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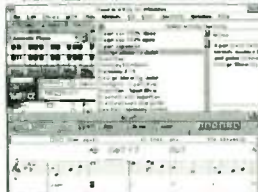
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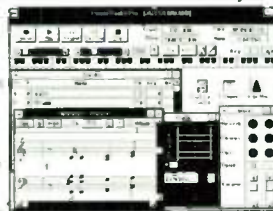
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SUCCESS?
I don't.

THAT'S A BALLSY TONE.
I've got more.
[hits the crunch switch]

WHAT'S THE COOLEST
SOUND YOU EVER HEARD?
The echo in Union Station.
What reverb!

WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG,
WHO INSPIRED YOU?
Gilligan rocked my world.
[kicks up the treble and
plays the TV theme]

IS THERE ONE GUITAR PLAYER
YOU'D LIKE TO BE?
I already am.

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START?
Coffee and donuts.

YOU SEEM TO BE MORE
VERSATILE THAN EVER BEFORE.
I grew up.

WHAT DO YOU
THINK ABOUT FLEXIBILITY?
You either have it or you don't.
[goes from shred to vintage blues]

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE
MEANS OF SELF-EXPRESSION?
I'm plugged into it.
[kicks the volume up and
starts to wail]

WHAT IS THE BEST PART
ABOUT PLAYING GUITAR?
The part where you split
and I play.

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Tube Logic
Blues Cube

7 frontman: ravi shankar

The legendary sitarist plays the changes.
by robert l. doerschuk

8 sideman: jerry hey

An L.A. session ace forecasts the death of the trumpet. by robert l. doerschuk

16 rough mix

The Buffalo bartender who inspired the Goo Goo Dolls' "Nanie"; ten essentials for surviving a road gig; the bedroom studio that launched Lisa Loeb; jazz voicings from Eliane Elias.

20 now signing

From Tempe's bars to the showcase wars of South by Southwest, the Refreshments made all the right moves. Also non-waif Tracy Bonham, the self-reliant Josh Clayton-Felt, and the morbid musings of Ruby.

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The coolest clubs, the hottest bands, the hippest music stores, the cheapest drinks. by johnny engel

26 masters of slide blues guitar

Some of the finest electric blues players in the world are scuffling in the Mississippi backwaters. Meet these unsung heroes—and take a lesson in slide guitar phrasing from some real masters. by ted drozdowski

34 gin blossoms

From local bar band to chart-busting pop phenoms, the Blossoms beat strong odds and blast back with a new album—and a lesson in how to overcome doubts from even their own label. by elysa gardner

52 online with music manufacturers

Tired of dealing with middlepersons? So are many of the folks who build your musical gear. Here's the latest on which manufacturers are online, how to access their sites and what you can expect once you get there. by randy alberts

62 fast forward

A potpourri of powerful products: JBL's EON speakers and mixers, Interactive Light's Dimension Beam MIDI-driven light system, the Viscount D9 organ, the Matchless Chieftain tube amp, ATI's Pro6 Input processor module for the Paragon console, and Fender's Jag-Stang reproduction of Kurt Cobain's Custom Shop guitar.

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Peavey's MAQ 300 and MAQ 600 amps give bands the kind of feedback they deserve. by dinky dawson

68 digital piano roundup

Whether onstage or in your livingroom, these digital piano modules and keyboards are nudging Steinways out of the spotlight. by julian colbeck

72 hard disk recorders

New even the technologically challenged can join the digital revolution. by ted pine

76 justin's jackson's home studio

They're cleaning a path for Daniel Lanois high over the streets of New York. by paul verna

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On disk with Cowboy Junkies, Cassandra Wilson, Lou Reed, Idaho and disciples of Joe Meek. In the studio with Gavin Friday.

98 backside

Why seek the rich when you can tax musical miscreants? by rev. billy c. wirtz

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frontman

This is a very important subject. I have loved experimenting. I like to use foreign instruments—different sounds, different ranges and colors. I like sometimes to use foreign musicians: I give them the same music I give Indian musicians, but it may not sound the same exactly. I'm very sure of what I'm doing, no matter what people say. But a lot of what I call fusion music is just a gimmick: Take a drop of this, a drop of that. Indian film music is especially full of gimmicks. Everybody is breaking their heads, trying to do something new, no matter what. They have no sense of propriety.

Maybe all it does is taint both cultures in the end.

Exactly, but you cannot stop it. There is no police rule. Otherwise MTV would not be there [laughs].

Did it bother you that many listeners in the '60s associated Indian classical music with pop culture?

I had a lot of problems because pop cul-

Many Western musicians have been influenced by your work. Has Western music influenced you?

Never in the context of music itself, but I have been greatly influenced by Western musical presentation, especially in terms of performing on the stage within a limited time frame. That never was the situation in the north of India, where I come from. Our music was always closed in a palace. Time was not a factor. The Maharaja would simply say, "Okay, stop. Now your play. Now you." There was not much discipline; there was no way of concertizing. By being in the West, I was able to change this pattern of our music. Also my brother, Uday Shankar, taught me how the light should be on the stage, how the artist should behave, how much he should give—not too much! "Keep them hungry": That was his teaching. And start on time. Finish on time. Have a nice podium, and cover it nicely, with incense burning. I took that slick presentation from the West. That was the only thing I took.

What about harmony? Since Indian music emphasizes melody and rhythm, was it possible to somehow draw from the beauty

Ravi Shankar

"I took the idea of slick stage presentation from the West."

of harmony in your performances?

No, but in my experiments with orchestration, chamber music, and writing music for films or opera, I used minimum amounts of harmony—fourths, fifths or thirds—without spoiling the depth of feeling of the *raga*.

Do you improvise melodies around chord structures that you hear in your mind?

Exactly. I do a lot of modulation. In fact, I have to control myself not to overdo that.

Is a true integration of Western and Indian music really possible?

ture was very superficial. The kids were all into drugs, which pained me a lot. I tried my best to make them understand that the music is very sacred, to listen with respect, just as if they were listening to Bach or Beethoven. Many times I had to walk off with my sitar and go home. For three or four years I was thinking that maybe I was doing the wrong thing. Then, gradually, in the '70s, I began performing on the classical circuit again. And now it's perfect, because out of the millions of kids from the '60s, many remained with me. They're middle-aged now, no more long hair or beads, but they're most understanding and appreciative. And they brought many other people in by telling about the greatness of our music, especially the spiritual quality. All that has made today the best period of my career.—ROBERT L. DOERSCHUK

gene martin

Was it hard for trumpet players to find studio work when you started out?

There were a lot of disco songs when I broke into the recording business, which was around '77, so there was still a lot of work for horn players.

When did jobs become more scarce?

The major impact came with sampling keyboards—that and the techno music style, which didn't lend itself to live musicians, drums and guitars included. Everything was through a synth and a computer. A lot of people even had us in their samples. There was a horn sample going around that was called Hey Horns.

That was actually you and your section?

Yeah, it was us. I would have arguments with people about using this. I'd say, "Look, you've got a hundred years of experience from me and the guys in my section, at the push of a button." I don't care how much time they spend: People can't recreate what we do on synth, because there are individual personalities involved in the horn section. Nothing against synths: They're instruments of equal quality to any other instrument when used correctly. But people who came up in the synth age don't necessarily know any different.

Have horn charts changed a lot since when there was more work for horn players?

Absolutely. I think I've been a part of making that happen, but it also has a bit to do with technology in that the older Motown-type horn sections played a lot of [chord] pads, and synths take that function now. When horns do it, it's pretty serious. You can put a synth pad down, and it's very transparent; if you have five horns playing chords, it's pretty hard to bury them. They're gonna be heard. So with the synth

**"People can't
recreate what
horn players
do on a synth."**

covering that function, the horns have to do something else.

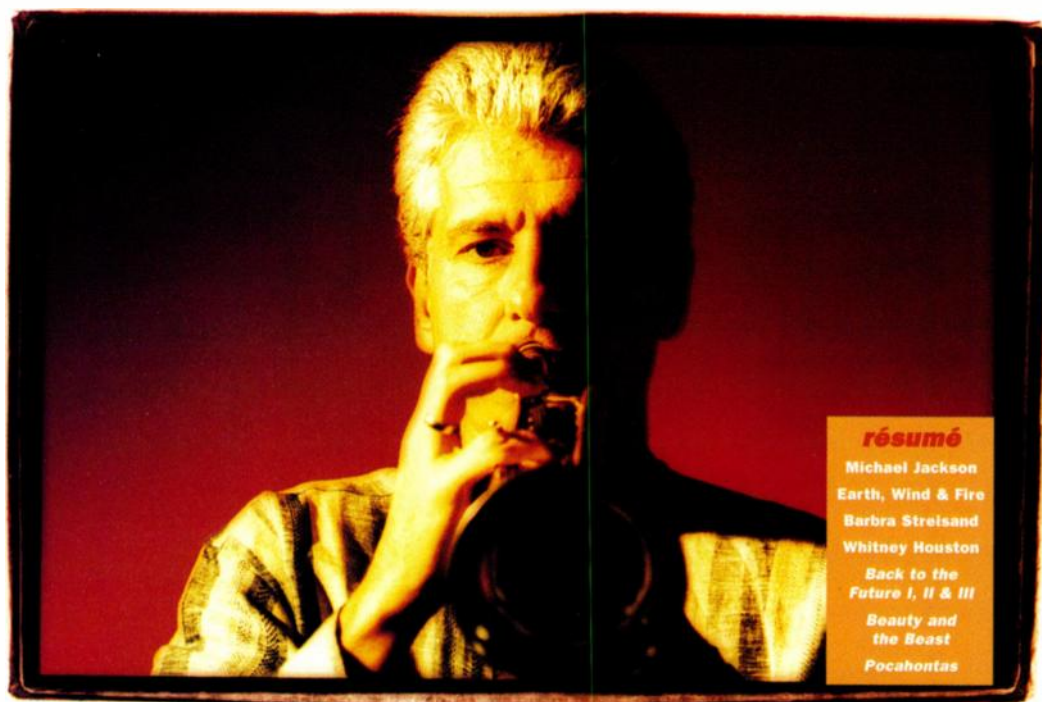
How would a chart you write today differ from one you might have done 20 years ago?

Well, even when I was doing the early Michael Jackson *Off the Wall* stuff with Quincy [Jones], I was never one to write whole-note pads or filler parts. But I do write a little less now, because the synth covers more of what we used to do. Obviously the song they give you has a lot to do with it. Some of the best writing I've done has never been heard because the song wasn't very good. Consequently they gave me a lot of space to use to save it.

So if you have a really good song...

...you don't necessarily need very much, or anything. All it might need is a

Jerry Hey



résumé

Michael Jackson
Earth, Wind & Fire
Barbra Streisand
Whitney Houston
Back to the Future I, II & III
Beauty and the Beast
Pocahontas

few little colors from us.

"Rosanna" [by Toto] was an example of that: The horns didn't play anything before the first chorus. That was a relatively minimal chart.

Is the trumpet phasing out as a contemporary instrument?

Definitely. I have this running joke about my grandson asking someday, "Grandpa, what did you do?" I'll say, "I played trumpet." And he'll say, "What's a trumpet?" I can see that coming—and it's not necessarily a bad thing. Music is evolving. The harpsichord and the lute died out too. Even so, there will always be room for a few great trumpet players; nothing can ever replace them.

—ROBERT L. DOERSCHUK

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a brilliant orchestral homage to Hendrix with an astonishing array of some of the best players in the world. Leave it to Eddie to break more rules. (Net surfers should check out the **rcavictor** Web Page @ <http://rcavictor.com>.) For a great read, pick up the *Jimi Hendrix Sessions* book by John McDermott with Billy Cox and Eddie Kramer (Little Brown), and on video, *Adventures In Modern Recording* (available from Mix Bookshelf, 510-653-3307).

sonic and musical rule in sight. The result was an aural legacy of such originality that it still sounds amazing — even revolutionary — a quarter century later.

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1. Including Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Kiss, Buddy Guy, and more recently, his work with other Mackie mixer owners: Sting, David Abbruzzese, Vinnie Colaiuta, Stanley Clarke, Tony Williams, Steve Vai, and Carlos Santana.

2. He hates the location of the 8•Bus' talkback button.

3. According to Eddie, Eric Shenkman (Spin Doctors), Little Red Wagon Mobile Recording Studio, Bootsy Collins and John McEnroe have purchased 8•Bus consoles at his urging.

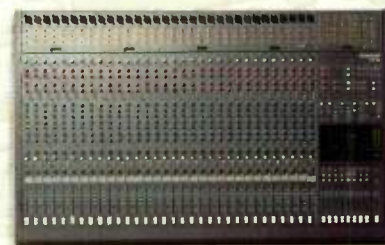


A console he says he likes for its "...sweet EQ, dynamic range, and cleanness."

Eddie wanted to do more than just take advantage of the creative and lifestyle options afforded by the project studio revolution. He also wanted to help DRIVE it. So a year ago, we agreed to lend Eddie a 32•8 in return for his feedback. Since then, we've learned Eddie is not shy about expressing his opinions. Luckily they're mostly good².

And Eddie Kramer recommends Mackie consoles to his associates, too³. In these cynical times (when pop stars accept millions to "endorse" products they admit later to having never tried), we at Mackie Designs think that's the only kind of "endorsement" worth having.

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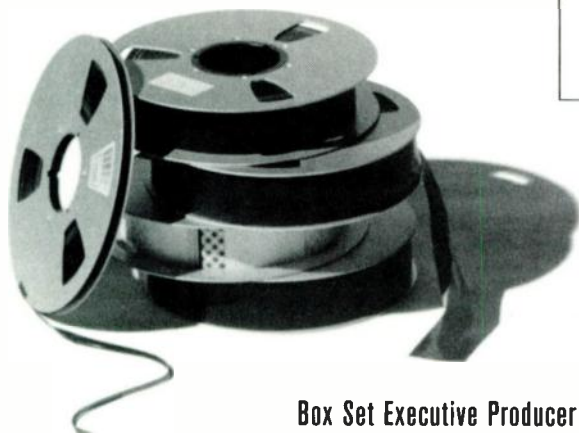
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president

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jimi

I started reading your cover story (Jimi Hendrix, Feb. '96) on the walk from the mailbox to the house. I got to the sofa but never got my jacket off. What a well-written report on the ambiguities surrounding the life and death of Jimi.

DAH3690@aol.com

After reading your account of the death of Jimi Hendrix, two thoughts linger with me. 1) Though the media portrayed Jimi as an independent, profound and content "voice of acid rock," his life reflected only glimmers of that lifestyle. Jimi didn't have it all together. He died a confused young man who still sought the answers to his questions, and still in the wrong places. We expect supernatural revelation from our rock stars and they can only give us themselves. Why isn't that ever enough? 2) Jimi Hendrix died a tragic death and somehow that fact becomes lost in the telling. He died alone in his vomit. Where were his cheering fans, his closest friends and the parents who reared him? How rotten for one who gave sense to the lives of many to die so senselessly. Yes, he left a legacy, but I'd rather have a live Jimi and a dead legacy.

Gary Severson
Everson, WA

This is just too much for me. Every music company in the known universe is pulling out outtakes, unreleased tracks and bootlegs of their most famous acts coughing and belching into open microphones. Even the once-upon-a-time Fab Four are being hyped like a Time-Life/K-Tel "best of" collection. And now, this magazine is sniffing around, trying to outbraid the *Enquirer*, "solving" the "mysterious death" of Jimi Hendrix. What happened—did you all run out of ideas and pull up a story you planned to do decades ago? For God's sake, the man's dead; let him rest in peace.

Roggie May
Yonkers, NY

Let's see, your investigative report on Jimi Hendrix revealed that a) Hendrix suffocated on his own vomit, and b) the presiding bimbo was really slow getting to the phone, just like Nelson Rockefeller's. Historically, bimbos don't seem to have a knack for the 911 thing. I don't see where this uncovered any new revelations. Also, I'm kind of hazy on what it has to do with Hendrix as a musician, except as an excuse to put him on your cover, but the timeline of his last hours was pretty comical.

Mariane Matera
Richmond, VA

melissa

Thank you so much for your articles on Emmylou Harris and Melissa Etheridge (Jan. '96). As a female guitar player, singer, and songwriter, I get little encouragement due to the scarcity of women out there who play and write rock 'n' roll music. The encouragement I received from these articles helped me desire to

to the readers...

With the success of *New Miserable Experience* and the release of their new album *Congratulations*, I'm Sorry, there's reason enough for any music mag to want to feature the Gin Blossoms this month. But at *Musician* we like to dig deeper and find the angle that gives you, the serious fan and the working player, something you can use in your own work.

This month's lesson is that there's no such thing as an overnight success. One-hit wonders fill much of the charts these days, and more than a few labels seem to be shifting from long-term commitment to new acts to going for the quick hit. So when *New Miserable Experience* didn't exactly break sales records on its initial release, some folks at their label gave up for a while on publicizing it.

Who has time to nurture sales? Right?

Wrong. By working together to keep the band's exposure high and sustain a publicity push over the long haul, the Blossoms and A&M turned *Experience* into a blockbuster. Whether you're in the performing or promotional side of the biz, there's something in this story for you to ponder—which is why you've found it in *Musician*.

A quick note about one of the many new features you've been seeing in recent issues: Several times a year you'll find something called a Regional Report in *Musician*. This feature takes you to a part of the country where the music scene is especially dynamic. Last month we took you on a tour of the incendiary acid jazz circuit in Orlando, Florida, and this month we explore the eclectic club maze in San Francisco. Next time you're planning a trip, take a Regional Report with you. It'll tell you not only where to catch the hottest bands; it'll take you to where the local musos hang. See you there.—Robert L. Doerschuk, Editor

continue my art with more fervor than ever before. I could relate to Melissa Etheridge's writing practices and could gain some insight into how to better my own writing environment and style. It also helped me to see that the most important way to write good material is to let it come from deep within myself. Finally, both articles helped me to see that women can be successful in this business and to keep trying. Please include more of these types of articles and I will love you for life.

Celeste Terrell

I've been subscribing to *Musician* for something like 15 years. Ages ago, I recall sorting through my mail and finding an issue of *Musician* that featured one of the Bee Gees on the cover. After the initial shock wore off, it dawned on me that it was, in fact, the back cover of the magazine. The Brothers Gibb had placed an advertisement in the guise of a mock cover of *Musician*. In a matter of moments, *Musician's* credibility was restored. And, if memory serves, the following issue went to great lengths to disassociate the magazine from the advertisement.

Last month, while sorting through my mail, I ran across a *Musician* with Melissa Etheridge on the cover. I frantically flipped it over in the hope of finding another advertising hoax. Sadly, it was not to be. *Musician's* cover star was, in fact, the ever-so-lame Melissa Etheridge. It was bad enough to find a musical lightweight on the cover of *Musician*. Worse, the ensuing story read like it was penned by her publicist.

Ed Dunn
Chicago, IL

flaming

Is Paul Lukas deaf? It's hard to believe you would give someone who can't hear music a job as a music reviewer, but after reading his review of *Clouds Taste Metallic* by the Flaming Lips (Nov. '95), I think you must have. How could he say such arrogant, foolish things about such a great band? To have heard the album and say, "Laughs are crucial to the band's endurance," and "this heavy-handed approach to comedy may play well with knuckleheaded frat boys" proves his lack of ability to appreciate good music. Though fans (not knuckleheaded frat boys, by the way) may enjoy their not-serious, happy lyrics, it's definitely not the most important thing about them. What has been crucial to their longevity is their ability to play beautiful, noisy, psychedelic rock/pop like the original artists that they are.

Bryan Replogle
Los Lunas, NM

rr aa tt aa

In the Feb. '96 album reviews section, Alice in Chains' newest release was mistakenly called *Grind*. The album's actual title is simply *Alice in Chains*.

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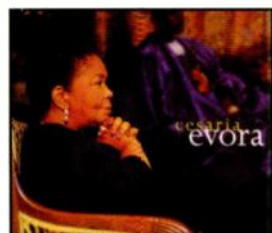
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How I Wrote That Song

Johnny Rzeznik of the Goo Goo Dolls, composer of "Name"

Last winter, when I was writing songs for the album [*A Boy Named Goo*], I decided that I had to get out of my cocoon and the safety of my own home, so I started buying train tickets to random destinations. Riding the train was a big inspiration to me; it opened my eyes. I had just been married, and the whole concept was just freaking me out. I realized that I was getting older, and it got me thinking about how in tune I was with the world when I was 16, and how you have to put blinders

on just to get through life these days.

"Name" came out of those train rides and a conversation I had in my car with this bartender in Buffalo named Johnny one drunken night at about four in the morning. He turned to me and said, "John, everything we do in life has regrets attached to it." That's really what "Name" is about—growing up and realizing that we all have a lot of regrets we have to live with. Everyone asks, "What if I had done this or that?" You've just got to learn to live with your choices, I guess.

The melody for "Name" came from just screwing around with the tuning on my guitar. I had become really bored with standard tuning, so I just stayed up all night, turning the pegs on my guitar and strumming until I came up with something. For the vocal line, I just hummed along to the melody until I came up with something.

I added that double-time part to the song because I wanted to see if we could rock with acoustic instruments. We've always relied on a lot of distortion in our music, and I wanted to try to get some power out of something that wasn't plugged into an amp.

The lyrics were written over a two-week period. I had made a demo of the melody, which I played over and over to get a feel for the mood it evoked. The lyrics started coming a little at a time after that. I'd write a verse, leave it alone, wake up in the middle of the night and jot a line, that sort of thing.

It's great to have a hit song, but I could give you a list of a million one-hit-wonder bands that you never heard from again. I wanna be like R.E.M. and have a career, not just one song.—MARC WEINGARTEN

rou

In the '60s and '70s a touring musician might just tote some penicillin and a little black book. But now touring is a more sober affair. To this end, it would be wise to slip the following accoutrements into your matching Zerohalliburtons. In fact . . .

1. Zerohalliburton or equivalent metal luggage. To withstand airport baggage handling, weather, sniffer dogs and X-ray machines.
2. Video camera. No tour is complete without a Handycam thrust under everyone's noses. You'll be thanked when you squeeze some of this hip, grainy and free footage into your next video.
3. Mobile phone. On concert dates even the humpers (several notches below road crew on the touring

John Hersey

Death of the Pro Studio?

by Juan Patiño

The articles have been coming out non-stop in all the tech magazines for at least the last two years: about ADATs, MDMs, hard disk recording, and how people are suspecting there's a recording revolution on the horizon. The fact is, the revolution's here. Alesis would probably claim that it started four years ago when they introduced the ADAT. But it's only now, with 60,000 of those machines in circulation, that we're starting to see what it all really means. Within the next decade, the way albums are made is going to change drastically. The death of the professional recording studio is a distinct possibility, and the next generation of top producers will most likely emerge from the world of home recording.



Jayne Wexler

Juan at home: "Nobody wants to pay \$2800 a day to make an album anymore."

The only reason I feel qualified to say anything about this is because of my own studio and the work that's come out of it. It's a modest setup, fitting primarily in one small bedroom of an apartment on 52nd Street in Manhattan. But scrape beneath the surface and there's 48 tracks of ADAT and 32 tracks of Digidesign Pro Tools. This apartment is where near-

ly all the tracks were recorded for Lisa Loeb & Nine Stories' debut album *Tails*, which I produced and which recently went gold. If you needed more proof that new technology is making home recording not only higher-quality but also potentially lucrative, there it is.

Of course, I didn't always have the gear I've got now. I started out with the same kind of setup 300,000 other

people probably have or have had: a Yamaha 4-track and a couple of microphones. Later, I picked up a Tascam 688 (one of the first 8-track cassette recorders), a couple of Quadraverbs and a few more microphones. Between 1988 and 1991, I used that equipment to record just about every acoustic artist in town. One of those artists was Lisa. We made a demo in my apartment that got shopped around for [cont'd on page 66]

gh mix

totem pole) carry mobile phones. It's also handy for arranging sessions, and less expensive than 1000 percent loaded hotel phones.

4. Laptop. Has replaced the diary, itinerary, address book, accounts book and "little black book" as well. With luck it may even replace the tour manager.

5. Modem for above, so that your 'Net habit can be sated without interruption.

6. Cassette player. Handy for recording fledgling grooves or songs during soundcheck, rash promises from the promoter before the show, and libelous ripostes from the management after.

Minidisc is cool but risky. And battery packs don't last.

7. Headphones. For Walkman, direct instrument/effect monitoring, hotel room practice, listening to tapes in car, or just for improving on those airplane-supplied bits of

as you force yourself to smile into the waiting audience. For this reason, back up everything in sight.

9. Flashlight. Innumerable uses. Maglite is still the best.

10. Screwtop container of handwashing liquid. There's never been a tour where this has not been essential.

Laundromats do not exist in Italy. There's only one in Frankfurt (in



your music

string with foam attached. Take two mini jack adaptors.

8. Box of high-densities. Floppies may be things of the past in the studio, but on the road you have to deal with things like "Get me sound up now!"

Saxenhausen), on the road and in Japan it's cheaper to replace your entire wardrobe than have it washed at the hotel.—Julian Colbeck
Send your questions about gigging on the road to Julian c/o Musician.

Eliane Elias' "Asa Branca"

by Roberta Lawrence

Brazilian pianist-composer Eliane Elias didn't have much of an advance plan for her fourth album, *Solos and Duets* (on Blue Note; her partner on the duets is Herbie Hancock). She simply wanted the project to be an exercise in spontaneity and "impressions of songs."

One of those songs was "Asa Branca," a simple tune by Luis Gonzaga, father of the *baiao* rhythm, which some say is akin to a national anthem. Others call it a children's song (Eliane, in fact, used to sing it to her 11-year-old daughter when she was a baby).

About her interpretation, Elias says, "It's a song based on majors, but I have moments when the whole motif goes into minor and it keeps traveling from one key to another with little

children's themes in the middle, while keeping the *baiao* rhythm.

"The piece starts out with a free-form introduction, then the melody comes in

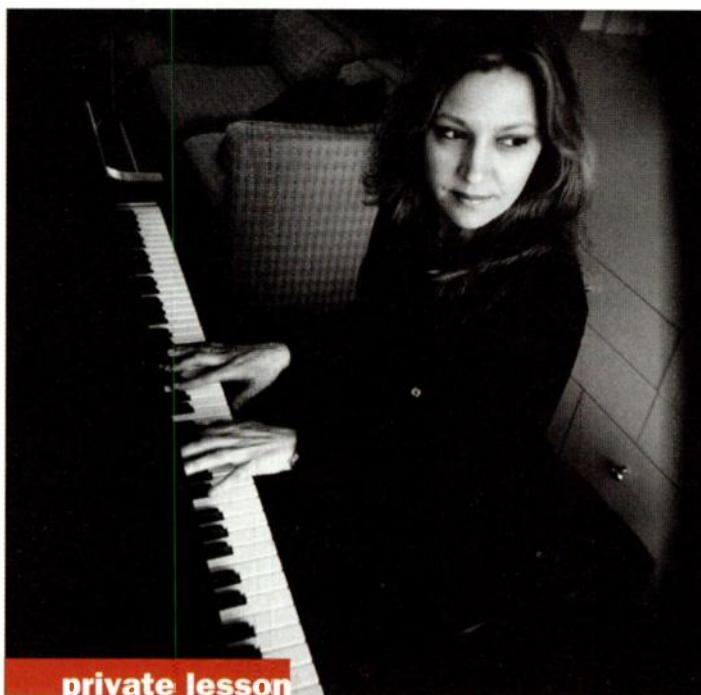
without the attachment of the written chordal structure, before reverting into its natural way of being, very plain and simple, what 'Asa Branca' was written to be."

Throughout the piece Elias makes use of the harmonic freedom and improvisatory styling gleaned from her jazz playing,

plus the use of polyphonic chords (in Portuguese it's called "dodecafonía," meaning the twelve keys) reminiscent of the writing of classical Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. Ex. 1 applies that polyphony to the *baiao*, while the rubato Ex. 2 is more whimsical and harmonically challenging, venturing into the realms of bitonality.

"It's interesting," says Elias, who was nominated for a 1995 Grammy for *Solos and Duets*, "because it travels through Brazilian music, from our folk music back to our premier classical

composer, then it blends with all the other jazz influences. It ended up being a very unique piece, twentieth-century writing with a polyphonic quality."



isa Brito

Ex. 1

Lively ♩ = 140



Ex. 2

Rubato ♩ = 82-100



"Asa Branca," by Luis Gonzaga, SPA-Ave. Duque de Loule, Lisbon 1098, Portugal.



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There's something familiar about the Refreshments. If you hail from Tempe, Arizona, of course, you already know all about these guys, who have been tearing up the local bar scene for a couple of years. But even if you've never set foot on the Arizona State University campus or stood in line for the band's Sunday night sets at the Yucca Tap Room, you've probably heard something like this good-time quartet in your neighborhood.

What we mean is that the Refreshments come to the spotlight

from down a well-worn path. Bands like R.E.M., Phish and the B-52's followed it years ago. The trail begins in some collegiate neighborhood and winds through a maze of local clubs. Night after night it circles back to the same venues, picking

up momentum with each spin 'round the circuit until, suddenly, it veers off onto a straightaway toward a record deal and, if lucky, broader horizons.

The Refreshments aren't stylistically unique. They're not arty poseurs. They just kick serious butt and know how to satisfy their audience. "Everybody knows that the world is full of stupid people," they cheerfully confide over a classic bar band groove; then, after an Eagles-like, mariachi-inflected intro to "Bandidos," they sing, "Here comes another song about Mexico," where they "found some hookers and lost our erec-

Danny Clinch

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new signings

tions." It's hard not to like these guys.

But the world is also full of good club bands, whose sounds don't differ that much from what the Refreshments put out. What, then, made the difference? Three things: Talent. A fortuitous visitor. And an A&R man who turned into a true believer.

The story begins in Tempe, where the band came together almost by accident. Drawn by shared interests in jamming, writing songs, and drinking beer, they began working locally and, after three months, recorded a demo in 13 boozy hours. "We built a pyramid of beer cans and tequila bottles," remembers singer/rhythm guitarist Roger Clyne. "It was all one take, almost all scratch vocals, and done absolutely inebriated. That's what we were at the time, and to some extent still are."

In a similar state of reflection, the band stumbled its way onto the ladder of fame in '94. "We were drinking one night and flipping through the local rag," says lead guitarist Brian Blush, "and we saw this entry form for the Ticketmaster national talent search. One thing led to another. The phone was ringing: 'Do you want to go to Seattle for the Ticketmaster showcase?' 'Get flown up and stay in a nice hotel? Sure.' A week later: 'Do you want to go to L.A. and be in the national finals?'"

The upshot was that out of 7,200 participating bands, the Refreshments took first prize. This led to an opportunity to record their own CD and showcase at South By Southwest early in '95. Here is where fate, in the form of Ruth Richards, stepped in. Richards was a regional talent scout for RCA. She also happened to be in the room when some folks from South By Southwest put on the Refreshments' tape. Richards called the band, and they sent her a copy of their CD, which she forwarded to her main contact at the label, A&R executive Peter Lubin.

"To be perfectly honest, I was only kind of partial to it," Lubin admits. "But

over the course of maybe three months, I found that I was playing this record maybe eight times a day. I couldn't explain it myself, and one unwritten rule for me is, if I can't explain it, I'm interested."

Lubin, who was in the process of switching affiliation from RCA to Mercury, made it a point to catch the band at South By Southwest. "I didn't

know what to expect. But when they hit the stage, they were magnificent. They rocked their asses off. Roger just took command of the songs, Brian augmented him tremendously well, and Buddy Edwards was a fantastic bass player, with a priceless attitude. What I saw was a band that had four distinct personalities that blended beautifully. [cont'd on page 66]

talent

ruby Since she was a child, Lesley Rankine has had a recurring nightmare fueled by a diet of Edgar Allan Poe and Vincent Price. "I dream of a huge wheel rolling over this long, flat line," says the Scottish singer. "The wheel rolls more and more quickly over an increasingly shorter

Rankine headed first to the moving graveyards of New Orleans before calling on producer Mark Walk (Pigface) to help her realize her "low, crunchy sounds."

Recorded with a bank of computers in a Seattle basement, the record conjures a subterranean world reeking of odd fears and even odder dreams as Rankine sings of control, sex and sensuality over swaggering hip-hop beats and eerie samples. "My curiosity in dead things is captivating because I don't really understand it," she explains. "How can a human being, which is not just a mechanical thing but a spiritual thing, suddenly end? The physical and the sensual and the spiritual are all combined and it intrigues me. But I'm a gorehound. I've got that morbid fascination."—Ken Micallef

tracy bonham On her 1995 debut EP *The Liverpool Sessions*, Tracy Bonham shrieked, "I'm not a waif." Her first full-length album, *The Burdens of Being Upright* (Island), backs that claim up forcefully with 12 tracks of muscular pop. Sure, Bonham's got a cute voice and an easy way with a melody, but big bruising numbers like "Tell It to the Sky" and "Sharks Can't Sleep" show a rocker's sensibility.

Though she usually composes on guitar, Bonham is a classically trained violinist. And when she whips that axe out onstage, audiences tend to gasp at her scorching bowmanship. "I never wanted to give violin up," the Eugene, Oregon native (now based in Boston) remarks. "When I moved into more of a rock thing, I thought it would sound cool



line until it's just shaking in place. It probably means I'm an absolute psycho who should be checked in." Rankine (aka Ruby) brings an interest in all things morbid to bear on *Salt Peter* (Creation/Work). Craving solitude after leaving U.K. band Silverfish,

talent



tracy bonham

to gradually incorporate it there. I want to use it more live in the future. It's a good way to keep my fingers in shape." —Mac Randall

josh clayton-felt In a lo-fi, post-rock era, Josh Clayton-Felt dares to be ambitious. On his debut solo album *Inarticulate Nature Boy* (A&M), Felt not only plays all instruments (and plays them well); he also tosses off one lustrous, ingeniously crafted pop gem after

another. Doesn't Felt realize that verses, bridges and hooks are outré these days? "That's just a trend," says Felt. "If it becomes trendy to write good songs again, then people will start writing good songs. It's almost as if artists are afraid to be melodic."

No one would accuse Felt of shying from creamy harmonies and multiple chord changes. An unabashed fan of '70s AM radio, the Boston native formed the band School of Fish in the late '80s with partner Michael Ward, only to find their brand of quirky pop register nary a blip on the sales charts. When School of Fish split, Felt began recording demos at a furious clip. "I must've written and demoed about 25 songs after School of Fish broke up," says the guitarist. To provide accompaniment for his homemade tapes, "I learned keyboards and bass and started playing drums—which I

found was the toughest thing to do." But he liked what he heard on the demos enough to record his album the same way, sans backing band. "I thought it sounded more personal," says Felt. "I would've felt phony if all of a sudden I just hired a studio band to play these songs. I do my best work when I'm on my own, anyway. I don't have to justify what I'm doing to four other people." —Marc Weingarten



josh clayton-felt

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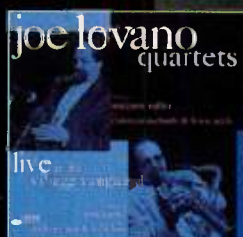
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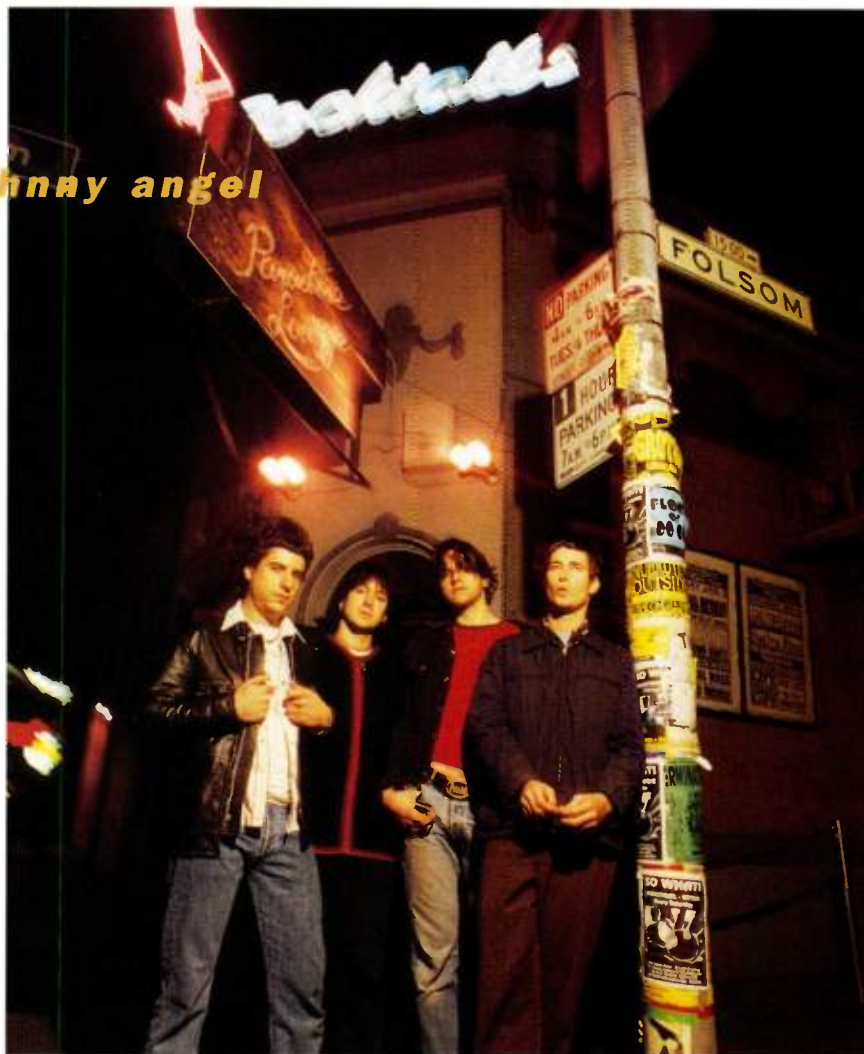


regional R=mont

by johnny angel

One thing about being in a band here in SF that's definitely a trip is how most of the audience is also in bands," says Heavy Into Jeff singer Chris Lehman. "It'll make you tough in no time, because wherever you play, your peers are checking you out." Ever since the halcyon days of the Fillmore, San Francisco has had an irresistible lure on young musicians. But times have changed since the Summer of Love, there is no longer a defining "San Francisco Sound." In fact, if any one factor is dominant here, it's diversity.

Lehman's band is among the most popular of the currently unsigned crop of new rock bands. Long a weekend headliner, HIJ epitomizes the San Fran band dilemma: They don't really represent a



▲ **Heavy Into**
Jeff loves the
Paradise
▲ **Bottom of**
the Hill is for
up-and-comers

unified scene as much as define a small corner of it. "There are all kinds of little scenes here," says Lehman, "and not a lot of crossover

between them."

On any given night in the city by the bay, a clubgoer can find whatever musical style fits his or her needs, be it hip-hop, oldies, folk, hard rock, punk, jazz—anything. San Francisco prides itself on being one of the most cosmopolitan, Euro-like cities in the U.S. This, coupled with a long-standing aura of tolerance and open-mindedness, makes for a pretty good live music scene.

But, as Lehman points out, it's a tough

es Fra

place to get ahead. "The best way to describe San Fran audiences is that they're a little jaded," says Ramona Downey, the booking agent for Bottom Of The Hill, SF's best live venue. "Everyone travels a lot, and they all come from somewhere





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else, so they've seen everything and it's hard for them to be anything but skeptical."

Bottom Of The Hill, located at Connecticut and 17th Streets at the, er, bottom of Potrero Hill, is the city's best showcase club for up-and-comers, both local and national. "I've had Oasis' first SF gigs, Alanis Morissette's, Bush's," says Downey. "There seems to be this trend where the labels want their hot new acts to play smaller, street-friendly venues the first time around, and luckily I seem to be the one they're coming to right now." Downey's is not the only room in

as well as a theater next door for larger acts; the DNA Lounge (375 11th St.), a dance-oriented post-disco that seems novelty-prone in its bookings (new wave nights, rockabilly nights, etc.); and Slim's (333 11th St.), which is home to many mid-sized national acts that vary from Desmond Dekker to the Circle Jerks.

Small though San Fran is geographically, many other venues exist outside the

retro and flailing punk bands.

There are indeed more places to play in tiny San Francisco than in our enormous southern neighbor L.A.—and a better environment too. "You can develop here without the labels breathing down your back," says Lehman. "But you can also get lost if you stay put and try to be a big fish." Among the San Fran indie rock bands that routinely tour outside of the City are Engine 88, a pop/punk combo

on Caroline; Clarke Nova, a Detroitish quartet who begin an eight-week U.S. tour in March; Victims Family, a long-running punk band; and Crutch, a power trio on Bongload who will also hit the highways this spring.

[cont'd on page 94]

the scene

best Jazz Club: Elbo Room, at 647 Valencia Street. Best Radio Station: KALX: the eclectic voice of the University of California's SF campus. **Best Record Stores:** Recordless Records in San Francisco, Amoeba at 2455 Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. Best Club Sound System: Slim's. **Best Music Stores:** Guitar Center (1321 Mission), the mega-huge emporium with all the latest high-tech gear and more; Black Market Music (1016 Howard), a used gear paradise; Rocker Guitars (1755 Market), a little hole-in-the-wall beneath the freeway, specializing in repairs and great prices. **Best Post-Gig Hangouts:** Chris Lehman's favorite "dive bar" is the Latin American Club (3286 22nd St.), where drinks are cheap and the music is loud; Lehman also favors Sparky's Diner (242 Church), where "everyone gets together after gigs and chows out. Cheap and good!" Other local players flock to El Pio at 3158 Mission Street in the Mission District, the Albion Club at 3139 16th Street, across from the Kilowatt, and the Rat & Raven on 24th Street in Noe Valley—this joint is so cool that its number is unlisted.

Jay Blakesberg

San Francisco

town that caters to what has become "alternative" music. In the South of Market area along 11th Street, lots of clubs also feature new rock and pop, including the Paradise Lounge (308 11th St.), which has two floors and two stages,

locals with funk-ed-out ambience to spare. In North Beach, the Purple Onion (140 Columbus) is still alive and kicking; thirty years after featuring the Smothers Brothers and the Kingston Trio, the Onion is now spotlighting mostly '60s

BY TED DROZDOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM HERRINGTON



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any a heartbroken soul with an old guitar has declared that the blues is where you find it—in the marbled canyons of the city, in the howl of a lost dog, deep in your heart. But today it's curled up in the back seat of a rented Lincoln, dragging on no-name menthols and a brown-bagged Colt .45, watching the

muddy winter plain of the Mississippi Delta slip by.

Smiling shyly from under the greasy baseball cap that covers an X-like scar on his forehead, Paul "Wine" Jones, who's heading up Highway 61 past scores of man-made catfish ponds and dry season cottonfields toward his first recording session, explains how he got his nickname.

"I used to show up for work



APRIL 1996

MUSICIAN

World Radio History



THIS PAGE: R.L. BURNSIDE; OPPOSITE AND PAGE 28:
JUNIOR KIMBROUGH'S CHULAHOMA JUKE JOINT

half drunk, so the boss man started calling me Wine. He'd say, 'Hey, Wine, you gonna make it?' But on weekends he'd still hire me to play big parties up at his house. I finally quit that job and went to Manpower in Jackson and learned to be a welder. You see that?" He points to an Army-green metal box floating atop a pond. "I make those; that's a catfish feeder. Feeds the catfish."

Jones also makes music, a strain of raw, electrified country blues that's rougher than rust and untainted by influences outside of his native Belzoni. Thanks to the vision of Matthew Johnson, the 26-year-old owner of Fat Possum Records, Jones is now part of an elite group of Mississippi bluesmen who, after decades of worse than obscurity, are getting their shot—not at fame or riches, but at stability, at the chance to slide above the poverty line, maybe own a little house or a nice car, maybe retire before they die with a hammer or a welder's torch in their hands.

This little group, ranging in age from 25-year-old firebrand Dave Thompson to 69-year-old slide guitar grandpa R. L. Burnside, has emerged from the backwaters to make some of the best blues records in the world—and to fuck with the conventional mythology that many blues pundits take for gospel. To hear Burnside and his trance-conjuring, hill country neighbor Junior Kimbrough is to understand that the heart of the blues has *not* been stilled by modernity, has *not* withered at its Mississippi roots.

In deep Delta towns



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JOINTS HOST BOTH OLD HANDS
AND YOUNGBLOODS WHO'VE
NEVER SEEN THE INSIDE OF A
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like Rolling Fork, the *Twilight Zone* village where Muddy Waters was born and where nothing seems changed since the '50s, or in Tutwiler, where Sonny Boy Williamson lies buried in a lonely kudzu-threatened grave at a cotton patch crossroads, the blues is alive. Despite poverty that's so withering it stings, most towns big enough for a gas sta-

tion and a church also have a juke joint too—or three. In Greenville, an industrial sprawl that's also the Delta's literary center, some 11 juke joints sit practically wall-to-wall along Nelson Street.

But the blues coming out of Mississippi's larger manufacturing cities, like Greenville and Jackson, is more pluralistic. Commercial radio stations throughout the South and beyond ensure that the sounds of everyone from James Brown and Prince to Mary J. Blige and

Boyz II Men come home to the local clubs. Despite the proliferation of older musicians around his Greenville digs, Dave Thompson is so profoundly under the radio-fueled sway of Stevie Ray Vaughan that his bandmates jokingly call him Little Stevie. That these cities have Cash and Commerce means they're cursed by another Big C: Crack.

"I'd been playin' on Nelson Street with Booby Barnes, at his Playboy Club, since I was around 15," recounts Thompson. "I don't even play on that street no more. It's rough; a lot of killing and carrying on. I've seen fights start up, and shit, guys be there with guns and they don't care who they shoot. One night

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on Nelson Street I saw a lady shoot a man down. Another night, I saw five or six guys shoot a man. It's been like that since around '89, '90, with the drugs and gangs. Now that shit's out of control."

The musical action is out in the sticks and the farmland. In the agrarian business center Clarksdale—home of the Delta Blues Museum, the folksy Rooster label, and the legendary Stovall Plantation—humble clubs like the Rivermont and Red's dot the banks of the muddy, meandering Sunflower. To the south, in Tutwiler, funky joints with names like the Mad Dog Disco hug the red-dusted main drag. And in Rolling Fork, there's a big pink juke owned by J. C. Moore, a gregarious coot in a cowboy hat whose cousin married Muddy Waters. It's called the One Way, named after a traffic sign the town set on the corner out front. Every weekend these



KIMBROUGH: ELECTRIC BLUES IN YOUR FACE.

places host old hands and youngbloods who've never seen a recording studio. Hell, some of them, like Wine Jones, have never played more than 100 miles away from home.

But now Jones wants to see the world. Six months after his first recording session in an Oxford, Mississippi, studio carved out of an old auto repair shop, he is the proud papa of *Mule*, a typically idiosyncratic Fat Possum CD. And he's gnawing to tour, to quit his day job, and to make enough dough to replace the tattered roof on his run-down house in Belzoni.

Live and on record, Jones' music is all flints and bearskins. His songs combine rough-hewn chords and bass string drones with tastes of wah-wah, all bludgeoned from a fake Les Paul that looks like it fell off a pickup truck without the case. His voice is a plea for

WAYNE KRAMER

dangerousmadness

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TUNING THE BLUES

Backstage before a recent gig at the House of Blues in Cambridge, Massachusetts, hill country blues patriarch R. L. Burnside, his protégé Kenny Brown and Clarksdale guitar wiz Big Jack Johnson swapped tips on playing slide. On tuning: "If you're playing in open E (E-B-E-G#-B-E), or open G (D-G-D-G-B-D), or open D (D-A-D-F#-D-A), you can put the slide anywhere on the neck to start a tune," advises Johnson. "As long as you know the chord positions, you can just glide right up to where you should be to pick up the tune, and it'll sound fine."

While standard tuning will work for some traditional blues numbers that use slide for embellishment, like Muddy Waters' "Sail On" and "Catfish Blues," open tunings are essential to get the full-throttle screaming chords exemplified by Elmore James.

"You've got to play cross-Spanish if you if you want to play like Elmore," Johnson says. "He told me. But he was dead when he told me. I went down to his burying site, and they were playing his records outside the church house while they were putting a headstone on him. I felt a chill all over my body, and I heard his voice tell me how to play like him: cross-Spanish. . . . same thing as an open Em." That's E-B-E-G-B-E, with the open notes ringing out a minor chord.

"What we call 'Spanish' is open G," says Brown. "I got to playing slide in standard tuning because I was playing in these other bands in open tuning. I'd be in G, they'd call a tune in D, and I couldn't get with 'em. So I got to playing standard. That's mostly a matter of playing the triads on the B, G and D strings for chords and then knowing the scales."

"The toughest thing when I started playing slide was just to get the chords right," offers Burnside. "But then I went to open tuning, and that's a lot easier."

Wearing the Slide. Burnside learned to play with a slide on his ring finger from watching Fred McDowell and Muddy Waters. Brown learned from Burnside but rephrases barre chords to ninths and partials. Johnson slips the steel over his pinky. "You get more action with the guitar, for chords and such," he says. "Put it on your ring finger, and you got to bend your fingers all around to make your chord and stuff. But on the small finger, that leaves you the other four fingers to squeeze and pull."

Slide Selection. Burnside, Brown and Johnson prefer steel or brass slides over glass. The heavier resis- [cont'd on page 94]

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Smith Bros. His shouted lyrics about growing up on a farm, about his baby getting drunk, about "bad times in Mississippi," are flavored by his rural upbringing. But when he gets onstage, he's a backwoods Pete Townshend flailing out power chords, bobbing and stepping like a young Ali, and yelping his big, crusty heart out like a crazy junkyard dog. Just as AC/DC's rock refuses to progress, Jones' blues is untempered by time. It's exactly

what his daddy K. C. played when he turned half his family's house in Flora, Mississippi, into a juke joint in the '50s and traded weekend sets with records stacked in a "Seabird," as Jones calls it, tucked into a corner. ("Seabird," a common euphemism among Mississippi bluesmen for "juke box," derives from Seeberg, at one time a major manufacturer of jukeboxes.)

"Paul keeps asking me, 'Matthew, should I quit my job?' I keep telling him,

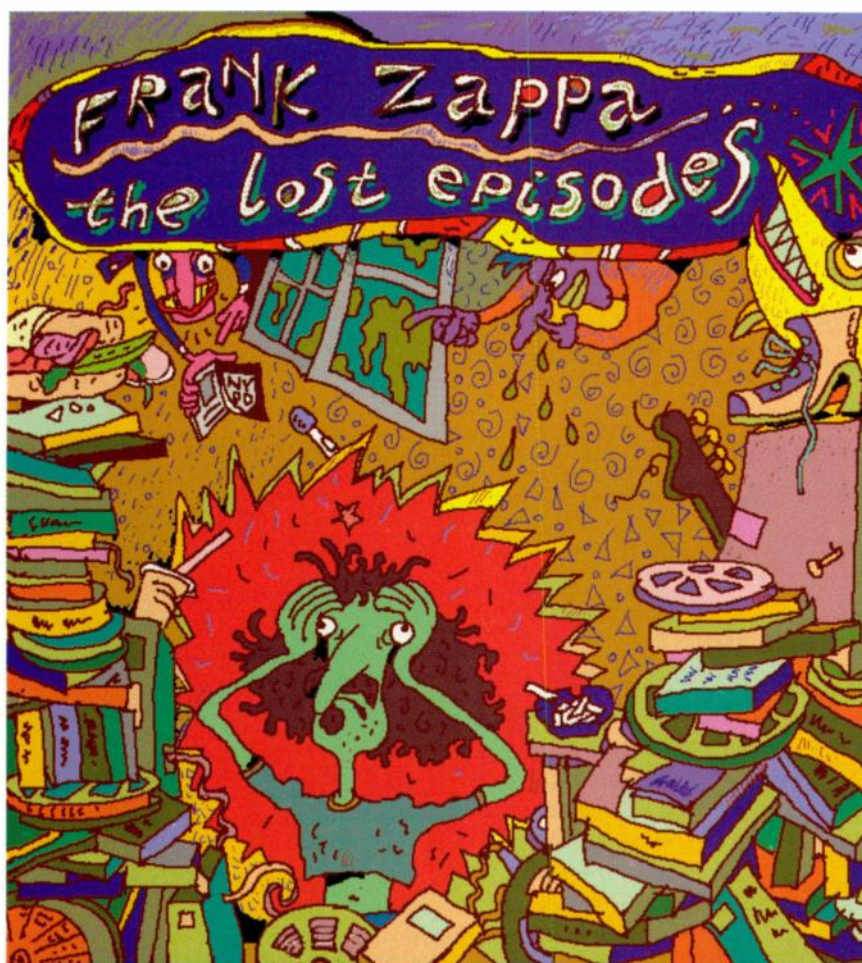
'No, Paul, not yet,'" says Fat Possum's Johnson, a renegade ex-English major from Ole Miss. "Putting money into the pockets of the artists is the only thing that matters. Who's to say a record's going to do a lot for the career of a sixtysomething guy with cirrhosis? What's the future? For someone like R. L. or Junior, who've been waiting to have a little something for their whole lives, the future is now."

Johnson founded his Oxford-based label in 1991 with former *Living Blues* editor Peter Lee, who has since moved on. On his own, Johnson is a rare breed of label owner. When R. L. Burnside, who has a realistic if not quite embittered attitude toward the record business, calls the office and asks, "Is the crooks in?," Johnson replies, "No, R. L., who else would be here?"

"I almost want my artists not to trust me," Johnson explains. "The older guys like R. L. and Junior already don't, 'cause they've been burned by other people so many times. But guys like Paul and David, they know nothing about the music business. I want them to get cynical quick, because that's their best defense."

Until John Hermann, keyboard player for the rock group Widespread Panic, stepped in with some cash in '92, Fat Possum ran on fumes and love. The label was started specifically to put out CDs by Kimbrough and Burnside. Both men are neglected giants, though legends for decades around their home turf of Holly Springs, in the Mississippi hill country just south of Memphis. "They are so fucking great, and I couldn't believe that nobody outside of a 50-mile radius had hardly heard of them," Johnson says.

Fat Possum's first seven albums reaped critical praise, but that and a buck buys coffee. Headed down and out in late '94, Johnson managed to score a licensing agreement with Capricorn that triggered the re-release of Burnside's *Bad Luck City* and *Too Bad Jim*, and Kimbrough's *All Night Long* and *Sad Days, Lonely Nights*. The Capricorn deal—since gone south, into the realm of contract violation suits—also paid for a two-week recording marathon in Feb. '95, subsidized a Fat Possum Mississippi Juke Joint Caravan Tour last spring and summer, and yielded new CDs by Jones, [cont'd on page 94]



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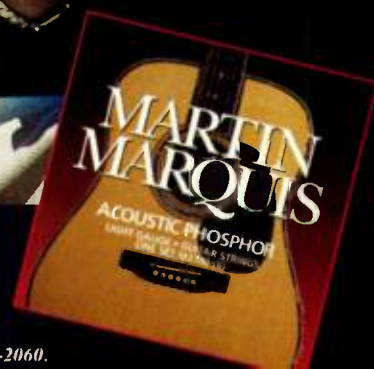
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Gin Blossoms story: Chapter 2

Deep in the heart of Memphis on a rainy September evening, the Tennessee State Fair is distracting tourists who might otherwise be lining up at Graceland to chase down the ghost of Elvis. At this very moment, in fact, the King's spirit seems to be hovering directly over the fairgrounds. It's being channeled through some guy who's visiting from Arizona. He is wearing a tiara.

Jesse Valenzuela, the black-haired, blue-eyed guitarist and backing vocalist for the Gin Blossoms—tonight's featured performers at the fair—grins impishly as a gaggle of female fans surrounds him after the show. Before you can say "Viva Las Vegas," he's got one arm wrapped around the waist of a young blonde belle who is placing a rhinestone-studded crown on his head. Having just won the fair's beauty pageant, Stacy Matthews is entitled to pose for pictures with her fave band, and she wants Valenzuela suitably attired for the photo opportunity.



Less Than

More

Easy

By elysa gardner photographs by niels van iperen



seriable

xperience



the band to fame—and the one who has been dead for two years.

So for a bunch of healthy, good-looking guys whose 1992 major label debut album *New Miserable Experience* sold over two million records and counting, and whose recent single, "Till I Hear It From You" vaulted near the top of the charts as well, the Gin Blossoms—guitarists Valenzuela and Scott Johnson, singer Robin Wilson, drummer Phillip Rhodes and bassist Bill Leen—have managed to maintain a remarkable degree of anonymity. For the past 15 months their public appearances have been few, their availability to the press zilch. Their elusiveness has much to do with creating some psychic distance from Hopkins' legacy while building a stronger identity of their own. Both tasks dovetail directly into the making of their new album, *Congratulations, I'm Sorry*, to which they've been devoting weeks of 12-hour days recording and mixing at Memphis' Ardent Studios, birthplace of albums by R.E.M., ZZ Top and local hero Al Green.

It's not as if the Gin Blossoms want to escape their past entirely—after all, they recorded *New Miserable Experience* at Ardent as well. But circumstance has thrust them into the paradoxical position of trying to reposition their reputations in the wake of a monstrously successful record, while at the same time proving—not to put too fine a point on it—that without Hopkins they can keep writing hits of their own. Hits that sound like "fun."

"Doug disappeared long before he died."

"We think the Gin Blossoms are awesome," Matthews gushes, in a drawl as thick as the late-summer air. Though she appears to have taken a particular liking to Valenzuela, Matthews vehemently insists that she could never choose a favorite Gin Blossom. "Oh no, no. They're all awesome. I wouldn't be able to pick, 'cause I love them all!"

This inability to pick a favorite Gin Blossom certainly seems believable; after all, who *can* tell these guys apart? Surely not fans with their ears tuned to the band's built-for-radio hits, mixing catchy

melodies and jangling guitars into a pop style that celebrates the spirit and craft of collective harmony over individual grandstanding. And surely not the inevitable barrage of media that chronicled the group's "overnight" success, and whose attentions have mostly focused on ex-Gin Blossoms songwriter and guitarist Doug Hopkins, the one member of the band whose life bore all the markings of "talented tortured artist," the one whose songs "Hey Jealousy" and "Found Out About You" first catapulted

Putting across a memorable melody might be the single

hardest and most valuable thing to do in pop music, but as many a power-pop ensemble can attest, it can also command the least respect. Ditto a manner of compositional popcraft Valenzuela half-jokingly describes as "fascist," which emphasizes interlocking instrumental parts and collective vocal harmonies over crotch-thrusting solos and emotive croons. Their music virtually demands light egos and compatible personalities to bring to life:



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That, and sharing the shadows of their past, may be the crucial glue holding the band together these days. Spend enough time with the very distinct individuals who comprise the Gin Blossoms, and the marvel is there's enough glue to hold them together at all.

IN 1987, WHEN the first incarnation of the Gin Blossoms came together, the campus town of Tempe, Arizona was hardly a mecca for smart three-chord pop acts, or for any other music. "There were the Meat Puppets," remembers Ted Simons, a Tempe journalist who works as news director at Phoenix's rock radio KZON-FM. "But they were really Arizona's band more than Tempe's—this was just one of the places they lived in the valley. Before the Gin Blossoms, there was no real music scene in Tempe at all.

Childhood friends Bill Leen and Doug Hopkins played together in several of these typically short-lived outfits, most notably in a group called the Psalms. On Christmas night of 1987, the two made their debut as Blossoms, in a lineup that also featured Jesse Valenzuela as the lead singer.

"We were a bar band," Valenzuela recalls. "We would play four, five nights a week. We had a pretty good crowd from the onset—rock people, kind of a hipper crowd, you know? By the time April or May of the next year rolled around, we had all the college kids coming to our shows.

"At that point, I was thinking, well, maybe we can play around town a bit more, and maybe I can save up enough money to get a tiny little house in Tempe, where the mortgage would be about the same as my rent. Then I'd be set. I think we all felt like that; we just wanted to be working musicians."

By the spring of 1988, the band had enlisted Robin Wilson, a record-store employee whom Hopkins met at a party, as rhythm guitarist and supporting vocalist. Before long Wilson and Valenzuela were juxtaposing roles, as it became apparent that Valenzuela was the superior guitarist and Wilson the superior ham. By year's end, the two decided to make the switch permanent.

The group enlisted drummer Phillip Rhodes, and with the lineup that appeared on *Experience* intact, the Gin Blossoms

Breaking Bands the Old-Fashioned Way

Five years ago, pop pundits wondered whether fledgling rock bands could afford to take their act on the road. These days, it appears, they can't afford not to.

"There's only gonna be 40 records in the Top 40," notes Mike Regan, A&M's senior director of product development, "and last year there were over 12,000 releases by Soundscan's count. So you have to find acts that can support themselves or take minimal tour support, and put them out for the long haul. Every record company loves quick obvious hits, but that's not in the nature of the business anymore. These days it takes you nine months just to establish the message you're trying to get across. Record companies are getting better at dealing with that."

Few have proved better at it than A&M, with three mega-platinum acts—the Gin Blossoms, Blues Traveler and Sheryl Crow—whose debut records for the label went nowhere for months. "Their common denominator," says A&R head David Anderle, "is the ability to get on the road and work. You can't force things anymore; you have to wait for that window of opportunity to show itself."

The Gin Blossoms are a classic case in point. *New Miserable Experience* caused few ripples at first, but by touring and developing support among A&M's regional staff, the band staved off its own execution. At a label meeting six months following the album's release, Anderle recalls, "we were debating whether to continue working the record. And our head of sales said, 'Wait a minute! I have people in the field who love this band!' So we decided to commit more money to keep them out there, and lo and behold, the second time around with 'Hey Jealousy,' it hit."

Regan, who was one of those enthusiastic field reps at the time, notes that

opportunity plays its part. "At the time we had 'pirate radio' [a rock format] out here in L.A. It was being programmed by Greg Stevens and Cindy Maxwell. Right then they'd decided to pioneer this 'alternative CHR' format, and the Gin Blossoms and the Lemonheads were the two records they were championing. So we'd have these guys play the Hard Rock Café at one in the afternoon for pirate radio, then take 'em upstairs at the Beverly Center and have 'em sign autographs in Sam Goody.

"That became the blueprint: It was about two shows a day, a lot of college-oriented touring, in-stores, interviews—they had an incredible work ethic. Those poor bastards lived in a van for two years, and that's really an acid test—not just for a band, but for the human spirit! I'm not saying they came through it smiling and cheering. But they came through it."

For the new album, Regan says there's little inclination to coast on the Gin Blossoms' reputation. "The Doug Hopkins thing doesn't enter into it," he says. "What we all look at is the horrors of the sophomore slump. We're in an industry that's kind of against bands having a second record. There's a bunch of retailers sitting with a ton of those records right now. So we're not taking any base for granted."

Nor is Anderle, who credits last fall's hit single, "Till I Hear It From You," for creating a psychic "bridge" between the old Gin Blossoms and the band's new album. "That it was so successful gave the band the confidence to go into the studio and do this record," he says. "Cause that other record had been out there, what, two and a half years? To me the Gin Blossoms are so much bigger than 'the Doug factor.' Now we'll find out whether that's true."

—Mark Rowland

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"EQ, August 1994." ***Greg Rule, Keyboard Magazine, April 1995."

World Radio History

gradually increased their fan base. "Arizona State has students from all over the country," Valenzuela explains. "These kids graduate and go back to Chicago or Detroit or wherever. So when we'd start playing those towns, we'd see people we recognized, and a lot of them would have brought four or five friends with them."

The band acquired friends in higher places as well, such as former ASCAP representative Tom DeSavia, who spotted the Blossoms while they were performing at home in Tempe. "ASCAP was the first industry outfit to come to Tempe years back," Valenzuela notes. "Tom would come out and sign up local musicians and songwriters, which started hippin' everyone to the place." Eventually, A&M took interest—and the rest is MTV history!

Well, not exactly. "Doug always had a drinking problem, right from when we signed them," recalls David Anderle, A&M's senior vice-president of A&R. "I don't think we knew how deep... but we

definitely thought it was manageable. They were all drinking at the time—you know, this was an Arizona bar band! They were scruffy kids who wrote great songs and sang and played together real well.

"From a record company point of view, there were three strong points—the songs, the sound of Robin's voice, and that they were a very strong live act. Having a hit record the first time out seldom occurs, so if you have a band that's been together awhile and can go out and perform live, chances are you'll get to records two, three and four and have a career."

Assuming you get through record number one, that is. As it happened, the original recording sessions for *New Miserable Experience*, in 1990, turned out to be just that. "It was a combination of things that weren't clicking," says Anderle. "There was something missing between the band and the producer, and Doug was a problem..." The label decided to make the best of the situation by releasing a four-

song EP and sending the band on the road, the beginning of what would become several long pilgrimages. "We didn't want to stall the process," Anderle explains. "If we'd just sat around and waited for the right producer and for Doug to get straight, it would have ground to a halt. We might have lost the whole thing. This way the band could keep writing songs... it was a way to keep the momentum going."

Months later the Gin Blossoms returned to the studio, this time in happier collaboration with producer John Hampton, whose engineering credits ranged from blues acts like the Vaughan brothers and B.B. King to melodic pop thrashers like All and the Replacements. The road had sharpened the band's instrumental chops and group interplay—sadly excepting Hopkins, who was becoming increasingly "unglued."

"At that point the label's role was to follow the band's desire," Anderle says. "Ultimately, the rest of the band's desire



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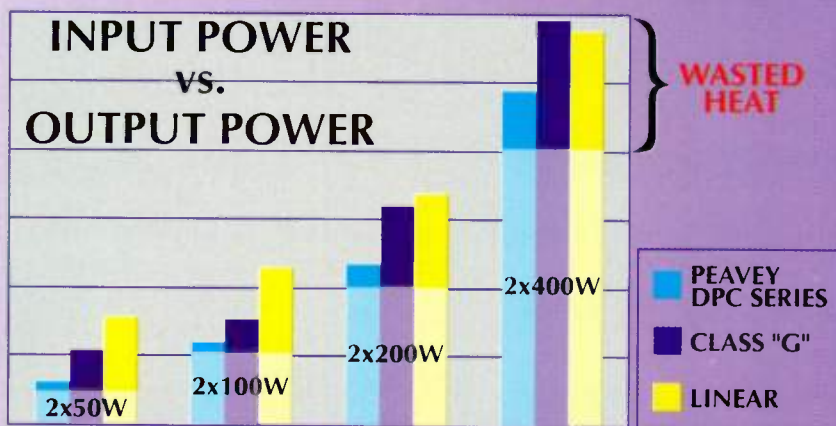
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flower power

Like the band itself, the Gin Blossoms' equipment is road-tested and ready to rip. Their guitar sound is carefully constructed; whichever guitarist plays the intro to a section yields the outro to his partner. **JESSE VALENZUELA** divides his guitar parts between his custom Fender Strat and his all-gold Gibson Les Paul, which he plays through a Matchless HC30 head into a vintage Hiwatt cabinet or a 1973 Marshall JMP 100 through an Orange cabinet. For effects, he relies on a rack-mount Chandler Tube Driver, an MXR Micro Amp line booster, an Ibanez TS09 Tube Screamer, and a Boss CS-2 compressor/limiter. For acoustic parts, he usually plays his Gibson J-200, though the live show is almost entire-

ly electric.

SCOTT JOHNSON complements Valenzuela on two Fender Strats, one from the mid-'70s and the other a '92 SRV. For amplification, Johnson uses two Marshall JMP 100-watt heads, dating from the mid-late '70s, through two Marshall 4x12 cabinets. Like Valenzuela, he uses a Tube Driver and a Tube Screamer for effects, along with a Vox wah-wah pedal. Both guitarists use D'Addario strings, .010 through .046.

BILL LEEN plays one of two Fender Precision basses. The one he uses most often is a '62 rosewood-neck reissue; if he breaks a string onstage, he'll grab his black '59 maple-neck reissue—the one he uses in all the band videos save one: On "Until I

Hear From You" we see him miming his parts on a Rickenbacker 4001 chosen for him by the producers because they liked how it looks. Leen plays through an Ampeg SVT amp and two Ampeg 8x10 cabinets. His strings are D'Addario, and his sole effect is a dbx 160X rack-mount compressor.

PHILLIP RHODES' drums are DWs, from the 22" kick through 10", 12", 14" and 15" toms to a deep solid maple snare. His Accelerator pedal and hi-hat stand are also DWs. Remo CS, Ambassador, and Power Stroke 3 heads cover the snare, toms and kick drum, respectively. Wilson's cymbals—a 17", an 18", a 22" ride, a China cymbal, and his hi-hats—are all from Paiste's Signature series. For sticks, he uses Zildjian 3Bs with round nylon tips.

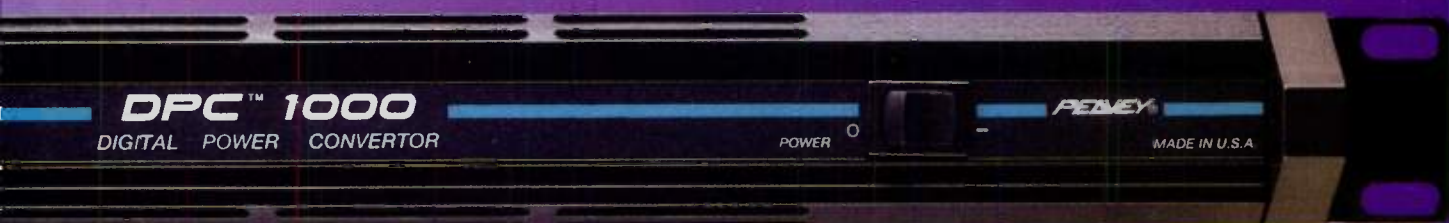
was to let Hopkins go. He was replaced in mid-session by Scott Johnson on guitar,

and the album was completed."

But the band blanched when the label

suggested releasing Hopkins' "Hey Jealousy" as the first single. "Doug had

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wanted the record company to use my songs and Jesse's songs after he left the band," Robin Wilson explains. "But he came to my house and we talked about it. I let him know he was going to get his due credit and he was going to make a lot of money."

Upon its release, however, both album and "Hey Jealousy" went nowhere; a followup single, "Mrs. Rita," stiffed as well. The band returned to touring relentlessly in a van while grinding out a support base of

fans, A&M field staff and radio contacts. And it paid off. A&M devoted more resources to tour support well past the point where they might have cut their losses [see sidebar, page 38] and sure enough, the second time around "Hey Jealousy" hit the big time. So did "Found Out About You."

But the success of his songs apparently did little to ease those demons afflicting Doug Hopkins' soul. Just before Christmas in 1993, he committed suicide.

While dealing with the psychological fallout of witnessing a friend and partner destroy himself before their eyes, the Gin Blossoms have been confronted with rumors suggesting that they may have played a role in his destruction. "I've read stories about it in the paper," Hampton says. "One of them said that they forced Doug to give up a certain percentage of his publishing (rights) to the new guitar player. I couldn't believe that was true. But I don't know the nuts and bolts of the situation; I've never discussed it with any of them."

TO THIS DAY, none of the Gin Blossoms are eager to speak directly about "the Doug element," as producer Hampton puts it. Bassist Bill Leen, perhaps Hopkins' closest friend and the band member who Wilson claims emblemizes "the original heart of the Gin Blossoms," wouldn't speak to me for this article. "After Doug died, it's kinda like everybody who spoke to him wanted to know about Doug this and Doug that," Hampton observes. "I think Bill might have just said, 'screw this.'"

"Of all the guys I think Bill has the best sense of where the band is from," Hampton goes on. "He's very intelligent and I always pay attention to his observations, but I'm not sure I read him correctly all the time, to be honest. To me, Bill is still an enigma."

The Gin Blossoms' least enigmatic member, and the one most willing to talk about Hopkins, is Robin Wilson. In their years together in the band, the two cultivated what Wilson describes as a sort of love-hate rapport, onstage and off.

"We had this antagonistic shtick when we'd perform," the singer muses one afternoon at Ardent, between final mixes of *Congratulations*. "Doug would grab the mike and say something about my [receding] hairline, and then I'd make a comment about his throwing up. He was closest to Bill, but for my first two years in the band, Doug and I were together all the time. We'd ride skateboards, take acid. It was fun, you know? But Doug had this image of himself as a sad, brooding poet. We had known [the suicide] was coming all along. The Doug who was my friend disappeared long before he died, or even left the band."

Still, Wilson harbors affection and rev-



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erence for Hopkins, and his last memory of his ex-bandmate is a poignant one. "We had this long, beautiful conversation right before he died," the singer says, "where we got to say all the things we'd wanted to say to each other. I got to say, 'It's your fault. I miss you. I think about you every day.' And he got to say, 'You betrayed me. I miss you.'"

Wilson and Valenzuela have since co-written two hits themselves; "Until I Walk

Away," the third single from *New Miserable Experience*, and "Till I Hear It From You," co-written with longtime idol Marshall Crenshaw. Composing the songs for *Congratulations, I'm Sorry* has become more of a collaborative process among the band members.

Texturally, the new material sounds like a natural follow-up to *Experience*. The first single "Follow You Down," one of two songs credited to the entire group, is a

grainy, driving rocker in the spirit of "Hey Jealousy" propelled by Leen's and Rhodes' relaxed-yet driving rhythmic pulse. "Not Only Numb," by Wilson and Rhodes, is darker and more intense, while Valenzuela and Johnson's "Memphis Time" has a brisk, buoyant country flavor. Throughout, the album is saturated with a recognizable post-post-Byrds guitar lyricism, and Wilson and Valenzuela blend their voices with the tight, Everly Brothers-style harmonies.

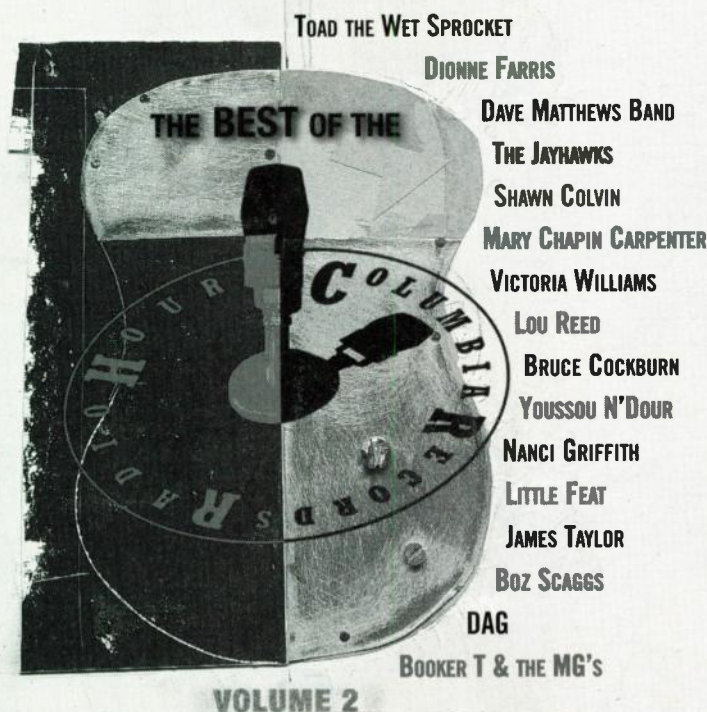
"I remember when we first spoke to John (Hampton) about making this album," Valenzuela says. "He suggested that we introduce some new elements. He said, 'Let's step things up—but let's not try to skip the first step, and go directly to two, three, four.' I mean, we didn't want to start in with horn parts; we wanted more of an organic progression."

When I ask Valenzuela whether he thinks any of the band's experiences over the past couple of years may have had an impact on the new lyrics, he shrugs. "I know that you media cats like to sort of over-conceptualize," he answers after a beat, smiling. "I suppose if the new songs do reflect our lives in any way, they show that things are a little easier for us now than it was three or four years ago, when we didn't have anything."

Wilson says there are no specific references to Hopkins on *Congratulations*. "Bill has written songs, which we're not doing, that refer to it. And I wrote a song that didn't end up on the record that's about this imaginary conversation between Doug and myself. There are little moments, like on 'Not Only Numb,' when I sing 'The air is getting thin/Getting out then looking in.' That makes me think of Doug . . . but more generally, it makes me think of all the bands that play in Tempe. It's just my attempt to explain my hometown to somebody else."

Still, the Hopkins legacy—and tragedy—casts a lengthy shadow. "I mean, sure, there were certain things about Doug's style, or spirit, that I tried to capture," Wilson admits. "I can't speak for any of the others, but Doug Hopkins was an influence on my writing just as much as Rick Nielsen or Tom Petty was. But it's not my place in this world to try to live up

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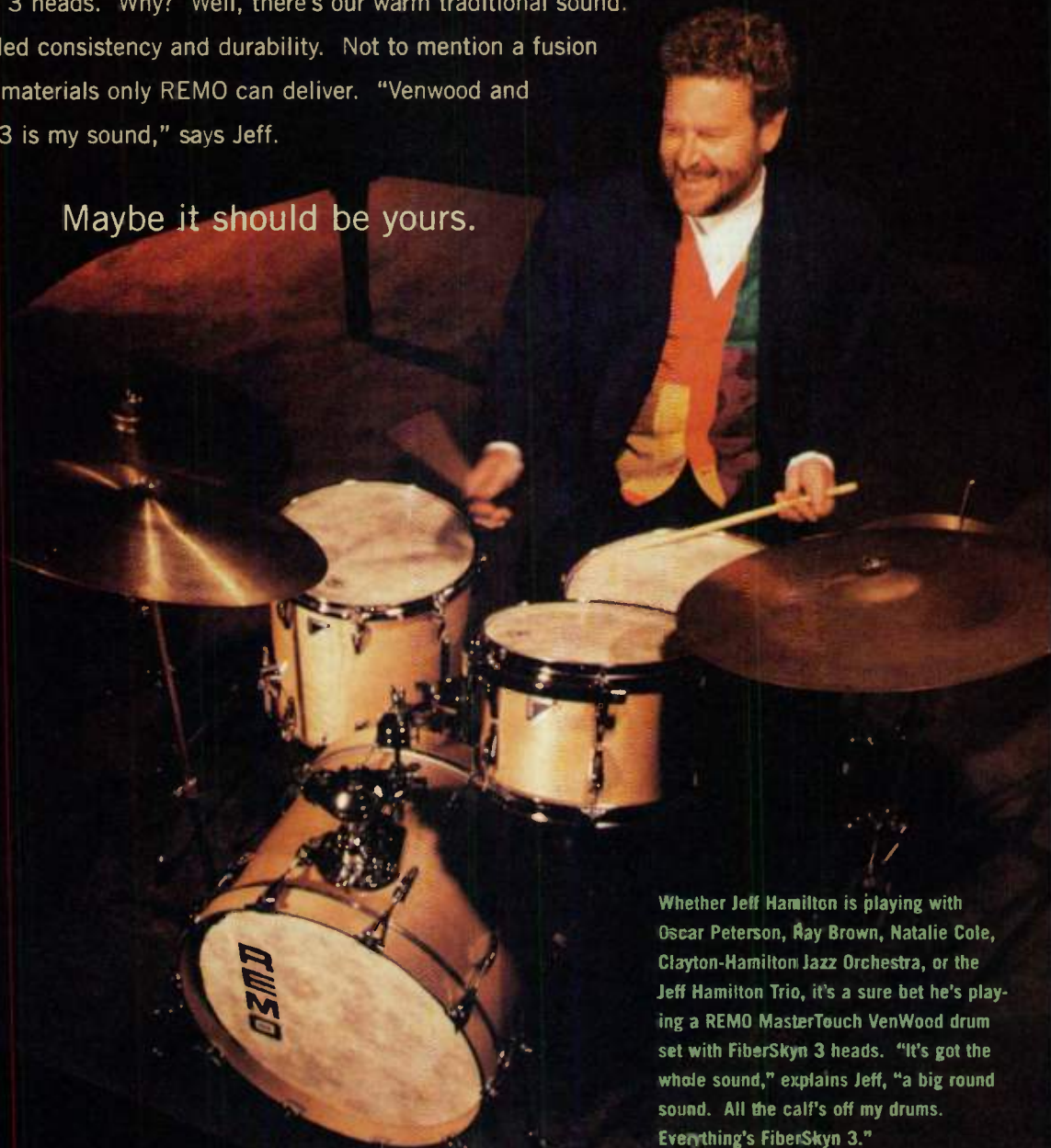
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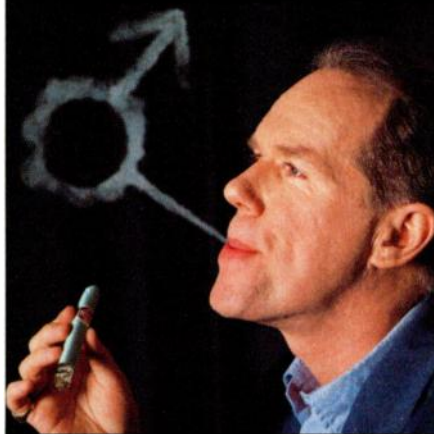
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to Doug Hopkins. It's my job to live up to my own potential, and I think I've done that. I think the band has done that." He pauses. "I think that Doug would be proud of us. I hope he would. I'd really like to make him proud."

IT'S SIXTY DEGREES at high noon in Tempe, a cool temperature for these parts even in mid-December, and Valenzuela couldn't be happier. For lunch, he and Johnson are relaxing at Haji Baba's, a popular neighborhood hangout that functions as restaurant, grocery store, and video-rental shop. "And they also sell, like, Middle Eastern teapots, and opium-smoking paraphernalia," Valenzuela points out. "There are some water pipes too, if you need them."

All the band members still live in Tempe, or in neighboring suburbs like Scottsdale, where Valenzuela just bought a house. "As long as I can get away in the summertime," Valenzuela laughs, "I'm happy. I've got my favorite restaurants here, and bookstores I can go to, and a place to eat breakfast in the morning

mutt H.I.—who makes a cameo appearance on *Congratulations*, barking on the outro track—Wilson carefully cuts it into small pieces to make it easier to chew and digest. "One of the reasons I enjoy getting a steak," he explains, "is that I get treats for my dog. He can smell the beef as soon as I walk in the door."

A few minutes later, Wilson starts talking about Rhodes, a gracious and good-humored guy a few years his junior, with a similar tone of patronizing affection. "Phillip is the most cooperative and enthusiastic member of the band," Wilson says, as Rhodes looks on like a student listening to his teacher evaluate his progress. "I find it really easy to write a song on guitar—and Jesse does this too—and then teach it to Phil. Any time I have an idea, I can call him up and he'll come down to the studio. So I gave him some credit on the new album for songs we worked on like that, just as a motivational thing. This way I'm rewarding him for his enthusiasm, and encouraging him to be more enthusiastic by giving him a piece of the publishing."

In other words, the
two songs on
Congratulations on

**"I think Doug
would be proud
of us."**

where I know everybody."

Off the road, Johnson says, "We stay out of each other's hair." What Wilson calls the

band's "glorious, drunken, decadent early days" are fading into memory. Johnson and Leen are married with children; Wilson and Rhodes each recently became engaged.

"Something's always going on, though, that brings them together as a band," says Rick Purcell, the Gin Blossoms' stage manager. "They're always involved, almost on the phone with each other every day, because of their work. You know, they've got 28 months of touring behind them now. That was really difficult, really long."

At dinner that evening with Wilson and Rhodes, the Gin Blossoms' lead singer shows me his domestic side. Before putting a healthy leftover portion of his sirloin into a doggy bag for his beloved

which he and Rhodes are listed as co-writers are really Wilson's songs.

When the young busboy delivering his doggy bag tells Wilson what a thrill it's been waiting on him, Wilson thanks him politely, but then later turns to me and scoffs. "Do you know what's really sad? Now he's gonna go tell all his friends that he met me. Then they'll tell all their friends that they met me."

Well, at least you can't accuse the guy of false modesty. Or perhaps, as Rick Purcell explains, "Robin realizes that he has a certain responsibility as the band's lead singer. Somebody's got to step up and be the spokesman, and he takes that on. But when he's just home, I don't get that vibe from him at all. I mean, he's not sitting around going, 'I'm the rock star.'"

"In the early days, back in '88 or '89, the band consumed Robin. All he'd talk

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about was the Gin Blossoms, the Gin Blossoms, the Gin Blossoms. He was really loud about it, and maybe he seemed pretty egotistical to some people. But look where it's taken them, you know?"

Later that night, Wilson and Rhodes head over to Gibson's, a local club where the Gin Blossoms played some gigs in their salad days and where Wilson is appearing tonight with his recreational side project, the Swaffords, a pop cover band. The group's namesake is Dave Swafford, a Phoenix-based musician whose sister once dated Hopkins and subsequently inspired the song "Hey Jealousy." Rick Purcell plays guitar in the Swaffords, and the drummer is Dan Henzerling, who was a Gin Blossom for about six months way back when. As Ted Simons, who's in the audience, observes, "This is a very close-knit, incestuous community."

Valenzuela and Johnson had indicated they might stop by to check out this gig, but by ten o'clock they're both no-shows. Before the show begins Rhodes leaves too, explaining that his fiancée isn't feeling well. As a modest crowd gathers in the bar area, Wilson asks the doorman to check if the V.I.P. list is in order. He's looking forward to this performance; with the Gin Blossoms beginning another tour in early 1996 to promote *Congratulations, I'm Sorry*, there won't be an abundance of other opportunities to jam with the Swaffords, who play on a sporadic basis to begin with.

"Sometimes I'll do a bunch of Swaffords gigs in a row," Wilson muses just before he hits the stage, "and I'll think, this is so much more fun than being in the Gin Blossoms. I mean, there's none of that pressure, none of the bullshit."

"But then I'll think about a show like one that the Gin Blossoms did in St. Louis, a really great show at an amusement park, where all the kids knew the words to our old songs. They all broke out their lighters and sang along, and my first thought after leaving the stage was, how can the Swaffords compare to this? How can being in a cover band compare to singing songs that you wrote yourself, and having other people appreciate that? That's a very surreal, very wonderful thing."

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process — important if you have a lot of songs to do in a short period of time. Call FaxBack Document #1750* |msrp \$1049. |

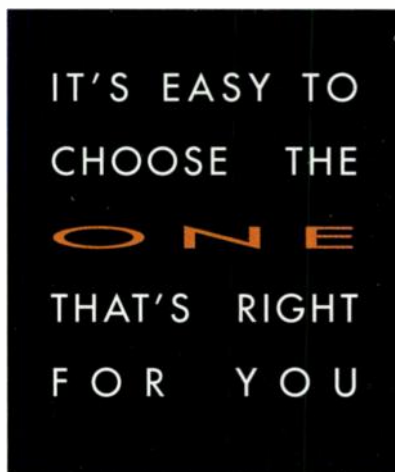
The 488mkII PORTASTUDIO™

Sometimes 4-tracks are not enough. This is the kingpin of all Portastudios. It's the only 8-track Portastudio™ and it features the latest generation transport and head technology yielding the best sounding 8-track recordings. A great portastudio for the MIDI musician or anyone with lots of gear looking to create more complex songs or soundtracks. The sound is amazing. That's because



the 488 mkII actually outperforms the original 8-track reel-to-reel decks. It has all the features of the other Portastudios, plus it adds pro-studio stuff. Like phantom-powered XLR inputs for using high quality microphones, sweepable mid-range EQs and two effects sends on each channel, and a sophisticated monitoring matrix giving you complete control of what you hear during recording and mixdown. You won't find any limitations with this Portastudio. So, if you've outgrown your 4-track or want to jump right in to serious multitracking, the 488 mkII is an incredible buy! Call FaxBack Document #1770* |msrp \$1899. |

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* Complete information, specifications, feature lists and diagrams of all these Portastudios are available via fax using TASCAM FaxBack. Call 800-827-2268, reference the FaxBack number of the model(s) you're interested in, and you'll quickly have all the information you need to make the right Portastudio™ decision.

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**The Music Industry
Spins Its Own World
Wide Web.**

**By Randy Alberts
Illustration By
Yumi Heo**

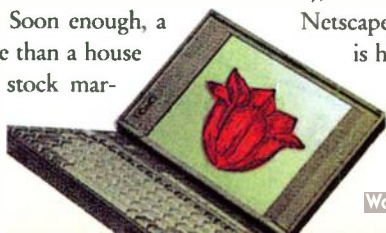
The meteoric rise of Internet-related businesses in 1995 has got us thinking about tulips—specifically, the Dutch tulip frenzy of the 1630s. The story in brief: In 1634, botanists discovered a way to alter the color of tulip blossoms. That discovery quickly led to a nationwide obsession with tulip gardening. Soon enough, a bulb was valued more than a house on Holland's crazed stock mar-

ket. Three years later the government stepped in and regulated tulips, leading to a complete crash of the Dutch economy.

Sound familiar? Put the words "World Wide Web" in the place of "tulip," and dig the parallels: a nation obsessed (with Web surfing), a crazed market (for high-tech stocks), and a "bulb" (in this case Netscape, Inc.) whose market value is higher than a house (actually, higher than Nord-

strom and Wendy's too). As for the bit about the government regulations and economic crashes . . . well, let's just do the atheist's prayer and cross our fingers. Right now at least, the future's all promise.

For many musicians, the 'Net is already familiar territory. It's a great place to hook up with players and fans of similar taste. We're even seeing it emerge as an alternative market for those who want their music to be heard without selling their souls to a





major label. But consider this: The latest research suggests that by 1997 almost 70 percent of all businesses will have some presence on the Internet. And in the last year or so music retailers and manufacturers have begun to catch the wave. It's only a matter of time before the musical instrument industry conquers the 'Net frontier. When it does, it could mean big changes in your professional life, from how you learn about the latest developments in music technology to how you buy that axe whose samples you'll be downloading.

THE PRESENT TENSE

Before we get too carried away speculating about the future (near as it may be), let's see what's available here and now. If you were to tap into an M.I. manufacturer's Web site today, what would you get?

The answer depends on the company. Throughout '95, more than 20 manufacturers quietly established beachheads on the Web, ranging from the basic "hang a shingle" to elaborate, multilinked presentations. Many are fact-filled with brilliant graphics, and some feature audio and video download files to showcase products or endorse clips. Kaman Music's site has 350 pages of information about its vast product line (including Ovation, Hamer, Trace Elliot, Takamine, Dean Markley, Gibraltar, Toca, Legend, Adamas and Seiko) and contains over 1000 images, along with nifty features like a downloadable 440 Hz reference tone for tuning. Gibson, which went online in September '94, has its own cyberzine called *The Amplifier*, including interviews with endorsees, album reviews, and practical advice from lawyers, producers and A&R reps.

Many manufacturers' Web sites offer dealer locators: Type in your ZIP or area code and you'll be directed to the retailer nearest you. If that retailer's got a Web page too, you may be able to connect directly to it from the company's site. Slicker still is a vintage search feature available on the Fender, Gibson and Martin sites. Just punch up a serial number and

you can find out what year that triple-0, Les Paul Standard or Candy Apple Red Strat really is.

To hear the company folks tell it, M.I. movement on the Internet is not meant to directly boost sales but is instead a way of

Eleven and getting a soda. When people have the money to buy one, we want them to feel they know what they're getting."

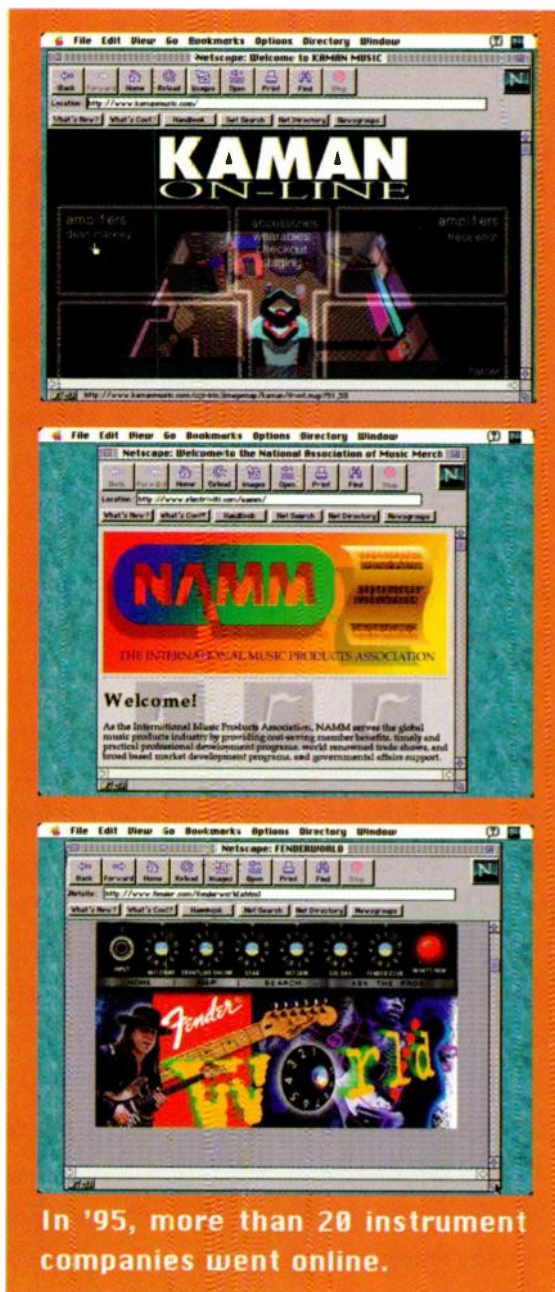
Since players' responses are also of prime importance, companies are making sure to include room in their Web sites for comments and suggestions from customers. "Our industry doesn't really get much feedback," says Wettlaufer. "It seems that across the board, from company to company, everyone's still so isolated. You can tell that by the number of products that come out every year and then just fade away. What do people think about new and old models? What changes would they like made? That's what we're looking for, to see whether our perception of what they want is accurate."

PLUSES AND MINUSES

Manufacturers desiring to get in on all the Web action should be prepared for a few headaches along the way. "The new media have brought a lot of advantages as well as lots of potential disadvantages," explains Daniel Kastner, president and founder of Baudway, an Internet service provider that focuses on the music industry. "The biggest hurdle is explaining the technology, because it's important to focus on the concepts, not the hardware."

Robbie Clyne of Neilson/Clyne, an "Internet agency" whose service MusicPro is giving many companies their first taste of conducting Web business, sees that challenge as worth the effort. "The Internet has already created a truly level playing field. The blessing is that clients are able to promote their products globally, the potential curse being that distribution as we know it is going to change the way we've been doing business over the next couple of years. Getting our clients to think globally is the biggest thing right now, especially with manufacturers."

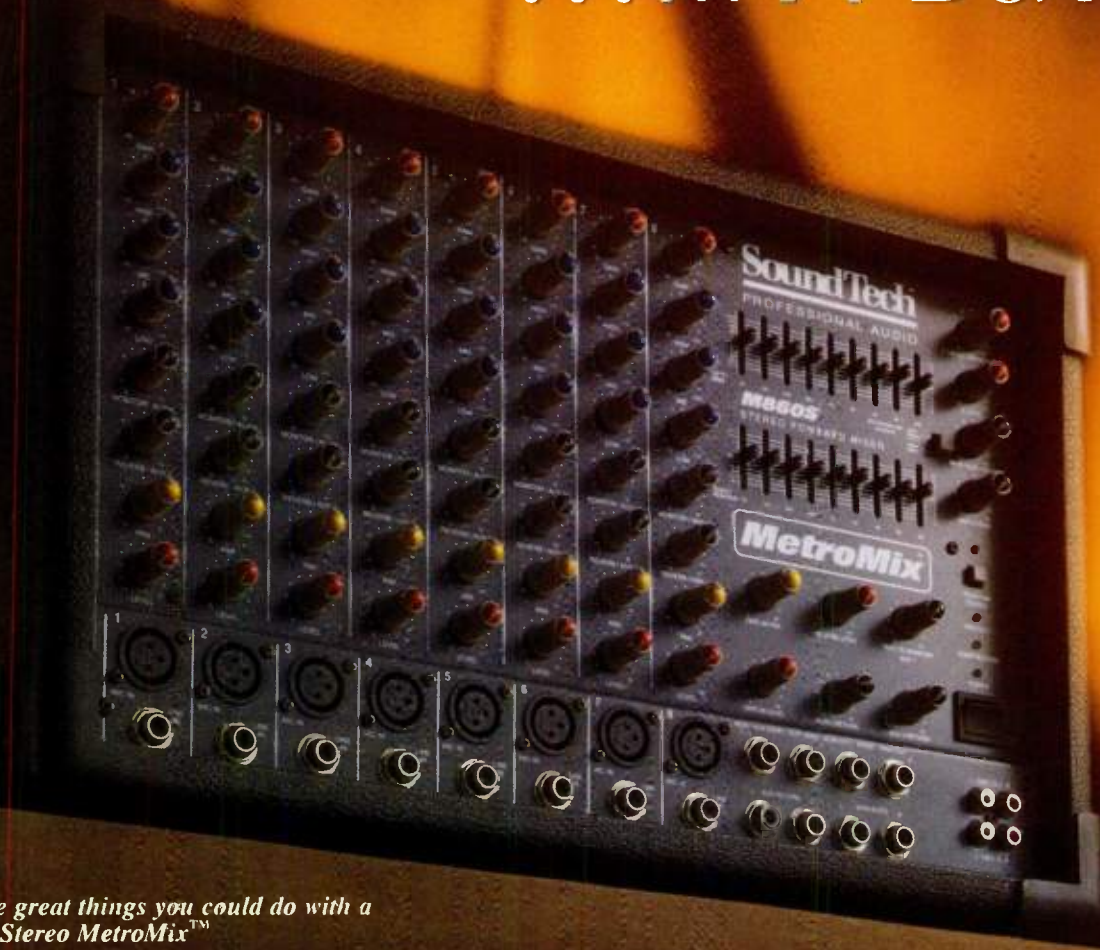
Once upon a time a manufacturer's biggest consumer nightmare was to deal with a negative product review from a magazine. That time may already be past, because with instant global access comes



In '95, more than 20 instrument companies went online.

getting more (and better) information across to players. "We have over 40 models," says John Wettlaufer, the man behind Martin's Web site, "but if you ask somebody about Martin guitars, they might be able to name five. And as to what the difference is between those, they don't have a clue. So we want to inform people. Buying one of our guitars isn't exactly like going to the 7-

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Abel Axe	http://www.tcd.net/~abel/
Alesis	http://www.mw3.com/alesis
Ashly Audio	http://www.ashly.com/
Carver	http://www.halcyon.com/carver/
Cort Guitars	http://www.esc.junc.net/esc/cortl.htm
ddrum	http://www.wesys.com/drums/ddrum/home.html
Digital Audio Labs	http://www.digitalaudio.com/
Dolby	http://www.dolby.com/
Emagic	http://www.mcc.ac.uk/~emagic/emagic_page.html
Luie Technologies	http://sysint.com/systems/s4/s4-l.htm
FenderWorld	http://www.fender.com/fenderworld.shtml
Gibson	http://www.gibson.net/
Grimes Guitars	http://www.maui.net/~grimer/
Heftone Guitars	http://www.msen.com/~brianhef/Heftone.html
Hot Licks	http://www.mw3.com/hotlicks
Kaman Music	http://www.kamanmusic.com
Kat Percussion	http://www.mw3.com/kat
Kurzweil	http://www.musicpro.com/musicpro/Kurzweil.html
Martin	http://www.mguitar.com
MIDIMAN	http://www.midifarm.com/midiman/
MidiScan	http://www.musitek.com/
Modulus Graphite	http://www.dnai.com/~modulus/
Musitek	http://www.musitek.com/musitek/
Musicware	http://www.halcyon.com/musicware/
MusicPro	http://www.musicpro.com/
Peavey	http://www.mw3.com/peavey/
Soundtech	http://www.soundtech.com
Solid State Logic	http://www.zynet.co.uk:8001/smiles/ssl/
TOA Elec.	http://sysint.com/systems/toa/toa.htm
Wildcat Canyon	http://www.wildcat.com/
Washburn Int'l.	http://www.washburn.com

• list compiled from mw3 newsletter 12/1/95

instant user feedback, both positive and negative, informed and uninformed. "I don't think manufacturers are really thinking about how many people have access to this information," says Clyne. "For instance, a manufacturer releases a product and there's an e-mail group for that product category, maybe even for that particular product. Say a guy buys a mike and happens to think it sucks. His opinion ends up on his newsgroup as a 'Don't try this mike out' posting that everyone in that forum will read. That can be dangerous if there's lots of negative stuff out there, but ultimately it's going to force manufacturers to release market-driven over engineer-driven products."

MOM & POP GO SURFING

As of this writing there's only a handful of M.I. retailers up and running a Web site, but according to Daniel Kastner of Baudway, there are many more stores that have initiated the 30- to 90-day startup period of getting their own Web page designed, implemented and flying over the Internet. "We're in the process of signing on probably 100 to 200 dealers that will be on a basic level of Internet service by the January NAMM show or shortly thereafter."

"We got on with Baudway in its infancy," recalls Skyline Music owner Dan Vedda, the first M.I. retailer to plant an Internet flagpole over a year ago. "The music industry is a me-too industry. The pioneers are the ones who'll take the arrows for now. Then everybody else says 'Hey, if they're making money, I want to

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The Best Of Both Worlds.

do it too.” But beyond this me-too attitude and the pioneer spirit of diggin’ fer gold on the Web, why should music retailers get involved?

“We’ve been using our Web page more as an institutional area than as a promotional tool,” Vedda says. “Things going on with the store, our teaching faculty bios, current news from our suppliers, and so on. I’m certainly willing to someday sell from the Web site, and someday we’ll have special sales in there, but having a page up there now is like having a billboard. No qualification as to who is going to see it or whether the needs of those seeing it are going to match the offering, but certainly it’s a faster way to get information out.”

What about finding a cyber-niche? “The best types of stores to go online right now are the used equipment dealers,” Vedda continues, “like Daddy’s Junky Music. That vintage stuff is what users scour the world for.”

And scour they do. Daddy’s effort represents the initial wave of success for M.I. Web sales, largely because they can offer a unique niche service online. By providing up-to-the-hour information on their extensive used gear catalog, Daddy’s pleases their regular customers, providing instant access to listings that used to take weeks to arrive by mail; at the same time they’re reaching a global market for second-hand gear over the Web.

“We’re providing an existing service in a better way over the Web, rather than just using it for marketing purposes,” says Addison Minott of Daddy’s, online since November 1995. “We’re already getting e-mail and phone calls like, ‘I saw a keyboard listed on your Web site, and I want to buy it—now.’”

Could this mean new life for old gear? “The Internet seems to be facilitating the sales of used instruments,” says Larry Linkin of the National Association of Music Merchants. “That could be a big plus for the industry as a whole.”

THE BIG QUESTION

And what about new gear? Might we soon be seeing instrument companies bypassing dealers completely in favor of direct sales in cyberspace?

“Just like there are those who allow

their stuff to go into mail order catalogs, someday there may just be a manufacturer who decides to go direct,” states Fender’s marketing VP Jack Shelton. “If I were a dealer I’d be concerned about that. The fear is that mail order is going to take over the music business, and in a lot of instances I’m not so sure that hasn’t happened already. The same could hold true for the Internet, because the Web site is a direct link to the customer.”

Shelton continues, “We already have dealers who are setting up their own Web sites, and they would like to hot link directly to ours. We’re mulling around on whether we want that to happen. For example, if we have a Web site up, and there’s a hot link to Joe’s Music, and you go to Joe’s Web page and it says, ‘Fender stuff, 50 percent off,’ that means 50 percent off everywhere in the world. At the same time, we’re not taking anything away from

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our dealers because, honestly, without them we're dead in the water."

Because of this delicate question of dealer relationships, most manufacturers are queasy about selling directly over the Internet. But if Gibson's "Internet mall" venture, launched at the end of January, turns out to be a success, other companies may lose that unease. The "mall," a feature of Gibson's mega-Web site, will sell a limited number of products, includ-

ing Oberheim synths, Gibson and Epiphone guitars, strings and accessories. "You can't just order anything you want," says Gibson's Web czar Mike Lawson. "It works like a store, with a selected inventory that we order and warehouse." Lawson sees the inclusion of spare parts in that inventory as key. "A lot of dealers don't like to stock a huge selection of our parts, preferring to order them as they need them. Now people

who need a new knob or toggle switch can easily get them anytime.

"We don't intend to compete with our dealers," Lawson affirms. "Our Web site's not going to be a better bargain than your local dealer. You shop our site for convenience or because there's not a store near you. The Internet store is an attempt to catch a market that nobody else is catching now. We're targeting people who live in rural areas or who work long hours or who don't want to go to a music store. Undoubtedly, some dealers are going to scream, but others are going to say, 'No big deal, I can sell that guitar for \$200 less than they can.'"

Clearly, with the rules of how dealers and suppliers work together in flux, the ostrich approach won't work for retailers or manufacturers. "You've either got to jump in the boat or get left at the dock," says Neilson/Clyne's Robbie Clyne. "If retailers choose to believe that the Internet isn't going to change the way people buy things, I think they're being naïve. Many retailers have Web sites already, and the manufacturers need to think about including hot links from their home pages directly to the dealers, even if it risks playing favoritism with online dealers. It's going to happen eventually."

As Addison Minott of Daddy's sees it, "The world keeps shrinking. Retailers are having to compete not just with the guy around the corner and the mail order folks, but now with anyone in the world who has Internet access. But the real danger to the Mom & Pop retailer comes when the guy on the Internet can provide a better service that will offset the fact most customers still want to touch and feel the product before they buy it."

The blessing of the Web is that anyone can put up his or her own page; the curse is that you'll see some bland amateur stabs among the gems. To be blunt, some Webmasters should consider a career outside of interactive graphic design.

Even so, it seems obvious that the easier and more compelling it is to get online, the sooner it will be that musicians will want online interaction to help them research and purchase products. And it won't be long till players can get the facts they need almost instantaneously, simply by pushing "start."



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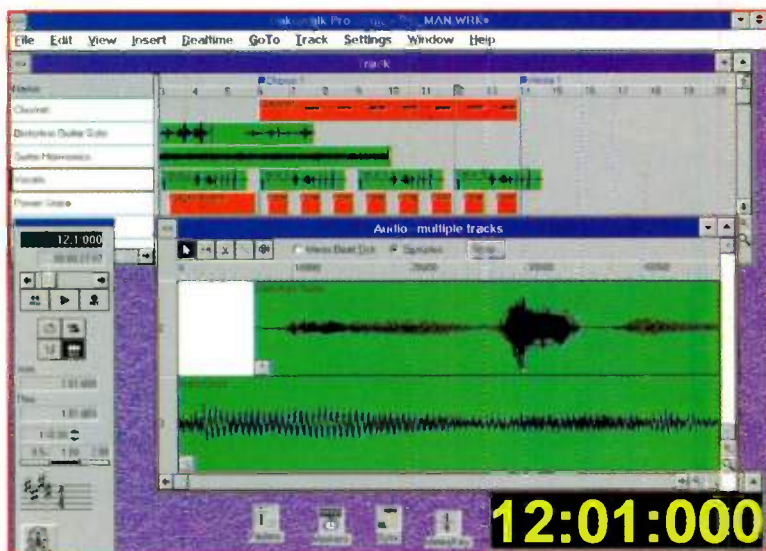


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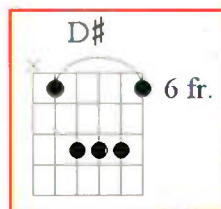


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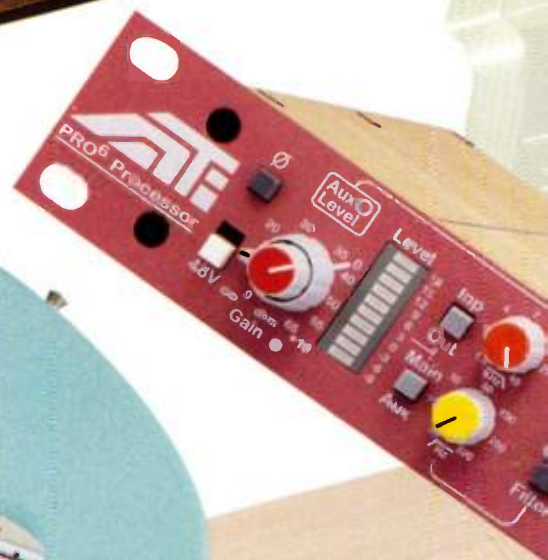
If you want your own P.A. but would like to avoid a hernia, look no further than JBL's EON series of speakers and mixers. The EON PowerSystem (\$2177) includes a 10-channel stereo mixer, two 15-inch bi-amped two-way speakers (like the big guy with the handle on the right side of the picture), two JBL E50S mikes and all the cables you need. All components are astoundingly lightweight, but none skimp on sound quality. **JBL, P.O. Box 2200, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329; voice (818) 894-8850, fax (818) 830-7802.**

2 matchless chieftain

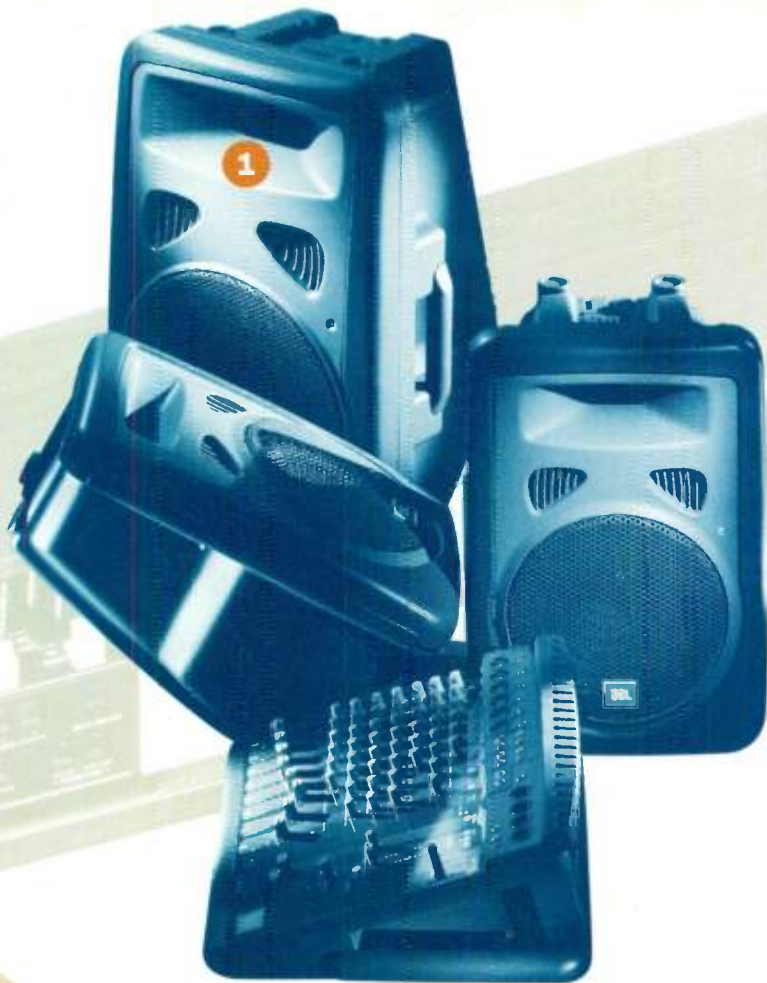
The folks at Matchless know you can't beat those classic '60s English tube amp designs, and they're keeping the grand tradition alive with their Chieftain series. The 35-watt Chieftain 210 (\$1999) and 212 (pictured, \$2299) have two EL34 output tubes, two Celestions, reverb, master volume, active low boost, active mid, passive treble and brilliance controls. Today's word is tone. **Matchless, 9830 Alburts Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670; voice (310) 801-4840; fax (310) 801-4828.**

3 ATI pro6 processor

Make no mistake: the ATI Pro6 (\$2395) is a serious piece of studio gear. Basically, it's the input processor module of ATI's acclaimed Paragon console adapted into a stand-alone rackmount unit. The six audio blocks that make up the Pro6 are a high-voltage mike preamp, 24dB-per-octave high and low pass filter, four-band parametric EQ with shelving on each band, compressor, noise gate and audio ducker with key filters. Enough knobs for ya? **ATI, 9017-C Mendenhall Ct., Columbia, MD 21045; voice (410) 381-7879, fax (410) 381-5025.**



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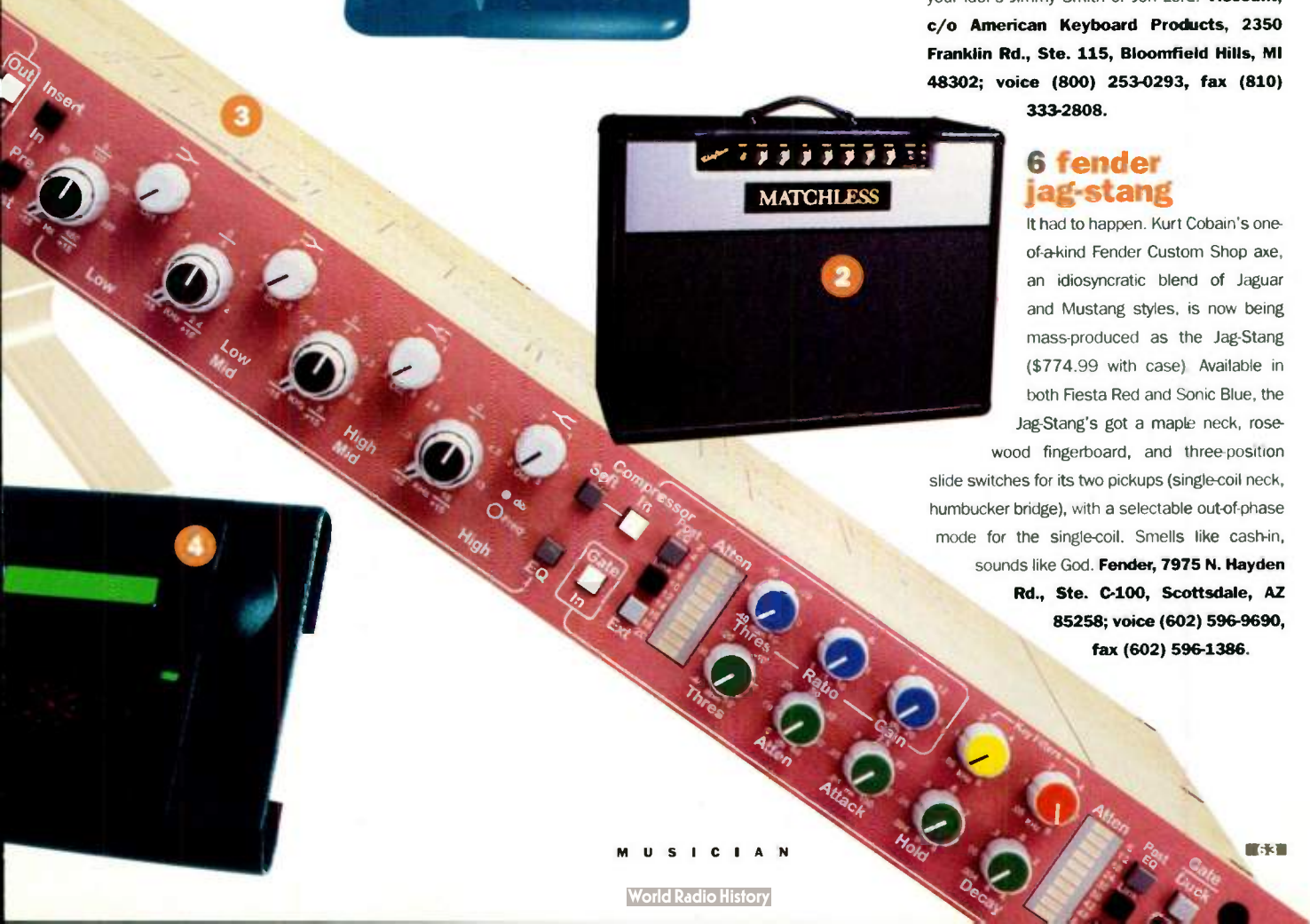


4 interactive light dimension beam

So you like to move around while you're playing? Well, with Interactive Light's Dimension Beam (\$599), you can actually give your motion some meaning. The Beam's infrared light senses movement of objects and uses that information to act as a MIDI controller for keyboards or processors. Lift the neck of your guitar and raise its volume, or rock around and change the amount of reverb on your voice. The possibilities for amusement are limitless. **Interactive Light, 1202 W. Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90404; voice (310) 581-8411, fax (310) 452-7443.**

5 viscount D9

If new-fangled organs like the Viscount D9 (\$1199) keep coming out, we'll soon be in for a percussion renaissance that has nothing to do with the men's movement. Not only has the D9 got nine drawbars with real-time timbral control, but it also allows you to preset and alter drawbar positions with a footswitch, leaving both your hands free to play. The D9's five-octave keyboard has got that Hammond action down, and its B-3 simulations are sure to please, whether your idol's Jimmy Smith or Jon Lord. **Viscount, c/o American Keyboard Products, 2350 Franklin Rd., Ste. 115, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302; voice (800) 253-0293, fax (810) 333-2808.**



6 fender jag-stang

It had to happen. Kurt Cobain's one-of-a-kind Fender Custom Shop axe, an idiosyncratic blend of Jaguar and Mustang styles, is now being mass-produced as the Jag-Stang (\$774.99 with case). Available in both Fiesta Red and Sonic Blue, the Jag-Stang's got a maple neck, rosewood fingerboard, and three-position slide switches for its two pickups (single-coil neck, humbucker bridge), with a selectable out-of-phase mode for the single-coil. Smells like cash-in, sounds like God. **Fender, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Ste. C-100, Scottsdale, AZ 85258; voice (602) 596-9690, fax (602) 596-1386.**

fast forward

Beat Back That Feedback

by dinky dawson

Intelligent power amplifiers? That's what Peavey claims to have created with their new MAQ series. Not only do the MAQ 300 (\$649) and MAQ 600 (\$899) have a built-in low cut filter and a 15-band graphic equalizer, but they also boast the ability to locate and vanquish feedback. For a band on the road, this is great news.

First the facts. Both the 300 and the 600 (or the Little MAQ and Big MAQ, if you like) offer two channels of amplification—the 300 has two 150-watt amps and the 600 has two 300-watt amps. The inputs are balanced XLR and high-impedance 1/4". The unit can function as a combination amp/graphic equalizer but also allows you to use either the amp or the equalizer, with the ability to patch directly into both sepa-

ately. Attenuation controls and a low-cut filter can be found on the input channels.

When you first turn on the power, the LEDs at the top of each frequency control fader glow dimly. As you begin sending a signal through the unit, the LEDs glow brighter and brighter as the signal

The best way to answer that question was under show pressure. I chose three different acts to evaluate the units with. The first was the Mulligans, a five-piece band from Stamford, Connecticut, consisting of drums, bass, two guitars and a lead singer. The Mulligans use a regular style drum kit, Hartke 2x10 bass rig, and two Fender Ultra Chorus amps for the guitarists. The sound system was two EV SX 200 cabs mounted on poles, and a Peavey XR500C power head with an auto compressor/limiter.

The gig took place in a 20x20 room of a private house. The lead vocalist patched his microphone into the XR500C and then directly into the MAQ 300. In this particular situation, the drummer acted as the mixer. He monitored each LED and adjusted the frequency as it went out. He

then turned up more volume and continued adjusting until the vocal was loud and clean. By the

editor's pick

Peavey's MAQ amps pump

strength increases. When feedback occurs on a particular frequency, the LEDs light up and stay on until you adjust it. Sounds like a brilliant idea, but does it work?

time the band went on, the room was packed and you could hear good separation between the instruments and the clean vocal. According to the singer's girlfriend, this was the first time she had

heard her boy-friend's voice at a gig. After the set, the singer observed that there was less strain on his voice and he didn't feel hoarse. No one in the band noticed any feedback. The overall appraisal was that the MAQ 300 had made the vocal sound unusually clean.

The second act, the Grasshoppers, is a four-piece band from New York City that performs regularly at a club called Flannery's.

◀ **Big MAQ**



The room there is long and widens out towards the stage area. The band's setup is very similar to the Mulligans, the main difference being that the Grasshoppers have a big Yamaha drum set, an SWR 4x10 bass unit and two Fender Bassman guitar stacks. Three of the lads sing and use a Peavey XR600C Power head with two old JBL MI 634 cabs on poles. They also have two EV FM1202 monitors. That's right, monitors!

Since the Grasshoppers have three vocal mikes, they used the bigger MAQ 600. This time, both channels were used, one side for the band monitors and the other for the house sound. First, the band adjusted the monitors, shaping the LEDs until they got a crystal-clear sound. Next, they did the same for the house sound system. All of these adjustments took, at



Little MAQ ▲

go directly into the mixer. The sound system has two 18" Cerwin Vega subwoofers and two EV 1503s for the mids and highs.

volume and shoot trouble

the most, five minutes. During this show, the band was particularly loud, and as a result, some feedback occurred. One of the guitarists, while still playing, was able to look down at the LEDs and immediately adjust the feedback until it disappeared. The only negative comment made by the band (and I don't look at this as negative) was that the MAQ 600 was so powerful that the JBL house system cranked louder than they could remember. But hey, as long as the sound is clear, you can always turn the volume down.

The third act, Noddacul, is a reggae/soca band from Boston. These lads are loud! They use a regular drum kit, a Trace Elliot bass head with 2x15 and 4x10 Mesa/Boogie bass cabs, a Peavey 2x12 guitar setup, one keyboard playing bubble-style through an old Epiphone 1x12 cab and the other playing piano, organ and steel drums through a Peavey Classic 2x12 amp. A total of four vocals, along with drums, guitar, bass and keyboards,

Vocals and instruments are mixed on a Peavey Unity 2000 16-channel console. From there the sound is sent into an NEI 32-band graphic equalizer and a dbx 163 compressor into an electronic crossover. Needless to say, the front of the house gets very loud. Two separate mixes are provided for the band. The first, for the singer, goes through a Sonic 15" horn cab. The second mix, for the bass, guitar and keyboards, goes through two 12" horn Sonic cabs. By taking advantage of the MAQ 600's dual monitor channel feedback location system, the bass player was able to mix the show without a sound engineer.

It was a cold winter night when Noddacul played on the beach at the Ranch House in Marshfield, Massachusetts, but in that big room, lots of people were chasing their blues away with loud reggae party sounds. During the soundcheck, I watched the bass player adjust the sound and noticed how easily he mastered the use of the MAQ 600. It

only took a few minutes until he had a clean and full sound. When the kick drum was put through the monitors, even though the sound was very smooth, I noticed that the frequency of 160 Hz was peaking as if there was feedback. As an experiment, I decided to set the low cut knob at 160. Incredibly, the sound got even smoother and there was no longer any indication of feedback. However, with reggae music you want a bit of that low end, so I readjusted the unit to its previous setting. During the set, there was one little squeak of feedback. I quickly glanced at the bass player and saw a knowing smile as he went straight to the MAQ 600 and adjusted the proper fader.

A final observation: Because the LEDs were designed to light up quickly and smoothly, the musician can observe a problem with a frequency setting without any blaring alarms or glaring lights. This may seem trivial, but during a performance it's like having a roadie right next to you.

I must say I love the idea of being able to see the frequency that is causing trouble and adjust it on the spot. This is an ideal unit for any act that uses its own small systems and mixes its own sound. However, the MAQ series could also

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work well in permanent installations such as clubs, churches or schools.

Kudos to the Peavey engineers! The MAQ 300 and MAQ 600, with their handy feedback locating systems, will bring Peavey to the forefront of live sound through the next century.

Stuart "Dinky" Dawson is an engineer, sound designer and production consultant who, over a nearly 30-year career, has worked with artists including Fleetwood Mac, the Kinks, Lou Reed, Jeff Beck and Steely Dan.

REFRESHMENTS

[cont'd from page 18] I really thought I was looking at something that was close to perfect. Musically, I thought, this is marvelous, but financially I heard the sound of cash registers ringing all over America."

What made the difference, though, was the rapport Lubin found with the guys before the gig, as he got to know them over a lunch of tequila shots. "Because the music field is so crowded, I've come to feel that the character of the people you get involved with is becoming more and more important," he says. "If they aren't ambitious, if they aren't focused, if they don't have their eyes on the goal line, they're not gonna make it. The character of all these guys impressed me as dead serious. So I was hoping to God that I would like them that night."

The band felt the same about Lubin—so much so that they asked for a "key man" clause in their contract, allowing them to follow him if he were to leave for another label. "We got shot down; those clauses don't happen," Clyne says. "But Mercury has been nothing less than perfect. They've been very positive from the get-go, and I know that Peter's enthusiasm and belief in the band has a lot to do with that."

As usual, there are lessons here for bands who are still looking for their break. "The most important advice I can give," offers Clyne, "is to not chase trends. The music industry goes through a lot of phases. Just play what comes out of you and stick with it. Don't try to be somebody else."

"As purely musical advice," Blush adds, "be dynamic. When the vocals need

to be out front, let the music step back. When the guitars need to come out, everyone else should step back."

Says Lubin, "Learn to play and sing. There are so many bands who, once they know four chords and how to mumble, try to do demos and get deals. Getting my attention is more a function of being good at what you do. Other musicians will talk about you. I'll hang backstage and hear somebody say, 'This band opened for us three nights ago. You gotta check 'em out. They're great.' That means a lot to me, especially if I like the band that tells me. I put more stock in that than in whether the band got its name in *Hits* magazine."

What about getting the A&R guy to loosen up over tequila before the showcase gig? Blush laughs nervously: "Uh, that could go either really right or really wrong."—Robert L. Doerschuk

PATÍÑO

[cont'd from page 17] two years with hardly any response. Finally, one of the songs we recorded ("Stay") made it onto the *Reality Bites* soundtrack. All of a sudden, people took notice, and eventually that success led to a deal with Geffen.

Now I don't want to be irresponsible and say that anybody who buys a Portastudio and an Audio-Technica 4033 is home free. But let's face it: No one wants to pay \$2800 a day to make an album anymore. Not even the big rock heroes, because even they end up responsible for that cost; the way the business works, your recording advance is a Mafia mortgage against your potential success. Also, in a fancy studio, you're trying to recapture inspiration while watching the clock; at home, you can relax and be yourself. Which is why this recent explosion of affordable pro-quality equipment is so exciting. Now, behind that first \$2000 or \$3000 you spend on a basic home recording setup lies an extraordinary world of possibilities. And it doesn't matter if it's an ADAT and a Mackie or if it's just a 4-track and a couple of microphones; if you've got the gear and the chops and the desire to work on music all day every day, you *can* buy yourself freedom. You *can* knock the system on its ass.

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fast forward

Ivory Samples

A rough guide through the oft-confusing world of digital pianos.

by julian colbeck

Nothing plays quite like an acoustic piano. If this bothers you, or you refuse to believe it, do yourself a favor and start looking for something else. Of course, digital pianos—pianos whose sounds are created (most commonly) by some form of digital sampling technique—are brilliant. They don't go out of tune (except when you want them to), they don't need miking up, they let you transpose key at will, they're portable, they can be laced into a MIDI sequence. But digital pianos sound and feel very different from their acoustic, hammer-hitting-strings cousins.

Confusingly, digital pianos also come in a wide range of styles and applications: piano modules, dedicated stage pianos, home/stage pianos, piano plus everyother-soundimaginable instruments, MIDI player pianos, and finally the latest accoutrement for the "I used to play in a band in the '70s but now I'm a chiropractor" type of customer, the so-named silent piano. This is an acoustic piano whose string mechanism can be disconnected with a swift kick of the foot, a maneuver that simultaneously activates a set of digital piano voices which can now be heard on headphones. The sales pitch goes something like: "Now young Duane can lacerate *Für Elise* without inflicting his crime upon the rest of the family. Meanwhile you can still have a real

acoustic piano in your living room."

Piano modules and pro stage pianos are the prime suspects in this case, but the field of digital pianos is a hotbed of cross-fertilization. A cardboard cutout of Elton John is just as likely to pop up from behind a Technics home piano as it is from behind the latest Roland pro model. Meanwhile, the hippest and most cost-effective



From top: Roland's classic RD-1000, Yamaha's P-300, Kurzweil's MicroPiano

piano module used by the pros remains Kurzweil's MicroPiano (\$495), an item that was originally marketed to the home user. The MicroPiano offers generous 32-voice polyphony across its 32 keyboard instrument presets, which range from acoustic uprights and grands to electrics to one or two jazz-type organs. There's a choice of sixteen digital effects that can be quickly switched on or off. Small and stream-

lined, the MicroPiano is inexpensive and highly practical.

Voce is not the size of Kurzweil and so its Electric Piano Module (\$549) may not be as easy to find, but this is an interesting unit in that its sounds are not based upon samples of acoustic pianos but upon additive synthesis. Accordingly, the best Voce sounds are vintage electric pianos like Rhodes, Wurlitzer, Clavinet etc. The 32-voice polyphony is good and you can even harness three sounds multi-timbrally. Some limited effects are on offer, too. For Roland, piano modules have become something of a specialty, though the all-digital P-55 (\$695) doesn't have the same depth as its analog effects-laden predecessor the MKS-20, made in 1986 and now

deemed a classic. The P-55 does offer more polyphony, though (28-voice), plus it fits snugly into a General MIDI environment since it conforms to GS/GM whenever it sees a GM System On or GS Reset message. Smart. E-mu's Proformance (\$399) is attractively priced, and attractively presented in its 1993 makeover color scheme.

This stereo sample-based unit runs at 32-voice polyphony and offers 15 tones (or 32 on the "Plus" model, \$450) but with no effects and no multi-timbrality.

Playing piano is as much about feel as sound. It is almost impossible to play in a pianistic way on flappy, plastic keyboards with no weight and depth. Good value though piano modules are, you may pre-

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fer a complete piano-type instrument, with a weighted keyboard, and one that has a longer span than the synth standard of 61 notes (5 octaves) as well. Once again, Kurzweil is making friends with its PC-88 (\$2396), an instrument that com-

bines 88-key master keyboard duties with 48 mainly piano-type presets and a GM sound set option if you want a more complete palette of tone colors. Polyphony is standard at 32-voice but can be upgraded to 64-voice along with the

GM set for \$495. (A pre-loaded version, the PC-88MX, goes for \$2850.) Finally the instrument has some 48 stereo effects. Kurzweil also has a dedicated piano keyboard in the plain vanilla RG-100 (\$1995), which features just four tones, reverb, and a pair of small practice speakers. Good as a rehearsal instrument.

Oberheim surprised a lot of people recently with the Eclipse (\$2495), the company's first ever digital piano. In fact, the Eclipse's actual manufacturer is Viscount, from Italy, under whose name the instrument calls itself the FK-1000. With strong sounds, tone layering, a pleasing if shallow 88-note keyboard, built-in effects, and the odd nice touch such as an additional slider-controlled strings tone, the Eclipse (colored cream) or FK-1000 (colored black) are well worth a play. And if you need to travel, they come already built into a flightcase.

One of the great digitals of all time is the 1986-produced and sadly no longer available Roland RD-1000. Roland's current equivalent is the RD-500 (\$2795), a hammer-action monster with piano, organ, harpsichord, and synth tones (28-voice), and good effects including chorus and EQ. Polyphony can get eaten away fast with tone layering, but the sounds are generally creamy and extremely playable. Meanwhile, the Roland FP-1 (\$2195) addresses a slightly more at-home crowd with its simple six piano-based tones and straight reverb and chorus effects. Polyphony is rated at 28-voice on this 88-note hammer-action instrument.

Sound and feel may be the prime qualities in a piano, but let's not forget looks. In the 1980s Yamaha scored incredible success with its CP-70 and CP-80 electroacoustic models, despite some quirky tuning problems, mainly because those sawn-off grand designs looked great on stage. So too will Yamaha's all-digital P-500 (\$8265), as well it might for the price. But this stylish design is accompanied by 11 AWM (Yamaha's sampling technology) tones, top-quality digital effects, including chorus and phaser, and [cont'd on page 78]

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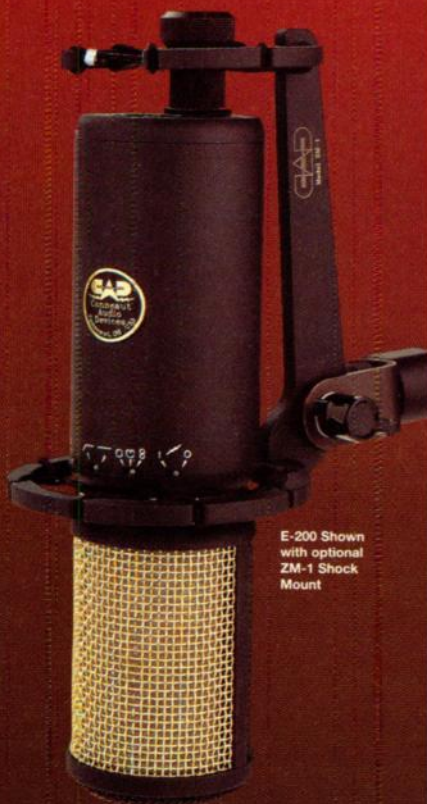
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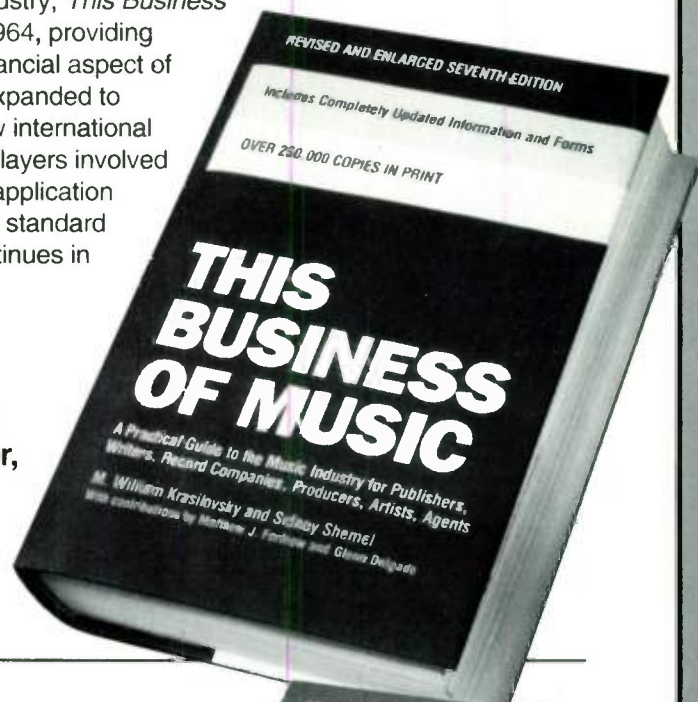
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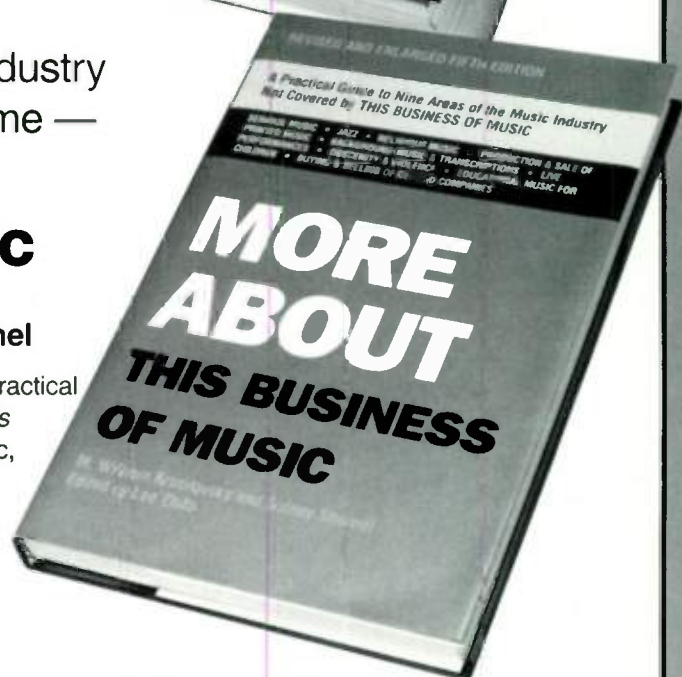
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fast forward

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by ted pine

Have you put off buying a hard disk recorder because a) they're too expensive or b) they're too hard to use? Friends, the digital audio manufacturers of the world are working

hard disk recorder (i.e., the audio isn't digitized at the input jacks of the mixer, but on the way from the mixer into the disk recorder and likewise, from the mixer to the stereo SPDIF digital output).

This actually buys you some flexibility. For example, you can mix down 8 tracks off disk with 8 new tracks from MIDI or live sources, and you can assign the 2-band para-



E-mu's Darwin makes a great editor.

hard to help you run out of excuses. A new generation of low-cost disk recorders has reached the market. Ditching the personal-computer front end that many musicians rightfully detest and replacing it with tactile front panel controls, these machines are both easy to use and affordable. For under \$5000, do you get all the whiz-bang of a full-blown Pro Tools III? No, but you will get excellent audio quality, random access editing, and perhaps even a flatter learning curve.

The Fostex DMT-8 Digital Multitracker (\$2795) is the long awaited non-linear version of the classic "personal studio" concept: multitrack recorder integrated with a small mixing console in a rugged, portable frame. Strictly speaking, the DMT-8 isn't all-digital. Rather, it is an 8x4x2 analog mixer married to an 8-track

metric EQs to the incoming signals. So if you don't have a massive number of inputs, you can use the DMT-8 as your main mixing board. Alternatively, you can bypass the mixer altogether and record straight to disk. The fixed internal hard disk is 540 MBs, which gives you about 12.5 minutes of sampling time per track at the fixed sampling rate of 44.1 kHz, enough for several songs but not *The Magic Flute*. As you'd expect from Fostex, the autolocator and MIDI Machine Control (MMC) features are excellent. You get six autolocator points for auto punch-in and looping, plus the ability to locate to measures and beats for those who use external sequencers but hate dealing with SMPTE numbers.

Vestax's new 8-track disk recorder, the HDR-8 (\$2495 w/540 MB hard drive), does include built-in digital mixing capability, with 2 digital parametric EQs, pre-EQ and post EQ volume control for each track and individual track output, pan and aux send levels. There's a stereo SPDIF I/O with both optical and RCA jacks for importing digital audio cues and sending out mixed tracks to DAT, and there are also 4 analog ins (so altogether you can record up to six tracks at a time) and a stereo analog output. But unlike the DMT-8, the HDR-8 is not designed to serve as your main board; it's simply a sub-mixer for the hard disk. Vestax doesn't supply the knobs and faders, but they have mapped the mixer controls to MIDI continuous controller values, so all parameters are addressable from your sequencer or an external MIDI fader and knob box. You can also recall up to 128 mixer set-ups on the fly from your sequencer for snapshot automation. If you change EQ settings in the course of a song, though, you'll get a pop.

Editing on the HDR-8 is playlist-based and straightforward, helped along by the ability to set 8 autolocate points for each track. 32, 44.1 and 48 kHz sampling rates are selectable; 44.1 kHz gives you around 12.5 minutes per track. The HDR-8 also offers a unique ability to pitchshift an entire song by +/- 200 cents, useful for auditioning new keys after the fact. The SS-1 SCSI expansion card (\$370) should be ready by the time you read this; ditto the SE-1 SMPTE interface card (\$370) for working with video.

If you've already got the mixing firepower you need and are looking for a straight-ahead digital recorder/editor, E-mu's new Darwin (Model 4000 is \$3195 without hard drive) offers plenty of high-performance, professional features. A 1-GB hard drive is built into model 4001 (\$3795) for around 25 minutes of recording time per track at 44.1 kHz (48 kHz is also selectable). There's also a SCSI bus on the back that allows you to cascade up to 6 additional drives, a limitation being that you can't record a project across multiple drives. Darwin provides 4 analog inputs standard, expandable to 8, as well

Fostex's DMT-8 combines hard disk recorder and analog mixer.

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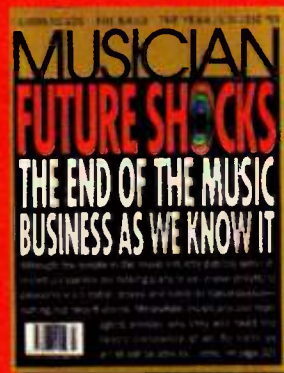
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as 8 outs and a stereo SPDIF I/O; the analog jacks are all balanced with 1/4" TRS jacks, so you may need to purchase some cables. If performance means speed in your lexicon, you'll like Darwin's editing approach. A wide backlit front panel displays a scrolling, zoomable track list. You can mark up to 40 autolocate or edit points visually or by using the jogwheel to scrub—and the scrubbing is an excellent emulation of analog reel-rocking.

Darwin is also very forgiving, with 16 levels of undo to get you out of edit hell, and a "virtual slave reel" feature that allows you to create multiple alternate versions from the same source material. Furthermore, Darwin has excellent MIDI Timecode and MIDI Machine Control implementation. MMC is an evolving protocol that many devices are finicky about, but Darwin interfaced to my trusty StudioVision sequencer in nothing flat, and worked flawlessly as both master and slave.

The Akai DR8 (\$3495 without hard drive; \$4295 with 1-GB disk) offers the widest array of features and options currently available. Like Vestax's HDR-8, the DR8 functions as both hard disk recorder and digital mixer (although you need the optional digital EQ8 board at \$550 for 3-band-per-track equalization). But the DR8 also gives you a separate analog input for each channel (there are stereo SPDIF and AES/EBU I/Os as well and an optional IB804A ADAT multichannel I/O for \$299). Thus, like Fostex's DMT-8, the DR8 can also be used as a flow-through mixer to combine hard-disk and live or MIDI tracks on the fly. You'd really want an external MIDI fader box to make this your main mixer, though. Consider Akai's own DL16 (\$1795) tactile controller made especially for the purpose. (For this you also need the \$299 IB-802M MIDI interface board.)

But you don't need a MIDI interface for snapshot automation on the DR8, because up to 99 mixer snapshots can be sequenced internally. An internal 1-GB drive provides around 25 minutes recording time per track at 44.1 kHz (32 kHz and 48 kHz are also selectable). You can also cascade external SCSI drives like the Darwin, but this requires an optional IB-801S SCSI-B board (\$299). Another

option you'll definitely appreciate if you work to picture is the IB-802T SMPTE reader/generator board (\$379). The choices might seem overwhelming, but fortunately the DR8 is quite straightforward in operation. It has more dedicated edit keys than any other model surveyed here—for example, a separate key for each of 9 autolocator points—and did I mention the excellent tape-style scrubbing yet? By the time you read this, Akai should have released the 16-track DR-16 (\$4995 w/o hard disk), which the track-hungry are well advised to check out.

Words to the wise: if you work with MIDI timecode, be aware that as of this writing, all these devices (except the Akai DR8 and the optionally SMPTE-equipped Vestax HDR-8) want to be the master timecode source in your system, not the ideal situation if you work to picture. Also, each of these machines has a finite limit as to the number of non-destructive, playlist-type edits you can make within a project. After that, you can keep going by bouncing tracks. Depending on the manufacturer, there are several more or less convenient procedures for accomplishing this. Finally, you really do need a DAT player of some sort to make the most of a digital multitrack. Since you've already paid your money to record in the digital domain, you might as well master digitally too. Moreover, most of these devices (e.g. the DMT-8, HDR-8, and DR8) back up their playlists to DAT. The Darwin is more flexible: it allows you to back up to any E-mu-recommended SCSI back-up device such as an MO or removable hard drive, each of which will work faster than a DAT. E-mu, in fact, is selling a Darwin Model 4002 (\$3995) which comes with Iomega's removable Jaz hard disk drive.

Moore's Law of computing states that chip speeds double every 18 months while prices fall. Of course, the unspoken flipside of Moore's Law is that if you wait too long, your subscription to this life will be canceled. The price/performance of hard disk recording has clearly hit a new sweet spot here and now, and if you've been dying to get in on the random access fun while you can still hit the high notes, this is as good a time as any.

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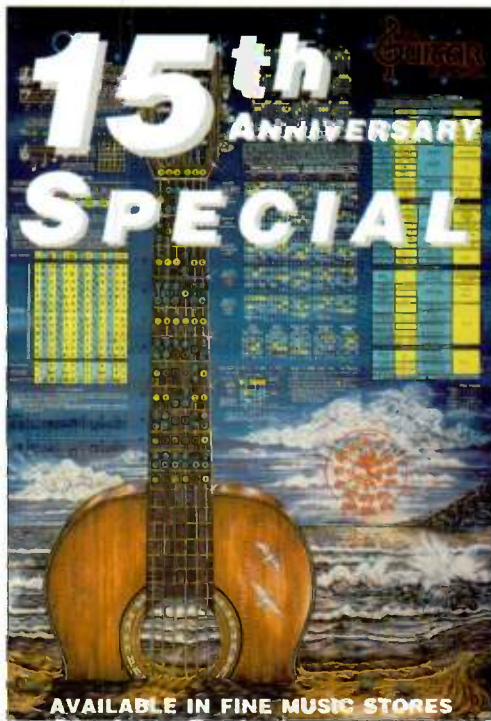
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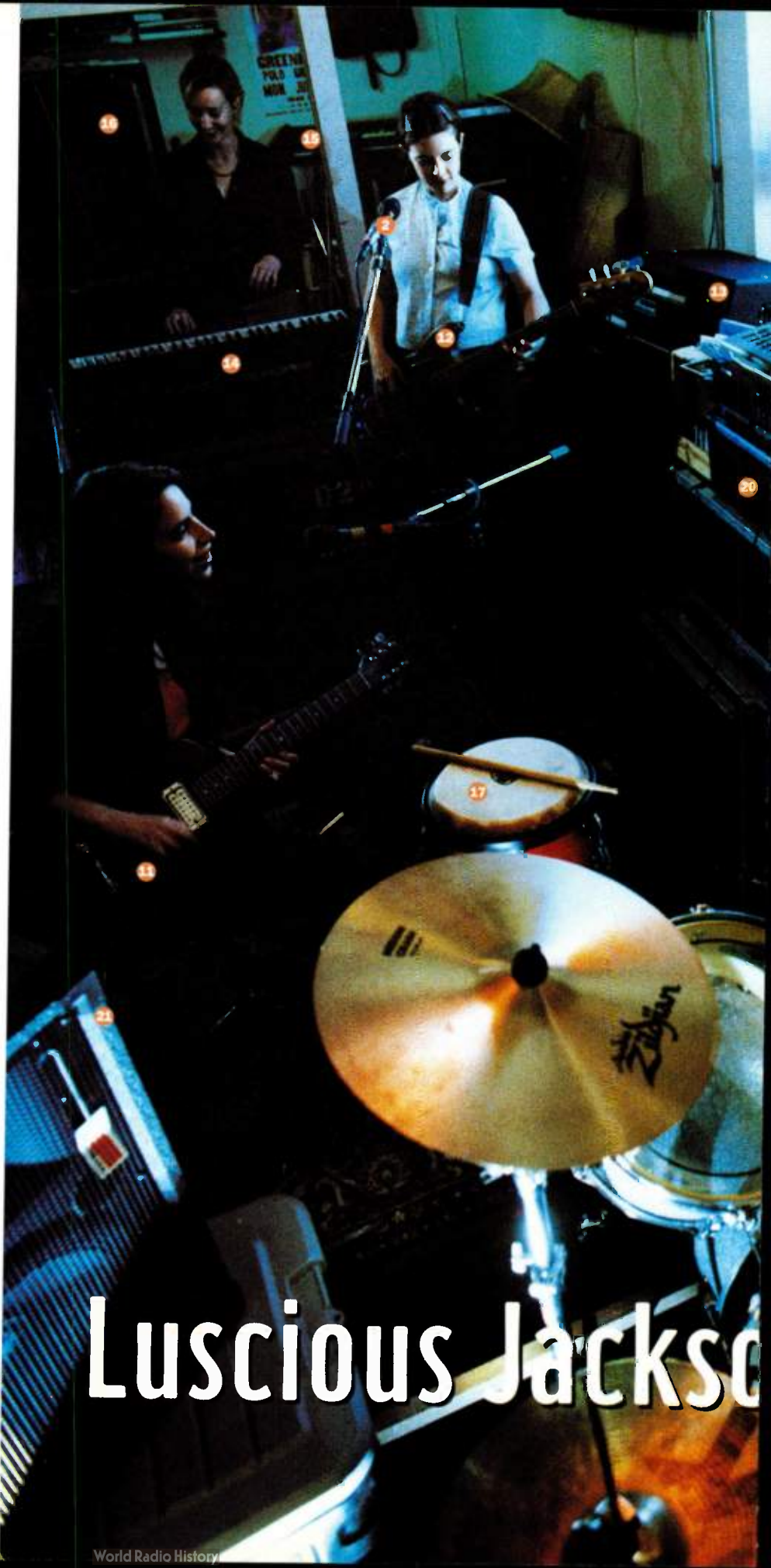
THE FIRST thing you notice upon walking into the Greenwich Village home of Luscious Jackson drummer Kate Schellenbach is that it's every New Yorker's dream loft: well-situated, spacious, high-ceilinged, flooded with light, homey, and full of character. It doesn't hurt that the place has full northern and southern views, and that it's a short walk from several subway lines.

"I've been living here since I was 13, and I got a drum kit at age 14 or so," explains the 30-year-old Schellenbach. "The room that's now the studio used to be my sister's bedroom, and the front room was my mom's. Eventually they all moved out and I got roommates. And then, when one particular roommate moved out of that middle room, it became a giant junk room, one of those where you can't even get through one inch in the door. Somebody I was playing music with at the time said, 'Why don't we clear this room out and make it a studio?'"

Twenty garbage bags later, the junk room was cleaned out and converted into a de facto rehearsal space for the various bands Kate played in—Wench and Lunachicks, to name just two—before forming Luscious Jackson four years ago with bassist Jill Cunniff, keyboardist Vivian Trimble, and guitarist/vocalist Gabby Glaser. Fresh from a year of touring that concluded with opening dates for R.E.M., Schellenbach and her bandmates took time to show *Musician* around the place, which gives new meaning to the term "studio apartment." Crammed with instruments, plastered with posters and stickers, and littered with pop-art paraphernalia, Kate's pad is exactly what you'd expect from a musician raised on a diet of rap, punk, thrash metal, rock, and pop.

Throughout the LJ's existence, the apartment has served as a creative haven where the band writes, rehearses, records, and hangs out. "It can be a little cramped, but it certainly beats the Music Building, which is disgusting, unsafe, inconvenient, and expensive," says Schellenbach, referring to New York's universally loathed rehearsal mecca.

Until recently, Luscious Jackson hadn't been able to use the studio to make anything more than hissy four-track analog demos. That changed in mid-'94, when the band pooled its equipment with Breeders member Josephine Wiggs and came up with a recording facility that rivals anyone's home setup, based around two



Luscious Jackson



n's home studio

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY STRAUSS

Alesis ADATs ④ [only one of which is pictured]. “[Last] summer,” says Kate, “Vivian and Jill recorded a side project here with Josephine called Kostars,” and Schellenbach herself cut a single with Wiggs under the name Ladies Who Lunch.

In keeping with the feel of the apartment, the studio is a rag-tag conglomeration of cheesy vintage gear, hi-tech stuff, and conventional, work-horse equipment. The band uses **Audix OM-5** ③, **OM-3XB, D-2** (for toms), and **Shure SM58** mikes for instruments and vocals, and **Realistic PZMs** for drum ambience. “Those are great,” says Kate of the PZMs, which can be purchased at Radio Shack for approximately \$70 apiece. “They pick up everything. We put one about a foot away from the kick drum, on the floor. If you put it on wood, it adds bass sounds.”

Signals flow through an **Allen & Heath GS3** 16-channel console ③, which has a split configuration that allows for monitoring 16 tape returns. The board is powered by a **Hafner** amp ③, which feeds two **Audix** monitors ③. Processing gear includes a **Lexicon Jam Man** ③, **Alesis Midiverb II** ③ and **Midiverb III** ③ units, and other inexpensive tools that Wiggs had taken out of the studio at the time of the interview. Mastering is done onto a **Sony DATman** portable DAT recorder.

But what gives Luscious Jackson its lo-fi sonic signature is not the processors, console, or storage medium they use, but rather, the colorful instruments they put into those machines. For instance, note Kate's **Ludwig Silver Sparkle Reissue** drum kit ③ with **Zildjian** cymbals ③; Glaser's **Gibson “The Paul” Deluxe** (2) ③, which plugs into **Cry Baby** wah-wah and **Electro-Harmonix Big Muff** distortion pedals, then into a **Fender Blues DeVille** amp; Cuniff's **Fender Precision Bass** ③, which she plays through **Ampeg SVT Classic** ③ amps; and Trimble's enviable keyboard setup, which consists of an **ARP** four-voice piano ③, a **Multivox MX-2000** ③, a **Micromoog**, a **Fender Rhodes**, a **Korg M1** workstation, a **Kurzweil K2000 RS** sampler, a **Power User** Syquest drive, a **Furman** power conditioner, and “a bunch of

BY PAUL VERNA

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APRIL 1996



Casios." (In the photo, she's going through a **Peavey KB-300** keyboard amp 🎸.)

Luscious Jackson also relies on such one-of-a-kind pieces as a **Univox** drum machine that is about as primitive as any device could be and still be called a machine; a **Boss DR-550 MKIII** (aka Dr. Rhythm); a **Stanton Vestax PMC**

690 DJ mixing controller; a **Latin Precision** conga 🎵, which Glaser bangs on from time to time; and miniature accordions, melodicas, and assorted percussion instruments.

Prior to the acquisition of the ADATs—which are controlled by the **LRC** remote controller 🎵—Luscious Jackson cut its demos on a

Tascam Portastudio 424 🎵, which is still very much in use. For rehearsal purposes, the band uses a **Peavey XM-4** powered mixer 🎵 and **Yamaha** speakers 🎵.

The vibe chez Kate is so conducive to creativity that producer Daniel Lanois has just decided to use the room to record Luscious Jackson's next project, slated for release later this year on Grand Royal/Capitol Records. Schellenbach reports that Lanois will cut as many of the basic tracks as possible at her place, perhaps overdubbing or mixing elsewhere.

Needless to say, Schellenbach's apartment is not a study in "proper" acoustics. The extent of the sound treatment is a foam panel, some cork-board, rugs, and so much gear that sound waves can't travel more than a couple of feet before colliding into something. "It is the city, and you do get outside sounds, but we all kind of like that," says Kate. "It captures where you are." 🎵

DIGITAL PIANOS

[cont'd from page 70] the useful addition of performance memories for storing patch, effects, and MIDI data. For those who wince at such a price tag, the Yamaha P-300 (\$3995) and P-150 (\$2295) have much the same sound generating features but in a more conservative setting. Both offer a full 88-note weighted-action keyboard and performance memories (32 for the 300 and 24 for the 150), and so can double as a quality controller keyboard if need be.

The main difference between the above instruments and the hundreds of home digital pianos is one of styling, specifically the casing. All home digital pianos also come with some form of built-in amplification. Models with greater appeal to the working musician, through tones or MIDI capabilities, include the Technics PX-207 (\$6295), Korg's C-505 (\$2900), the CA-840 (\$4500) from long-serving acoustic piano specialists Kawai, and a brand-new range from Baldwin, spearheaded by the Pianovelle RP2 (\$4490). To end on a really exciting note, it seems likely that the seminal Rhodes electric piano is poised to go into limited manufacture once again, with the now-octogenarian Mr. Harold Rhodes back in the driving seat. No prices, no more details. But this information is from the man himself, so he should know. 🎵

MUSICIAN MAGAZINE'S

1996 BEST UNSIGNED BAND COMPETITION

SEMI-FINALISTS

ROUND I

All the entries, so many entries . . . Well, we're a third of the way through all of the tapes you sent us, and we're pleased to announce the first round of semi-finalists. This is just the tip of the iceberg, mind you. They are in no particular order, nor do they reflect how early or late we received the entry. What this means is if you don't see your band listed below, you should keep your eyes on the next couple of issues of *Musician* for more semi-finalist announcements. In the meantime, how about a hearty round for . . .

Great Beige, IL
Culture Shock, SC
Verbal Threat, VA
Joe Root Band, APO
My Reality, CT
Fervor, MI
Un X Pected, MS
Shades, NY
Naked Aggression, OR
Mulligans Stew, MO
Droogz, VA
Mommi I'm Scared, MD
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Cyberputz, IL
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Legs Akimbo, CT
Urban Twang, IL
Backwash, NY
The Beat Prophets, TN
The Penny Dreadfuls, MA
The Strangers, NJ
Perpetual Change, KS
Mary Joy, NY
Damian Cremisio Band, SC
The Findells, VA

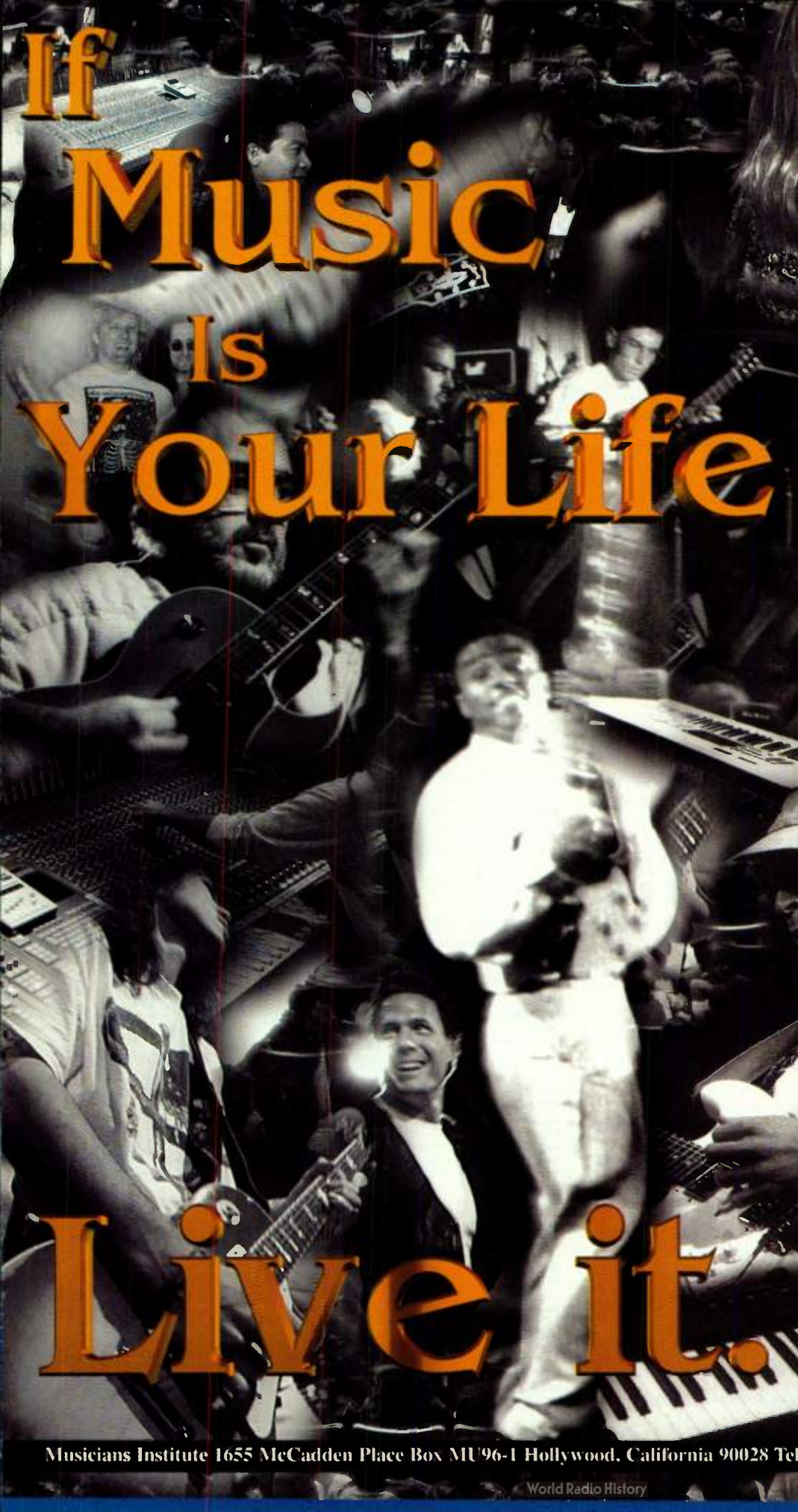
The Slick Boys, IL
Straw Horse, SC
Fridays Past, CA
First Circle, IL
Ja-Hfu, OH
HD Loudertrain, CA
Entrain, MA
Sick, CO
The Nooners, AL
Bud Collins, CT
Sunflower, CT
Loose Caboose, MA
Stage, NY
Rupdupa, PA
Blush, NY
The Racketeers, WA
River Chicken, FL
Heavens To Murgatroid, NH
Out of Control R&B Band, NY
Cream of Weegee, CA
Degen Mattingly, NY
The Sky Blues, MA
Unique Touch, USVI
Hazel Virtue, GA
The B Natural Band, VA

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Jazz for the People

Cassandra Wilson

New Moon Daughter
(Blue Note)

When Cassandra Wilson, rediscovering Joni Mitchell and discovering Robert Johnson, forsook the avant-garde jazz scene for the larger world, the usual gang of purist critics whined that she'd sold out. Personal motivation is a tangled affair, and you could argue about why Wilson changed styles until you were blue in the face; the point is, her 1994 commercial breakthrough, *Blue Light Til Dawn*, was a wonderful album, a rare instance of an artist increasing her accessibility and her artistry at the same time. Going pop didn't screw Cassandra Wilson up, and neither has staying pop: *New Moon Daughter*, cut from the same cloth as *Blue Light*, is at least as satisfying.

Between them, Wilson and producer Craig Street know most of New York's jazz and "post-jazz" avant-garde, so you get interesting combinations here—some of the world's cleverest musical oddballs putting their stamp on pop standards and accessible new tunes. At its best, this music works on two levels: The quarter-million or so Triple-A radio and lite-jazz fans who bought *Blue Light Til Dawn* will like *New Moon Daughter* because they recognize the songs ("I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "Harvest Moon," "Strange Fruit") and find the folksy instrumentation unthreatening; listeners pursuing subtler rewards can ponder the oblique relationship between Graham Haynes' cornet obbligato and the melody of "Strange Fruit," or the bizarre sonics of Butch Morris' hand-in-bell corner on "Love Is Blindness" or enjoy Wilson's fantastic pitch, the way this singer leaps out of nowhere to nail a wide interval or unerringly navigates a difficult melody.

Wilson's Southernness (she comes from Jackson, Mississippi) is a big part of her music; no matter how far out she takes a scatted vocal, her voice, and the motion backing it, stay down-home and warm. On "Harvest Moon," her low register swaddles your ear in a blanket of friendly sexiness. She puts new life into "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"—not that it needed it, just that Wilson finds a whole new way to make Hank Williams feel forlorn. "Last Train to Clarksville" is more problematic; with her passion and virtuoso scat singing, Wilson reads more into the song than is actually there, and the only way to enjoy it is to forget the original. Wilson is already a good songwriter (the only quasi-throwaway of her six originals is "Memphis"); with work she could become a memorable one. And the musical settings Street conjures, and allows the musicians to conjure, show—again—that he is one of the smartest, most imaginative new producers working.

The only negative I can think of is this: Mainstream jazz singing, the erstwhile realm of Ella, Carmen and Sarah, is in pretty lousy shape these days, and while Wilson was never exactly mainstream, she could've extended that lineage, could've given straight-ahead jazz musicians a real voice to accompany. But I doubt if that thought gives Wilson pause. Meanwhile, *New Moon Daughter* will continue to win her the big audience she deserves.—**Tony Scherman**

Iggy Pop *Naughty Little Doggy* (Virgin)

One look at the lines which mark nearly 50-year-old punk-rock icon Jimmy Osterberg's well-worn face will tell you that rock 'n' roll is not aging gracefully. But so will the still-potent *busso* snarl and world-weary *profundo* croon he alternates to great effect on his new album. After all, Iggy Pop has nothing to do with conventional notions of beauty. The World's Most Forgotten Boy has always been about the unbridled id in pursuit of animal pleasure. Just last Labor Day, the Igster turned the staid Rock & Roll Hall of Fame concert in Cleveland into his own bid for rockin' immortality, as he made explicit the sodomite connection between "I Wanna Be Your Dog" and "Back Door Man."

Naughty Little Doggy finds the Ig returning to that canine fixation, but with a puppy-like eagerness to please that's closer to the Don Was-produced *Brick By Brick* than to '93's angrily socio-political *American Caesar*. Still far from mellow, the record celebrates his own survival and career longevity with warmth and confi-

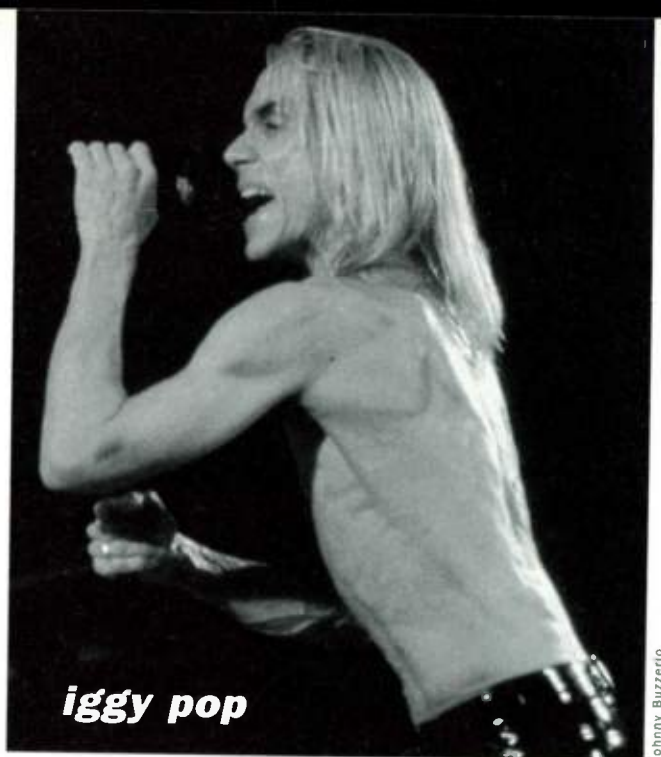
dence. Most of the songs here are paens to positivism, like the Stooges-styled psychedelic grunge of "Keep On Believing" and the gnarled '70s punk-rock of "Innocent World." Vintage three-chord thrashers like "Knucklehead," a self-deprecating rocker that takes its chorus from the Sex Pistols' version of "(I'm Not Your) Stepping Stone," hark back to the Ig's early influences—Midwestern pre-punk *Nuggets* bands like the Outsiders. A couple of atmospheric epics also recall his one-time coronation as the next Jim Morrison, including "Look Away"—a surprisingly confessional narrative of addiction and rebirth.

Maybe that's what separates Iggy Pop from all the punk pretenders: When he howls "I've given up my soul... to belong here," you realize the cost he's paid for craving acceptance his whole life. After all these years, he still wants to be our dog.—**Roy Trakin**

Steve Earle *I Feel Alright* (Warner Bros.)

To an almost uncomfortable degree, *I Feel Alright* smacks of vendetta—message music from an angry man incarcerated by an unforgiving system, now free, wiser, but still lashing out at foes (and society in general) like a venomous old sidewinder. Unlike the gentle acoustic persona of last year's hushed *Train a Comin'*, there's a grim undercurrent to Earle's patented bad-hoy drawl as he swaggers through these 12 dour Canterbury tales; his harp may wail, his trusty 6-string might chime, but keep your party hats in the drawer.

The title track taps into that foreboding. A simple acoustic strum turns sinister with whip-crack punctua-



Johnny Buzzerio

Satie Takes E: Gavin Friday on *Shag Tobacco*

GAVIN FRIDAY'S THIRD solo album, *Shag Tobacco* (Island), is his most high-tech. The ex-Virgin Prunes leader is still as dramatic and angst-ridden as ever, but this time the songs he's cowritten with longtime collaborator Maurice Scozer are awash in samples and beats, primed for the dancefloor. "We could have done the songs all-acoustic," Friday says. "That's how we wrote them. But it's easy for us to do that. You've got to keep challenging yourself."

Challenge came in the form of co-producer Tim Simenon, the man behind British club sensation Bomb the Bass. "He changed our lives, and we changed his," Gavin chuckles. "We told him, 'This is a cello.' 'This is a woodwind.' 'This is a white singer who doesn't say 'Yo!'" And in return, he showed us what a genius-of-the-mixer is. Some people expected, since Tim was involved, there'd be these fast techno rhythms. But no. We needed a Gavin and Maurice rhythm, slower and more sexy."

One of the album's standout tracks, "Angel,"



was born out of studio improvisation. "Maurice had a bassline he liked, and he was playing it during some down time. Tim became obsessed with it, and he started fucking around with some rhythms

to match it. Then I said to Maurice, 'What would happen if Erik Satie took Ecstasy and played on this tune?' So we improvised this ethereal high stuff over this mother bassline and said, 'That's it.' That's why the winds are so minimal, because I didn't want to get in the way of the melody I'd spontaneously come up with."

Friday estimates that *Shag Tobacco* took about 12 weeks to record and mix; besides "Angel," the album was 70 percent written before entering the studio. The song completed most quickly, a warped cover of T. Rex's "The Slider," was wrapped in a day. Another track, the thundering "Little Black Dress," took forever to finish. The problem is we like middle eights, and we kept adding more parts. Also, at one point I wanted it to sound like it would if the girl in the little black dress was on the boat with James Bond; you know how it is at the end of those movies. It was tough making that work. Tough perhaps, but the final result—Friday calls it "science fiction cabaret"—is easy to enjoy.—**Mac Randall**

tion and Earle's muttered invectives: "Now some of you would live through me and lock me up and throw away the key . . ." Conspicuously absent is the self-deprecating humor that colored earlier down-and-out anthems like "Copperhead Road" and "Johnny Come Lately." The sleazy hero of his "Unrepentant"—an ornery electric rocker—winds up "standing at Hell's door/With a bad attitude and a .44." Meeting Beelzebub, he doesn't hesitate to challenge him. And when Earle hisses, deep in the steely mix of "Cocaine Cannot Kill My Pain," "I guess you'd best leave me alone/At least until these blues are gone," it doesn't sound like he's kidding around.

But Earle—one of country/rock's first hybrids—still has a fluid way with a pop-twanging hook that slaps most of his material across. The brassy, booming arrangements of "Billy and Bonnie," "More Than I Can Do," and "You're Still Standin' There" (a duet with Lucinda Williams) clamber out of their own lyrical darkness to show the singer's smiling, optimistic side, as if life and its attendant pitfalls hadn't hardened him at all. Overall though, *I Feel Alright* is the equivalent of Paddy Chayefsky's screaming *Network* mantra—"I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!" Finding out exactly who Earle is mad as hell at would probably spoil its wicked chill.—Tom Lanham

Lou Reed *Set The Twilight Reeling* (Warner Bros.)

After a self-described trilogy which included a love/hate valentine to his hometown ('89's *New York*) and two records mourning the dead ('90's *Songs For Drella*, and '92's *Magic & Loss*), Lou Reed's new album finds him happy and in love—with multimedia artist Laurie Anderson, no less. "I've met a woman with a thousand faces/And I want to make her my wife," he sings in "Trade In," while declaring on the title track that "A new self is borne . . . the other self dead/I accept the new found man and set the twilight reeling." Ah, romance.

Of course, we've heard this sort of thing from Lou before, as on '84's *New Sensations*, where he sang of the pleasures of his home basketball court in the Jersey suburbs, among other domestic joys. *Set The Twilight Reeling* has a similarly earnest, song-based feel, as Reed, backed by long-time bassist Fernando Saunders and drummer Tony "Thunder" Smith, plays most of the guitars. The sound ranges from the guttural gargle of "Egg Cream" (a paean to "U-Bet's chocolate syrup, seltzer water mixed with milk") to the psychedelic rave of "Riptide," a biting farewell to his ex that still manages a few dollops of compassion. In the Van-the-Man-like, scat-sung, horn-punctuated "NYC Man," the lustfully euphemistic "Hookywooky" and his celebration of a fellow artist on "Adventurer," rock's original tough guy even admits to

shockingly human emotions like vulnerability, jealousy and need.

He's still far from mellow. Reed bares his fangs on an anti-Republican diatribe, "Sex With Your Parents," glibly accusing "Rush Rambo" and Bob Dole of being "motherfuckers" (literally), while "Finish Line," a tribute to late Velvet guitarist Sterling Morrison, traces a familiar path from death to sex to resurrection to enlightenment: "First came fire/then came light/then came feeling/then came sight." And then, the perfect chocolate egg cream.—Roy Trakin

Idaho *Three Sheets to the Wind* (Caroline)

From the way Idaho's frontman Jeff Martin sings, you'd think he'd just had a good cry before stepping to the microphone. His foggy baritone quivers, breaks, and strains for high notes as he slurs his somber lyrics. "I watch the sun go out" is the first line of "Shame," joining other choice phrases like "Thirty years are gone" and "Late December is what I'm feeling." Even when the band cranks the amps and blasts off, as on "Catapult" or "Pomegranate Bleeding," they sound deeply unhappy.

Why doesn't all this weepiness get annoying? Partly due to Martin's sincerity, but mainly because of his musical savvy. Writing on a four-string guitar in a variety of odd tunings, he conjures dancing melodies that always feature at least one clever twist. He's also got a brilliant chordal sense, favoring close intervals like major and minor seconds and juxtaposing chords in surprising ways. Take the beginning of "Get You Back"—D♭-maj7♭5-Absus2-B♭maj9; not the most common chords, certainly not a standard progression. Or check out the album's centerpiece, "No One's Watching," as Martin and guitarist Dan Seta refrain from playing full chords

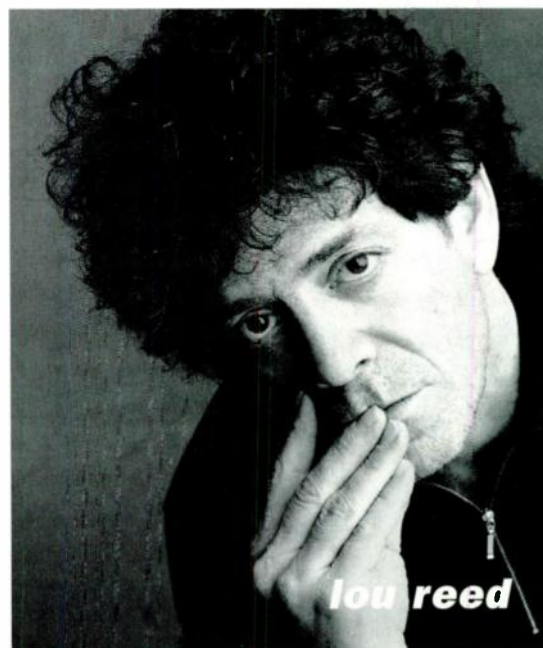


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for nearly the whole song, choosing instead to establish an F# drone. Meanwhile, Terrence Borden's bass traces around the key signature, starting on the fifth, resting tantalizingly on the third, taking four full measures before finally joining the guitarists. It's a short meeting, though, and Borden's soon off again on his own harmonic path.

Fine as Idaho's previous two albums were, *Three Sheets to the Wind* sounds warmer, more expansive. Maybe it's because there's a real group involved (in the past, Martin pretty much was the band). Whatever the reason, songs like "Stare at the Sky" and "A Sound Awake" boast a grandeur only hinted at before. Music doesn't come much sadder than this, or much prettier.—Mac Randall

Brian Stevens *Prettier Than You* (QDivision)

Dan Baird *Buffalo Nickel* (American)

News flash: Two retro enthusiasts from two great American bands (now defunct) have just come out with two groovy albums.

Of course, the reference points of ex-Cavedog Brian Stevens and ex-Georgia Satellite Dan Baird aren't quite the same. For his inspiration, Stevens leans heavily on music dating from the seventh decade of the 20th century, made principally by individuals and groups hailing from a certain nation known as Great Britain. Stevens' high, nasal voice is often strikingly similar to that of one John Winston Lennon,



Brian Stevens

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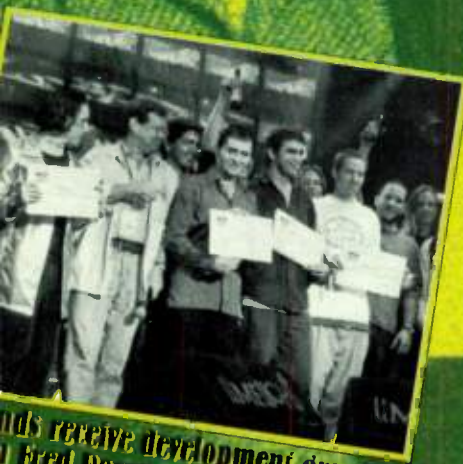


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while his sophisticated melodies tend more to suggest the influence of colleague James Paul McCartney. The contorted central riff of "Mixed-up," the close vocal harmonies of "The Piper" and the Harrisonian (or is it McGuinnian?) 12-string on "Disillusioned Days" are all standouts. But it's guest star Dave Gregory, on leave from XTC, who steals the show here. His guitar work, alternately fluid and stinging, leads one to wonder yet again why such a phenomenal player is so overlooked. Fans of the Cavedogs, who put out two marvelous albums on Capitol in the early '90s, may occasionally miss the dirty guitar and harder-rocking contributions of Todd Spahr (whose current project, the Gravy, is as yet unsigned but worth keeping an ear out for). Still, smart pop like this is always welcome.

It would be easy to say that while Brian Stevens wants to join the Beatles, Dan Baird prefers membership

Cowboy Junkies

Lay It Down
(Geffen)

Now they're on Geffen, a.k.a. home of the hits, and John Keane, who helped bring R.E.M. to the people, provides production assistance. So have the Cowboy Junkies made a crass bid for commercial success on *Lay It Down*? Nope. Defiantly themselves, Margo Timmins and company continue to craft the eerily hushed folk-rock that sounds so right late at night and inspires goosebumps in the daytime. This elegantly morose album won't impress louts who mistake the band's muted angst for blandness, but connoisseurs of Timmins' gorgeous voice will be enthralled one more time.

Brother Michael Timmins' catchy tunes spin an elaborate web of neurotic impulses, though he rarely forgets the simple desires sparking the action. Margo's re-

Lay It Down is stylishly reassuring, covering familiar ground with enough grace and musical wit to excuse the lack of surprises. Let others chart unexplored territory: Disdaining artistic growth, these folks have quietly achieved a sorrowful sort of perfection.—*Jon Young*

Eric Dolphy

The Complete Prestige Recordings
(Prestige)

If commercial success was the measure of a jazz musician's career, Eric Dolphy would be but a footnote in that music's history. Using a yardstick that measures originality and innovation, technical skill and enduring influence, Dolphy ranks as one of jazz's towering figures, despite a tragically abridged career. A virtuoso on alto sax, flute and bass clarinet (an instrument he singlehandedly established as a jazz vehicle), the Los Angeles native bridged successive waves of jazz modernism, from 1940s' bebop to the 1960s' avant-garde.

The nine CDs contained in this Fantasy box set were recorded in a 17-month burst between April 1960 and September 1961. Besides the 18 records these comprise, covering his own ground-breaking sessions and his work as a sideman (with Oliver Nelson, Eddie "Lock-jaw" Davis, Ken McIntyre, Mal Waldron and Ron Carter), Dolphy was also recording with Charles Mingus and John Coltrane—the latter listed him as George Lane on *Olé* for contractual reasons.

Time has not lessened the impact of his sound. From his debut as a leader on the aptly named *Outward Bound*, featuring a tentative Freddie Hubbard, Dolphy had clearly left behind his sweet sound in the Chico Hamilton Quintet for an impassioned, volatile improvisational style, full of angular twists and sudden register leaps. The heart of this collection is the legendary Five Spot recordings, where Dolphy was surrounded by like-minded visionaries Mal Waldron, Richard Davis, Ed Blackwell and Booker Little; these two discs of incandescent music remain a jazz benchmark.

Though Dolphy recorded a number of classic sessions after leaving Prestige, mostly with Mingus but occasionally under his own name, his inability to obtain regular work led him back to Europe, where he died of insulin shock in 1964 at age 36. But even if his reputation solely depended on the Prestige recordings, Dolphy's place in the jazz firmament would be assured.—*Andrew Gilbert*

Society of Soul

Brainchild
(LaFace/Arista)

If you're like me, you often scratch your head over the question of black pop music's essence. Is it in the classic-pop leanings of Motown or the soppy biscuits soul of Stax/Volt? In the radio-ready triumphs of the Commodores or in the sprawling glory of Parliament-Funkadelic? The answer, obviously, contains all of that—which is why, despite its reputation as a mainstream-pop soul factory, LaFace Records makes sure folks like Society of Soul get their say.

Society of Soul is, for all intents and purposes, Organized Noise, the production team that worked on Outkast's "Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik," TLC's "Waterfalls" single, and, most recently, Goodie MoB's



Guzman

cowboy junkies

in the Stones. But that would be wrong. As much as some songs on *Buffalo Nickel* (the rollicking "Woke Up Jake," in particular) speak to a nearly ungovernable desire to be Keith Richards, other tracks suggest equally strongly the wish to be Lowell George or Neil Young. True, Baird's raspy attempts at Youngisms on "Younger Face" come out sounding like a more vinegary Tom Petty, but the spirit of Neil is present, and it sounds great in any case. An ultra-heavy cover of "Hush" makes plain a previously unimagined debt to Deep Purple, and Baird goes one better by dragging in the song's original author, the legendary Joe South, to sing backup. But enough references already. What really matters is that Baird and producer/guitarist/keyboardist Brendan O'Brien have cooked up another fantastic bunch of tunes, full of raunchy guitars, backbeating drums and pungent lyrics. It's guaranteed to get your body movin' after you've exercised your brain with *Prettier Than You*.—*Mac Randall*

signed calm suits the creeping dread of "Lonely Sinking Feeling," where a relationship crumbles with the inevitability of death, while the livelier "Come Calling," presented in His and Hers versions, charts a gulf between estranged lovers, holding no hope of relief. Not every interlude is a bummer. "Hold on to Me" and "Angel Mine" offer tender expressions of unqualified devotion. Still, the pitiful closing track "Now I Know" ("... what it means to be broken") better captures the weary dismay that dominates the proceedings.

A doggedly conservative performer, Margo only sings notes that suit her poised demeanor. Maybe she belts out "Piece of My Heart" in private, but not here. (A jarring use of the f-word in "Just Want to See" and the slurred faux-hipster delivery of "A Common Disaster" constitute token stabs at a raunchier persona.) Although Ms. T's understated charisma tends to overshadow her capable bandmates, Michael's crisp guitar chords and edgy fills project an inviting, luminous warmth.

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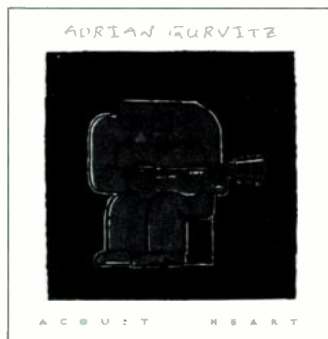


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DISC MAKERS

"Soul Food"; in other words, they're in-house funksters. Music history is filled with examples of house artists that put together solid work under their own name, and while Society is no Booker T. and the MGs, they display enough chops, flair, and vision to make liver pudding out of their hip-hop soul competitors.

They have more to say, first off; Big Rube's KRS-One-influenced ruminations and eyes-on-the-prize anthems like the radio-ready "Pushin'" and "Things Can Only Get Better" reveal concerns beyond a mere good time. But most of the time, this crew brings the knowledge disguised as comfortable, head-bobbing, vocal harmony-sweetened grooves—the kind of stuff you play cards to at a barbecue or hang out with under a shade tree. "Black Mermaid" is a glossy head trip that sounds like a lost track from *Motor-Booty Affair*, while the vocals on "Things Can Get Better" and "Peaches and Herb" are right out of the Curtis Mayfield songbook. Along with these digested influences (lead singer Sleepy Brown's father played for Brick, which explains a lot), Society brings its own flavor to the mix—from Ray's tight bass/drum/keyboards tracks to vocalist Espranza's gospel-weighted vocals. If the centers of urban black culture are shifting from the north to the south (most notably to Atlanta, where it seems everybody and their mama hangs out), then *Brainchild* is about as warm a welcome home as you can expect. Pass the potato pie, please.—Tony Green

shorts

Various Artists

It's Hard to Believe It:

The Amazing World of Joe Meek
(Razor & Tie)

A genius and crackpot rolled into one, maverick producer Joe Meek cut a slew of strange, fascinating pop singles at his homemade London studio during the early and mid-'60s. He pioneered the use of distortion, sound effects and virtually every other trick in the book, often riding roughshod over performers and material. Highlights of this overdue compilation include his two American hits, the Honeycombs' thumping "Have I the Right" and the heavenly Tornados instrumental "Telstar," which epitomizes the intriguing blend of cheesy and profound heard in Meek's best work. The pinnacle, though, may be John Leyton's "Johnny Remember Me," an absurdly morbid lament that lingers in the subconscious like a sad, unsettling dream. Listen and marvel.—Jon Young

Blinker the Star

Blinker the Star

(Treat and Release)

There's something fascinating about one-man-band albums; even if they aren't technically perfect, they allow you to hear an artist's concept undiluted by middlemen. The debut of Jordon Zadorozny, a.k.a. Blinker the Star, is a case in point: murky, messy, often self-indulgent, yet strangely affecting. "J-Bird (Part 2)" starts things off with a ferocious burst of low-fi guitars and cacophonous drums, then adds a Cobain-worthy

melody to the fray. It's hard to hear what Jordon's yelling at us—something about being throttled to sleep, I think—but whatever, it couldn't be half as surprising as the bizarre percussion jam tacked on at the end. The rest of the album doesn't quite match the drive of "J-Bird," but it comes pretty close. These crude recordings are nearly two years old; let's hope for more soon. (Distributed by I.L.S., 825 8th Ave., New York, NY 10019.)—Mac Randall

Millennium

A Civilised Word

(CNR Music)

Jo Bogaert (Technotronic)'s latest project is a lush, highly ambient but largely danceable collaboration with two very different singers. Blissphemy (yes, that's right) has a gritty, soulful style that's well suited to groove-heavy tracks like "Too Much Heaven" and "Prey," but on the more delicate "Kill Me Softly," his delivery grates. The three cuts featuring English leftist hermit Robert Wyatt, on the other hand, are a success; besides featuring his fragile, reedy voice and jazz-inflected melodies, they bear the distinctive traces of his lyrical involvement. "Another Great Victory" takes on war-mongering world leaders, while the brilliant "Erupt/Peru" is full of trenchant quips such as "Bankers of the world, unite." But it's the non-political "Igor Mortis," with its Beckettian evocation of approaching decay and death, that's most touching. All this and Michael Brook on guitar too.—Mac Randall

Richard Davies

There's Never Been A Crowd Like This

(Flydaddy)

As the second member of Cardinal to leave the nest (the first being Eric Matthews), Richard Davies stays close to form on his debut: sparse, purposeful orchestrations, wordy lyrics and '60s-styled pop melodies. The attention to detail here is quite impressive; the songs are full of high harmonies and pristinely crafted arrangements. Mastering every chord change in your Bee Gees, Beatles and Bacharach record collection doesn't guarantee equal results, but when Davis gets it right, as on "Sign Up Maybe for Being," he comes closer to the Godhead than Noel Gallagher can imagine. Infused with Mellotron, thunderous timpani and insistent acoustic strumming, the song is an irresistible blend of melodic urgency and classic pop structure. What a crowd, what a crowd.—Ken Micallef

Paul Butterfield Blues Band

The Original Lost Elektra Sessions

(Rhino)

This group's self-titled debut and follow-up, *East-West*, literally changed people's lives in the mid-'60s, turning both hippies and nerds onto blues masters. The mix of authoritative, industrial-strength Chicago blues and jazz experimentation set a standard that has yet to be matched. Producer Paul Rothchild's last project before passing away last year was to remix and master the 1964 demos that led to that auspicious debut, featuring guitar hero Mike Bloomfield and the bandleader/harpist, both now also deceased. Hairsplitting aside—

such as Bloomfield, a new addition at the time, being mixed louder here than on the early albums, and some annoying cymbal sizzle—this is magical stuff, with Butterfield distinguishing himself as one of the greatest blues singers and a true original on harmonica.—**Dan Forte**

Terry Adams

Terrible
(New World)

Terry Adams has been surfing the fringes of American music for years stretched into decades, mostly through the trusty vehicle of the legendary NRBQ. For his first "jazz" project (by the equation which mates *instrumental* with jazz), Adams inducted a cast of able pals, including his Q-mates, John Sebastian, and trombonist Roswell Rudd, who slinks neatly over the rubbery turf of "Hilda," with bassist Greg Cohen and drummer Bobby Previte. Adams is not one to disguise or deny the influence of heroes Thelouious Monk ("dog"), and Sun Ra ("Le Sony'R," featuring Arkestra man Marshall Allen). Other memorable nuggets here include a piano trio version of the lovely ballad "Yes, Yes, Yes" and a tender-ethereal solo, "Distant Instant." Adams smirks out a vocal on "These Blues," from the *Short Cuts* soundtrack, and sculpts cryptic miniatures whenever he plays a solo. If this is terrible, bring on more terrible.—**Josef Woodard**

Don Pullen's African-Brazilian Connection

Sacred Common Ground
(Blue Note)

The virtuoso pianist's much-heralded collaboration with the Chief Cliff Singers takes on an extra poignancy because of his death last April, but it's Pullen's power of invention that drives this date. The integration of Native American chants and bump 'n' grind blues motifs links the sacred and secular, and its rousing realization creates an exotica void of oddity. Credit Pullen's romantic streak, which for the last 20 years has helped turn eruptions into prayers. Even his most frenzied moments, like "Message In Smoke," have a way of vivifying gospel joy or utopian wishes. And when Pullen waxes wistful, as on "Common Ground," a deeper elegy is hard to imagine.—**Jim Macnie**

Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys

1971-1973
(Rebel)

Somewhere in these 96 tunes Stanley plays the first song his mom ever taught him, "Shout Little Lullie." But his heart belongs to daddy; not his real pa, but the one that holds the heavenly keys. The holy rolling that takes place in this four-disc box set is some of the most prickly and prayerful music you'll ever come across. "Stand still Moses and see salvation work, for I am the Lord thy God," Stanley sings with a scary authority. But that doesn't mean innovation was condemned. Southern a cappella harmonies are reintroduced to the genre with the shimmering "Bright Morning Star," while the '70s incarnation of the Clinch Mountain Boys—which included Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whit-

ley—helped him drive the nails briskly. If Bill Monroe is the bluegrass deity, then Stanley is surely a key apostle.—**Jim Macnie**

Kenny Werner

Kenny Werner Trio
Standards:
Live at Visiones
(Concord)

It's a record that resubstantiates that hoary "sound of surprise" cliché often in the air around jazz. When you think they're going to zig, they zag. So all the recognizable tunes—"Soul Eyes," "There Will Never Be Another You," "Blue In Green"—have pliable character. Bassist Raulo Harris and drummer Tom Rainey have been with the pianist for years, so it's minutiae they're concerned with; drift away for a sec, and they've turned a stomp into a waltz. Easily one of the most adventurous mainstream trio dates of 1995.—**Jim Macnie**

Jackson Browne



Steve Legari

Looking East
(Elektra)

After 24 years recording, one thing is clear about Jackson Browne: Writing introspectively (as on his '76 classic *The Pretender*), he always hits the emotional target; when he hops on a political soapbox, his songs fall short. *Looking East*, like several recent efforts, is a 50/50 deal. Social commentary side: the flaccid reggae of "It Is One," the boy-am-I-mad-about-things title track, and a tired Don Henley-ish "Information Wars." Pleasant man-

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Ministry

Fifth Pig

(Warner Bros.)

For all the throat-straining vocals and mega-distorted guitar, what makes this Ministry album seem heavier than metal is the lumbering, animal menace of the rhythm section: a sound that puts the band's industrial era firmly in the past. Granted, Al Jourgensen's taste tends less toward trash and burn than to slow-churning riffs redolent of classic Black Sabbath, so there's little chance the average headbanger will mistake this for the new Metallica disc. But the difference between Ministry and most modern metal isn't just a matter of pacing. Some songs, like "Lava" and "Dead Guy," are so rhythmic-centered they seem almost funky; others, like "Reload," or the creaking, dissonant "Brick Windows," perlay their



clockwork drumming and repetitious riffs into early hypnotic noise. By building each track from the bottom up, Ministry adds a measure of humanity to the music without ever compromising its in-your-face aggression.

Original Soundtrack

Dead Man Walking

(Columbia)

Though it's packaged like any other star-heavy soundtrack collection, this one is really a 12-song meditation on justice, prison and the death penalty. Though it's easy to empathize with the dread of the condemned man in Bruce Springsteen's "Dead Man Walkin'," he makes a less compelling argument against capital punishment than Steve Earle does in "Ellis Unit One," which puts us in the shoes of a guard who feels his own humanity draining with each execution he works. Most of the artists take a stripped-down approach, but not always—note the light industrial pulse of Suzanne Vega's "Woman on the Tier," the clanking blues of Tom Waits' "Walk Away," and the Middle Eastern textures of Eddie Vedder's collaborations with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Tommy Keene

Ten Years After

(Matador)

A decade after Keene made his major-label debut, we finally get the album he should have made. "If You're Getting Married Tonight" shows that his balladry has never been better, but it's really the album's sound that makes all the difference. Simply put, it comes across exactly like Keene does on stage—raucous and impassioned, power pop pumped to 11—which gives songs like "We Started All Over Again" the power they need without making them seem overstuffed.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook

Night Song

(Real World)

Though his voice has been used by everyone from Peter Dinklage to Trent Reznor, Khan has never really rocked the way he does here. It's tempting to lay credit with guitarist Brook, but the arrangements here really aren't all that Westernized. Rather, it's the way Khan sings that has changed; instead of allowing his virtuosic vocal improvisations to unfurl as freely as on his traditional recordings, here his ornamentation underscores the music's rhythmic flow, playing off the drums and synth pulse as vividly as any pop star. Not that any actual pop star would deliver something as transcendently beautiful as "Night Song" or "Intoxicated," of course.

Various Artists

The Songs of West Side Story

(RCA Victor)

Let's be honest—if you're amused by the thought of Little Richard singing "I Feel Pretty," it's mainly because you don't expect him to do it, er, straight. So when he gives the tune a respectable, Fats Domino-ish rendition, of reason to be disappointed. Ditto Brian Setzer's Fonzie-style take on "Jet Song," Aretha Franklin's blowsy "Somewhere," or anything else here.

Whipping Boy

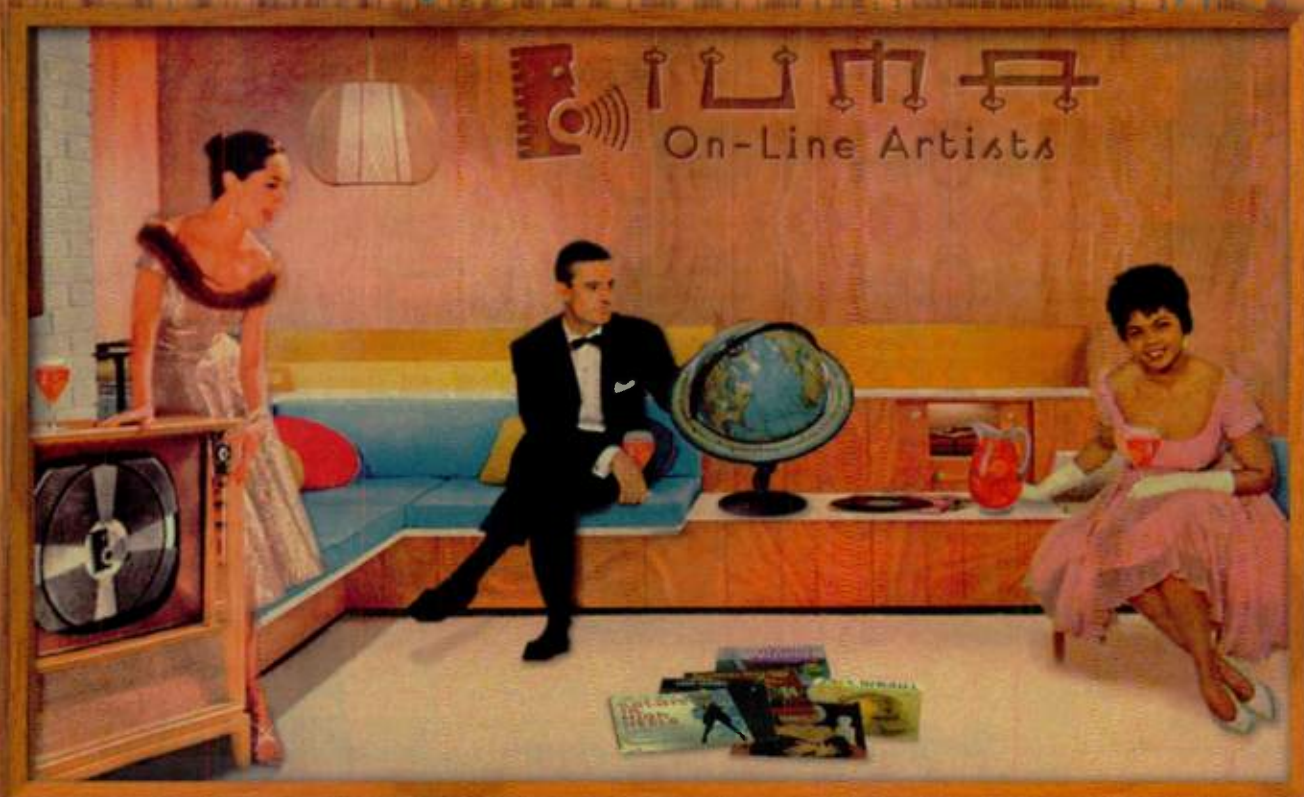
Heartworm

(Columbia)

Even if you don't buy Ferghal McKee's attempts at literature (as in the overly studied narrative of "We Don't Need Nobody Else"), there's no denying he can write; "When We Were Young" and "Personality" are as vivid and evocative as Lou Reed's early works. But this Dublin quartet's greatest strength is its sense of texture: at its best, the music seems lush and edgy at once. Worth hearing.

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Same with Brown, whose solo on "Snakedrive" is a fiery exercise in going apeshit, with dizzy screams spun from all over his Danelectro's neck, culminating in high-pitched, just-above-the-bridge howls. "It just sort of happened like that in the studio," he says. "I wasn't thinking about the key or the melody or the beat or anything; I just went crazy. I played that tape just the other day, and there were some licks in there. . . . I don't even know how I did 'em."

—Ted Drozdowski

World Radio History

child portion: the love-struck "I'm the Cat," a funk-founded "Culver Moon," and a touching elegy to lost innocence, "Barricades of Heaven." But Browne manages a nifty trick on "Some Bridges"—he successfully combines the two: "Every day I walk out in this torn-up world and I fight to survive/I'm laughing when I make it to Saturday and I'm alive/Carrying your smile with me."—**Tom Lanham**

Steve Riley & The Mamou Playboys

La Toussaint
(Rounder)

Riley & Co. stand at the forefront of the new breed of traditional-but-progressive Louisiana bands, mixing white cajun and black zydeco, and experimenting with electric instruments. Their main contribution, however, is in composing instant classics, such as bassist/fiddler Peter Schwarz' mournful title track and the swinging opener, "Je M'en Fous Pas Mal," with a quirky-but-cool cameo from C.C. Adcock on electric guitar. As the great Dewey Balfa said, "A culture is preserved one generation at a time." At 26, Riley represents the best of the genre's past, present and future.—**Dan Forte**

Marion

This World and Body
(London)

Bur. Oasis. Pulp. And coming up fast in the left lane are more maudlin moxops from Manchester, Marion. But fey frontman Jaime Harding has got a breathy Bono-edged singing style that's well beyond his 21 years, and more dark anti-social thoughts than Leonard Cohen. Some of these numbers are derivative, maybe even a tad contrived. But there's enough chiming, arrogant vision pulsing to sweep out most of Marion's neophyte faults. His group's got the big guitar chops, but Harding—who pours his heart into every performance—will be the real star to watch in '96.—**Tom Lanham**

notfadeaway

remembering buddy holly
(Decca)

The music of Buddy Holly returns to Nashville's Decca label 40 years after Holly's first Decca recording with this tribute album that surprisingly lives up to the music it honors. Striving for authenticity, the album features Holly's original Neumann U-47 microphone (utilized on several cuts) and the return of the original Crickets (including Waylon Jennings). For all its sweetness, Holly's music has an undercurrent of menace that presaged later rock 'n' roll, a point driven home by Los Lobos' nightmarish version of "Midnight Shift," which transports Holly into the late-'60s acid era. On a rocking "Crying, Waiting, Hoping," Marty Stuart shows his guitar prowess, while Steve Earle gets to show off his Holly hiccups again. And on "Learning the Game," Jennings (who gave up his seat to the Big Bopper on that ill-fated flight) delivers solemn vocals, wrapped by Mark Knopfler's ethereal guitar. *Notfadeaway* stands out in a growing field of groan-inducing, calculatedly commercial tributes.—**Ray Waddell**

Easley Blackwood

Microtonal Compositions

Blackwood/John Bruce Yeh

Clarinet Sonatas of Blackwood and Reger
(Cedille)

The two worlds of Easley Blackwood. The sonatas, in "conservative tonal idiom," for clarinet and piano, and the microtonal exercises for (solo) synthesizer and guitar. First the sonatas: sandwiched around a Max Reger work in a similar style, two Blackwood pieces feature Mr. Yeh on differently pitched clarinets. The Opus 37 is the major effort, with Yeh stylishly chasing melody after melody in his bright tone. This tone is less convincing in the middle *Grave* section, where the brightness shocks the slower tempos. Nothing beats the lovely Op. 38, scored for the rarely heard piccolo clarinet.

As for *Microtonal*—well, Joni Mitchell rarely performs nowadays because her songs are in something like 40 different tunings, and that's why I think altered tunings stink. Still, every sound can be illuminating in the right frame of mind, and Blackwood's solid musicianship saves these jarring one-movement pieces, where he explores one-by-one the tunings ranging from 13 equally spaced notes to the octave to 24. The ingenious exercises search (not always successfully) for acceptable harmonies and melodic lines in the "cracks." He tries out all 13 possibilities on synth, then leaves four short unpleasing movements for Jeffrey Kust, guitarist. Most of it sounds like awful movie music—but that doesn't diminish the listening pleasure one bit.—**Keith Powers**

books

The Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music

Second Edition
(Guinness)

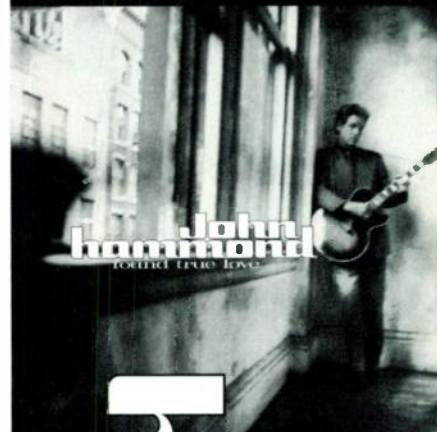
This six-volume megalith is heavy enough to squash a dwarf and packed with enough information to overload any pop fan's synapses. The new second edition significantly updates and enlarges upon the 1992 set that garnered raves upon its release in Great Britain.

Guinness II comprises nearly 5000 pages and some 15,000 entries (plus index and bibliography), and there is precious little that the demanding music freak can't find here. Its international purview takes in work in just about every imaginable genre, from rock to far-flung world musics, and its scope includes artists, producers, engineers, equipment manufacturers, journalists, and labels both major and independent. The stage and screen are also accounted for in a multitude of entries on Broadway and Hollywood musicals and feature rockumentaries.

As with any venture of such magnitude, imperfections come to light. In one glaring instance, pianist Lloyd Glenn's name is rendered as "Lloyd Glebb" on the spine of volume 3. Some omissions are frankly mystifying: Bluesman Hound Dog Taylor's rhythm guitarist Brewer Phillips rates an entry, but the slide guitarist himself goes without. Also, certain Anglophiliac tendencies are (naturally) present.—**Chris Morris**

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Impure Thoughts

When politicians and radio hosts start slamming various forms of music, as well as some of my favorite TV shows, I get nervous. Somehow I just don't feel comfortable having Jesse Helms accompany me to the CD store or William Bennett doing my channel surfing. There are, however, a few people and practices we need to put the brakes on. Certain unforgivable lapses of taste and decency should be taxed accordingly, such as:

1. Country music as performance art. A few years ago, Nashville decided country needed a facelift and a tummy tuck. With few exceptions, all those great singers with names like Wynn, Ferlin and Kitty were replaced by fat-gram-counting adult children of dysfunctional cowboys. The result is a stream of warm, fuzzy videos featuring poignant closeups of the homeless, differently abled, and toddlers in cowboy hats. "Sorry we can't play your record, Merle, but how 'bout a hug?"

2. Christian line dance music. Lead us not into temptation, and teach us not the Achy Breaky.

3. Yanni.

4. Oldies stations that rely on programming consultants, who in turn rely on marketing researchers to tell them that a large portion of the 35-50 demographic still yearns to hear Gary Puckett and "American Pie."

5. Standup comics who mimic blues singers. Sunglasses and a harmonica . . . Wait, I get it! Gosh, those old blind, destitute guys were pretty funny after all. Pass the burnt cork.

6. The playing of "Wind Beneath My Wings" during West Virginia family reconciliations on *Geraldo*. It's not trash—it's healing! Daddy, hand me my Marlboros.

7. Any singer/songwriter who begins a song about Native Americans, Colorado sunsets, or the demise of a pet, with a major seventh chord.



8. Doctors who switch from Muzak to "lite rock, less talk" stations. At least Muzak occasionally programmed "Body and Soul" or Henry Mancini. Having the urologist whistle along to "Horse With No Name" during an exam is barbaric.

9. Anyone who attempts to launch or rejuvenate a career via The Psychic Friends Network. Where's *Hollywood Squares* when we need it?

10. Pop/rock/country divas who include a gospel choir in the grand finale. Okay, okay. So your last video included a hot oil scene with several androgynous bald dancers. Thanks for sharing your new-found spirituality. Oh, Happy Day . . . of the Locusts.

- Reverend Billy C. Wirtz

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