX-630** stereo amplifier **15**, **Kenwood DP-R4450** CD player **16**, **Sony DTC-700** DAT **17** and **Technics HX Pro** double cassette deck **18**. He prefers **Tannoy PBM 8** speakers **19**—"they're not as harsh or brittle" as the studio-standard Yamaha NS10s. Giant **Gerwin Vegas** **20** loom overhead—"my disco speakers," he laughs.

But what to play? An avid guitar collector, Rosas is particularly fond of his five-string **vihuela** **21**, 12-string **bajo sexto** **22** (with thicker-gauge strings than typical 12-string guitars), and green **1960 Fender Stratocaster** with stop tailpiece **23**, retired from the road but at the ready for studio action.

"Now I can come here and play in the middle of the night," he says. "I had just come out of here when the earthquake hit." Shakin' shakin' shakes indeed!

BY MARK ROWLAND
PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY BLAKESBERG

THE STUDIO



MAX WEINBERG ON LET THERE BE DRUMS

"I'VE ALWAYS had an interest in the generational and historical aspects of rock drumming and the drummers who played rock—where they came from, where they got their ideas," says Max Weinberg, explaining how he came to compile *Let There Be Drums* (Rhino), a three-volume survey of rock drumming. In a sense, the series is a follow-up to his 1984 book, *The Big Beat (Conversations with Rock's Great Drummers)*, offering classic stickwork by everybody from Earl Palmer to Al Jackson to Bernard Purdie.

"One of the problems inherent in doing this kind of compilation is that, because it's all licensed material, some people want to play ball, and some people don't," he says. "Some obvious omissions occurred because of licensing problems. You can't get Keith Moon playing with the Who. You can't get D.J. Fontana with Elvis Presley. You can't get Beatle material. Until Charlie Watts interceded on my behalf, you couldn't get Rolling Stones material. I think I have the only licensed Rolling Stones track in existence,

'Rocks Off,' which is on the '70s volume."

Weinberg's notion of giving the drummer some left little room for solos. "For me, drum solos was never what it was about," he says. "Fitting into the scope of the tune you were playing was the most important thing. All the drummers, even the not-so-well-known ones, contributed to the particular song, but not in a drum solo way."

Weinberg adds that, as one who knew most of these recordings as 45s, he found the process of CD remastering to be both revealing and disappointing. "Sometimes you'll hear with more clarity, and for me that will screw it up," he says. "Like when I heard 'Topsy II' [by Cozy Cole & His Orchestra]. It didn't have quite the mystery the original 45 had. And you hear the mistakes a lot more. On a song like 'Jenny Take a Ride,' there's some stuff in there that's probably better left murky. Or 'Red River Rock' [by Johnny & the Hurricanes]. You listen to the 45s, it sounds like one thing. Now, the drums sound sampled. It's just the way that it came out sounding when they cleaned it up." —J.D. Considine

World Radio History

HOLE

Live Through This

(Geffen)

JUST YOU TRY TO HOLD ME DOWN/COME on, try to shut me up," snarls Courtney Love near the end of *Live Through This*, hurling a challenge no sane person would accept. On Hole's major-label debut, Kurt Cobain's much-discussed, little-heard other half finally gets the chance to escape gossip-column purgatory and succeeds with flying colors. Those who insist on seeing Love as another Yoko Ono for messing with the leader of a popular boy band won't be persuaded by her vivid diatribes—but who needs them? Anybody receptive to an ornery voice that raises prickly questions will welcome a kindred spirit.

Yes, there are similarities to Nirvana. Love's singing shifts from ragged drawl to full-throated primal roar on most tracks, and the melodies are much poppier than the veneer of punk-rock noise would suggest. That doesn't guarantee another *Nevermind*, of course, because irritable women with trash mouths tend to suffer diminished commercial rewards, even when the band is this tight and driving. (Goodbye Wal-Mart display.) It'd be hard to misconstrue her rants about the objectification of women, that's for sure: From "Jennifer's Body" to "She Walks on Me," Love's outbursts of anger and disgust have an unsettling ring of truth, whether she's lamenting lost innocence or attacking "anorexic magazines."

This exhilarating bluntness also results in a hilariously gross vignette of infancy ("Plump"), as well as a scathing assault on conformity ("Credit in the Straight World"). Between ambivalent allusions to fame ("When I get what I want, I never want it again") and admissions of low self-esteem ("I'm sleeping with my enemy—myself"), however, Love makes a case for herself as a classic confessional artiste, instead of just a surly raver. Not to slight her capable mates, especially drummer Patty Schemel, who deserved a better spot in the mix. But it's Courtney Love's foul, funny eloquence that cuts through all the bullshit with a mighty flourish. Rock on, sister! —Jon Young

WILLIE NELSON

Moonlight Becomes You

(Justice)

The Early Years

(Scotti Bros.)

WILLIE NELSON'S IN THE HALL OF FAME now, folks. I guess that makes him a legend. What the hell, he's been everything else: struggling songwriter, country star, Julio's duet

What Are You Listening to Lately?

partner, movie star, tax evader... Willie's just about done it all. Under the weight of that extracurricular activity, his music has had a tendency to get a little flabby now and then, but for over three decades, Nelson's public persona has grown as stubbornly as his hair.

Two new releases do a nice job of blowing away the showbiz smoke and getting to the essence of what makes Willie Willie. *The Early Years* is a collection of demo- and record-quality tracks dating from the early '60s when Nelson was a writer at Pamper, country star Ray Price's Nashville-based song publishing company. Each of these 14 songs, delivered in the marvelous matter-of-fact vocal style Nelson favored back then, is a killer. Nelson's ability to crystallize everyday emotion and experience is in full flower on songs like "Undo the Right," with its stark, pedal steel-and-guitar arrangement, and "End of Understanding," which, like many of these tracks, is given full "Nashville Sound" treatment.

His current major label didn't want to hear about *Moonlight Becomes You*, so Nelson waited until he was between contracts to release this collection of standards in the tradition of 1978's *Stardust*, on Justice, a small Texas-based indie label. This time the joy is in the playing, as Nelson and a circle of his closest musical compadres (including legendary Texas musician Paul Buskirk on guitar and mandola) kick chestnuts like "Please Don't Talk about Me When I'm Gone," "Sentimental Journey" and the title track back to life with a tight, jumpy piano-and-guitar-based ensemble. The album opens with Nelson's "December Day," a lovely



PATRICK EWING

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BJORK

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DAVID HARRINGTON

1. Bonda polyphony
2. Canray Fontenot
3. Noam Chomsky radio tapes
4. Smashing Pumpkins
5. Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy



meditation on the passing of time from his Pamper days that also appears on *The Early Years*. Listening to both versions reassures us that, as a singer and a guitarist, Willie hasn't lost a thing.

It's a shame that an artist of Nelson's stature can't just pull his bus into Music City and make exactly the kind of record he wants. But maybe it's for the best. When he was kicking at the door to get in, he was cranking out the kind of priceless stuff you hear on *The Early Years*.

Three decades down the road and Nashville still won't let him do it his way, so he stomps off and makes an unselfconscious gem like *Moonlight Becomes You*. As musical bookends framing an unbelievable career, these two records remind us that, for Willie anyway, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

—Peter Cronin

GANG STARR

Hard to Earn

(CHRYSALIS/ERG)

GANG STARR CAN TAKE CREDIT FOR recognizing the possibilities of mingling rap and bebop, but labeling them "jazz rappers" misses the mark. They're no more "hip-hop-pers" than Afrika Bambaataa was a German-synth rapper because he appropriated a Kraftwerk riff. Rapper Guru and DJ/producer Premier's first goal has always been to create hardcore hip-hop, and *Hard to Earn*, their latest album, offers further proof. This is music that reflects and responds to New York City: sophisticated, alternately claustrophobic and soothing, violent and cool. Depictions of urban reality remain keen and unglorified, yet affectionate; "Tonz 'O' Gunz" is about a city drowning in firearms, while "The Planet" is a rock steady-flavored ode to Brooklyn. "Code of the Streets" is reminiscent of *Step in the Arena's* "Just to Get a Rep" in its portrayal of urban angst, but with a love/hate twist: "The streets give me energy," recites Guru, to

GANG STARR



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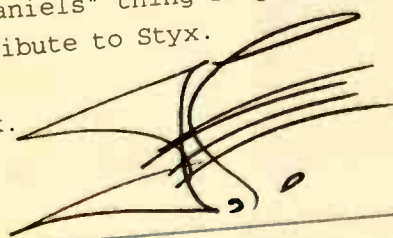
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TO: Al Schwanzstucker, Pres. METAMORPH RECORDS
FROM: Jimmy Futtobuoco, Under Ass. Promo. (West Coast)

RE: Turner passed on your memo about about developing our own multi-format crossover project like the Adams, Stewart, Sting thing that's doing so well. I went to the A.S.S. guys about that Kiss tribute you suggested and they got real pissy about the billing-KISS/A.S.S. So here's some other ideas:

1. **BLIND MELLONCAMP**, "No Rain on the Scarecrow" JCM and those hip-pie kids save the family farm from Killer Bee Girls. Great video of John kicking some Bee-butt while the Melons ponce around naked.
2. **SNOOP DOGG NIGHT**, "Joy to the Hood" Snoop and Dre swear Three Dog Night were "the shit" when they were kids. Includes "Mama Told Me Not to Come-So I Shot Her."
3. **BAND OF GYPSIES TRAMPS AND THIEVES** Cher backed by Hendrix's old rhythm section. Single is "I Got You Babe (Slight Return)."
4. **BOB DYLAN AND THE UNION GAP** The two biggest stars Hibbing, Minn. ever produced. Marty wants to go with "Lay, Lady Willpower," but I kind of like "Young Girl from the North Country."
5. **AC-PC**, "Interactive Highway to Hell" Todd Rundgren backed by Angus and the lads. Computer album allows the consumer to select from a menu of over 200 euphemisms for women's breasts.
6. **LIZ PHAIR AND THE PHAROAHS**, "Exile in Woolly Bullyville" Sam the Sham and Liz "deconstruct the androcratic-hierarchical male view that 'Woolly Bully' refers exclusively to the female organ."-(Village Voice)
7. **U2-B-40** Achtung, reggae! We're going to push the rub-a-dub version of "Sunday Bloody Sunday." (And wait till you hear Astro toasting on "Numb"!)
8. **BOBBY BROWN AND THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND**, "The Devil Came to Roxbury." Vibe says this "New Jack Daniels" thing is gonna break big.
9. **STYNX** Sting and Vynx on a tribute to Styx.

Call me and tell me what I think.



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