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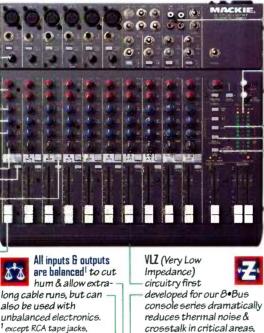
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World Radio History

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Note: there is no such thing as a perfect preamp.

#### Super Channels™

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#### Amplifiers

The next most important circuit is the summing amp. Combining tens of sources magnifies the amp's self-noise to be amplified N+1 times. Using low impedance resistors in this circuit can only reduce part of the noise. Peavey uses discrete transistor summing amps instead of the off-the-shelf ICs found in most consoles. This costs more, but we know you'd want to spend a few extra dollars when it makes such a big difference in overall performance.

#### The Little Details

When comparing competitive consoles you can miss the little things that make such big differences; like mutes that mute the sends, but not the PFL. Little things like meters and inserts on the subs. Little things like assign capability on all 4 stereo returns. These and a bunch more may not show up on paper but make a big difference in the real world.

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(the Small Print)

75Hz low cut filter 6 Aux sends PFL mutes MM faders stereo aux. return stereo tape section

control room section balanced XLR L&R balanced XLR Mono output lamp sockets



#### the flip side of cd plus

It's no surprise that artists and labels release "enhanced" CDs without anything worthwhile to put on them (Technology, Jan. '97) when you consider that no one can even decide what format to use to put the files on the disk and some of the formats they use won't work with all CD-ROM drives. Many of these disks have the computer files placed on track O—bad idea, since several manufacturers' drives can't read track O. And these

are not just older two-speeds that need an updated driver, these are brand new eight-speeds that use track 0 for internal proprietary operations.

john green jgreen@apta.org

#### pay the pusherman

Are your articles paid advertisements by the artists or are they meant to tell the truth? Our doubts arose after reading Dev Sherlock's writeup of Pusherman (Talent, Jan, '97). We attended their performance on Nov. 13 at the Shelter in Detroit. and what we heard that night was safe, watered-down modern pop. Comparing their music to the Dead, Zeppelin, and Jane's Addiction is misinforming the public. As artists, we have a goal of expressing ourselves in our own way. But whether Pusherman makes music from the heart or for the bank account is up to the individual.

> rev ripper & jim beam jim beam & the throwups detroit. Mi

#### stung again

When Mr. Sting tenderly declared that Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings brought him to tears

(Frontman, Dec. '96) and then backhanded him by adding that "I still can't believe an American wrote this," I felt the urge to vomit. Wouldn't we all be better off if we gave our narrow nationalistic filters a rest? Then again, when one listens to the pretentious drivel Sting has produced lately, it's easy to believe that it was written by a Brit.

> todd steed knoxville, TN todzilla@utkux.utcc.utk.edu

#### review roundup

In his review of Les Claypool and the Holy Mackerel (Nov. '96), Mac Randall asks, "What exactly constitutes the appeal of Les Claypool and his band Primus?" Allow me to respond.

Les Claypool is a genius. His singing is a universal statement as well as an artistic revelation. Independent guitarists and drummers are still not able to set their egos aside and understand and appreciate Claypool and Primus. Yes, I am a bass player, but first and foremost I have an insatiable lust for great music, such as that made by Primus.

#### petty thoughts

I was all set to fire off an addendum to Taylor Young's letter (Jan. '97) about tact with regard to dealing with the press. Then I read Tom Petty's comment a few pages later about how getting records for free is "not the same as if you went down and bought it." This got me thinking. As Petty suggests, there's that thrill of discovery experienced by haunting the bins that just can't be duplicated by a trip to your P.O. box. And any music critic who takes his work seriously no doubt buys a ton of records in any given year—if I added up all my receipts from '96 they'd probably rival a small indie's annual budget.

My point is that some of us have no interest in being shills for labels. publicists, managers, and promoters. Not to sound noble or anything, but we actually go out of our way to discover-for ourselves, for our readers, or more likely for both-new and different sounds. The constant deluge of free music is, admittedly, not unwelcome; the incessant ringing of the phone is decidedly less thrilling, though I guess it's a necessary evil. (Hint to publicists: Get toll-free numbers and see your return calls from impoverished freelance writers multiply.) Still, I really don't care much about wading through reams of photocopied hyperbole or being put on the guest list or being "pitched" the latest brain-throb from the meanest/baddest/punkrockingest group of tattooed love boys on the block. I just wanna listen to the music and decide for myself if it measures up to whatever vague critic's and fan's standards I've developed over the years. If what I hear excites me, you can be damn sure I'll find a way to get the word out. To Young (and to Deborah Frost, whose article prompted Young's letter), I say good luck with the career, and thanks as well. Giving your overtaxed/overwhelmed local hack breathing room is indeed appreciated.

> fred mills tucson, AZ

It's important for readers who have not heard his masterpieces to understand that the lack of respect forced upon Claypool in your pages stems solely from one unreputable source: Mac Randall.

#### rama thomas cooper fort worth, TX

Hey! Anyone noticed that the price of new CD releases seems to be going up instead of down? Again?! I just read Mac Randall's right-on-target review of Adrian Belew's excellent new release *Op Zop Too Wah* (Dec. '96). I usually buy used CDs, but in a rare fit of aural instant gratification

I ran down to my corner Blockbuster Music where they actually had it in stock!—and plunked down my hard-earned \$17.98 plus tax.

What a piss-off. Gimme "used" any time.

eric berg santa cruz, CA ahisrts@3dshirts.com

#### ella fitzgerald

I've been enjoying the articles in *Musician* for the past fourteen years, including your Backside trib-

ute to Ella Fitzgerald (Oct. '96). I couldn't get enough of the comments and reflections, so I thought I'd share with you my personal reflections of Ella.

Ella Fitzgerald. Beneath this very name lies an unmatched and unsurpassed passion filled with the kind of heart and soul that so many others in the realms of jazz, pop, and scat are missing. That's why each tune she sang became more than a song; she transformed it into a masterpiece that represented the best of both the composer and the singer.

Whenever Ella sang a ballad, it was almost like a lullaby. Whenever she sang R&B or scat, she would join us together in a glorified union of expressive musicianship. As a self-taught musician, I never get tired of listening to Ella alone and in her many great recordings with Louis Armstrong.

That is what Ella Fitzgerald means to me. Thanks, *Musician*. Keep up the great work.

> peter e. greco new milford, NJ

#### errata

Contrary to what was stated in our Dec. '96 Talent piece on Rasputina, the band's Melora Creager didn't open for Nirvana in '93—she actually played cello with Nirvana on their European tour that year.

Send letters to: *Musician* magazine, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. Email us at: musicianmag@earthlink.net.

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Vorld Radio History

# (frontman)

our latest major work, the oratorio Blood on the Fields, embraces a variety of musical styles, from ring shouts to bebop. How did you put them together without disrupting the musical and lyrical flow?

Well, I hear all those as the same. You have calland-response, you have riffs, breaks, polyphonic sections. Once you establish a rhythmic identity, you can apply almost any harmonic language.

But you varied the orchestration, depending on the style you were referring to. Your clarinet line on "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," for example, wouldn't have worked in a piece that had a more modern feel.

I wanted that to sound like a country band that's unpolished and playing some wrong harmonies, but they're so well-meaning that it gives it a certain flavor.

So you wrote some harmonic clashes.

Yeah, although I did change the original clarinet line because it was too dissonant to get my point across. The consonance [of the other parts] is what makes it sound like that, the fact that they're playing unison and they're not really in tune. The clarinet is squeakin' up there, an octave above the trumpet.

What dictated where you would write out the parts and where you would leave space for improvising?

First of all, somebody's got to be improvising in the rhythm section. The more you write out the rhythm section, the less it's gonna sound like jazz. As far as the horns, most of the parts are written out at the beginning of *Blood on the Fields*. Then, as it goes on, there's more room to play because the main character is getting free; as he starts to realize what he has to do to become free, his people start soloing more. But also I was running out of time [*laughs*]. Four days before the premiere, I was still writing all night and rehearsing all day.

The piece runs about three hours, and you're taking it on the road in January and February. Will audiences be as open to something this ambitious as they were to your more traditional jazz sets?

When I started doing extended pieces with my band, like Blue Interlude or Citi Movement, I could see my audience was like [makes groaning sound]. Even the cats in the band wouldn't want to play it, because you know once you start it's gonna be fifty minutes before you finish. I'm always paranoid when I write new music. With Blood on the Fields I had to convince the cats in the band that it was not noise, because it sounds avant-garde at first. It would be so dissonant, with so many things going on, they'd think, "Don't tell me he's joining the noise-makers too." But I don't like noise, so if something I write doesn't sound musical in some kind of way, maybe I wrote it wrong. Like when I did my string quartet, the transposition for the viola was not done properly, and the part was written up a whole-step. I could tell by the sound of their voices that it was like, "Oh, no, not another one of those pieces!" But the part was just wrong.

Of course, noise is a subjective concept in music.

Well, I have sections like that, but it's always a transition to something coherent. For me to capture the feeling of walking out into traffic is not really much of an achievement.

-Robert L. Doerschuk

ICIAN

**Vorld Radio History** 

# Wynton Marsalis

*"I'm always paranoid when I write new music."* 

# Топуцетории Спорти и полнование vhat h

ou worked with Peter Gabriel for nearly twenty years and have been a member of King Crimson for fifteen or so. Has that made you more in demand for other proiects?

I did more records before I did high-profile tours with Peter Gabriel and King Crimson. Now I do maybe fifteen sessions a vear, not all of which come out.

You own quite a few instruments: fretless, fretted, and three-, four-, and fivestring basses, Chapman stick, even a didgeridoo. How do you choose which to play on any given song?

I don't decide until I hear the music. The instruments give me a variety of tones to choose from. Some basses lend themselves more to heavy rock, some to fluid notes and sustain. Ideally for me, I hear the music, let some process inside me decide what to play, and then choose which instrument, whether to dampen the strings, play with a pick, or whatever.

What are those drumstick-like things we sometimes see on your index and middle fingers?

I call them "funk fingers." I've been playing with them for a long time. They give a mallet-like, percussive sound, quite a bit like a thumb slap. You can hear them on "Steam" and "Secret World' [from Peter Gabriel's Us].

By your own count, you've appeared on between two and four thousand CDs and

have no doubt recorded on countless more projects that were never released. What has made you so successful as a session player?

> I don't think of myself as a session musician. What I do is to focus on how I do it, my process of playing music. I never step back and get a distant perspective. My object is always to play the bass, just to play a good part.

Do you turn down a lot of work? It varies. Sometimes I don't get called for months, sometimes all the calls come at once. You came to rock rather late, after years of classical training and forays into jazz.

> Did that background prepare you

at all for doing rock sessions?

It gave me the ability to read music, but when I began to do studio work I found the technique of reading as in classical is not what's called for. You need to give the arranger what he wants more than what he wrote. When I began, I'd read-and playexactly what was written, which is definitely not what most people want.

What do the best producers do in sessions that others don't?

The best producers try to make it all work. They're the ones who make the music end up good. I like the

ones who allow the musicians to choose where their part will go.

Define the perfect session. It's any one where the music came out good.

One of your most memorable sessions was with John Lennon on Double Fantasy. Did he know you, or did you just get a call out of the blue?

résumé **Robert Fripp** Peter Gabriel Kate & Anna McGarrigle Don McLean ("American Pie") Lou Reed Paul Simon

Lots of times I'm called for records by people I don't know, sometimes by people I haven't even heard of. When I heard from John, he said, "They tell me you're good. Just don't play too many notes." I said, "Don't worry, John. You've got the right guy."-Chris Rubin

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# was going to school in L.A., studying film, and my brother was teaching me to play guitar," remembers **Failure's** singer/songwriter/guitarist Ken Andrews. "I had a crappy bass, a

singer/songwriter/guitarist Ken Andrews. "I had a crappy bass, a guitar, a crappy drum machine. and one mic. In the beginning it was just, 'Let's play a few shows, get the name Failure in the paper, and laugh about it.' It was only literally after we signed the record deal that I seriously thought, 'Okay, let's do this.'"

Failure's first album was cut after the band had played 22 gigs. Though they got to record with Steve Albini, Andrews had mixed feelings. "Part of it was the way we played, but most of the problem is that some of the sounds take away from the songs." The experience prompted Ken to get more involved. He engineered their second album *Magnified* and felt confident enough to take over production with bassist/songwriter Greg Edwards on their latest and most sonically sophisticated work, *Fantastic Planet* (Slash/ Warner Bros.).

"We took a little over half of our recording budget, bought equipment, rented a house, and set up shop," Ken says. "I don't like studios. They're sonically treated so that there's no artifact in what you're listening to. If you have a decent room that doesn't have any weird frequency responses, I prefer it to a studio. No one has a living room or a car that sounds like a control room."

The result is an album of rich guitar rock, heavily influenced by the sci-fi and spy movies the band watched while recording. Besides the disc's title, taken from the classic animated film of the same name, tracks like "The Nurse Who Loved Me" and "Solaris" attest to long hours spent in front of the VCR. According to Ken, "It's better to be inspired by a medium other than your own." Maybe that's why so much of Fantastic Planet conjures up images of starships gliding through space. One thing's for sure: It's a far cry from those early crappy gear days. -Kris Nicholson

#### failure

using on puppy love amid new-wave styling and shining female harmonies, Oxford's **Heavenly** are the ultimate revenge of the girl groups. And that Heavenly are often branded as cutesy "twee" pop doesn't bother singer/co-songwriter Amelia Fletcher one bit.

"I'm more proud of it than ever before," she says. "It used to really rile me. When we began, we were so young. Though we were quite punky, we always giggled in interviews. We didn't think that fast on our feet. The media really ate that up."

The band's new album, *Operation Heavenly* (K), runs up a heady pop steam, but with newfound sarcasm. Lines like

"He says he can't waste a good erection; I think I'm starting to lose affection" are like finding salty anchovies in a spongy-sweet Twinkie.

Stranger still is that the bulk of Heavenly's male-impaling asides were writ-

ten by Amelia's **Incaveniy** drumming brother, Matthew Fletcher. Matthew's sharp wit and humor apparently covered a depressed spirit; he committed suicide shortly

before the album's release. As the band carries on, their new songs are sure to form an ironic contrast with the happier times of *Operation Heavenly*.

"The next album will be more reflective, but it's only because I want to make a change," explains Amelia. "We get letters from people who put on Heavenly because it's made them feel good when they were depressed. It's such a pity that it didn't cheer Matthew up. It's a bit weird."—Ken Micallef



icture yourself on a boat on a river with tangerine trees and marmalade skies. Sud denly someone appears at the turnstile...it's **the Olivia Tremor Control**. This quintet's new release *Music from the Unrealized Film Script Dusk at Cubist Castle* (Flydaddy) features 75 minutes of poppsychedelia, and enough John, Paul, and George harmonies to make you feel as if you've just arrived at the Maharishi's ashram circa 1968.

"Bill [Doss, guitar/vocals] is actually more of a Beatles fan than I am," Will Cullen Hart (guitar/ vocals) insists. "At an early age I bought Pink Floyd's *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn.*" He also cites such disparate acts as Oval, Sun Ra, Big Black, the Beach Boys, the Butthole Surfers, the Kinks, John Cage, Sonic Youth, and Tortoise as influences.

Dusk was recorded primarily on a Fostex 28X 4-track. "We would fill a 4-track cassette up and dump that onto two tracks of an 8-track," explains Hart. "I learned a lot from Mark Lewisohn's *The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions.*" In addition to the obligatory backwards tape loops and sitars, the instrumentation includes Tibetan prayerside project. And what of the alleged film *Dusk at Cubist Castle* itself? "We don't actually have a script yet." Hart explains, "but we have characters and lots of images."

The OTC is part of a musical collective called the Elephant 6 Recording Company, made up of like-minded friends who grew up in or near Ruston, Louisiana. Its other members include Robert Schneider of the Apples (In Stereo)—who co-



#### the olivia tremor control

board, singing saw. and (of course) space bubbles. A limited edition of the album includes a bonus ambient disc, while the CD booklet solicits cassettes with details of your favorite dreams for a future OTC produced *Dusk*—and Jeff Mangum of Neutral Milk Hotel. "We really didn't fit in that much," Hart says. "We only had a few friends in high school." Somehow it all makes perfect sense.—Andy Gensler

tevie Wonder and Chaka Khan are it!" exclaims **Rahsaan Patterson**. "They're my godparents. spiritually and musically. I'm the child they didn't know they had!"

On his self-titled debut album (MCA), this soft-spoken New Yorker does his elders proud, combining Khan's theatrical flair with a supple voice that recalls Wonder's Seventies prime. The kid's no nostalgia act. Though barely 23, he boasts more than a decade of dues-paying and a lifelong love of soulful grooves.

Brought up in the Pentecostal Church, where he sang solos in the choir, Patterson was a vinyl junkie from childhood. "I always had my own stereo," he recalls. "I'd lis-

ten for hours with my face literally in the speaker, smelling it and looking at the album covers."



t's an alternative world these days, but **Dariational's** debut, Big Fine Thing (Reprise), is a rock record and proud of it. Leader/ singer/songwriter/guitarist Luke Janklow laughingly concurs. "It is a rock record. There's a real handmade kind of vibe. The whole attraction of being a musician is it's one of the few places you can still operate on instinct," declares the tall (6'6") New Yorker.

From slide to 12-string, guitars permeate the dozen melodic and edgily compelling songs on the album, though Janklow has no hankering to be a guitar hero. "I was a worshipper of Eddie Van Halen but I'm much more into rhythm. I played in bands with drummers that were...inconsistent." he says, choosing his words carefully, "and as a result, developed a very percussive right hand. In fact, I'm a total

darlahood

closet drummer and bass player. I'm really rhythm-oriented. By default, we ended up fooling around as a trio, and all of a sudden there was all this air and all this good space to work with----and a better palette.

"I just love big chordal textures, interesting voicings," explains Janklow, who owns about 20 guitars and used three amps simultaneously during the recording of *Big Fine Thing*, which was produced by Clive Langer, Alan Winstanley, and the band.

While the album's selections were carefully honed down to a dozen from an original batch of about 75, the name Darlahood was an eleventh-hour choice, taken from the childhood heartthrob of *The Little Rascals*. That kind of sardonic humor, Janklow suggests, mirrors his own sensibility. "I was born and raised in New York, and stuff with a dark edge tickles me on a humor level," he says, "even if it is at my expense."—*Katherine Turman* 

By age ten, he was pursuing stardom in Los Angeles, and subsequently landed a regular gig on the music-oriented TV series *Kids Incorporated.* as well as working live theater and doing commercials. Patterson's high voice changed with puberty, temporarily slowing his career. "I stopped singing for a year, because I was afraid of what I would sound like," Patterson notes.

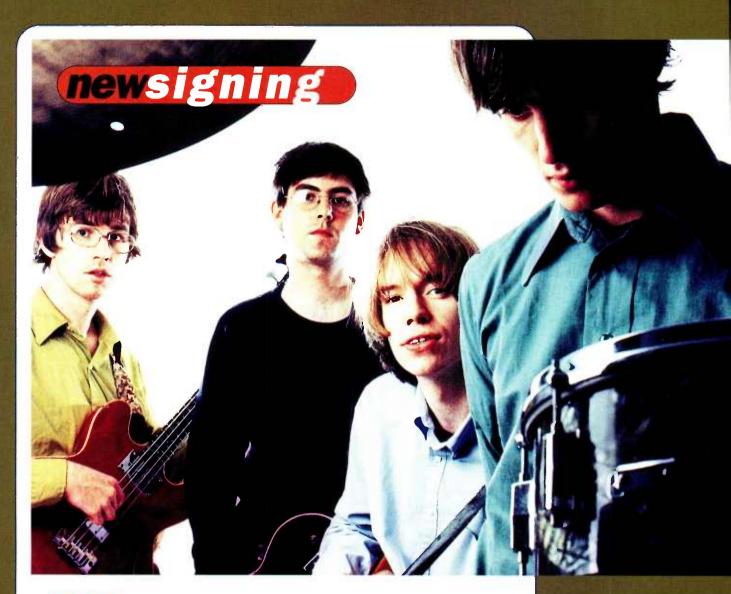
Named after jazz great Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Patterson sang on albums by Stanley Clarke and George Duke and co-wrote songs for Tevin Campbell and Brandy (including her hit "Baby") before flying solo. Now, he's doing it for himself. "In 'Sir Duke,' Stevie Wonder sings that music is a world within itself," Patterson says. "I want people to know this place does exist. Sometimes I think I'm crazy, 'cause I go so deep into it."—Jon Young

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y ad quick Encla rare

y advice," begins Sloan bassist/vocalist Chris Murphy, "is don't sign to a major too quickly." The versatile Canadian band has recently signed with new American label The Enclave, but it's not their first major deal. The youthful guitar-pop quartet are getting a rare second chance. And they've learned a fair amount about the music

business in the process.

The Sloan story begins in 1991 with a self-produced six-song EP, *Peppermint*, released on their own Murderecords label in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Within months, they are signed to Geffen label DGC Records in the U.S. (home to Nirvana, Sonic Youth, Guns N' Roses). They release their debut LP *Smeared* and hit the road behind the single "Underwhelmed." "I feel we were signed largely on the commercial potential of that song," remembers guitarist/vocalist Patrick Pentland. "And, unfortunately, we got lumped into that whole punk/alternative pile. We had yet to really define our sound when we made our first record—it was predominantly heavy guitars all over the place."

By the time Sloan entered the studio to record the follow-up, *Twice Removed*, in 1994, things had changed; their approach was more focused and stripped down, with

much less guitar. Says Pentland, "That's when we began to feel friction from the label, because they didn't hear any radio hits. They were looking to build on the foundation of *Smeared*, but we'd moved away from that neighborhood. We weren't interested in being a noisy guitar band."

"They were frank with us," says Murphy. "They told us they couldn't really get behind [Twice

SLOAN

ALBUM: One Chord To Another LABEL: The Enclave RELEASE DATE: February 25

World Radio History

MUSICIAN





*Removed*] and we said, 'OK, but we still want to release it.'"

"We understand how they felt," Pentland continues. "We didn't sound like the same band they'd signed, they didn't hear any followup to 'Underwhelmed,' and that made it difficult to keep the story going at radio."

Unsurprisingly, the album made little impact in the States, band morale suffered, and, in the end, Sloan and DGC mutually agreed to part ways. Contrary to reports, the band never broke up (nor did they stage a breakup in order to get out of their contract, as some believed). Explains Pentland, "We just took time off to reassess our situation and repair some of the internal damage that came as a result of *Twice Removed* not doing very well."

However, back home in Canada, Sloan was hardly considered a failure—record sales were solid and their live audiences continued to grow. So, the band smartly decided to focus on business at home, eventually recording and releasing their third album (and forthcoming Enclave debut), *One Chord To Another*, before worrying about a record deal elsewhere. "In Canada, we're signed to Murderecords, which we own," explains Pentland. "And we're distributed by MCA Canada, which is the same group who handled our records here when we were on Geffen U.S.—it's an ideal situation."

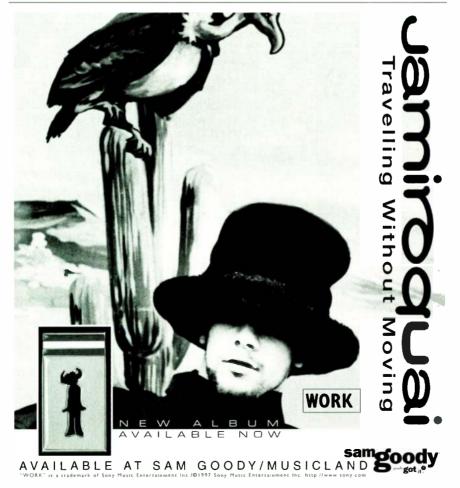
"Don't mistake this for cynicism, but we own Canada," says Murphy. "We own all of our previous records in Canada, and we can afford to make records, distribute them, and tour there. It might make up only five percent of the world market, but it's big enough to support us. For now, America is almost like found money."

"On the other hand, it can also be a trap," warns Pentland. "A lot of Canadian bands who become successful there will give up on America if it doesn't happen for them right away."

Eventually, they began talking to DGC again about releasing *One Chord* in America but they soon discovered that "nothing had really changed," says Pentland. "DGC were still putting out twenty records a week and we weren't going to get the attention," shrugs

MUSICIAN

World Radio History



Murphy. "I know it sounds like we have an anti-Geffen vendetta, but we really don't. I still personally like most of the people there, but we also understand that they're in the business of making money. It's nothing that surprises me."

The Enclave were the first label to offer Sloan an alternative and, while many other U.S. majors followed suit, the band decided The Enclave made sense. "We were kinda starting over again in the U.S., and here was a new label consisting of people who had become disenchanted working at other major labels—it seemed like a perfect fit," smiles Murphy. "Like us, I think they kinda have something to prove."

Leyla Turkkan is the Enclave A&R executive who, with the help of Richard Williams (head of Enclave-distributed Spongebath Records) and Enclave president (and former Geffen A&R wiz) Tom Zutaut, brought Sloan to the label. Past experiences at Columbia and Atlantic have led her to echo the band's sentiments. "I wanted to leave that whole major label environment. Here, we have the funding and distribution of a major, but the autonomy and focus of an indie."

Turkkan was first introduced to Sloan in 1994 when she signed Canadian band the Inbreds to TAG/Atlantic. The two bands share management, which made it easier for Turkkan to approach Sloan upon learning that they were looking for a new U.S. deal last year. She insists that the radical change in Sloan's sound in recent years will not be an obstacle in re-introducing them to America.

"I don't think it's so much of a re-introduction as it is simply the evolution of Sloan," says Turkkan. "It's one of the things that attracted us to them. They're like the Beastie Boys in that respect—they're constantly re-inventing their sound, going on a musical adventure. Furthermore, the last time Sloan were really promoted to radio or press was a number of years ago, so I don't feel there's too much preconception to overcome."

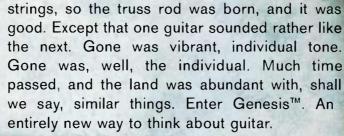
"This is the position we should've been in the first time we signed," concludes Murphy. "Someone like Sonic Youth, for example, definitely had their act together when they went to a major label—they knew the vocabulary and how the business worked. Meanwhile, we were like, 'Thanks for having us!' I think our goals are more realistic this time."

—Dev Sherlock

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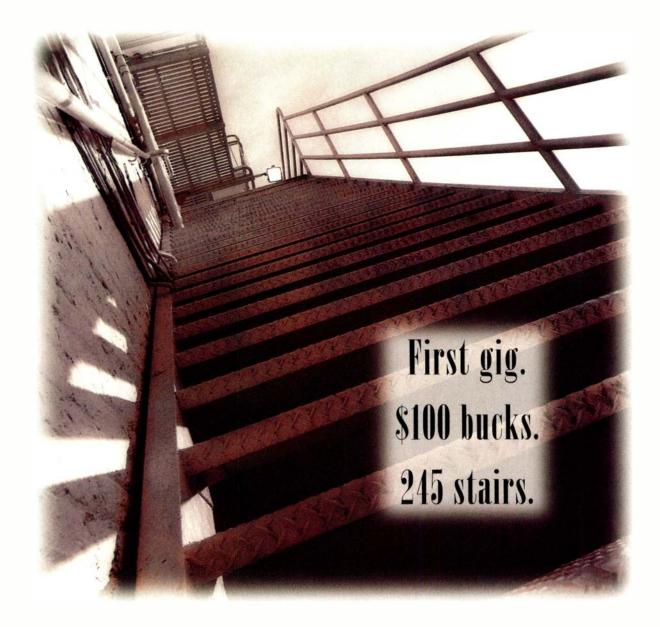
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# songwriting

## From the Table to the Door: The Discipline of Creativity

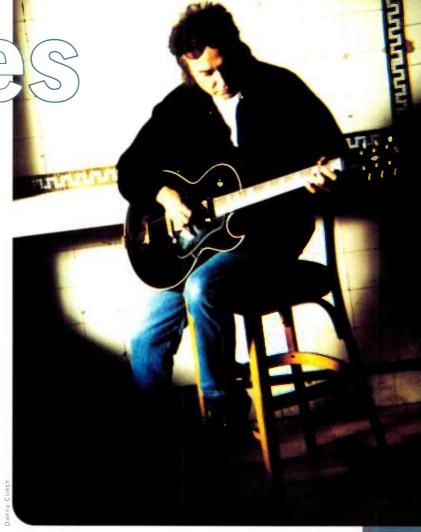
#### by robert I. doerschuk

e stood out like a Dickens character on the set of *Bright Lights. Big City.* Looming over the power lunchers, he threaded through the maze of tables in the Upper West Side eatery he favors while in New York, with hair far thicker than a man his age deserves, pointed birdlike features, and a spectacular scarf flung 'round his throat.

The scarf was no affectation. for this throat is home for the unmistakable voice of Ray Davies, one of the great rock voices of all time. as strong at full snarl and as delicate in repose as Roger Daltrey's. yet touched with an irony that sets him apart from brawnier bawlers. Of course. Davies has the advantage of great material—the classic tunes of his band, the Kinks, all of it written by his own hand.

Who can claim as wide and deep a catalog as this? The proto-metal, riff driven "You Really Got Me." archetypal studies both affectionate ("Village Green Preservation Society") and derisive ("Dedicated Follower of Fashion"). daguerreotypes from some timeless time in London ("Waterloo Sunset." "Come Dancing"), songs of ribaldry ("Lola") and mystery ("Fancy")—an astonishing range. And on closer examination, the details of Davies' work—the vicious singsong chorus to "Picture Book," the wedding of innocent lyrics and inspired key changes in "Days"—reveal an artistry that's unrivaled even in the work of less prolific composers.

On this autumn afternoon, the chill in the air had roughened the edges of Davies' voice. With a solo performance at Manhattan's Westbeth Theater only hours away, he nursed several bottles of mineral water and hunched over our tape recorder. Before the altar of songwriting, he spoke intimately, self-deprecatingly, with humor and insight, much like the characters in his songs. These similarities between life and art, we learned that day, are no coincidence; rather, they are the essential bridge that Davies the songwriter endeavors to



build.

For a couple of years now you've been leading five-day songwriter clinics three times a year in England. Is it really possible to lead participants closer to the place where songs come from?

It's not where songs come from, it's where our ideas come from. So much of what I do starts with a basic idea, and while there are ways of going through an idea, there are no rules to songwriting and nobody can teach you how to do it.

See, I'm interested in the way people see the world. I had a young boy come to one of my things. His name was Greg, I think, and he was an unemployed kid from Essex. Obviously he had very limited access to music, but he saw things in a very abstract way. He was coming out with really abstract ideas that we could draw out a bit, so I told him to read anything from any text he could find in a magazine and try to make something out of it. It's more difficult to come to terms in only four days with people who have a strong tonal sense or a chord progression they want to develop.

## **songwriting**

So trained musicians are harder to teach than novices?

Actually, the toughest people I've worked with have been journalists who've come to the course. I guess it's because they think editorially; they think of what they have to cut all the time, and that should be the last thing you're thinking of. You should just write everything and then cut it later.

But people who have quite a good grounding in music knowledge can be difficult as well; that's why some of the great lyricists are not really great musicians. I usually tell these people to get rid of the textbooks. I'm not a teacher in the sense I tell them to go home and study

composition or counterpoint for a week and then come back. It's more about stimulating ideas, getting their nerve endings to work.

The interesting thing happens when I get them to do a "musical in a day" sometimes two, if you get the right bunch of people. You do enough so that you can actually perform the musical at the end of the week and see whether it works or not. Last year, for example, we did *OJ: The Musical*. We each had different characters: I was Judge Ito. But the most stunning piece was "Nicole's Song," sung by her ghost in the courtroom.

How would someone develop the kind of awareness of life they need in order to write a narrative song?

They'd just need the right information. A famous writer took my course—she's got a career, so I don't want to mention her name and she said, "I can't take all the information you've given me and put it into a three-minute song." So you limit yourself to what goes into your life between walking from this table to the door over there, which is ten feet away; that's the journey in your song. You adjust the way you take stuff in. I don't teach that; I just supply ideas and ways to work. Every individual makes his or her own decision. That's what's so great about songwriting.

What about the other side of the equation the music? What do you tell people in your workshops who already have the words and want to find the song?

Sometimes I get them to make noises—the sounds of the words. I mispronounce words all the time in the way I write. The classic one for me is that I say [*speaking slowly*] "spe-ci-fi-cally" rather than "specifickly," because I like the sound. That's my signature.

You don't pronounce it with the extra syllable in conversation.

No, but I say it that way to make it work with my melodic ideas. It's as simple as banging bits of wood together. The words have meaning, but they also have values as sound and rhythm. The sound creates the way we speak, a certain pattern—the musical pattern. I do whatever I can to break down that barrier and to make people accept the notion that they can make music from their words. Most people can make words, but they can't make music. I'd say eighty per-



cent of the people I work with don't have a musical idea when they start. People always ask me and most songwriters whether the music or the lyrics come first. I think that with most people who do both, the lyric would come first. On a great day, they'll come together.

How much writing are you doing these days?

I'm writing songs all the time, really. It's not until I have to sit down and come up with something that I intensify what I'm thinking about into a song. "To the Bone" [the title track to the latest Kinks album, on the Guardian label] is an example: I wrote five drafts of that song, in different ways, always using the title. One draft was about a dog, obviously. I wrote another one about my dentist. They're all finished songs, but the one that worked for me on the record was the relationship song, which was about a record being the soundtrack of someone's life: Now all he's left with is a soundtrack, and he's trapped in his gramophone because he keeps seeing his life over and over again. When did you realize that you were going to be a songwriter?

As soon as I started playing the guitar. I learned the typical finger-picking stuff you learn in classical music, and I still write that way: My little finger goes on the soundboard. I started sitting in with people who were much better than I am, and I'd suss out the way they played. I'm not one of these guys who, when he sits in, does his stunning blues solo and then sits down. I'm more of a musical chameleon: I'll get up there and feel their style out for a couple of songs, and end up playing in their style. It never occurred to me until later on that I was actually composing as I played.

Because you were taking in their ideas as you performed.

Yeah. Writing songs came about because I was doing blues covers. I played Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf—then suddenly I had to start making pop records. "You Really Got Me" was one step in that direction. It was basically an R&B song in G. The breakthrough with it was when I took it up one step to A rather than to C. I have to say it was actually an accident: I wrote "You Really Got Me," "All Day and All of the Night," and a lot of the early songs with the Kinks on the piano, and I just missed the C. But the A sounded great, so I kept it in.

By the time you hit the V chord in that song, it functions differently than in a more traditional blues setting because you haven't heard the expected chord—the IV chord, on the C.

Do you know what the A major does? It says, "Oh, I know that this is about G-D-G-D; something is going to happen." If it'd gone to C instead, it'd say, "Oh, yeah, you're just moving it around to where it's supposed to go now." Of course, then it would have turned out to be [Roy Head's] "Treat Her Right" [laughs]. I can analyze that now, but I wasn't thinking at the time I wrote it that the D chord has that certain kind of tension because the A chord laid the groundwork for it. One of the secrets is to do this naturally, without analyzing why something works. That's why a lot of schooled musicians, unless they're very good, have such difficulty. It's the enthusiastic amateurwhich I am, to a certain extent; I wouldn't still be doing this if I wasn't-who brings the energy into play.



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# private esson

# Ritchie Blackmore's

#### by mac randall

e's one of the classiest payers in the hard rock school\_-clever, powerful, utterly distinctive. With Deep Purple and Rainbow, his playing has graced many a classic tune; it's also been the saving grace of quite a few borderline cases. All things considered, you'd think Ritchie Blackmore would be more in the public eye. Instead, he's kept a pretty low profile in the last few years, at least in English-speaking countries. He doesn't do a lot of interviews, and he hasn't toured much in the States, favoring Europe and Japan. The last Rainbow album, Stranger In Us All (Fuel), was recently released with little fanfare. As Blackmore admits, "The Rainbow type of music is going through a hard time at the moment. But I try not to let fashion dictate what I'm going to play, even if that means not selling out some hall or not selling a lot of records. I play what I like to play."

What Blackmore likes to play is an odd blend of hard rock grit and classical ornamentation. He's perhaps one of the least bluesy rock guitar players. "I have been heavily influenced by classical music." he says, "but also by blues too. I don't listen to much blues, but it's in there because I played that bluesy style for a long time. When I listen music, it usuFinding the right blend of rock and the classics ally has nothing to do with guitars. It's more singers or violins. Growing up, I listened a lot to Les Paul, Chet Atkins, Wes Montgomery, and especially Django Reinhardt-although I could never copy anything he played because it was too difficult. After a while, though, you stop listening to people so much, and you just pick up the guitar and play for yourself. A lot of guitarists tend to listen to guitar records and learn those runs. But I was always very bad at picking things up note for note. I would slow the record down for maybe 15 minutes. and if I hadn't learnt the solo by then, I'd start to improvise my own version of it. That wasn't very good when I was playing in cover bands, but it kind of backfired in a good way---it gives you your swn style because you can't copy shmebody else's."

The clastical underpinnings of Blackmore's style go back a long way, to his first year of guitar le sons. "I was classically trained in the beginning. We did things like 'Gavotte' by Bach. But I wanted to wail and get wah-wah sounds and they weren't teaching that, so I left that behind. I only came back to it about 10 years later. Although I don't profess to be good enough to be a classical player, I can do what you might call mock-Baroque—it sounds like I know what I'm doing."

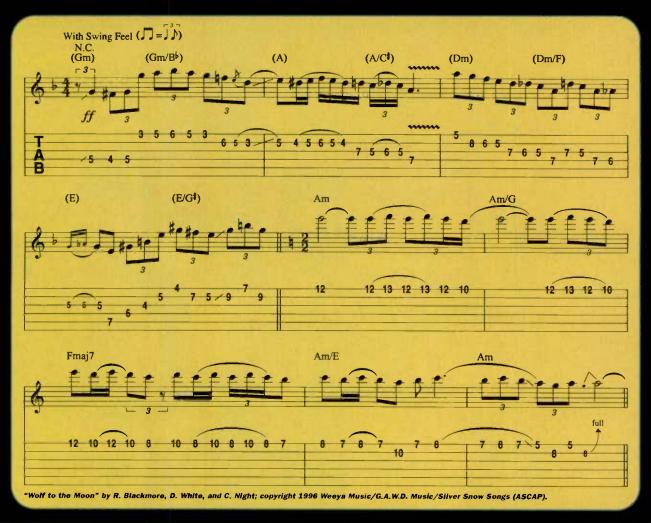
Did the emphasis on reading and musty old composers in those early lessons tie your ambitions down or did those elements help your playing in the long run? "I\_think the

lessons helped me, especially technically. They taught me to use all my fingers. I learned from the beginning to use the small finger on my left hand in chromatic scales, rather than starting off playing blues scales, which emphasize the first and third fingers. I notice that a lot of players really favor two fingers of the fretting hand, but I started with all my fingers and it quickly became a habit to use them all, so I was lucky in that sense. As for the right hand, I play fingerstyle more than plectrum-style, and I always thought everybody did. I'm surprised that they don't, because to me it's second nature to use all the fingers on both hands." A positive vote for classical training. To keep all his fingers in proper gear, Blackmore works out with a special hand contraption, "one of those exercise things where you press each separate finger down. I don't know where it came from; I know I didn't buy it, but it found its way into the house somehow."

All the fingers get into the action during Blackmore's solo on "Wolf to the Moon," the leadoff track of *Stranger In Us All*. The beginning of the solo was pre-composed, the ending improvised; the excerpt here is in the middle, and it exemplifies the Blackmore style. Jaunty eighth-note-triplet "mock-Baroque" lines trace out chord changes with heavy doses of chromaticism in the first four bars, while the rest of the example delves into luscious trills and hammerons, ending with a full-on bend that reminds us this is, after all, rock.

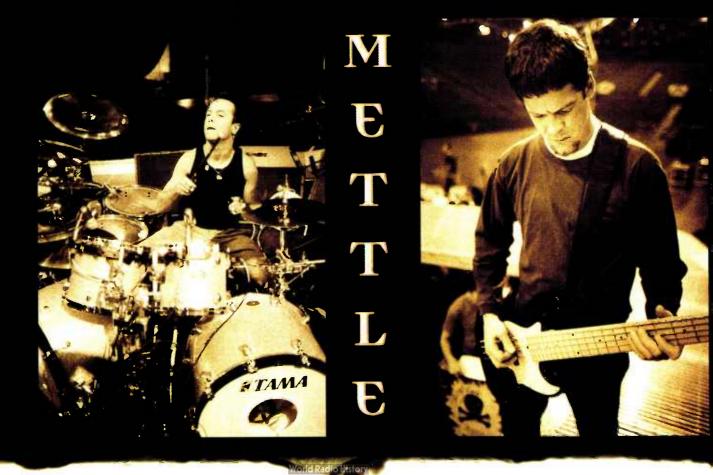
In keeping with his old-timey inclinations, Blackmore is currently working on an album that's partly rearrangements of traditional Renaissance-era songs, partly new material in the same vein. "I'm playing it predominantly on acoustic guitars---though there are a few electrics on it---and added instruments like crumhorns and sackbuts. It doesn't really have a label as yet. I don't think too many people would approach it normally, as it's practically guaranteed not to sell. But it's something I've been wanting to do for a long time. Most of the material was put together sitting around the house with an acoustic. Rather than going into the studio and having to come up with a heavy riff, it's a pleasure to just sit down and play this way."

And yes, he does still make sure to practise every day. "It's generally about an hour a day, practicing various exercises and scales, and I'm usually watching television as I'm playing. It's strange how I can watch television and play something I think is quite good, and when I go to record it, it becomes very awkward because I'm concentrating 100 percent. Maybe I should bring a television into the studio."





James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett, Lars Ulrich, and Jason Newsted Travel the Distance





ick nammett takes another draw on his coney Island dog-sized cigar as he ponders what he's enjoying most about Metallica's leap to megastardom. Houses with kidney-shaped pools? All the guitars he could ever want? closets full of the *Mean streets* pimpwear he's taken to sporting? The gorgeous models who flocked to last night's show in Milan? & Hammett exhales another of the clouds that have turned the van in which we're speeding through the Italian country-

side into a smokehouse. "It's having our own jet," he says.  $\mathscr{D}$  "yeah," I offer. "It must be great to fly at your own pace, not have to deal with the airlines. ..."  $\mathscr{D}$  "Nah," he replies. "what's really cool is that we can stand up and drink when we're landing and taking off."  $\mathscr{D}$  Ah, thank you, beavis. And butt-head, too. As it happened, MTV's bastard sons were the second and third guys I saw after lurching from a cab at the Milan forum the day before. The first guy was wearing a knock-off Beavis and Butt-head T-shirt; the dysfunctional duo's heads were dropped in full bang as they wore *their* metallica shirts. A felliniesque double bootleg—ripping off not only the band's merchandising but MTV's as well.  $\mathscr{D}$  The forum in Milan is a big ugly concrete blister in the hot october afternoon sun.

BY TED DROZDOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHS NEILS VAN IPEREN

But the crowd for the sold-out show wants in bad. They're already queued, three hours before showtime, some two hundred across and fifty feet deep. Somewhere a boom box blasts "exit light/enter night/ take my hand/off to Neverneverland" over that familiar one-chord riff. It's the same scene that's played at every arena from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Warsaw, Poland—fans wearing their Metallica shirts like flags, the occasional whiff of drifting pot, sneakers, jeans, boots, and leather. Girls with long, straight hair; guys with beards that won't quite grow in.

Only the proscuitto and the weak beer remind me I'm in Italy. Signs for Coke and banks and radio stations dot the hall. A tall, modelesque woman with red hair and an American-flag midriff blouse capers by. People start pooling on the floor, flowing aimlessly like sticks in a stream. Finally, Corrosion of Conformity take the stage, their Marshalls braying like Japanese movie monsters over a machine-gun kick drum. Unfortunately, the sound's terrible. But



#### LARS ULBICH DRUMS DOWN

aking a break from their seven-year touring and recording streak gave power drammer tars which a chance to rethink his mega whopping approach and the codzillalike proportions of his dram rig.

" the big turnaround for me actually started on the sind justice for sll tour, where the changes

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with all these different time signatures became no exercise in taying not to fuck up." he recounts, "and that took a lot of the spack out of the live gigs, that's when the became interested in pulling the drums out of the front-line and letting the guitar riffs do the talking, that approach has given me more control as a player than thad when t was busier behind the kit, when we did the *toad* session, we cut 30 songs, and i played to a click track for every one, that took me above what i was playing on the 'flack album.' when t listen to tapes from the 'flack album' tour, even though we were playing in a new, simplified style, the tempos still sound pretty rampant to me in places."

ulrich applied the same restraint to his cymbol technique. "I wanted to listen to the song 'konnie' on the record this morning. I don't even hit the cymbol on the downbeat: I don't hit it on the upbeat; I don't accent the fucking change in the guitar riff at all? ror me, I just had to hear that again because for years I was so and about nailing the transitions with accents, when I heard it—or didn't hear it—on the record, I thought, 'word' that flowed really nicely."

But ulrich's too much a lover of the tentural "hoosh" that cytobals produce under sustained hits to totally swear off his old ways, just cue your copy of *wad* up to the beginning of "the nouse jack built," "It thought that was really beautiful, that shimmering that spreads right across the stereo spectrum. Now the actually playing a ride cymbal live for the first time in three or four tours, unfore that, when i vanted a variation from the hishat, instead of going to a ride cymbul -would go to the crash and play half-time.

"Elile cymbals that of sizzle," he says, "wright cymbals announce their presence with a big fucleyeah! nore cam' sort of thing. "Ealways use zildjians. To me, zildjian and cymbals are like wheenew and snot tissues," in the studio, which prefers as; live it's wrilliants.

while he hasn't cut back the number of cymbols in his live rig, thrich has peeled a few toms out of his setup and downsized literally were dram save for his snare. "During our year off, I went to scattle and played with my friend yeary cantrell in slice in chains' rehearsal room. I played on [africe drummer] sean tinney's kit, and it was a lot smaller than I was used to. At first I didn't like it, but we jammed for two or three days, and by the end I was seriously into it. I felt I could sit more on top of the kit and I was more in control. And the tuning was a lot easier than it was for my monster heavy metal drams from hell, I also become less interested in big weil peart fills and more selective with fills, accents, and even cymbol hits.

"The one thing I wouldn't change is my snare," ulrich states. "I really like the attach and the sound of a rama snare drum called the "Bell Brass." They have depth and top and crispness. I use them in the studio, on the road. I sleep with it, I have it in the shower with me."

Charles Dat/Amba

Snare

Bass

Toms

CS Coated w/Black Dot/Ambassador Snare Powerstroke 3 Clear/Ambassador Smooth White Emperor Clear/Ambassador Clear O Steve Smith Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare Ambassador Clear/Ebony Ambassador Clear/Ambassador Clear

Marun Smitty "Auth

Marvin "Smitty" Smith Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare Powerstroke 3 Clear/Ebony Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Clear

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when Metallica take the stage, pummeling the flying monkeys' theme song from *The Wizard of Oz* out of their instruments, the aural details are as crisp as the look of their tight-shrunk jeans.

The colors of the day are black-onblack-on-black. So's the music, but in a beautiful way. This show, and the gig I see the next night in Torino, rank among the best arena rock concerts I've attended. Of the dozen or so Metallica performances I've seen since *Kill 'Em All* made me feel like I'd been force-fed an alien embryo in '83, these seem their most energized and vital, from an "Ain't My Bitch" that's all piss, venom, and raw power, through near-

ly two-and-a-half hours of postmodern heavy metal thunder. The set list embraces the old days of downstroked guitar fury and crazy quilts of chord changes, provoking the crowd into the kind of singalong on "Master of Puppets" you'd join in Cleveland—save for the

Italian-accented English. And it whips along through the violently pacifist "One" to James Hetfield's chorus-drenched guitar intro to "Enter Sandman," the tune that made them nearly as big as Neil Diamond.

For Load's "King Nothing," Jason Newsted strides to the rim of the stage, watering the guys in front with perspiration as he kicks off its moaning riff. It's all great playing, from Kirk's sweetly screaming slide guitar to Lars Ulrich's newly restrained power hitting to Jason's fat textural blasts and James' vinegar-sweetenedwith-honeyed-melody vocals. Metallica touch all the bases and run straight over home, performing at an intensity more akin to the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion than any of their metal contemporaries.

After the show, down the cinderblock hall at the back of the Forum, fans are herded into a room for a meet 'n' greet. James and Kirk pose for pictures with members of Metallica Italia, their local fan club, and sign some LP-sized flats of the *Load* cover. Jason is the last Metallican to leave the Forum, but as we step outside—two hours after the last bellowing chord was struck fifty or so fans are still waiting for him along the gate. He throws his travel bag in the back of a waiting Benz and strides to meet them, smiling and holding out his arms. He shakes every hand, signs every autograph. "He seems proud to have such ardent fans, but hell, after fifteen years of knuckle-busting roadwork and groundbreaking recordings, Metallica's earned 'em.

"This is the most songs we've ever played on a tour," Lars observes. "We're hitting 21, 22 songs. We've tried to get away from the ten-minute guitar, bass, and drum solos; we realized they were destroying our momentum. The only reason those breaks were put in was so the rest of us could sit and rest for a few minutes. I think now we've grown a little older and the partying is subsiding slightly, just slightly, so



we're finding we can play longer and a little more intensely.

"Plus, when we were planning this tour, we realized it was the first time we were going to be playing indoors in three-and-ahalf years. After doing stadiums and sheds and amphitheaters, one of my main hardons is being indoors again, where the energy and spectacle and vibe is contained. The loudness of the audience, the interplay it's really cool."

So is Metallica's new stage setup, which American audiences will see in late winter. It's a huge, steel, raised figure-eight set in the center of the halls they play. The lighting is more sophisticated than past tours, and the pyro effects, for which the band's become notorious, are more, um...fiery, including the most flipped-out stunt I've ever seen a band pull off onstage. I'm loath to give it away, so let's just say it sure appears that if something went wrong, someone could get killed.

James half-jokes that the new production is so elaborate "if we break even on this tour, we're happy. But we want to put our money back into the band for things like this. It's worth it, because it's pretty fucking cool." So cool, and well-planned, that except for Lars, who's manacled to a drum kit, the players are free to rove anywhere on the immense stage and still hear their instruments "loud as fuck," as James puts it. "There are monitors everywhere, and our monitor guy has 24 mixes. He figured out that gives him something like 2,000 possible combinations for what's in the monitors, depending on where each of us is standing."

Just where Metallica stands in the current rock pantheon became an issue last summer when they were invited to headline Lollapalooza. The indie-rock aesthetics police were pissed. They charged Lollapalooza organizers with abandoning their alternative roots for metal's middlebrow appeal. But for some old-line

> Metallica fans, Lollapalooza also marked the band's final abandonment of hard-edged credibility—an erosion that began with Metallica's first video (for ...And Justice for All's anti-war epic "One"), continued through the jettisoning of their early trademark air-ham-

mer, all-downstroke guitar rhythms on the "Black Album," up to the inclusion of a bona-fide country tune, "Mama Said," on *Load*. For such fans, Metallica's decision to embrace pop songwriting values like hooks and melodies and hits—hell, they cut their hair, too—suggested a treasonous embrace of mainstream tastes.

A more generous view might credit Metallica as a classic alt-rock success story. Combining punk energy and attitude with the then-new wave of British heavy metal (bands like Tygers of Pang Tang, Angel Witch, Mötorhead) and an ear toward the clangor of Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music, Metallica hit early-Eighties rock like a barium enema-something hardly anybody wanted but which nonetheless reilluminated hard rock's guts and soul. As with fellow Eighties-bred superstars R.E.M., the rest was hard work and musical growth. These days, R.E.M. can rock out or sculpt ballads with generous melodies. So can Metallica.

And these days, explosive industrial outfits like Nine Inch Nails owe Metallica an unacknowledged debt for making sonic savagery a part of modern life's soundtrack. Says Kirk, who digs the sounds of Fear Factory and Ministry as much as he does John Lee Hooker's boogie, "Metallica was a foray into very extreme heaviness. I think a lot of musicians didn't know that those levels of extremity could be reached until we came out. We opened up a realm of possibility with our first three albums. Even for the grunge thing: I remember Kurt Cobain saying *Ride the Lightning* was one of his favorite albums because it 'wasn't stupid.' Those were his words.

"To me, our music is very urban sound-

ing. I agree there's an industrial vibe. It's grim, based in reality. Our music mirrores modern life as much as Motown's mirrored the romance of falling in love. It says, 'You're being manipulated, man, by the big corporations, by the media. It's just that nobody's sorted it out yet.' And it's getting weirder, still, with things like the Internet. It's supposed to be the ultimate means of communication, yet you're sitting alone in front of a computer 'talking' to someone else. It's isolation being sold as some sort of extroversion. Weird shit."

Indeed. But if the guys in Metallica have such a dire worldview, why do they look so happy? After tensions brought about by overwork, and inflexibility on the part of the group's hard-nosed founders Lars and James, the band members seem to be having fun again—exploring new sounds,

also gave me the space physically by leaving the studio, which would have never happened before. Right away we were able to start experimenting more with amplifiers and speakers."

the basic bass sounds on the album were made via a collection of amps, miked in various combinations: sumpeg svr heads, marshall guitar cabinets, boogie heads, and render 400-watt bass bins with 18inch speakers, plus a little gibson amp that didn't live through the sessions. "There was a lot of experimentation with analog pedals, old stuff. I always play with a mu-tron, which can be a cool, heavy thing, it doesn't-have to yield that 'boinky' bootsy collins kind of sound. It can also have some serious meat—a lot of character.

"so it was different pedals and all those amps at the same time, in three or four different rooms in the studio. In one room, we had those big 18s just booming the fuck out of it. and we had mics up in the corners, at ten feet away, at four feet away, and at two inches away. And we could mix those in different combinations, sob sock is a genius at that kind of stuff." For a taste of the power all that overdriven wattage provided, plus the MU-Tron pedal jacked to its nastiest level, check out sewsted's ultra-distortion on "the House Jack Built."

To get the ultra-lows that have throbbed through Metallica's last two studio albums, Newsted eschews five- or six-string basses in favor of an unconventional setup on his favored '82 spector, "1 put a .128 on top, a.105 in the second position, and take off the little string and tune the bass like a five-string, with a low 8. The bridge has to be set up differently for consistency, but it does offer quite a different sound." Newsted's gone the five-string route, but hasn't found anything that's felt right, for that matter, in his quest for sounds, perfect playability, and relief for his neck, aching from years of wearing a heavy render pbass around it while banging his head, he's tried just about everything off the top shelf, "night now 1'm using all sadowskys on the road, i've got seven or eight of them, and they're holding up.

"I've had a lot of problems with high-dollar basses. As far as being able to take the sweat, the slime and the temperature changes, the serious workout that instruments get from heavy gigs and weather, those high-end basses can't hang. The electronics freak out. They're also usually very heavy instruments. I could play them when I was 25, but that's not cool anymore."

In the studio, Newsted used an array of axes, including a Music Man and a zon, and his trusty old render precision bass collection: a '56, '58, and '59, '11f stevie Bay Vaughan played bass, that '59 would be his bass," he says. "It's just beat to shit, but it's like buttah."

#### JASON NEWSTED HITS NEW LOWS

hen jason sewsted replaced steallica's original bassist cliff bueton in 1986, he found himself part of an ensemble with the unusual practice of structuring its rhythms around james Herfield's guitar changes and tars ulrich's drums. In most rock bands, an absolutely symbiotic relationship between bass and drums is a given, but metallica's always played by its own rules, to the eatent that ulrich didn't need to hear sewsted's bass at all to pull off a concert flawlessly.

That's changed with Load, where Newsted experimented more with sonics and technique in the studio. It is bass even takes the lead on the rivering "ring Nothing." "As opposed to the rigidity of many of our songs in the past, this time james wrote songs that gave way for me to play some groovin' bass lines," says Newsted. "Lars and james

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writing new kinds of songs, sharing a more relaxed camaraderie. Even Hetfield, who earned his reputation as the most stoic Metallican, seems relatively cheerful witty, good-natured, enthusiastic.

They're also at a creative peak. Coming off *Metallica*, the so-called "Black Album" that sold more than nine million copies in the U.S. alone, they've put together a record that's got more melodies, more hooks, and more imagination than anything they've created in the past. *Load* debuted at number one on *Billboard*'s chart last June, selling 680,000 copies in its first week. And it's hung around the top 40 ever since.

In other words, everyone in the band is also rich—rich enough to afford, and need,

bodyguards on the road. No doubt some of that money is the result of Metallica's new contract with Elektra, following a 1994 lawsuit against the label. In September of that year, the band had sued to be released from its deal, invoking California Labor Code 2855,

which prohibits personal service contracts from being enforced for more than seven years.

That suit came in the wake of a shakeup at the label which resulted in the resignation of Elektra's then-chairman Bob Krasnow. Before Krasnow's departure, he and Metallica had allegedly worked out a joint venture relationship that waived album advances in exchange for a higher percentage of the profits than the 14% royalty rate Metallica had signed for ten years earlier. At the time of the suit's filing, Metallica's attorney Jody Graham Dunitz told Billboard reporter Melinda Newman that Warner Music Group chairman and CEO Robert Morgado nixed the joint venture after Krasnow left, then tried to renegotiate the old contract at a higher royalty rate. Metallica balked, feeling, Dunitz said, that the band "had a right to find its value in the marketplace."

Metallica eventually settled out of court, and the cash value of the new agreement remains a well-kept secret. Band members say they can't discuss it as part of the terms of the settlement. But label insiders say that Metallica now own their own masters, and that the band and Elektra share record and video production expenses 50/50 while receiving a similar percent of the profits.

As Elektra's only real superstar rock act, Metallica was in an excellent position to bargain. The band's back catalog alone is a goldmine. *Metallica* has been on the Top 200 Albums charts since its debut, and when *Load* was released, 1988's ...*And Justice for All*, '84's *Ride the Lightning*, and '86's *Master of Puppets* all moved into *Billboard*'s Top Pop Catalog Albums chart, at four, six, and seven, respectively.

"We've got a very cool deal that's very, very different from most other deals," Ulrich acknowledges. "But, obviously, we've sold 35, 40 million records worldwide, so we're pretty set."



As it happened, though, the band's most recent rebirth followed a near-collapse after the "Black Album" became a mega-hit. Lars explains: "As the record went along, we kept touring and touring, and things kept getting bigger. There were more and more opportunities to play for more and more people, and we thought we might never have the chance to do it again at that level—getting invited to Eastern Bloc countries and out to the Pacific Rim. 'How do you know if a place like Singapore is going to be willing to let us into their country four years from now? We gotta go.' That was the attitude.

"I wouldn't exactly say I was hungry or driven, but I wanted to cram this thing down everybody's throat as much as I could. Just play everywhere! I was the one who really pushed. And I was very stressed out about it. Finally, after touring for a couple years, our manager came to us and said, 'Do you guys want to do another European leg in stadiums?' I said, 'Yeah, we gotta do this.' But James said, 'No, I'm gonna fuck up my voice.'

"We had started really pushing the whole touring thing relentlessly when we were, like, 26. And when the tour behind the 'Black Album' ended, we were looking at 30. I realized in the next year that other things besides the band were important to me. I think I became less anal in terms of how much we want to push ourselves, work-wise. We'd just had a level of success that was unbelievable—how much was left to prove on that score? I could relax and let go a little bit.

"But there's still a lot of places to go tour," he adds. "Antarctica, the prairies of Central Africa, the swamps of the Amazon..."

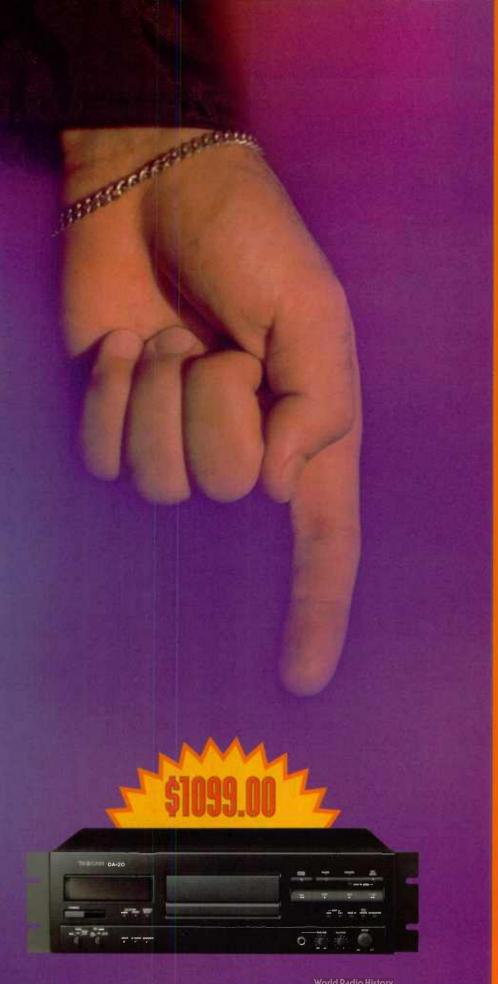
Following the "Black Album" tour, the band members scattered. Lars threw himself into his scuba diving; James spent time on his ranch and hunted. Jason built a home studio and jammed with other play-

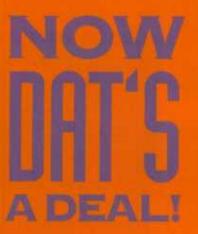
> ers. "I tried to play different kinds of music with different kinds of people, different ages, from different walks of life jazz players, dub guys, other metal dudes," he says. "That started all the experimenting that came on this album.

"The whole reason I played

with outside musicians was so I can be the best bass player possible for the songs James comes up with. I've learned a lot from recording bands in my own studio and from being in the big studio with [producer] Bob Rock, because he teaches you stuff without knowing it. You just soak so much up, because he just knows so much about the technology and what needs to take place. And I learned a lot from playing with all kinds of other musicians—things I would have otherwise not been able to bring back into the studio."

For Kirk, staying off the road allowed him to explore the textural guitar playing he'd become fascinated with listening to recordings by the likes of Robert Fripp and Adrian Belew, and to get back into the blues. He became friends with fellow Bay Area resident Carlos Santana and sat in with him at a benefit for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences school outreach program. "John Lee Hooker was there, and Buddy Guy, Vernon Reid, Wayne Shorter, Al Hendrix... But John Lee Hooker did not understand my piercing at all," he adds with a smile. "He just kept staring at it. When I met him, he said, 'What's this trinket in your lip?'"





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#### STRUNG OUT: HAMMETT & HETFIELD FIND A FRESH GUITAR APPROACH

et's get some weird shit going," was james netfield's rallying cry when he and Kirk nammett found themselves back in the studio to record the guitars for *Load*. It was a call nammett was happy to take. "I was tired of the traditional approach," he explains, "and I became interested in the idea of coming up with a really cool sound that was more a part of the song than a guitar solo.

"And the means didn't matter," he continues. "A good example is the first break in "the nouse jack suilt." I recorded that at my home studio, then reversed it with [bigidesign] pro-tools, and added tremolo and weird flange, we put it on CD at my studio, and sob sock flew it in when it came time to track that part of the song. I think having a textural part like that, instead of your traditional guitar solo, just opens the songs up more."

Hammett says there are some things on *word* that were a hard sell to his bandmates, tike the cloud of mosquitoes that's buzzing over the opening riff in "sing nothing," "that's a drone i came up with when i heard that intro," Hammett relates, "that's the is string on the 14th fret; and i just bend it up to an  $\varepsilon$  and simultaneously pluck the open  $\varepsilon$  string, with a flange and some auto-panning on that, i played it on my parker fly guitar, i think it definitely establishes a mood right off." so does the organ-like guitar sound, somewhat like the tone of Hendrik's stratocaster on "pali gap," that appears on "isleeding Me" and "cure."

"that's the [soland] vy-8," says nammett, on 'cure,' it's way down in the mix, but it fattens up the chorus so much, but you don't want to just let the curting-edge technology stand by itself. You get great results when you bridge the gap between digital and analog by doing things like setting up a sound with the vg-8 and slapping an old maestro





#### fuzzbox on it."

Although metallica first used slide guitar in space brushstrokes on the "Black Album," it's a staple of Load's six-string palette. Hetfield plays slide with a wah-wah on "Mama said," and Hammett slings steel on "Ain't My Bitch," "Bleeding Me," "The outlaw torn," and "poor twisted Me." usually, he favors his old gibson es-335 or a les paul junior for his slide playing, and there's so much slide on *Load* that now you'll also catch him with his finger in a tube on stage "on 'Ain't My Bitch,' that's slide with an old MXB phase 100-a total cop of jiminy page's sound on 'in my time of bying," Hammett allows, "I was standing in the studio cutting that solo, and bob bock and i looked at each other and said, "this is not right for some reason." I suggested breaking it up by doing some riffing with slide here and there, like puane Allman. Bob said, 'Ehhhh, do slides through the whole thing." And it was one of those little epiphanies that happen in the studio sometimes."

Hammett is especially proud of his slide in the middle of the solo on "outlaw rorn," which combines his interest in blues tradition with his newfound thirst for sonic sculpting. "I grabbed a slide and held it at a 45degree angle so it's not really at the proper intonation—more like subtones or microtones—and slid it down the neck. The sound's real foreign, i've seen guitar magazines try to write that out in tab, and when they come to that part, there's a note that it's some weird outboard effect. But it's not."

If there's a little more bite in some of Load's leads, that's in part because of creative use of wah-wah pedals by both Hammett and Hetfield. "sick and Looth love wah," says Hetfield. "sometimes I'll just kind of halfway cock it down to get a little honk going on the guitar's signal. In 'Mama said,' I do these little digs between the phrases, kind of Jimmy page-y clean wah, and it was me playing a relecaster with a parsonswhite] B-Bender and Bob working the wah in



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Hetfield also used a talk box, a device made famous by peter erampton and more recently revived by alice in chains's jerry cantrell. "Lused that to double the vocals and get some huge sickness going on in the background," says Hetfield, unfortunately, the device proved too unstable for road use, "on this record, the boundaries between our guitar playing really bled into each other," Hetfield says, "we both experimented with sounds—lots of effects and stompbon doodads. L played some B-3 stuff here and there, Kirk's more the slide guy, which frustrates me, and L did all the B-Bender stuff, but the solo

Kirk also found time to make tapes, full of licks and riffs and changes and solo lines and sounds: a grab bag of ideas he could bring to the studio sessions for *Load*. Historically, Metallica's recordings have pretty much been the Ulrich and Hetfield show. Typically, they'd go into the studio weeks before Newsted and Hammett, setting the tempos, laying down the drum parts, cutting the rhythm guitar tracks, even some guitar solos and lead lines. Working with producer Bob Rock, of Bon Jovi fame, on the *Metallica* sessions changed that a bit; the group sounded less like a monolith and more like a band.

When Metallica reconvened for *Load* in May '95 at the Plant Studios in Sausalito, California, Kirk and Jason were creatively stoked by their outside work, while Lars and James were more relaxed. "I went on a hunting trip for a few weeks, and when I came back there was this tape," James explains. "They said, 'We've been doing some things. Kirk played rhythm guitar.' I was like, 'What the fuck?' I listened, and it was cool.

"So the whole studio thing changed. We found this new looseness. After the songs were coming together, we'd just let Jason and Bob go into a room and fiddle, and they'd come up with four or five different bass tracks. And we'd listen to them and pick the winner. The songs definitely wrote themselves. The parts came right together, or we'd have some changes and we'd jam on them, and it wouldn't quite click until somebody came up with a new part of the arrangement, or a vocal thing, or a tempo change—and suddenly it all fit.

"The idea that everybody's writing is a little bit of a misconception," Hetfield

says, "because Lars and I really sift through all the stuff, and it gets thumbs down or thumbs up from us. But we'll give every riff a chance. Kirk had a lot of good riffs on tape for this album. [Hammett has seven co-writing credits on *Load.*] And Lars and I would take one of those riffs and jam on it, and hammer it, until it made sense in a song. Like the riffs from 'Ronnie.' One's Kirk's and one's mine. We've got two guitar players; we finally decided it should sound like we've got two guitar players."

"Playing rhythm guitar and getting more involved with this album was much healthier and very inspiring," Hammett adds. "In the past, I was preoccupied with my solos. I'd be sitting in a corner practicing while the songs were going down. This time I contributed musical ideas as well, and got involved in textures and guitar edits and where the mixes were going. I wish we'd started doing this long ago."

The creative atmosphere grew to the point where it led James to break new turf in his vocal performances. "For the 'Black Album' sessions, Bob tried to get me to ad lib more vocal parts, between phrases, that kind of thing," he says. "But I was rigid; I just could not do it. This time he couldn't shut me up. We had old Green Bullet mics, and a lot of times I had a Green Bullet in one hand and a vocal mic in another, and I was just running around the studio, throwing the mics around and jumping off the mixing desk. It was fun! When the Bullet sounded too distorted, we'd just mix up more of the other mike."

Hetfield also credits Rock with turning him on to vocal melodies—the ingredient that, along with monster riffs, has made

and rhythm parts really blurred, if he had the vibe for something, he did it, if I had the vibe, it was mine."

Hammett continues: "Bob Bock would sit down with James and me to make sure that we didn't just double our rhythm guitar parts, we're always playing different things, even if we're both playing rhythm, that makes the songs more full. Lyuess I'm trying to be more tasteful and melodic," he says, "It's weird, because all these guitar magazines used to say, "Kirk Hammett's fast, but melodic," when this album came out, a lot of them said, "Kirk Hammett's lost his frenzied, spazzed-out solos for a more bluesy kind of sound." They can't really make up their mind."

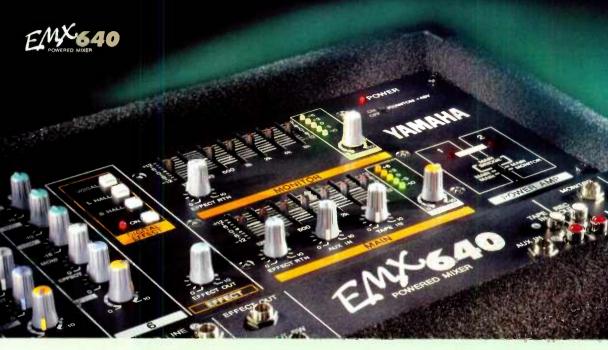
> *Load* work for mainstream radio. "I just knew that the vocals were gonna make or break some of these songs, because a lot of them are so simple," he says. "There's not a lot of guitar stuff to keep your attention, so something has to take it to the next level, and most of the time that's going to be the vocal."

> The creative atmosphere of the session was so enervating that Hetfield and company ended up writing and recording nearly thirty songs during a nine-month stretch. Some seventeen or eighteen remain uncompleted, but should be ready for release as a new Metallica album later this year. "But this isn't the shit we had left over," Lars insists. "These are solid songs. That never happened before. Mostly, the reason a song got on *Load* instead of the record that's coming next is that the lyrics were completed."

> Hetfield adds that the prospect of writing nearly thirty sets of lyrics for the new songs was intimidating. Letting some of them sit a while took pressure off, and let him concentrate on guitar and vocals especially vocals. "What I really wanted was to get a little more character into them," he says. "They might not always be in key or in time, but they've got feel. I think that came from listening to other guys I dig, especially Tom Waits. Sometimes it sounds like he just pushes 'record' and goes, 'Good enough.' Doing all that stuff was a radical change for me."

> For musicians who are used to free collaboration in a group environment, Hetfield's loosening of Metallica's creative reins might not seem like such a big deal. But it's worth understanding that James has been on his own since he moved out of his

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parents' restrictive religious household in his teens. And that he and Lars built Metallica from dust into one of the world's most popular, most successful bands purely on the strength of their songwriting, sweat, and vision. That's a heavy burden, and it hasn't been easy to lay it down.

Plus, Hetfield is a creature of habit. Hence the catbox, a tray filled with earth spotted just inside the dressing room backstage at the Milan and Torino shows. James, did someone bring their cat on tour?

"I'm the cat, man." Huh? "On Lollapalooza, I got into this thing: My stage boots were too clean when I first got them. 'Fuck,' I figured, 'I better dirty these things up.' So every night before I went on stage I kinda kicked around in the dirt and rubbed it into them. Then it became kind of a ritual. Every town I'm in, I have to get local dirt on my boots for good luck. That was fine at Lollapalooza, 'cause you're outdoors everywhere. But here, I have to have somebody bring me some dirt."

Riding back from the Milan gig to the hotel, eyeballing the marvelous old architecture of the city, Jason Newsted says that "after ten years of touring, we're finally making time to see things in these cities. It's the first time, you know. We have days off. The day before yesterday, we went to the Sistine Chapel.

"The vibe's quite a bit more grown-up now. People are more individual, more independent. The feeling of commitment to the group is still intact. But people have found they have interests apart from the band that makes the attitudes they bring back to the band healthier. Everybody knows there's a world out there. You can forget that, when you work so hard on one thing for such a long time."

#### ROAD WORTHY

n this tour, JANES WETTELD'S found an organic way to achieve his trademark, highly compressed crunch—if you consider purting all your boogie 402 cabinets (loaded with celestion vintage 30 speakers) in a big black box organic.

"nasically, they're in road cases, about ten feet long and maybe five feet wide. They've got mics bolted inside them, the sound guys come in, plug into the box, and we're ready to go, so the quality of the guitar sound isn't affected by the hall or whatever, the same sound comes out of that box every time, we have a backline for ourselves for feel, but you could turn that off and it's loud as shit still, 'cause we've got so many fuckin' monitors all over the stage," uetfield's mysterious black box gets its power from two Mesa/Boogie tri-wis heads, "to get a couple of different sounds going, But those provide the main crunch," for clean sounds, he's switched from a starshall to a boland je-tzo, making heavy use of its inimitable chorus for the opening to "Enter soundman," among other numbers. An sphere parametric to provides his sonic fine-tuning, tive, james still favors his custom esp explorer-type site-strings, fitted with EMG pickups covered by Emie ball .oros. tue's also gotten back into using his gibson riving v for the stage. In the studio, it was another matter, those guitars were joined by his white ralcon (rou'll hear it on "until it sleeps"), a breathtaking classic gretsch hollowbody model, us also heated up a 'sz-reissue relecaster with a parsons-white B-Bender and a classic '03 gibson sg that producer nob nock gave him for his birthday, near that sg slammed through an old orange super fuzz on "wasting sny mate" ("beautiful and ugly at the same time," james observes) and "the outlaw roor."

metfield and main massiver mode entensive use of the boland vgit guitar modeling system during the *toads*essions. "It lets you get any kind of guitar or amp sound: strat, rele, i.es paul; Marshall, render tweed, AC30. And you can move the mic around a simulated room, and there's a bunch of digital effects that come with it. It's nuts; (love it to death," says nammetr, the studio amp selection was also a smorgashoard, soldano, Marshall, and Mesa/Boogie heads, Marshall and Boogie cabinets, and combos by Matchless and Boland. There was also a pile of vintage analog effects being shared, from MAR phase 100s to Maestro fuzzboxes to Boss flangers and a jerrybuilt talk box, Live, Rich's amp setup is a simple workhorse, albeit a clydesdale. It's a Mesa/Boogie Tri-Azis and a Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier run through 4212s with vintage 30s, "The Tri-Azis is my clean sound, the Dual Rectifier is chythm, and my leads are both of them combined, for a bigger sound," he notes, onstage, Hammett Uses a custom-built tone/volume pedal and a Boss multi-effects unit for flanging, chorus, and the rest of the basics. He favors his custom esp strat-style guitars, strung with Dean Markley .010s, for the sweet stuff, he'll use his '62 Les paul special. And an ibanez Tube screamer—always an ibanez Tube screamer. In the studio, Hammett's guitar selection was liberalized to include his '63 strat, a '58 Les paul, a gibson 68-335, and a tes paul junior.

The only thing JASON NEWSTED touches onstage, besides his seven touring basses by noger sadowsky, is a Morley wah/volume pedal, otherwise, he's got a trio of stomphones—noss flanger and bass chorus and an MXB phase 90—which are activated offstage, and a rech 21 sansAmp XXL and has briver for extra hair, tive, Newsted has long relied on a combination of Ampeg svr-11 tube heads running cabinets outfitted with either two 18s, a 15 paired with a 10, or 8 x 10 cabs, it all runs through dbx 166 compressors and a Mackie cu 1402 miner, Jason's strings are tabellas, "fat as possible, and roundwound."

Finally, drums are trama star classics, with toms scaled down from 12", 13", 14", 15", and two 18"s to today's lineup of a 10", 12", 16" and 182this double-kicks are 222 also down two inches, and beaten mercilessly with trama's new powerglide kick-pedal system. It is bell brass snare's a 14" by 6 1/22 and his array of zildjian brilliants on stage are a 17" medium crash, two 18" medium crashes, a 19" medium crash, a 20" ping ride, an 18" china trash, a 20" custom china, a 12" custom splash, and 14" by nobeat high-hat. The heads? they're nemo, and ulrich's sticks are aluminum-shaft vastons.

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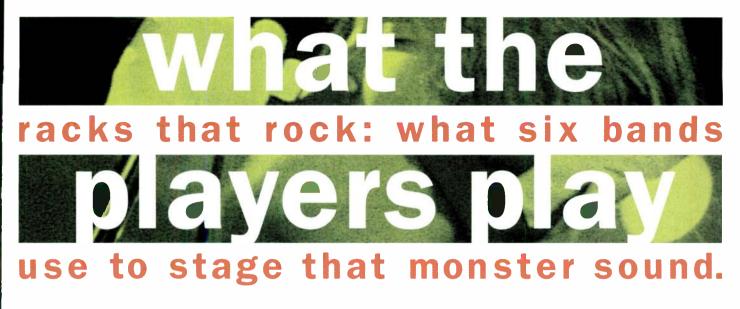
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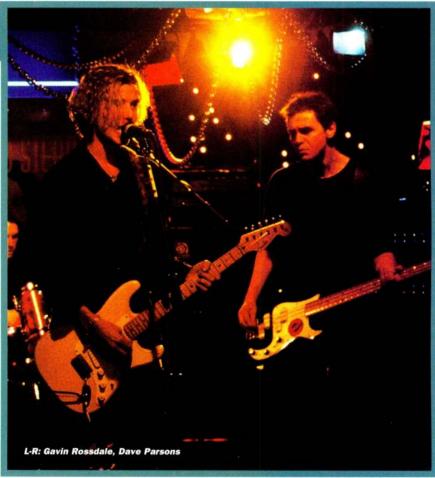
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## bush

igel Pulsford, the lead guitarist for Bush, is on the phone from his home in London, and he sounds awful glad to be there. No wonder. Two hundred and fifty shows in approximately eighteen months isn't a schedule to sniff at. The last month alone has included a threeweek jaunt through the Far East-including Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Japan-and a quick visit to the States for appearances on Howard Stern and Saturday Night Live to promote the band's second album Razorblade Suitcase (Trauma/Interscope). "We're all fucked at this point, basically," Pulsford admits with a laugh.

Of course, during the course of this long past couple of years, this relatively young band has learned a lot about live performing. "You can't have too many preconceptions," Nigel says, "and you've got to be ready for anything." That's why he's got both a complicated switching system for his logic-challenging amp and effect setup (built by Bob Bradshaw of Custom Audio Electronics), and a simpler backup in case of emergency. "It's just a pedalboard with some fuzzboxes going right into the amp if the Bradshaw doesn't work. That's happened a couple of times, and it reminds me that it's actually cool to do it that way. You get bulldozed into having all this gear, but the old-fashioned way still works." Of



the several distortion units he employs in his quest for maximum crunchiness, Pulsford singles out for praise the Fulltone 69 and the Bixsonic Expandora. As for the four-amp rig he's been taking on the road all the while, Pulsford is making a change: from a recent-vintage Fender Twin Reverb to a new Mesa/Boogie Heartbreaker. "I just got it, and I used it for the first time on the radio in New York. Its clean tone is great."

Hopefully, one thing won't be changing soon: Bush's live sound team, led by Brian Ruggles. "You've got to have friends on the road," Pulsford says, "people who know what sounds you're trying to achieve. The people in charge of the P.A. hold so much power over you, because they can hear what's going on and you can't. And we can play pretty loud, so it's important to keep it understandable too. We've been lucky to have a great crew right from the start."

Even so, it's taken a while for Nigel to get used to some of that crew's duties changing strings, for instance. "For a long time, I wouldn't let anyone else change my strings, because I thought no one else could do it right. I had to do it myself, and I had rules about it. I'd never change them before a soundcheck, for one. I finally realized that it was superstition. Well, mostly superstition—I never used to break strings, and now that the tech's started putting them on, I notice they do break occasionally."

In January, Bush starts rehearsals for the next proper tour, beginning in England and hitting America in March.

#### Bush

avin Rossdale. Guitars: Fender Stratocasters and Jazzmasters. Amps: Three Mesa/Boogie Trem-O-Verbs, two 4x12 Mesa/Boogie cabinets. Effects: two Bixsonic Expandoras, Mu-Tron pitch shifter. Strings: Emie Ball, .010 to .046. Vocal Mic: Shure Beta 58. Nigel Pulsford. Guitars: Four Fender Stratocasters (one '62 and three '89s), 1958 Gibson Les Paul Junior. Amplification: Fender Princeton, Mesa/Boogie Heartbreaker, Trem-O-Verb, and Blue Angel, through Mesa/Boogie 2:90 power amp into three Mesa/Boogie 4x12 cabinets. Effects: Fulltone

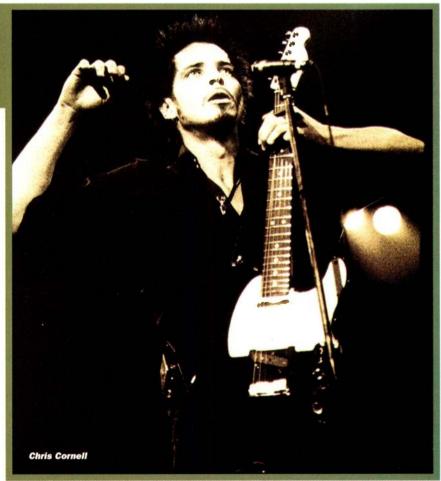
Among the things they're looking into are carpeting to cut down the stage volume ("We can't go deaf," Pulsford acknowledges, "but we can't wear earplugs either—we've tried and it just sounds like you're in another room") and possibly bringing along a string section for at least a few dates. "We're thinking of asking the Rachel's, who are a great 69 and DejaVibe, Boss delay, pitch shifter, and Turbo Overdrive, Prescription Electronics Yardbox and Experience, Bixsonic Expandora, TC Electronic M2000, CAE Super Tremolo, Mu-Tron flanger and octave pedals, Morley wah/volume pedal. Switching System: Custom Audio Electronics RSB. Strings: Ernie Ball, .010 to .046. Dave Parsons. Bass: Fender Precision. Amplification: Two '70s Ampeg SVTs into two SVT cabinets. Strings: Ernie Ball. Robin Goodridge, Drums: DW. Cymbals: Zildjian. Heads: Remo. Sticks: Vic Firth. Stage Mics: Shure 451s for amps, Shure SM57s and AKG C414s for drums, Cambridge Audio for cabinets.

band," Nigel reveals. "But honestly, I'm not as interested in doing it as I was. We've done it before, and since *MTV Unplugged* came along, everyone seems to have decided they'd like to have a quartet playing with them. But we'll see. We're certainly not getting a keyboard player, I'll tell you that much." —Mac Randall

## soundgarden

The best of the sound of the sound of the set of the se

Which, as drummer Matt Cameron explains, is the band's live philosophy. "We try to keep it wide open and anything-canhappen," he says from Seattle days before the band left for a European tour. "We don't try to perform exact note-for-note renditions of our recorded versions of the songs. We like to bash it out a little bit more, I guess, and not really worry about perfection. That's what the studio is good for, getting the perfect performance."



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**World Radio History** 

#### Soundgarden

hris Cornell. Guitars: 1996 Fender American Standard Telecaster, mid-Seventies Gibson Les Paul Deluxe. Amplification: Marshall JMP-1. Cabinets: Mesa/Boogie 4x12 Rectifiers. Rack: Two each of the following: JL Cooper MSB Rev II MIDI router, Mesa amp switch, DigiTech GSP 2101 multieffects, Peavey Tube Fex, Mesa/Boogie Triaxis tube preamp, Uptown Technology Flash

If you've tuned in along the Soundgarden trail, you know they've ventured from the early dirty sounds of *Louder Than Love* to the shinier tones of *Superunknown*, but the touring philosophy has remained the same. On the *Superunknown* tour it got a little tricky when they brought a real live Leslie cabinet

## ben harper

f you really want to get down the brass tacks of the matter, consider this quote: "Ben's a real guy, he's got a real message, it's real songwriting and he's playing real instruments." That comes from Bob Coke, who has been Ben Harper's soundman for the past two years. "The crux of his deal is really the intelligibility in it," he continues, "and a lot of our approach to sound has been to really respect his acoustic side."

And so the key to the Ben Harper live sound has been to make Ben's message as accessible as possible to the folks who come and hear Harper and The Innocent Criminals. The players that surround Harper (Oliver Charles on drums, Juan Nelson on bass and percussionist Leon Mobley) are simply strong musicians who don't rely on effects or tricks to get their sound through. The stage floor sports a grand total of four effects pedals, which fits into the Harper philosophy. "To keep the music alive you have to give it space to breathe," he says. "You clutter it up and it doesn't have space to move and communicate."

After experimenting with a number of

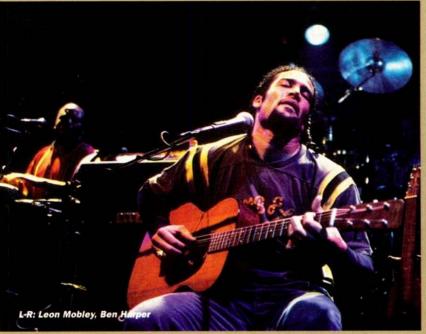
Switcher, DigiTech DSR-24, Mesa/Boogie Simul-Class 2:90 power amp, EMB custom switcher, ColorSound wah, Lake Butler MIDI Mitigator. Strings: Ernie Ball, various gauges. Vocal Mics: Shure SM57s. Wireless System: Shure. Ben Shepherd. Basses: Fender Jazz, Musicman Stingray. Amplification: Mesa/Boogie V-2 preamp, Mesa/Boogie M-2000. Cabinets: Mesa/Boogie 2x15 diesels. Wireless System: Shure. Kim Thayil. Guitars: Guild S-100,

on the road to capture the guitar parts on "Black Hole Sun," and on the sweep through the States they've programmed some background vocal parts for the songs "Blow Up The Outside World" and "Boot Camp."

Cameron sums it up this way: "Chris [Cornell] has started to delve into the Musicman Silhouette, Gibson Les Paul. Amplification: Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifiers (3), Cabinets: Mesa/Boogie 4x12 Rectifiers. Effects: Dunlop Crybaby wah and RotoVibe, Boss OC-2 octave and CE-2 chorus. Strings: Ernie Ball. Wireless System: Samson UHF. Matt Cameron. Drums: Ayotte kit with 22" kick, 12", 13", 16" toms and snares by Keplinger. Cymbals: Zildjian. Pedals: Yamaha and DW. Sticks: Vic Firth. Heads: Remo.

world of rack systems and programming different sounds for different songs." Then he starts to laugh a bit and finishes, "But Kim [Thayil] is still guitar cord into amp and Ben [Shepherd] and I just kinda dial in our own sounds and go for it." Truer words have never been spoken.

---David Farinella



different setups, the team has come up with a rig that Harper calls a good starting point. More than anything else—including the fact that Harper has a habit of singing anywhere from six inches away to right up against the microphone—it's his Weissenborn lap guitars that have perplexed the team. As Harper says with a laugh, "It gets a little complicated, and it so easily moves into that guitar geek category, which is all right, because I am professedly that." The solution has come in two installments, the first being the placement of

Sunrise pickups in all of Harper's guitars, including the traveling Gibson acoustic (though that gets miked too). For the Weissenborn it's a perfect pickup, capturing the resonance of the guitar top, the acoustic qualities generated by the air circulating inside the soundhole, and the magnetic pulses of the strings.

The second step in clinching the Harper sound has been his selection of amplifiers. After going through a number of heads, amps and assorted equipment, Harper has latched onto a Groove Tubes



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amp. "I feel Groove Tubes are making the best amps on the market today. They're just amazing," he says. And at to medium. Offener Chartes, Drums: Inmahi Sunburst Custom Recording AT, including a 10° Porkpic snate and a vintage Loody Reliance scare, Cymbals: Associment of Sabians and Zhdyana, Sticks: Vic Firth Cormine Apple: Juan Mateon, Bass: Stuart Spector Rive-string, Amplifiers: SWR Grand Pris preamp, Gravin MachoTech 1204 power amp. Cabinets: SWR Gollath II 4:00, SWR

the end of it all he comments, "Lord knows it took me this long to get to where I am with it, man. It's taken me a

Goliath II 15' Pedal: Boss OC-2 actave. Strings: D'Addania roundwound medium gauge Leon Mobiley, Percussion: Remo 12' and 14' tubenos, Remo 14' djembe Remo 15' djembe, Remo 22' djundjuri, Latin Percussion Generation 2 Series bonges with Remo hoeds, various analysis and tato bearines. Cymbals: Sabion 10' splash cymbal. Sticks: Vic Firths.

long time because you walk in with a Weissenborn and they just don't know what to do." **—David Farinella** 

## danzig

lenn Danzig's guitar must be awfully happy to see him leave town. On the concert trail, the Danzig frontman concentrates on his singing, leaving the guitar work to new bandmate Tommy Victor. But in studio during the making of the latest Danzig album, *Blackacidevil*, the well-muscled bandleader treated his solid-body Gibson Les Paul with malice aforethought.

"I like to take a guitar and bang it and make it scream," Danzig chuckles. "Make it feel like it's dying. That's what it's there for—to make noise. And whatever I have to do to get the sounds out of it, I'm gonna do. To my Les Paul's credit, it puts up with everything I do and just doesn't ever break. I've actually had past bandmembers walk out of the studio because I wasn't treating my guitar with respect. But with Tommy, not only is he a great player, he beats up his guitars even more than I do."

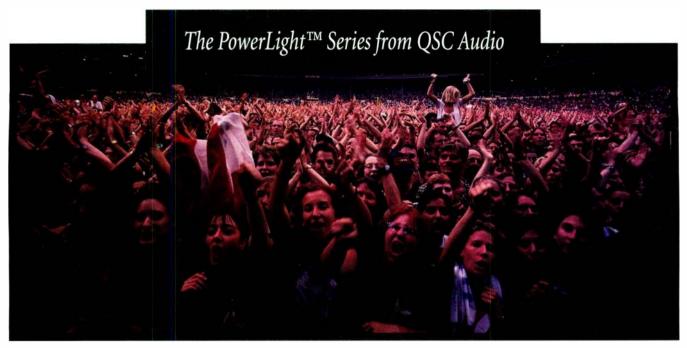
Victor's assault is helping to recreate live the dark charge of the album, which sets such Danzig staples as blood, sex, and unholy reptiles against a newly tooled blend of fierce guitar and industrial clamor. That sonic blend began to turn up on 1994's *Danzig 4*, but the singer says the sound is an older idea that's now receiving state-of-the-art execution. "The new stuff uses a lot of elements I was trying to use in the Misfits and Samhain—but the technology's gotten better. We're light years ahead, and if you can think something up, you can find a way to make it work. On our last



two albums, the band has been really free to play with its sound."

And Danzig feels he's found a way to make that freedom work in concert. "It can be tough to mix live and programmed sounds on stage, but I approach this differently than most people. A lot of performers use click tracks or play with headphones on, and to me it seems they're just kind of making it hard on themselves trying to

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redo what's on the record. My attitude is, just put the programming through the monitors like another instrument. You keep a live feel that way. It's like having one more musician onstage—although it's a musician who's unable to stop."

As for the humans he leads, Danzig who also played the lion's share of bass and keyboards on *Blackacidevil*—says his band pumps up his demonic visions in admirable fashion. "The songs don't change much live—they're just more intense and exciting. And a lot of that really comes from the people in front of us. When people are going crazy, and you know they can't get enough, it's a real payoff. With the new songs and the new line-

#### Danzig

Ienn Danzig. Mics: Usually Shure SM58s. Tommy Victor. Guitars: Fernandes H Series. Strings: Dean Markley, .010-.052. Picks: Dunlop. Amps: Mesa/Boogie head and 4x12 cabinet. Effects: Behringer Intelligate, Rocktron Intellifex, Vox wah pedal. Wireless System: Nady 950GS. Josh Lazie. Bass: Ibanez TR300. Strings: Dean Markley, .045-.105. Picks: Dunlop. Amps: two Ampeg SVT heads, two Ampeg 8x10

up, people are not only really shocked by the music, they really like it. That's very cool."

Can the dark sounds ever shock

cabinets. *Effects:* dbx 160x compressor, ProCo Rat, Dunlop fuzz wah. *Wireless System*: Nady 950GS wireless system. *Joey Castillo. Drums:* Tama Artstar Custom—24" kick, 13" rack, 16" floor tom, 18" floor tom, 14" snare. 14" Ludwig Black Beauty snare. *Cymbals:* Paiste—14" hi-hats, 18" heavy china, 19" power crash, 20" power crash, 22" power ride. Tama hardware, Tama Iron Cobra pedals. *Heads:* Remo. *Sticks:* Calato Regal Tip 7000. *Electronics:* ddrum3, Tascam DA-88 recorder.

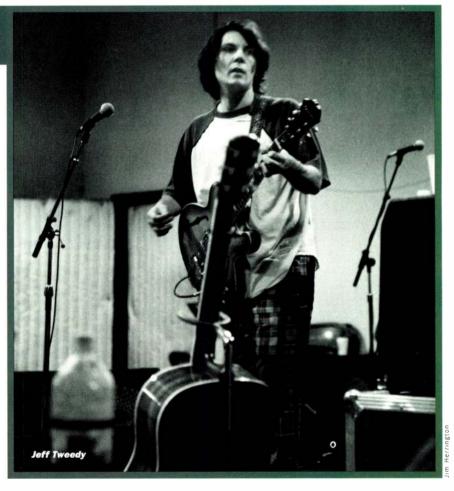
Danzig himself? "My music makes me happy," he says with a laugh. "But the fact that I'm still here—that's shocking." —**Chuck Crisafulli** 

## wilco

ilco's Jay Bennett has been slashed: The former guitarist is now a guitarist/keyboardist. Bennett joined Wilco after the release of 1995's *A.M.*, adding preternaturally tasty licks to the band's sublime country rock. But while in the studio for sessions that led to this year's masterfully moody *Being There*, Bennett was encouraged by Wilco frontman and songwriter Jeff Tweedy to experiment with keys. "I didn't ask to play keyboards," shrugs Bennett. "It just kind of happened."

In fact, much of the music on this double-disc sophomore effort was allowed to "just happen." The band wanted to experiment with sounds and textures, so they left a lot of room for in-studio inspiration. "The bulk of the record is Jeff saying 'Here's a song' and the band saying 'Okay, let's go play it," says Bennett. "A lot of what helped us get varying vibes was avoiding cutting everything with two guitars, bass, and drums: It was always guitar, some kind of keyboard, bass, and drums. I used two pianos, a [Hammond] B-3, a [Hohner] Clavinet, a Wurlitzer, a beat-tocrap Rhodes—whatever felt right."

To bring the feelings back around in concert, Bennett is still splitting his time between guitars and keyboards, though he and the band don't do note-for-note replications of what's on record. "We might not play particular parts, but there will be



something there to cover the vibe. On a tune that had piano and organ, maybe I'll play piano and pedal steel will fill in for organ. Actually, I don't think we could really play exact parts even if we wanted to; it's more about filling a certain space with a certain feel. We talk a lot about getting the right tempo, about which sections should be shorter or longer live, and we work a lot on the sequence of songs in a set. All those things are higher priorities than playing parts."

Bennett's double role in the band means that he is almost constantly in motion during concerts. "Physically it's hard to go from instrument to instrument because

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World Radio History

#### Wilco

ay Bennett. 1969 Gibson SG, Fender Telecaster (dropped D). Gibson Mercury 15"x10," Vox AC-30 w/ top boost. Ibanez Tube Screamer, MXR Blue Box, Ernie Ball volume pedal, Roland Space Echo, A/B box. D'Addario .010s. Plus "a shifting cast of portable keyboards." Jeff Tweedy. 1995 Gibson Vintage-AJ, 1953 Gibson J-45, 1958 Gretsch Chet Atkins w/ Bigsby, 1966

piano and guitar require different hand muscles, and if I play more than three or four songs on one or the other I start to feel like I have mittens. It's better for me to switch every couple of tunes. Technically, it's one more thing to go wrong, one more thing to stay focused on. I wasn't looking forward to it, and it took a while to get used Epiphone Casino, 1995 Hamer Daytona (dropped D). Ludwig "Bellevue" 4-string. Acoustic guitars run to a Countryman D.I. Morley A/B/C switch box, Diaz Tremodillo, MXR distortion, Experience pedal. D'Addario. John Stirratt. 1971 Fender Precision. Ampeg SVT head or Hartke Model 7000 through Ampeg SVT (8"x10") cabinet. D'Addario, medium gauge. Bob Egan. Steel guine 1929 National

to, but now I'm enjoying it; I get to sit down every couple of songs. That's not such a bad deal."

When things do go wrong onstage, Bennett takes it in stride. "We've had three keyboard disasters in the last swing of our tour—meltdowns and jammed pitch shifters that meant I had to do some instant Triolian custom fitted w/ two pickups through Fishman preamp & DI box. 1954 Rickenbacker Iap slide, Zane Beck 12-string tuned to E9, run through DOD analog delay, Tech 21 SansAmp, Boss EQ, & Fender Reverb. Peavey Stereo Chorus 400, loaded w/ old EV 12" speakers. *Ken Coomer.* blue sparkle Fibes (26" kick drum, 16" & 14" floor toms, 12" rack tom), Pearl snare. Paiste (22" ride, 20" splash, 17" crash, hihats).

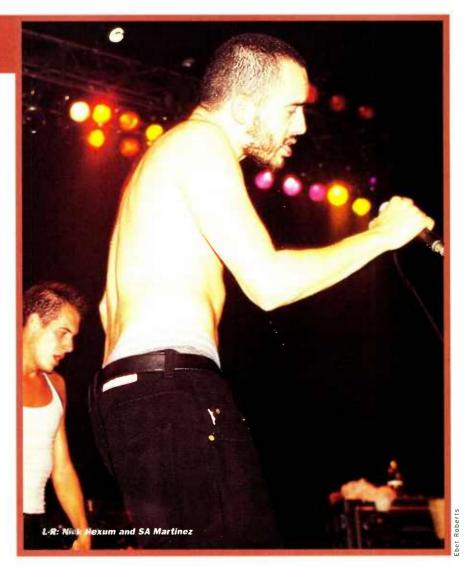
transposing. But you can't panie. I think it's funny; it adds to the circus environment. Nothing ruins a show like watching a player yell at his tech or his band or at the monitor guy. You're out there playing music. Have fun no matter what happens; that's what people will react to." —*Chuck Crisafulli* 

## 311

ot to knock the amped-up mix of rock, reggae, rap, punk, and funk that Nebraska-bred 311 have committed to disc on their three full-length releases, but they seem to be one of those bands that listeners don't really "get" until they see one of the band's frenetic, fully charged live shows.

"I agree," says Nick Hexum, who sings, plays guitar, and writes much of the material for the group. "Our sound is pretty different when we take it out there. We deliver the songs with more force, and there's a heavier groove and a power that you can't really appreciate until you see us play. We do have 'album fans,' but the most important thing to us has always been the [live] playing. We're not going to be media manipulators, or fashion kings, or this week's bunch of bad boys. What we want to do is play the music."

311 bring their wickedly tight arrangements to life with what looks like reckless abandon onstage, but Hexum says that the players never let showmanship get ahead of musicianship. "We make a conscious effort not to get too worked up before we get onstage. We don't want to be so pumped that we can't control the music. It's better to grow the groove and let it



#### 311

ick Hexum. Guitars: Guild Man-

hattan and Songbird, Fender Strat. Amplification: Rocktron Velocity 250 power amp through Rocktron S112 and SE112 cabinets. Effects: Rocktron Replifex, Intellifex, and Voodoo Valve, Strings: Ernie Ball RPS .010s. Picks: Dunlop. Nord lead keyboard with Macintosh Power Mac 8500. Tim Mahoney. Guitars: Paul Reed Smith Santana and Standard Mahogany. Amplification: Mesa/Boogie Tri-Axis Preamp. Strategy 500 power amp, and 4x12 Mesa Rectifier cabinets with 30-watt Celestions. Effects: Rocktron Replifex and Intellifex. Ernie Ball volume pedal, Boss SE-70 effects processor, OC-2 Octaver, & T-Wah dynamic filter, Digital Music Corp. ground control unit. Strings: Ernie Ball RPS .010s. Picks: Dunlop. P-Nut. Basses: Warwick five-string. Amplification: SWR SM 900 bass amp head, Big Ben 18" speaker cabinets, and Goliath II 4x10 bass speaker cabinets. Strings: GHS (custom set: .040, .060, .080, .100, .130). Chad Sexton. Drums: Orange County 6-ply maple kit (18"x22" bass drum, 6"x12" maple snare, 4-1/2"x14" free floating snare, 7"x8" tom, 8"x10" tom, 9"x12" tom, 14"x16" tom, 16"x18" floor tom). Cymbals: Zildjian (14" hi-hats, 20" K crash, 10" splash, "20" pre-aged drylight ride K, 20" Custom Lite ride (used as crash), 18" K Custom Dark crash, 22" Brilliant medium ride), Azuka Latin multicrash with rivets. Heads: Remo (tom tops: clear Emperor, tom bottoms: clear Ambassador, bass drum batter: coated Power Stroke, bass drum front: black Power Stroke, main snare: Falams; side snare: coated Emperor). Sticks: Vic Firth (3A). Hardware/pedals: Pearl. SA Martinez: Shure wireless mics, Technics turntables.

blossom over time and then give yourself over to that, rather than run out onstage and immediately spazz out. You have to give the audience something to look forward to."

With guitarist Tim Mahoney handling solos and lead lines, and bassist P-Nut and drummer Chad Sexton laying down the meat of the grooves (on a Warwick fivestring and an eight-piece Orange County kit, respectively), it's up to SA Martinez's turntables and Hexum's guitar to thicken the band's sound with layers of rhythm and sonic texture.

"Tim finds a guitar tone and sticks with it," Hexum explains. "I end up playing with a lot more effects. I'll go from a rotary on one song to a guitar synth the next to a T-Wah on the next. I really enjoy playing with sound, and I'm making a concerted effort to get my technique up to match the sound-making ability of my gear. Equipment can do so much and we want to take full advantage of that."

The sounds of 311 are undeniably aggressive, but Hexum is quick to warn listeners not to mistake energy for angst. "Some people confuse angry-sounding stuff with anger, and a lot of bands will couple certain emotions with their sound to try and get a certain level of energy. But we wouldn't sacrifice personal happiness to make the music sound emotional, and I don't believe you have to be pissed to rock really hard these days. Energy and emotion can come from anywhere—not just from negative experiences. It's a misconception that to be a musician you must have a tortured soul. Our stuff may sound aggressive, but we're not letting off anger—we're jumping for joy."

#### —Chuck Crisafulli

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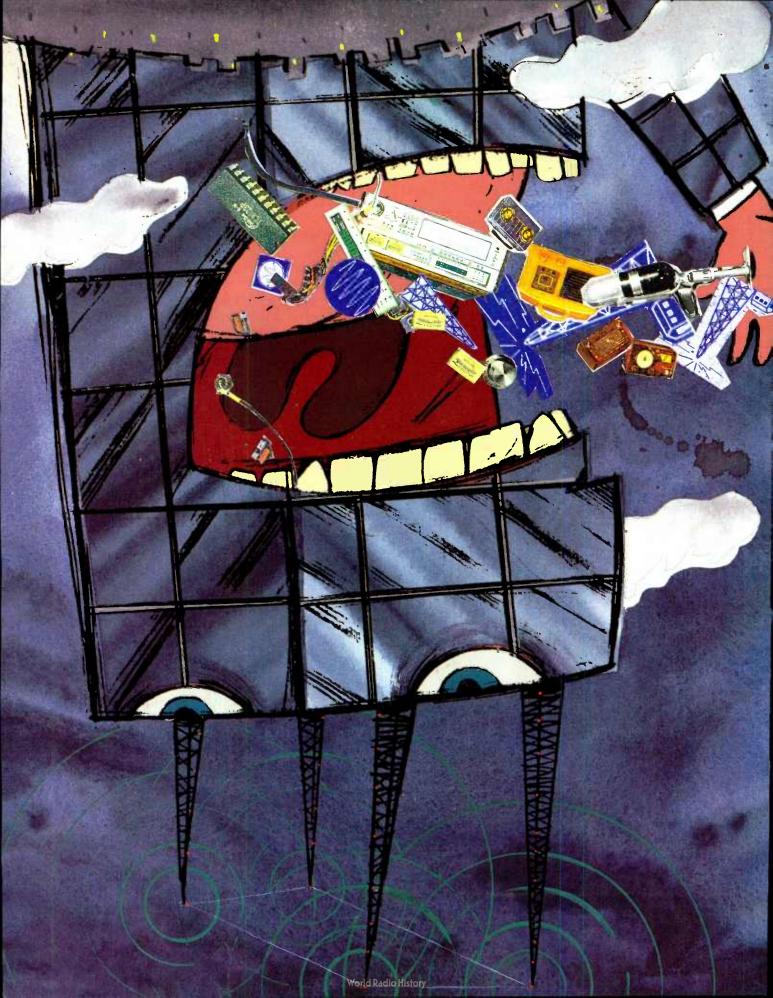
## A Musician's Guide to Exposure in the Era of Broadcast Mergers

erhaps the most exhilarating scene in Tom Hanks' That Thing You Do! is the moment the Wonders first hear their song on the radio. The group literally dances through the main street of their small hometown, waving their transistors aloft in astonishment that the local station is actually playing their record. The time was 1964, and AM radio was king, presided over by wacky, echo-voiced DJs who played hits, from "Can't Buy Me Love" and "Do Wah Diddy" to "Hello, Dolly" and "Everybody Loves Somebody." The FM band, though capable of staticfree broadcasts, was largely used for jazz, classical and dentist office wallpaper music-but change was in the air. That same year, to put a freeze on the overcrowded AM band, the FCC ruled that all FM stations in cities of more than 100,000 had to give at least half their airtime to original programming.

Mansion On the Hill, Fred Goodman's book about the transformation of the rock counterculture into an amoral multi-billion-dollar worldwide business, tells the story of how in 1968, Boston Tea Party concert promoter and Phoenix publisher Ray Riepen leased seven hours of airtime a day from the nearly bankrupt 50,000-watt FM station WBCN-whose major source of income was early-morning religious programming-to play "album cuts." Less than three years later, he sold his interest in the station for \$220,000. "That's how FM started," recalls ex-Mercury promotion exec Jim Sotet, who was a DJ at Detroit's legendary progressive station WABX in the early Seventies. "You could buy an hour's time for next to nothing to play your Quicksilver Messenger Service albums and talk about revolution." • "I grew up under the spell of WABX," says producer and erst-

BY ROY TRAKIN • ILLUSTRATION BY RUSSELL JONES





while Was (Not Was) brother David Was. "It was one of those hybrid formats that has no place in today's mass market, the freest-form FM'er of them all. Each disc jockey's time slot was his own, and you might hear anything. That was when underground meant something, not just people consciously trying to be underground like Eddie Vedder."

That eclectic mix—as Sotet put it, "not only Led Zeppelin but the people they stole from"—certainly influenced the twisted punk/funk/disco/metal/ soul/R&B music Was chose to play with his partner Don and as producer for such disparate artists as Rickie Lee Jones and MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer. Progressive radio encouraged artists to break through the three-minute verse-chorusverse outline of Top Forty radio in favor of a more linear, progressive, non-melodic sound.

Jump cut thirty years into the future to 1997. AM radio, according to Sotet, is now "angry white guys secondguessing the quarterback or whining to Rush about the liberals." FM is now where the action is, though it has splintered into dozens of fragmented rotations spread among the pop offshoots of the day, from modern rock to adult alternative to hot adult to urban to churban to dance to mainstream rock to active rock to classic rock.

With the U.S. radio advertising pie approaching \$12.5 billion—more than domestic box office receipts or record sales—some major money players have emerged, especially since the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a deregulatory law overturning the previous limits on the number of stations a company could own in a single market and overall. Just five years ago operators were allowed to own no more than 24 U.S. stations and no more than two AM and two FM stations per market, a limit imposed by the FCC to guarantee diversity.

Major companies like CBS Radio which just merged in a \$3.9 billion stock deal with Infinity to form a conglomerate boasting 79 stations in seventeen markets (including WBCN) with yearly earnings that will top \$1 billion—are stockpiling up to six stations in each major market, severely limiting much of the competition as well as the traditional mom-andpop operator. Other companies who have been gobbling up stations like Pac Men include Jacor, Evergreen, American Radio Systems, ABC/Disney, Chancellor, SFX, Clear Channel, Emmis, and Susquehanna. Prices for stations are soaring; those that once sold for between eight and eleven times their cash flow are

THIRTY YEARS AGO BANDS HAD NO ALTERNATIVE TO THE RADIO IF THEY WANTED TO REACH AN AUDIENCE. TODAY THERE'S A LOT MORE CHOICE.

being sold now for between eighteen and twenty times.

"It's changed the face of the industry," says veteran radio man Scott Wright, who under his nom de broadcasting Shadow Steele was operations manager at Z100 N.Y., PD at B97 New Orleans, and VP programming for EZ Communications. "This used to be a very programming-driven business: young guys with their shirtsleeves rolled up who were passionate and aggressive about the business of running radio stations. Now it's more of a business of bankers and investment types. The emphasis is less on creative programming and more on the bottom line."

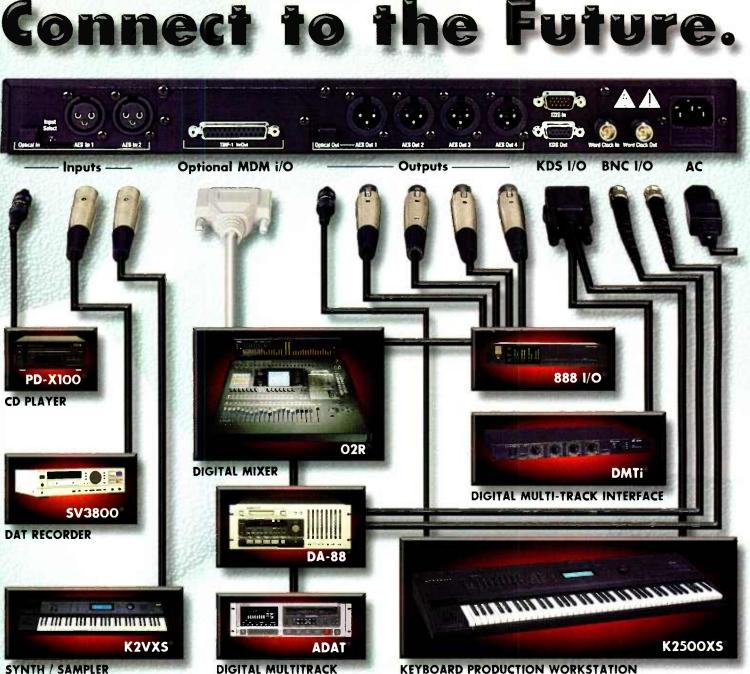
#### The Price of Freedom

f course, in an environment where the emphasis is on selling product, the songs themselves can't be allowed to get in the way of the message. You can't have Sheryl Crow slamming Wal-Mart for stocking guns if you want to attract the retailer's ad dollars. And as we've seen in other branches of American industry, from supermarkets to entertainment companies, when too much power is invested in a single entity, a chilling effect tends to descend on creative freedom.

Robert F. X. Sillerman's company SFX controls eighty stations in 23 markets and bills \$258 million a year to rank seventh among broadcast groups. As executive chairman, he disagrees that consolidation limits artistic freedom. "In a market where there may have been two stations competing for the modern rock audience, if you now own both of them, instead of competing, you can have them complement one another," he says. "Or you have a full signal to do something that might be more intriguing or experimental."

"People are concerned consolidation is going to create fewer programming choices," says Norm Pattiz, chairman of Westwood One Companies and a refugee from the station ownership business since he sold 25 percent of his company, which now produces syndicated radio programming, to Infinity several years ago. "I don't see that at all. It's the marketplace, the listeners, which will determine what gets programmed. By combining ownership, you cut the cost of operations, maybe eliminate some general managers, merge a few sales departments. But you can't cut back on the variety of formats as long as an audience exists for the format in that market."

Not everyone is so sanguine about the effects of these mergers. Mike Morrison, program director for L.A.'s Triple A outlet KSCA, is feeling the heat from the station's yet-to-be-consummated sale by Gene Autry's Golden West Broadcasting to Heftel, already the owner of two highly successful Spanish language stations in Los Angeles, including the Arbitronleading KLVE. Two years ago manage-



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mat convertor, digital patchbay, as well as for use interfacing Kurzweil's K2500 series production stations to popular MDM formats such as TDIF, and ADAT formats found on MDM's produced by Sony, Tascam, Alesis, Fostex and others. The DMTi allows communication between Alesis Adat or Tascam DA-88 with their respective proprietary 8 channel digital formats and AES-EBU or SPDIF digital formats.

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#### DIGITAL MULTITRACK INTERFACE



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ment convinced the old cowboy to wait until he got an unheard-of bid of \$60 million for the station, the last of his onceextensive broadcast holdings. Now Autry is negotiating for what is believed to be upwards of \$110 million for KSCA, a price that Morrison laments will never support the station's demographic-rich but Arbitron ratings-poor Adult Alternative format.

"They're going to have a lot of pressure to get ratings for a return on their investment," says Morrison, who estimates the \$800,000 a month the new owner will have to pay as interest on their loan is equal to the station's billing right now-and that's operating expenses. "I guess that will lead to a format change. The thing is, there are examples of this format working in other major markets around the country because ownership has a commitment to doing well. We have a higher percentage of listeners with a salary of \$100,000 or more than any other station in this market. But this is a format that has to be handled with care and patience.

"Are there any quick fixes in the radio business? I'm not sure there are right now, though I guess going Spanish in L.A. is going to look like one," he concludes ruefully.

#### The Meaning for Musicians

oes this mean that all those angst-ridden folkie singer/songwriters should toss their acoustic guitars and get down with some banda? Not necessarily. In fact, Morrison wants to put those broadcast mergers to work for his format.

"Triple-A could be the perfect complement to a second alternative or classic rock station in your market that's generating strong 18-to-24 numbers," he offers hopefully. "If the same company owned both stations, it might be a good idea to skew the second to an older demo." Morrison admits he looks at the next few weeks while waiting for the sale to go through as "an audition to find a good home."

If radio consolidation doesn't affect the kind of music being played on the radio, it may well limit who's doing the playing-according to which musicians play the game. "It used to be you had to call two hundred guvs to get vour records played," recounts Shadow. "Now you call forty or fifty gatekeepers."

"Today's winning strategy is tomorrow's dinosaur," says Steve Gottlieb, founder of TVT, the label which launched Nine Inch Nails. "As stations become more centralized and less responsive, it's a danger to everyone. Whenever there's a concentration of decision-making power, getting things started becomes that much more difficult. The creative end of the business remains something that the small independent operator is best at: identifying and nurturing talent. Big organizations lead to a corporate culture which, though it does have virtues, produces a group point of view-which by definition doesn't lead to the variety the vital independent community produces."

"It's not easy to get independent product on commercial radio in the best of times," admits KSCA PD Morrison. "And it's not going to get any easier."

"If I were a musician," says Sotet, "I'd stav as far away from radio as I could. Kids don't hear about music on the radio anymore. They read about it in fanzines or on the Internet."

The broadcast mergermania is not just moving vertically to other radio stations, but horizontally as well to complementary acquisitions. The latest move, in the tradition of Boston's Riepen controlling both the booking of the local rock venue and the rock radio station, is SFX's recent purchase of the East Coast promotion company Delsener/Slater, which has veteran rival promoter/manager/label chief John Scher of Metropolitan Entertainment more than a bit concerned.

"What wasn't quite a level plaving field to start with becomes even more unbalanced for concert promoters," complains Scher, who blames SFX's move on the proliferation of "pseudobenefit, acoustic Xmas"-type radio concert promotions which have become "six-figure profit centers" because the acts play for below their regular fee. "There's always the implied threat that

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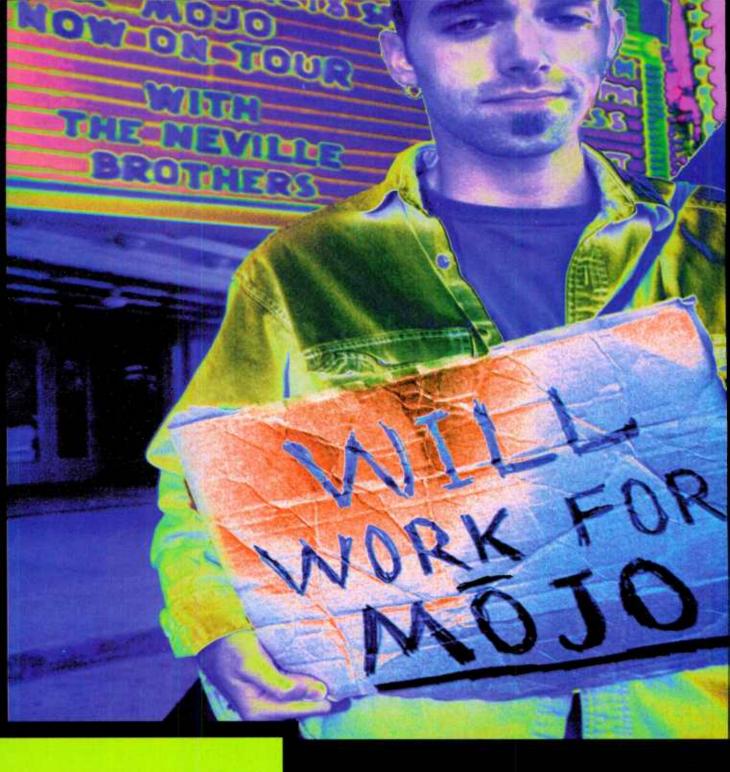
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"There's always the implied threat that your artist will get hurt at radio if you don't book the local date with their promotion company."

Suddenly musicians can't play one station against the other in a given market, which can be a good or a bad thing, according to Scher. "If, as a label, you piss off one of these radio chains, you could lose ten to twenty stations at once. On the other hand, if you have a good relationship with one of these broadcast groups, they have the ability, for the first time ever, to take an act under its wing and vow to break it without waiting for MTV or Top Forty."

What can a musician do to defeat this broadcast hegemony? Maybe the best thing to do is to ignore it.

"Bands like Phish and moe bypass radio," observes Sotet. "They put out their own albums, tour, and build a grass-roots following without ever getting any airplay on radio or MTV"

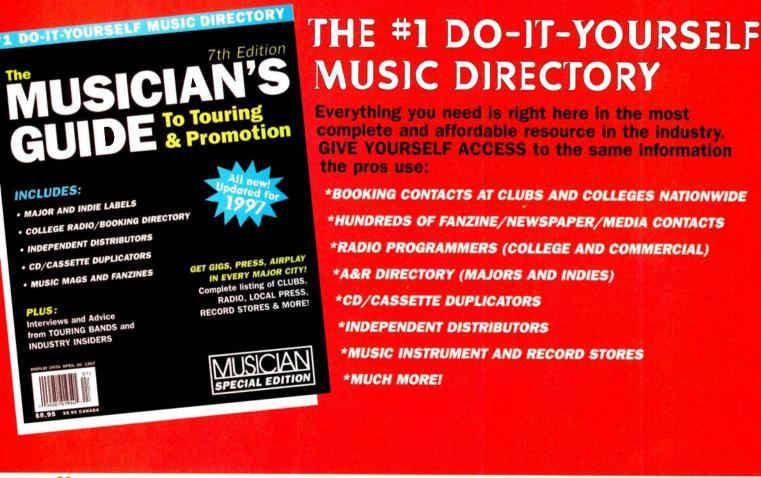
Thirty years ago bands had no alternative to the radio as a means for reaching an audience. Today there's a lot more choice. NetRadio is the world's first live 24-hour Internet radio network, with a sophisticated brand of audio streaming to broadcast over the World Wide Web (http://www.netradio.net). The station programs eight separate music formats in such categories as Modern Rock, Vintage Rock, Classical, Children's, New Country, EarthBeat, Cafe Jazz, Hits!, and Contemporary Christian Music, as well as sports and stock market reports and talk shows. With half a million regular listeners in 96 countries around the world, NetRadio lets users program their own radio stations to their own tastes. The company is owned by record distributors Navarre, who hope to turn NetRadio's one-to-one marketing approach and individualized audio content into valuable demographic information.

"We have an opportunity of telling what kind of music you like by where you move on our Website," enthuses NetRadio CEO Robert Griggs. "We have built the first dynamic content recommendation system, built on your personal profile, where you go and what you do. We set out to be the alternative for musicians and artists. We don't have to do X number of ads per half-hour or hour. We also don't have the limitations and barriers of the FCC or the cost of putting up a new format."

"When intellectual property rights and payment is fully secured, direct downloading of music can happen in the future," he says. "But I'm not saying it's going to happen. We're not out there to compete with retail. We're there to support and drive people to and through retail. Let's face it, the Internet can never replace radio when you're driving in your car or sitting by the pool."

#### The Durability of Talent

ike the record business, broadcasting sees regular cycles of consolidation and breakup. When it seems as if the conglomerates control everything, some street





MUSICIAN

genius comes along from nowhere and breathes life into the stagnant scene. Will this current consolidation situation really turn out any different in the end? TVT's Gottlieb doesn't think so. "The game of finding talent will always remain the one thing you can't bottle," he says.

"There's still a difference between selling salt shakers and promoting records," argues Red Ant senior VP and longtime promotion exec Nancy Levin. "Records are emotional. They're still an art form. A salt shaker either looks good in your kitchen or not. A record has the potential to move somebody, to make a connection. Statistics like Soundscan and BDS reflect that; they tell you a song moved 100,000 kids to buy it."

Jim Sotet isn't so sure. "Mass appeal is whoever fits in with the Pepsi commercial. When people get tired of having stuff rammed down their throat, they move on to the next thing being rammed down their throat, thinking it's something new. This entire fucking country's a mall, no matter

where you go. Even the Internet's just an electronic mall.

"And radio consolidation is a Ponzi scheme. What happens when they can't make the bank payments? It's a house of cards, just like the entire record industry. They're just not signing the kind of bands that give you catalog. The only people who are going to see any money out of this, if any, are those at the top."

"That's what I'm afraid of," agrees John Scher. "Because these stations are selling for so much money, the days of the entrepreneurial one-or-two-station ownersthe model of WXRT in Chicago, for example-become difficult if not impossible to duplicate."

Maybe the best thing musicians can do is to shut out the multimedia corporate rumble and follow their own inner path.

"If the work is great enough, it will not be ignored," concludes David Was. "The means of distribution will not hold it back. There's something almost Darwinian about it. Of course, once this underground is

brought overground, there's no turning back, and that's lamentable. But as far as the music itself, the emergence of rap proves that hope springs eternal. The emergence of genius every few generations is as inevitable as rain. And that will catalyze musicians whose antennae are up higher than the public, the corporations, and everyone else. I don't so much see some evil choking off creativity in the musical community as I do an unfortunate adherence to the hegemony of demographic engineers and accountants. But that's just the name of the game: Everyone wants to sell more Buicks."

Adds Shadow, "You've got the tail wagging the dog. That cash flow figure has become God and radio stations will do anything to meet it."

In an atmosphere like that, the question of what kind of music you play comes in a distant second. 121

Contributors: Roy Trakin is senior editor of Hits magazine.

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#### 2 Sabian Pro Stage Crash

Percussionists are always looking for the same thing. (No, not free beer.) They want their sound to cut through, but they don't want to compromise on tone. Sabian's Pro Stage Crash cymbal, available in 16" (\$142.50), 17" (\$151.50) and 18" (\$160.50) sizes, meets both requirements. Precision-formed from pure uni-rolled bronze, then buffed to a high-gloss finish, the Pro Stage Crash delivers a powerful tone, and its raised-profile design guarantees a penetrating response. Sabian, 1 Main St., Meductic, NB Canada EOH 1L0; voice (506) 272-2019, fax (506) 272-2040.

#### **3 Warwick Fortress FlashBack**

Echo/Chorus/Vibrato

Yes. it does look a bit retro. but the sounds Warwick's Fortress FlashBack bass produces can be as modern as you like. An ash body and celluloid mother-of-pearl pickguard help provide the vintage appearance; the MEC lipstick pickups (one in the neck position, two in the bridge position) also play a major role, but their tone isn't purely old-school—they give great high end too. The four-string version of the FlashBack goes for \$1699. and the five-string's \$1999. Warwick, 5427 Hollister Ave., Santa Barbara, CA 93111-2345; voice (805) 964-9610, fax (805) 964-9749.

#### 4 Washburn D 97

As usual, Washburn has a new limited-edition acoustic guitar out for 1997. and as usual, it's a beauty. The D 97 LTD (\$799.90 with gig bag, signed and numbered certificate of authenticity, and 200-page book detailing the history of Washburn) features a solid North American spruce top, select mahogany sides and back along with special mother-of-pearl neck inlays and rosewood bridge pins. The precision scalloped bracing, nickel Grover tuners and multi-colored wood mosaic pattern that decorates the body binding and soundhole add to the deluxe feel. *Washburn, 255 Corporate Woods Pkwy, Vernon Hills, IL 60061-3109; voice (847) 913-5511, fax (847) 913-7772.* 

#### **5 Kurzweil DMTi**

Looking for an easy way to integrate your studio setup? Consider the Kurzweil DMTi digital audio format converter (\$1495). The DMTi can interface with most digital audio systems in their native format at selectable sample rates with full 16-bit resolution; it also serves as a sample rate converter and a digital patch bay. This means that any audio streaming device you own becomes fully compatible with an ADAT. D-88, DAT machine. or any other digital audio device as soon as you connect them to the DMTi. Not too shabby. *Kurzweil*, 13336 Alondra Blvd., Cerritos, CA 90703-2245; voice (310) 926-3200, fax (310) 404-0478.

#### 6 Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man

Listen to just about any early U2 song and you'll hear it: the distinctive warm analog delay of the Electro-Harmonix Memory Man. And now, thanks to the continuing reissue schedule of those noble folks at New Sensor, that sound is once again available to all seekers. The Deluxe Memory Man with Chorus/Vibrato (that must be what makes it deluxe) is still about the closest approximation of a tape delay unit you can find, and at \$299, it's much cheaper than a vintage Echoplex. Electro-Harmonix, c/o New Sensor Corporation, 20 Cooper Sq., New York, NY 10003; voice (212) 529-0466, fax (212) 529-0486.

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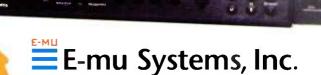
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#### Come See Us At NAMM, Booth 3340.

vides eight analog inputs. two onboard ADAT outputs, two internal processors, and full console automation. **Tascam** also had a prototype digital console under glass (price TBA but said to be "under \$4000").

But analog is far from dead. In fact, **TL Audio** showed their highly retro all-valve console (that's "alltube" to us Yanks—price about a grand per channel), while **Behringer** shook up the price wars with the release of their MX 3282 8-bus analog console (just \$1995). If you're looking for a great rack-mount mixer. check out the **Alesis** Studio 12R (\$489), or take a listen to the two new **ATI** models: the 8 channel 8MX2 (\$1889) and the 16-channel 16MX2 (price TBA). And Pro Tools

### Fast Times & Sharp Gear at AES

#### by Howard Massey

to the

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Taking

Context How many transplanted New Yorkers who now live in California does it take to change a light bulb? A: None of your #@%^! business—but have a nice day.

The preceding joke was brought to you courtesy of the 101st Audio Engineering Society (AES) convention, where the theme was "Head Out On The Highway." And so we did. leaving the late fall New York chill behind in order to face record heat in L.A.-land, Actually, this year's theme was somewhat confusing; Was it simply a pun on Highway 101 (the nearby Hollywood Freeway) or an allusion to the Information Highway? And why does a trade show need a "theme" anyway? Questions to be pondered as we braved the phalanx of panhandlers on our way into the L.A. Convention Center.



Though it lacks the Spandex-clad hordes of Winter NAMM and the Vegas glitz of Comdex, AES provides another opportunity to preview the coolest recording technologies bound for home and professional studios in

Yamaha's

03D

digital

mixer

Wa

the months ahead. Mixers, for example. With everyone gearing up for the imminent release of DVD ("Digital Versatile Disk," described in our Nov. '96 issue)—and hence multichannel audio—there was a great deal of interest on the show floor in the new **Yamaha** 03D 4-bus digital mixer (\$3995) and, though priced considerably higher

21

(starting at around \$32,000). **RSP Technol**ogies' Project X surround

sound digital console. **Soundtracs** debuted their Virtua digital console (with 32 analog and 16 digital inputs, priced at \$35,000). At the lower end of the price spectrum, **Korg** showed their 168RC digital console (\$3499). which proowners will be interested to learn that **Mackie** have inherited Digidesign's long-shown-but-never-finished ProControl interface and are releasing it under the fabulously straightforward name HUI (Human User Interface—price \$3899).

Of course, it still takes a great microphone to get signal into those consoles, and there was lots of mic news at AES. Leading the way was

> Beyer, with their previewing of the

world's first digital-output mic, the MCD 100. Yes, you read that right: This actually includes an onboard preamp and A/D converter, provid-



ing an AES-EBU output from its 3-pin XLR connector. The price is still to be determined, but the company says it will "certainly" be well over \$1,000, so start saving those pennies now. The rest of us will have to stay content with analog mics, but there's lots of great

new ones out there, including AKG's low-cost Emotion series of dynamics (\$90 for the cardioid version, \$99 for the hypercardioid version), Shure's new Microflex line (which includes lavalier, overhead, boundary, and gooseneck modelsprices TBA), and Samson's QV and QE

headset mics (both prices TBA; the latter is waterproofed so it can be used in high-humidity environments, such as aerobics workouts or glasses of seltzer).

Almost everyone seems to love that great Lexicon reverb, and the company's new MPX-1 includes not one but two discrete processors-

one for the reverb, and the other for additional effects-all in a singlerack space unit for just \$1299. Drummers will welcome Yamaha's REV500 (priced. appropriately, at \$500), which is the first signal processor I've ever seen that includes two sound

sources for patch-auditioning purposes (snare drum and cross-stick samples)-it's even got a demo built in! Home studio owners on a budget will want to check out TL Audio's moderately priced (\$795 each) Crimson Series, which includes mic preamp, equalizer, compressor, and power amplifier models. Singers will go nuts over DigiTech's Vocalist Workstation, which boasts a unique "Gender-Bender" mode for applying male or female tonalities to harmonies as well as providing extensive pitch correction capabilities. • Guitarists will dig the DigiTech 2112, which combines a tube -15 guitar preamp with digital multieffects. Broadcasters will want to

tune into TC Electronic's DBMAX Digital Broadcast Maximizer (price TBA), which uses circuitry adopted from their tremendously popular Finalizer (our Dec. '96 Editor's Pick). And live sound contractors found their little corner of heaven in the Rane booth, where they had a chance to play with the RPM 26, which com-

bines a crossover network with compression, limiting, delay, and parametric equalization, all under the control of Windows software.

Speaking of live sound, JBL raised a lot of evebrows (and moved a lot of air) with the

debut of their HLA Series large touring sound system, while Peavey countered with their DTH Series system. Sabine showed their SDA Series digital delays for acoustic alignment of speaker installations, as well as their single-channel FBX-Solo 620 and dual-channel FBX-2020, both of

which provide automatic feedback extermination (squeal no more, brother!). Community introduced the new PC300 Series of medium-format pattern control horns. And there were lots of new power amplifier announcements as well, including additions to QSC's PowerLight Series and Peavey's new CS Series, which features modular input and output hardware.

> A welcome new trend, perhaps initiated by Mackie's summer NAMM announcement of their HR824 active studio monitors (\$1498 per pair), are the new affordable self-powered monitor systems. KRK unveiled their Exposé

series of biamplified monitors (price TBA), and Genelec showed their 1029A active nearfield monitor, which has a list price of just \$535 per speaker. If you like to rattle the floors, you can augment a pair of 1029A monitors with Genelec's 1091A subwoofer for an additional \$680.

On the software front, Opcode announced Studio Vision Pro 3.5, which can directly read and write QuickTime audio and music files. Waves unveiled their Native Power Pack, a suite of plug-in tools for various Mac and Windows products, as well as TracPac, described as a "no-+15 loss" audio compression application. Steinberg showed new versions

SOHz of their WaveLab audio editor, including a way cool plug-in called the Grungealizer, which actually adds noise and distortion-it even includes a "year" dial that lets you hear music as it would have been recorded in, say, 1956! Digidesign sponsored a slew of third-party TDM plug-in suppliers, including dbx (demoing the DC66 compressor, which includes emulation of their OverEasy circuitry), Drawmer (showing a frequency-sensitive limiter/compressor plug-in), Dolby (a SurroundTolls AC-3 encoder/decoder), Wave Mechanics (Pure-Pitch, a formant-corrected pitch shifter), Liquid Audio (a TDM plug-in version of their Liquifier software, which allows the user to preview audio at simulations of various modem speeds before publishing the results directly to a Web server), Qsound (QX/TDM stereo soundfield expander), Intelligent Devices (IQ, an "intelligent" equalizer), Waves (PS22-Stereomaker), Spatializer (PT-3D), AnTares (AutoTune pitch shifter), and Cedar Audio (DeClicker TDM). Will this trend ever completely negate the need for hardware signal processors? Only time will tell.

A hot topic in the "miscellaneous" category is balanced power; the use of highly shielded power supplies is said to be able to drastically reduce noise in the studio environment. A new company called Equi=Tech were debuting their various balanced power systems, with prices ranging from \$1389 to more than \$3000, depending on amperage required. In a similar vein, Furman were showing their IT-1220 transformer, as well as their new PlugLock, a terrific \$58 product-it's an AC power strip that provides adjustable clamps for "wallwart" power supplies. Another great new idea came from Signal Transport, who showed their line of Swing Racks-hinged frames for patch bays that make rear-panel access a breeze. The company also markets a line of Project Patch kits, which bundle patch bays with connecting cables for various mixers and recorders.

Speaking of recorders, Panasonic introduced their SV-3800 DAT recorder (price TBA), which uses new 20-bit DACs, and Sony debuted their StorStation tape drive (price TBA), which holds 1 gig of uncompressed data or 2 gig of compressed data, so you can archive your audio easily. E-mu Systems unveiled their E4K Turbo sampler, which provides 128 voices as opposed to 64 (\$5195), and announced that they will be distributing KAT percussion controllers. Last but not least, there were several new surroundsound products, including Otari's PicMix (\$5000), which adds surround sound capabilities to any mixer; AKG's K290 surround headphones (price TBA), and Aureal's DirectSound 3D accelerator chipset.  $\langle \underline{\mathbf{U}} \rangle$ 

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MPX 1 Multiple Processor FX

Pitch programs Vocal Tools Tempo 🖛

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t the heart of the new MPX I is Lexicon's Multiple Processor FX technology featuring two independent microprocessors - the proprietary Lexichip for the world's best reverb and a separate DSP chip for additional effects. Unlike other multi-effects processors, there's never a sonic compromise in reverb programs with the MPX I, even in the most complex multi-effects programs. But that's just the beginning.

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MPX 1 Multiple Processor FX

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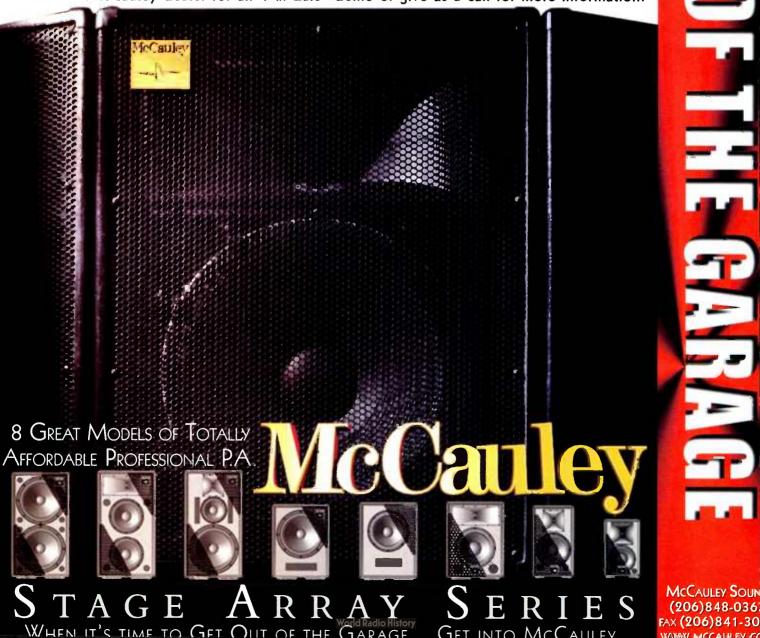
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e've all heard the saying, "Garbage in, garbage out." The guy who coined that phrase must've been talking about microphones. The microphone is the very start of the recording chain, so which one you use and where you point it will largely determine just how good-or bad-your finished recording project will sound. But unless you understand what makes your mics tick, you'll be shooting in the dark on your hunt for killer-sounding tracks.

Why are small diaphragm condenser mics often the best choice on plucked instruments and drum overheads? How can switching a mic's polar pattern reduce vocal popping? How can you warm up a vocal track by changing the mic placement? Why will a large diaphragm condenser usually give you a less glassy sound on a guitar cabinet than its small diaphragm cousin would? The

answers to such questions are no-brainers once you understand the commonly held properties of specific types of microphones.

#### **Transient Response**

ransients are essentially the short-lived frequency components that make up the attack portion of a sound. In other words, they are the pluck in a guitar string before the ensuing sustained tone, and the crack in a snare drum hit before the shell rings. Transients are comprised of mostly very high frequencies: that is, short wavelengths, here and gone in a fraction of a sec-

ond. A microphone's diaphragm must react quickly if it is to capture these transients. The lighter the diaphragm, the quicker it will react, capturing more crisp detail. On the

Audio-Technica's AT 4050

other hand, transients are largely over and done with by the time a heavy diaphragm builds up enough inertia to move.

The mass of a condenser mic's diaphragm is only about one thousandth that of a dynamic mic's, which is why condensers generally offer far greater transient response and a more extended high-frequency response

compared to dynamic mics. "Small diaphragm" condensers capture the most detail of all, as their diaphragms-roughly 1/2 inch or less in diameter-are even lighter than the 1inch-diameter diaphragms typically found in "large diaphragm" condensers. A large diaphragm must also be tensioned tighter to prevent its center from sagging against the capsule's backplate and self-destructing; this rigidity makes a large diaphragm respond less readily to sound pressure than a looser small diaphragm does.

The small diaphragm condenser mic's superior transient response makes it an excellent choice for recording plucked and strummed stringed instruments (acoustic guitar, mandolin, banjo, etc.), hand percussion instruments (shakers, tambourine, congas), cymbals and even snare drum. If you want a slightly softer and warmer sound with just a little less detail, use a where large diaphragm condenser. If a drummer's technique is sloppy, however, you'd better stick put a dynamic mic on the snare drum-dynam-

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ics are less expensive and far more likely to survive a misplaced whack of a drumstick. The tradeoff is that their transient response is usually quite poor.

The next time you're recording electric guitar with a dynamic mic, think of transient response. If tweaking the EQ in the upper mids and highs is only making your axe sound thin and bright, yet it still doesn't have enough edge, try using a condenser mic to bring out the detail of the pick hitting the string. A small diaphragm condenser will often capture too much detail and end up sounding too glassy; a large diaphragm mic will usually give you the perfect blend of detail and warmth.

Dynamic mics offer lower "sensitivity" (output level) than condensers, which is beneficial when trying to mike a loud drum kit without overloading a mixer or recorder operating at semi-pro, -10 dBV lev-

els. (+4 dBV systems offer far greater headroom.) The **Sennheiser** MD421 cardioid dynamic mic has long been an industry standard for miking toms. Sennheiser introduced an improved version, the MD421 II (\$485 list), at November's AES Convention in L.A.

The preamp electronics that reside inside all condenser mics give them a robust output, allowing you to keep the noisy mic preamp on a cheap mixer turned down for a quieter (less hissy) recording of delicate instruments. All other things being equal, large diaphragm designs are inherently less noisy than small diaphragm ones.

#### **Reduce the Bleeding**

mic's polar pattern indicates how well it picks up sound arriving at various angles to the mic. You've probably seen polar patterns represented as circular graphs on spec sheets. To review briefly, an omnidirectional mic (or "omni" for short) picks up sound equally from all sides of the mic in a 360° sphere; *i.e.*, in front of, behind, to either side of, above, and below the mic. A cardioid pattern, so-called because of its heart-shaped graph, picks up the least amount of sound from its rear (*i.e.*, at 180° "off-axis" from the front of the mic). It is said to be more "directional" than an omni mic because it picks up sound arriving at its front more than at its sides. The angle at which it rejects sound the most, in this case 180°, is called the "null point."

The more expensive large diaphragm condensers (and a few small diaphragm condensers as well) offer multiple polar patterns, usually changed by a switch on the mic. As a mic's polar pattern is switched from cardioid to supercardioid to hypercardioid to bi-directional (also called "figure eight"), three things happen: 1) The mic picks up less and less sound from its sides; 2) the mic picks up progressively more sound from its rear (from almost nil with a cardioid to equal pickup at the front and rear with a figure-eight pattern); and 3) the mic's null point moves forward from 180° (cardioid) off-axis to 126° (supercardioid) to 110° (hypercardioid) to 90° (figure-eight) or perpendicular to the front of the mic.

> Sennheiser's MD421

Remember point number 3 the next time you record an entire band in the same room. If you're miking a guitar cabinet with a supercardioid mic, for instance, make sure that the drums are set up 126° (roughly 4 o'clock position) off from the front of the guitar's mic for the least amount of bleed onto the guitar track. You'll be amazed at how tight and punchy your recording will sound if you just make sure all your mics' null points are aimed for maximum rejection of unwanted sounds.

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#### Pop Goes the Microphone

he more directional a mic is, the more sensitive it will be to wind turbulence (*e.g.*, gusts of wind popping the mic's diaphragm whenever you sing *p*'s and *b*'s too forcefully). So a figure-eight mic is more sensitive to vocal popping than a cardioid mic, and an omni mic is the least sensitive of all to "plosives."

If a wind screen fails to stop a vocalist from popping a multi-pattern mic set to cardioid mode, try changing the mic to omni mode. You might also want to move the mic closer to the singer to prevent the omni pattern from otherwise picking up more room sound. (Remember, omni mode will pick up more sound from the sides and rear of the mic than cardioid mode will.) If your studio's room acoustics don't sound so great, stick with cardioid mode and have the singer take a step back from the mic. Better yet, position the mic slightly above, below or to the side of the singer's mouth.

The lightweight, loosely-tensioned diaphragms of small diaphragm condenser mics generally make them highly vulnerable to popping and thus a poor choice for recording solo vocals up close; the Neumann KMS150 (\$1495 list) is the only hypercardioid small diaphragm condenser mic I've ever heard that could be used for-and sounds great on-lead vocals. However, I've gotten incredible results recording vocals with a B & K 4006 omni small diaphragm condenser (\$2060 list) by pointing the mic at the ceiling (with the top of the mic at throat level) and having the vocalist sing over the top of the mic. Generally speaking, though, small diaphragm condensers sound too glassy on vocals and dy-

namic mics lack the detail that makes vocals intelligible, clear, and intimate. That leaves large diaphragm condensers, the usual choice for recording vocals and voice-like instruments such as sax, cello and flute. The **Audio-Technica** AT4050/

CM5 (\$995 list) and **Beyer** MC 834 (\$999 list) are the best-sounding large diaphragm

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condensers I've heard for under a grand, although the multipattern AT4050/CM5 offers more features than the cardioid-only MC 834. If you can afford to spend more, the highly adaptable AKG C414 B-TLII (\$1675 list) is a truly world-class mic. For people with really deep pockets, the AKG C12 VR tube mic (\$4540 list) is the overall best-sounding and most versatile large diaphragm condenser I've ever heard. It kills on vocals and sax.

#### **Heavy Breathing**

ack to practical tips, if an acoustic guitarist is breathing heavily while tracking, he's likely to pop a small diaphragm condenser placed on the fretboard. (If he's watching his fretting, that's the mic he'll be facing.) Putting a foam windscreen on the mic is a good idea. Also try miking the fretboard from slightly above, with the mic at a

45° angle to avoid any breaths from hitting the diaphragm head-on. If the sound you're going for allows it, switch in the mic's bass roll-off filter (many mics have these).

As a last resort, you can roll off the lows at the board, with your EQ. If you have a music stand that will angle itself parallel to the floor, you can position the mic under the stand and pointed at the guitar. The stand will form a barrier to any wind and will aid in isolating the guitar track from any

vocals if the guitarist is also singing. This method has its drawbacks: It can be awk- MCE83 ward for the guitarist,

... and

and the sound of the guitar bouncing off the music stand and into the mic can be a problem for critical recording. Hey, we do what we have to in a pinch!

The AKG C460 B (\$699 with the cardioid CK61 capsule) offers the best price for value in a small diaphragm mic, and sounds awesome on guitar, mandolin, banjo, cymbals,

and choirs. AKG introduced their new C480 B mic (\$1001 with the cardioid CK61 capsule) at the November AES Convention in L.A. It's

a transformerless version of the

beverdvnamic's **MCE84** 

C460 B, offering higher sensitivity and lower noise-I haven't heard it yet, but I expect it'll be a real winner.

Where price is no object, the B & K 4011 (\$2190) is the overall best small diaphragm condenser I've used, offering crystal-clear sound and lightning-fast transient response.

#### **Don't Stand So Close to Me**

ith few exceptions (notably some Electro-Voice mics), most directional mics inherently exhibit a "bass proximity effect." As you move closer to the mic, bass frequencies will be boosted more than the highs. If you're miking a vocalist with a directional (e.g., cardioid) mic and he sounds too thin, have him move closer to the mic to enhance the bass frequencies. If, on the other hand, he sounds too boomy or muffled, try having him step back a few inches.

The more directional a mic is, the more pronounced its bass proximity effect will be. Omni mics don't have a bass proximity effect. Cardioid mics do to a moderate degree, supercardioids and hypercardioids do to a progressively greater degree. And figure-eight mics, being the most directional, have the most bass proximity effect. If you have a multipattern condenser close up on a vocalist and the cardioid pattern sounds too thin, try changing the polar pattern to hypercardioid for more bottom beef. Just remember that increased directionality means increased susceptibility to vocal popping. Also, the mic's frequency response will probably change when you switch polar patterns, so make sure the overall sound is still right for that vocalist.

MUSICIAN World Radio History

#### Just Ask the (Off-)Axis

he smaller a mic's diaphragm is, the better its off-axis frequency response will be. In other words, sound arriving at the sides and rear of the mic will have roughly the same tone as if it were coming directly at the front of the mic. Take a large instrument like classical harp, for instance. If you mic this instrument closely, some of the strings (and part of the body) will inevitably be somewhat off to the sides of the mic. To keep the tone even (not too bassy, shrill, or muffled) across all of the strings, you'll want to use a mic with a good off-axis response. Quality small diaphragm condensers will give you the best off-axis and transient responses. They sound dynamite when miking harp, piano, and multiple cymbals in stereo. Large diaphragm condensers will generally give a warmer sound on drum overheads, but cymbals off to the sides of the mics will tend to be less sparkly due to the poorer off-axis high frequency response.

#### Exceptions to the Rule

microphone's construction quality will affect its performance more than its type of design, so keep an open mind and an open ear. For example, the AKG C414 B-TLII, a very high quality large diaphragm condenser, has a better transient response than many small diaphragm condensers. Also, microphone choice and placement is largely a personal art form. For instance, some people prefer using large diaphragm condensers on acoustic guitars and drum overheads, while others prefer small diaphragm condensers. It all depends on what kind of sound you're going after. Knowledge is power. By knowing what characteristics your mics bring to the table, you can adjust your mic choice and placement to purposefully improve things that don't initially sound right. The next time someone complains about how your mic makes them sound, tell 'em where to stick it.

Contributors: Michael Cooper is a producer, engineer and owner of Michael Cooper Recording, a commercial studio in Eugene. Oregon. He's written over a hundred articles about recording.







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Pro Audio Review Lorin Alldrin, Sept/96

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Electronic Musician Brian Knave, July/96

> IN CANADA Yorkville Sound Ltd. 550 Granite Court Pickering, ONT. L1W 3Y8



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#### ing to be able

sit back and n to a great but then say, who beat kick on that one section come up just a little bit, so more present and more powerful.' To be able to just do that and forget it."

As an example, he points to the debut album by A&M artist Jamie Blake. "The two guitar tracks I've spread over eight tracks, so during the mix it switches to all these different tracks, which have different compressors, filters and equalizers. So, basically it's just switching through the whole track. You can see how impractical

While the Blake project is espe-

cially suited for automation, a lot of

his most recent projects have not

been set up that way. "I get my mix

to do manually."

that would be

he gap between then now is so huge that mix engineer David J. Holman can't believe he worked any other way. "There's a big difference between frantic, continuous attention to the console and spending my whole day detailing and computer crunching," he says. The tool that's taken him from the nearly impossible 72-channel manual mix he performed on a Nelson album to a snug cup of coffee while listening to a No Doubt mix is CAD's MegaMix automation.

Holman, who has been producing and recording albums since 1969 and whose most recent credits include Bush's Razorblade Suitcase, No Doubt's Tragic Kingdom and Stabbing Westward's Wither Blister Burn + Peel, admits that he was somewhat wary of using any type of extra machinery, but

once he did it changed his world, "It's at here to help you, you still have to be creative," he explains. Some mes it may make you work a little harder, because you can always attain that, 'It's really good, but...' Then you've got to go a little further to make it really, really good. Then to get **By David John Farinella** 

that incredible thing takes as much time, but these tools give you that capability." In addition to the MegaMix automation, Holman has stocked his Cactus Recording Studio in Los Angeles' Laurel Canyon (affectionately called The Bunker) with rooms of gear, including a custom built 88-input desk, three custom built Stephens 24-track tape machines and "so much outboard gear it's silly."

While he's experimented with nearly every other automa-

David Holman Automates with CAD's MegaMix

tion program on the market, it's the CAD product that has pushed him in a number of directions. "It's made it so that I can concentrate on the music instead of concentrating on the machine," he comments. "It's a wonderful

up on the console without automation, then I gradually plug it in as I need it," he says of the MegaMix system that he uses just like a piece of outboard gear. "I don't think there's a thing on any mix that I do nowadays that doesn't have some moving stuff going on and I use this automation extensively."



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World Radio History

#### by michael gelfand

mbrace, for a moment, the insanity of a musician's vernacular, where the word "P.A." has somehow come to mean "any beatto-shit, mid-Seventies keyboard

amp not being used by the bassist." So ironic. After all, most of us would willingly give up a pound of flesh to purchase the instruments and amps we covet most. But if you apply that gotta-have-it rationale across the board, how does any band that's half-serious about rehearsing or playing gigs do without buying a real P.A.? For vocals, a P.A. is downright essential gear, and in a sizable performance situation it's what you rely on to reinforce your band's sound.

It used to be that klug ing together a P.A. was a costly, cumbersome, and often confusing endeavor, but thanks to JBL's EON ® PowerSystem (list \$2177), your band can take that next step toward relative professionalism without breaking the bank, your back, or your brain.

It's no secret that JBL makes some excellent speaker cabinets for pro sound applications, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that the EON PowerSystem uses some of the company's technological ingenuity to create a portable and reasonably priced P.A. for the masses. Consisting of two EON Power15 powered speaker cabinets, a 10channel MusicMix10 mixer, two JBL E50S mics, and all the necessary cables, the EON PowerSystem is a

# JBL's EON PowerSystem: a P.A. for sensible people.

measure overall speaker output with any geeky equipment, my ears told me they were plenty loud.

The Power15s aren't just brawn---they sound good too. Our singer actu-

# **Out the Volume**

complete P.A. package suitable for practice and small club jobs.

editor'spick

ump

I auditioned the EON by placing it in a real-world scenario: the basement rehearsal space used by my band, the Floyds of Flatbush. My thinking was that almost any rock

**AIII** 

band with two guitars, bass, and drums generates enough

> competitive volume to demand a strong and accurate performance out of a P.A. Besides, the rickety impostor P.A. we'd been using until then never could handle our female vocalist's throaty midrange delivery, so we gladly enlisted the EON to tackle both the main and background vocals along with some miked kick drum. I honestly expected the system to fall

on its face, but I was wrong. In fact, after weeks of rigorous practicing, the whole band agreed that the EON really made the grade.

First and foremost, the diminutive Power15s kick out enough volume for just about any practice situation. Measuring 27"x17-1/2"x 16-1/2" (h/w/d), each of these two-way speaker cabinets employs a

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biamped power section that's rated to deliver 130 watts to a 15" woofer and 50 watts to a 1-3/4"hornloaded compression driver. While I didn't

USICIAN **/orld Radio History** 

mag



ally asked me to reduce her volume and notch off some of the high-end EQ from her vocals. She even complained of being too pronounced in the mix. Imagine that. Likewise, the speakers can handle the successive 60Hz thud of a kick drum without any problem. (No, they're not going too much lower, but that won't matter unless Barry White is your singer.)

Since these are powered speakers, you must hook them up to a nearby AC outlet by using the supplied power cords that connect to the rear-panel power jack. (This can be a slight hassle when it comes to speaker setup, but that's nothing a couple of grounded extension cords can't fix.) On the rear of each speaker you'll find an XLR input and output; these are used for connecting the speakers to the mixer and for daisy-chaining additional speakers. You'll also find a power switch, a level control knob, signal- and peak-LEDs, and a mic/line switch with a corresponding LED.

While the signal- and peak-LEDs are useful for monitoring the operating status of the



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Modern Postcard 1-800-959-8365 speakers, they're not nearly as critical as the level control knob. Once you've placed the mic/line switch into line position, you'll have to carefully adjust the level control's position in relation to the mixing board's main volume fader. It's the same kind of balance needed LEDs for signal presence and peak overload. Channels 7 and 8 employ both 1/4-inch and RCA stereo inputs instead of XLRs; these channels aren't equipped with pan and trim pots, mid-frequency shelving, or LEDs for signal presence and peak overload.

The EON's a no-brainer to hook up, sounds good, and takes up so little space you won't even have to make room for it.

between a power amp's master volume control and a preamp's gain setting. The thing is, if you get the balance wrong here, you either don't get enough speaker output or you get an earful of squealing feedback. Just set it correctly and forget it, I say. (When set in the mic position, the speakers can receive a signal from a single microphone, but that's not necessary unless you're using the speakers in a stand-alone setting without the mixer.)

Each enclosure weighs in at just over 40 pounds (thanks to a recently patented speaker design that exponentially reduces the weight of the magnet) and comes fitted with a comfortably placed handle that renders the speakers highly manageable. Notched slots on the rear panel allow for neatly hanging the speaker wire, and the speakers can be mounted on stands or hung via sus-

pension hardware (available but not included) if need be-all thoughtful extras.

As I've already mentioned, you could choose to run a mic directly through the speakers, but that would defeat the purpose of the MusicMix10. This is a highly intuitive 10-channel mixer that's clearly laid out and offers space-age good looks to boot. Channels 1 through 6 are fitted with both XLR and 1/4-inch mic/line inputs, and each channel features a level fader, pan and trim pots, monitor- and effects-send level controls, high- and low-frequency shelving (at 12.5kHz and 63Hz, respectively), mid-frequency peaking (at 2.5kHz), and

Given this price range, it would be unfair to expect a lot of sonic flexibility from the individual channels, and indeed, they proved to lack midrange punch. That's not to say they were at all offensive—the trim pots are actually surprisingly quiet—but the limited EQ section isn't as effective as, let's say, three sweepable frequency bands with plus or minus 10dB boost/cut might be. I quickly learned to appreciate the signal presence LEDs, though. They came in very handy whenever anyone wanted me to change their channel settings on the fly.

The board's output section consists of left and right main output level faders, balance

> control, level controls for headphone, monitor, main- and monitor-effects return, LEDs for power and output, and a stereo/mono switch with a corresponding LED—all pretty standard stuff on any decent mixing board. Two 12-segment LEDs monitor

peak-hold output, but if you're paying attention to what's coming out of the speakers, you probably won't need to use this feature much. There's also a full complement of inputs and output jacks, including the XLR speaker outputs, stereo RCA tape outputs, a stereo headphone output, and the 1/4" stereo effects I/Os.

I really like the presence of the phantom power (with an on/off switch and corresponding status LED on the back panel). This is most convenient for times when you might want to use condenser mics—overheads on the drum

# The AT4050 goes live.



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kit, for instance. Unfortunately, the phantom power is only rated to deliver 14 volts instead of the more universal 48 volts. Many of the better-made condenser mics need 48 volts to operate, but I doubt whether anyone's going to condenser mic that a user is likely to connect to an EON system. The decision to make our phantom power supply 14 volts was based on design considerations. We wanted to ensure that our mixer would power condenser mics on



bust out a vintage U47 to use with the EON. [Steve Steinhart, product manager for JBL Professional, notes that "most condenser mics will operate on anywhere from 9 to 52 volts. Fourteen volts will power almost any all six mic input channels simultaneously without increasing the size and weight of the power supply."]

The notched cable management system is another winning aspect of the MusicMix10. Like the smaller version on the rear of the Power15s, you place your cables into the snug-fitting notches that stick out over the channel inputs. This holds the cables in place and keeps the board clear of tangled cables. It's such an obvious plus that I can't understand why every board doesn't have one.

The EON PowerSystem offers a whole lot of convenience, performance, and functionality, especially when you consider its relatively modest price tag. Think about it: For less than \$2200 you have a fully functioning P.A. that's a no-brainer to hook up, sounds really good for practice and small gig situations, and takes up so little space that you won't even have to make room for it. The added bonus is that you'll be able to give your old P.A. back to your bassist. Overdriven bass is in, man, 120

Contributors: Michael Gelfand is a writer specializing in consumer electronics and music pieces.

# DON'T MISS A BEA

205	12/95	Sonic Youth, Ponty, Clarke & DiMeola, Alanis Morissette
206	1/96	Melissa Etheridge, Cypress Hill, Garbage
208	3/96	100 Years of Recording, Women Producers, Keith Jarrett
209	4/96	Gin Blossoms, Luscious Jackson, Masters/Slide Blues Guitar
210	5/96	Tori Amos, Dwight Yoakam Meets Willie Nelson, KMFDM
211	6/96	Hootie and the Blowfish, Rage Against the Machine,
		Masters of Jazz Bass, Songwriter Royalties
212	7/96	Brit-Pop. Oasis, Pulp, George Harrison, Blur, Cast, Radiohead,
		Boo Radleys & Robert Smith of The Cure
213	8/96	Kiss, The Blue Nile, Ani DiFranco, Perry Farrell, Boyz II Men
214	9/96	Duane Allman, Vernon Reid & Junior Brown, Red Hot Chili Peppers
215	10/96	Jerry Garcia, Sonny Rollins, Vinnie Moore, Screaming Trees
216	11/96	Guitar Trio: Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, Eric Johnson
217	12/96	Phish, Sting, Graham Maby, Burt Bacharach & Elvis Costello
218	1/97	Tom Petty & Beck, Iris DeMent, Tony Garnier, Evan Dando
219	2/97	20th Anniversary Issue, Eddie Van Halen, Brian Blad, Frogpond

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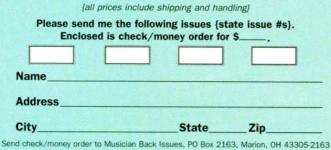








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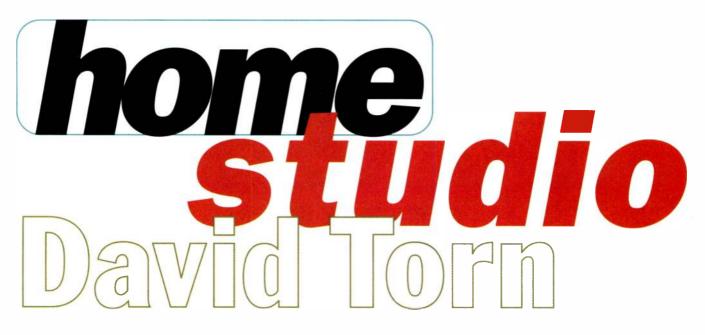
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World Radio History



elcome to The LoopooL, guitarist/producer David Torn's home studio, nestled in the Catskill Mountains in Bearsville, NY. From this sanctuary emanate the majestic soundscapes of Torn's solo releases, guitar atmospherics for film soundtracks, and his contributions to records by other artists, like Patrick O'Hearn and Jules Shear, Torn's latest CD, What Means "Solid," Traveller? (CMP), was created entirely, from inception through final mastering, in this 14' x 20' room. Everything essential is arranged in a circle in the center of the room, surrounded by a plethora of ethnic percussion, bizarre guitars, and cast-off amps, which line the walls and crowd the corners.

Though versatile enough to produce records for others, the studio is not meant to be all-purpose but is primarily dedicated to Torn's own twisted sonic explorations, including *Pandora's Tool Box*, his second sampling CD for Q-UP Arts. While creating ungodly, insect-fear noises by subverting loops, delays and harmonizers to his own weird ends with massive amounts of distortion, he'll tell you he's just playin' the blues. It's a strange mix of primitive mojo and state-ofthe-art technology.

The LoopooL is littered with way too many stringed instruments of every description, from the ridiculous to the sublime. David's primary guitars are an **Ithaca Guitar Works acoustic/ electric** (1), a 1993 remake of a National Duolian metal-bodied resonator guitar with an absolutely huge sound (not pic-

#### by baker rorick

#### photographs by randi anglin

tured), and a pair of **Klein** electric guitars **2**. The Kleins are outfitted with Joe Barden pickups and one custom-wound pickup by DiMarzio's Steve Blucher. Torn tours with the primary guitars; the others—including a 1957 Gibson ES-350T, a customized Fender "Duo-Stang" (with a Mustang body and Duo-Sonic II neck), an original prototype Steinberger, and two new Ibanez Talmans—are saved for studio use.

"It's hard for me not to include something as critical as my main Rivera amp," says Torn, "because it's like an instrument to me. It's irreplaceable." His **Rivera M100** Slavemaster 100-watt head (3), custom-built by Paul Rivera in 1990, can load the power amp signal through his effects to other amps, in effect slave-driving a pair of **Rivera Hundred Duo Twelves** (3).

David's live guitar rig, with its dozens of pedals, processors and footswitches, and its convoluted signal path—worthy of an article in itself—is the heart of the LoopooL. There



are two pedalboards. The first ③ is home to about a dozen stompboxes and a TC Electronic Type 14800 protected power supply. Favorite toys are by Prescription Electronics: an Experience with octave (upper), fuzz and swell effects, a COB octave pedal, and a Yardbox overdrive. Other effects include a Boss DM-3 delay, TC Electronic XII phaser, TC Electronic Sustain + Parametric EQ, Visual wah/volume, Boss AW-2 auto wah, and another favorite piece of cheese that Torn picked up in Japan, the Guyatone WR-2 Auto-Wah. David tunes his guitars down a half or even a whole step with a Korg DT-2 chromatic guitar tuner.

The second pedalboard 6 holds a halfdozen foot controls for the rack-mounted looping and processing devices. A Lexicon Vortex audio morphing processor (), Lexicon Jam Man (1), Lexicon PCM-42 digital delay (1), and Lexicon PCM-80 digital effects processor @ are his main looping tools, sharing rack space with his Roland S-760 sampler (1). Not in the rack at the time was another of David's favorite tools, an Oberheim Echoplex Digital Pro. Everything in the live rig is mixed through a Mackie CR1604 mixer 2 and samples are triggered with a **Peavey** PC1600 MIDI controller (1), when performing. Torn stresses that no synthesizers or keyboard programs are ever used, and his Korg M-1 workstation (1) is only used for triggering samples in the studio. The RCA video monitor I programs the Roland sampler.

An **Alesis SR-16** <sup>(1)</sup> drum machine is only used for click tracks these days, as Torn cre-



# homestudio

ates his rhythm tracks with drum samples from friends or commercial sampling CDs. Producing an upcoming record for bassist Mick Karn, who plays with David and drummer Terry Bozzio in the Polytown trio, will mean recording tracks with a live drummer at another studio.

Torn's computer is a Macintosh Centris 650 (1), used in conjunction with Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Express 🖲, Digidesign Pro Tools SMPTE Slave Driver (19), and a Digidesign Audio Interface @ to run his software programs: Digidesign Sound Designer II ("There are four tracks of it, with plug-ins, and I use all the plug-ins for it by an Israeli company called KS Waves."), Digidesign Intelligent Noise Reduction System, Emagic Logic Audio sequencing program, and Arboretum Hyperprism special effects processor.

"It's all for audio, done on the computer. Even my sequencer I use primarily as an audio sequencer; I don't use the MIDI stuff,

I also master here. I've been mastering pretty much everything on Alchemy Records these days, including CDs by Wayne Krantz and Leni Stern, Gary Willis and Dennis Chambers, and Tim Berne. For mastering, I use Digidesign MasterList CD with a PCT/Yamaha CD recorder 2. I have a number of hard drives, used either for my computer or the sampler; I switch 'em back and for th. I use APS hard drives-a little one and a medium one @-and a Glyph Jaz drive @. Glyph is an Ithaca company specializing in computer storage for the music and video industries. I've also got two cheap SyQuest drives 20 and one discount-mail-order CD-ROM drive."

A CAD Equitec E-200 (2) and a pair of Shure SM57s @ are used primarily for miking speaker cabs. A hand-held Shaker harmonica mic with volume control and an old Astatic ham-radio mike found at a yard sale are used for dirty vocals. Torn has neighbors, and often guitars must be recorded so as not



to disturb them. For direct recording, he uses a Tone King Load Box 20, a silent speaker custom-built by Tone King president Mark Bartel, an ADA MicroCab II miked-speakercabinet emulator 20, and an ADA Ampulator 3, containing a pair of 12AX7s, with huminjection and tube-bias controls to add more noise and buzz than a hive of angry African bees. The Retrospec Squeeze Box 💷 is a footswitchable compressor/limiter. "It's got two tubes and uses opto-isolators, like an old Teletronics LA-2A. It's incredibly warm and squishy."

Genelec 1030A studio monitors @ are "critical" when using the Mackie 24+8 Console to record to a pair of Tascam DA-88s 🚯 and a Tascam DA-30 DAT machine 🚳. Headphones are AudioTechnica ATH-910 PRO run through a Rane HC-6 headphone preamp In A Sony TC-WR690 cassette deck I and Technics SL-PG440 CD player 3 are available for playback as well.

"I've got all this high-tech shit and I'm trying to rootsify it, so it's not all cold and nasty but dark and muddy and murky. That harmonizer there"-pointing to a Digitech DHP-55 five-part digital harmony processor I only use it for fuzz and fuzz-wah, particularly for drums and vocals. I never use the harmonization and fancy stuff." The Yamaha TX81Z FM tone generator 69 doesn't get used at all anymore. Other processors include a dbx 120XP subharmonic synthesizer (1), Tube Works RT-921 stereo tube 12spring reverb (1), Lexicon Reflex dynamic MIDI reverberator 42, Eventide GTR4000 Ultra-Harmonizer (3), and Lexicon LXP-15 reverb/multieffects processor 4. Power is conditioned by a Furman PL-8 power conditioner 45. "I have a lot of expensive gear," Torn admits, "but so much of it is dedicated to fucking up sounds. I use distortion like other people use reverb. You wanna record your drum kit? I've got 10 fuzzboxes for you. You wanna do a vocal? I got a little mic and a guitar amp for you. You want crispy clean? I think you're in the wrong house!"

David whirls around the LoopooL's circle of sonic tools on a wheeled, ergonomic stool by Comfort Craft (1), which helps to alleviate fatigue. "It's one of the most important things I've bought for the studio. I spend a lot of time in here. Can I offer a pro tip? A comfortable studio chair is essential!" (**\***)

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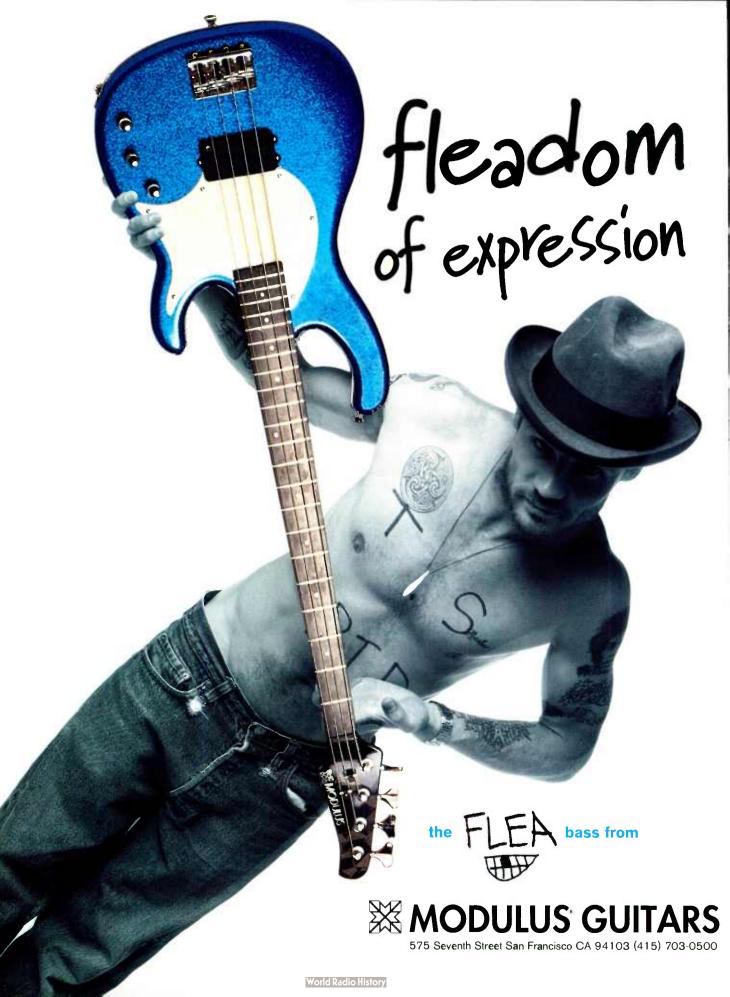
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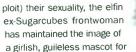


#### **Björk** Telegram (Elektra)

very generation of music fans gets its Peter Pan. The Sixties had Tiny Tim, the Eighties had Michael Jackson. and the Nineties have an Icelandic kewpie doll named Björk. At a

FIGE

time when female rock stars are encouraged to openly explore (and exploit) their sexuality, the elfin



the alternative rock set. This may be the only thirtyyear-old woman alive who can get away with wearing pigtails in public.

And yet, as a musician, Björk reveals a sure sensual sophistication. Her feathery, restless soprano-one of the most distinctive voices in pop music today-can veer in an instant from a demure chirp to a mighty growl or a shivering, orgasmic wail. On her solo albums, 1992's Debut and last year's Post, she abandoned her old group's unapologetically sophomoric guitarrock in favor of sinuous funk and jazz grooves. With a little help from techno and dance music savants like Nellee Hooper, Howie B., and Tricky, she's constructed a sonic playpen for kids of all ages, one that nods to the old school while drawing on state-ofthe-art studio techniques.

> Björk's latest effort, Telegram, is a collection of re-mixed versions of songs that originally appeared on Post. That approach might seem a bit self-indulgent for an artist with only two (solo) LPs under her belt. But for

Björk, who has always been a lot more interesting as a singer and musical conceptualist than as a songwriter, it's a clever idea that engenders some vitally creative—or at least vitally re-creative—music. A few of the intricately produced tracks here seemed like remixes to begin with; in doodling fur-

ther, Björk often achieves

the opposite of a typical dance remix—that is, she makes the original material sound warmer and more organic. On "Hyperballad," the Brodsky Quartet lends elegant, plaintive strings to complement the chilly urgency of her vocals. The wistful "Isobel" acquires seductive Latin percussion, and the funky "I Miss You" projects a pleasantly languid, trippy vibe.

Elsewhere, Björk is up to her young tricks. occasionally playing hide and seek with the listener by disappearing into the elaborate orchestration. "En joy" is refashioned so that industrial crunch comes to the fore, with Björk's voice distorted be-

hind a wall of echo. She's fragile and fuzzy on the quietly omi-(and overlong) nous "Head-phones," and on "Cover Me." you can barely hear her at all over eerie electronic effects. But on Telegram's one new song, "My Spine," Björk re-emerges in full force: She sings the goofy lyrics clearly and playfully, accompanied only by the tinkle of exhaust pipes. Performed by someone else, the number might sound like kitsch, but Björk's blend of childlike whimsy and grownup authority makes the results as universally entertaining as a good Disney movie. Or a least a good Michael Jackson video.

—Elysa Gardner

World Radio History

# JUNGLE GENE? Martin Rossiter's Brighter Side

Responding to a typical greeting of "How's it going?," tall, distinguished-looking Englishman Martin Rossiter slumps into his chair at a London studio and sighs a tentative "All right, I guess ... so far." Which means, ironically, that fans of the crooner's classy depresso-pop quartet Gene will be rejoicing, as the group was finishing up its sophomore disc, *Drawn to the Deep End*, with more lyrically somber, musically uplifting enigma songs like "Fighting Fit," "Save Me, I'm Yours," "Why Was I Born," and even an unblinking study of depression's darkest stage of self-mutilation, "Long Sleeves."

re ords

How did Gene capture its moody, textural sound this time around? Simple, says Rossiter. He hired a producer whose "track record was an odd one, because a lot of the records he's produced L don't actually like

attrough the production on them is fantastic." Fortunately, Chris Hughes did have one thing going for him, as far as Rossiter was concerned: He used to play drums with Adam and the Ants.

Before rolling tape on Drawn at London's Metropolis Studio (and also in sessions at Hughes' home), Rossiter and his colleagues opted for a little experiment. "We met him and worked with him for only three days. It was exceedingly relieving in the sense that he was getting things out of us really quickly that no one had gotten out of us before." Rossiter had been "a little disappointed" with the producer Phil Vinall's sound on the band's debut for A&M, *Olympian.* "So we were determined not to get it menoing "quite an unusual mic, quite a rare one actually, although I tend to deliberately ignore the mics or amps used because I don't want to get bogged down in any of it. I know what I want things to sound like, and I'm not averse to saying 'I want a little bit more top, please' in the studio. But beyond that, I'm technically inept—and I'm happy being technically inept."

Conversely, the hellbent, wall-of-noise miasma of "Voice of the Father" was given such classic rock & roll chops by Hughes that it almost—almost, mind you—feels like a different group. Rossiter grins with pride over this minor coup. "That's the great joy of me with the record: We had fun in the mixes, and it does still sound like us. On the same album, you can have something that's tech-



#### Emancipation (NPG/EMI)

f all the pop stars out there, I can't think of anyone who has the talent, musical overview, and ambition of Prince Rogers Nelson, by that or any other name. At least, that's the way I used to feel. For me, 1987's Lovesexy and its accompanying tour were watersheds of modern R&B and rock, and I saw in Prince a pop Ellington for the Nineties, one whose reach never exceeded his grasp. The music seemed to just pour out of him, and it was everything he could do to get it down. But, alas, our hero ran afoul of his old record company when his desire to release this deluge ran contrary to, er, sound business practices, and for several years his career seemed stalled as he sought to free himself from a business marriage that wasn't working; much of his subsequent output ranged from the inspired to the indulgent to the indifferent

But, having dissolved his label marriage and entered into a real one, He Who Haveth No Name has apparently re-emerged, re-energized. *Emancipation* is Prince's White Album, three CDs worth of fresh

> songs and arrangements that proceed with such joy and rage, sensuality and devotion, it's as if he'd never left us. I won't even pretend to have digested all the narrative and musical details in this elaborate trilogy—there's simply too much music, too many self-referential asides—but Prince's resounding production values and commanding technique invite the listener to jump in anywhere and any number of times without tiring of the game.

> For me, each of the three CDs sustains its own sense of mood and purpose. Roughly speaking, The Artist engages in an operatic depiction of the conflict (or rather, the confluence) between his spiritual quest and his sensual longings and a streetwise expression of indignation as he strives to project and protect his vision of artistic growth, personal freedom and family values. Yeah, family values, because while a/k/a Prince still enjoys dressing up, playing at being an adolescent

as it were, it seems clear that in jettisoning his old name (again) "the artist formerly known as..." seems determined to transcend his old image as well—even as he revels in it. Thus on disc 2 he proceeds from a typically elaborate, sexed-up funk arrangement of "Joint 2 Joint" (in which he goes through more intricate harmonic and rhythmic modulations in one song than your garden variety R&B band would in a lifetime), through deceptively bucolic depictions of death, deliverance, and re-dedication of purpose on "Holy River" (with its echoes of



wrong this time; I think that was the essential driving force. We went in quite open-minded and open-eyed, and we were a lot less precious about certain arrangements, a lot more willing to accept new ideas."

"Long Sleeves," for instance, achieves a delicate balance between guitarist Steve Mason's echoed acoustic chords and Rossiter's tiny, distant vocals—the result, according to the frontman, of Hughes recomvibrant and exciting and full of energy. Or it could be the opposite: gentle and beautiful and reflective. Everything on the record was in us to start with, but we were simply pushed a bit more [by Hughes], to be honest. We haven't suddenly gone jazz-jungle fusion," assures Rossiter. "But then again, we just might."

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# chuck's cuts

by charles m. young

#### Silverchair Freak Show (Sony)

Either you get the guitar tone right with riff-based metallic grunge, or you don't. If you do, everything is possible. If you don't, you suck. The guitar tone is right here, the arrangements not too obviously Nirvana-influenced, the riffs range from solid enough for hard rock respectability to genuinely catchy. Violins and acoustic guitars in "Cemetery" and a few other instruments that I can't identify in other songs keep things properly paced. Reports of the death of grunge are greatly exaggerated.

#### Original Soundtrack Evita (Warner Bros.)

The cocktail party cliché about Madonna is that aside from her genius for self-promotion, she has little talent. The evidence here is that she is singing with personality, vulnerability, and humanity, and is the only thing I want to hear again on this two-CD set that otherwise suffers from soulless Broadway production values. Maybe my rock & roll-attuned ears automatically rebel at the well-enunciated, and maybe it's too easy to dismiss Andrew Lloyd Webber, so I reserve the right to change my mind after I see the movie. Until then, this is, except for Madonna, Meatloaf in Buenos Aires

#### Snoop Doggy Dogg Tha Doggfather (Death Row)

Anything you say about this album, the opposite is equally true. Snoop is conciliatory, Snoop is defiant. Snoop is renouncing violence, Snoop is celebrating violence. Money should be your guiding principle, creating a decent world for the next generation should motivate you. Party now, delay gratification so you can join the middle class. So other than jostling for status within the extremely capitalist hierarchy of gangsta rap, I don't know what he's getting at. If he ever figures out what his values are, and sticks with them, his instinct for satire could make him infinitely more dangerous.

#### Big Jack Johnson & The Jelly Roll Kings Off Yonder Wall

#### (Fat Possum/Capricorn)

Johnson can play the blues dirty, and he can play the blues clean. Here he finds a point that's about two-thirds into his really dirty stuff on Earwig and about one-third into Hard to believe it's been twenty-five years since I sat down in my dorm room and first read Hunter in the fourth anniversary edition of *Rolling Stone*. I remember laughing as hard as I've ever laughed, and the book stands up to my memories today. Reminds you what it's like to lose all your middle class superego coordinates, which is to say it makes you feel free, as a great work of art should. This oral rendition (Harry Dean Stanton, Maury Chaykin, Jim Jarmusch, Harry Shearer, among

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his latter-day B.B. Kingified stuff. I approve of this point. The Jelly Roll Kings (Sam Carr on drums, Frank Frost on harp and Farfisa organ) know how to groove, which everyone says is crucial and damn few achieve. They also know how to get low-down, psychedelic, demented and sweaty, which brings out the best in Johnson's often whimsical musical imagination on guitar. All three of them deserve to be a much bigger deal. And no, they don't need a bass player.

#### Hunter S. Thompson And Various Actors Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (Margaritavilie)

many actors) may seem intrusive on your imagination for the first few minutes, and then you get swept away in a time and place as distant as the American Dream Hunter set out to find.

#### **John Fahey** The Legend of Blind Joe Death (Takoma/Fantasy)

This is the headwater of the vast river that is solo steel-string guitar composition. And like all rivers, the water doesn't get any purer downstream. Lots of guys had more chops, nobody had more emotional range or profound melodic gift than John Fahey. Twenty-one cuts assembled from his first recording session in 1959 and several rerecordings during the Sixties, *BJD* maps his development as a musician and composer in greater depth than the Rhino greatest hits collection *Return of the Repressed*. Meaning Fahey's taste for the weirdly dissonant when dealing with foul emotions and his fascination with tone to the occasional exclusion of almost everything else is on fuller display here.

#### Aphex Twin Richard D. James (Sire)

First cut "4" has one of the most irritating rhythm tracks I've ever heard. So I suspect he's going for anti-trance ambient, music that takes you so far out of the groove that, depending on your tolerance of post-modern post-melody, you'll either noodle dance in masturbatory aloneness or bitchslap your partner. Subsequent cuts confirm my suspicions.

#### Choying Drolma and Steve Tibbetts Chö

#### (Hannibal)

You could allow yourself to become annoyed that Tibetan Buddhism has become fashionable, or you could be happy that its values are actually penetrating Western culture. I choose to be happy. This album also makes me happy. Tibbetts traveled to a small monastery in Nepal and recorded a bunch of nuns singing sacred songs with a couple of DAT recorders. He's added some of his understated but thoroughly mystical guitar and cello to enhance the atmospherics. Since recordings of Tibetan monks have been widely available for the past decade or so, the nuns at first induce a mild case of cognitive dissonance. like the first time you heard a female newscaster in the early Seventies. But then you realize your brain is floating somewhere beyond the ozone layer. So I'm going to listen to this until I achieve supreme enlightenment.



But the music still packs a punch. Some tracks, like RBX's "Blunt Time," stick close to the classic Dre formula, framing the rap with vocoder and a whining synth hook while grounding the groove with a lazy, floor-shaking bass line. Mel-Man's engagingly gritty "Shittin' On the World" adds new elements to the mix, including dub-style piano. pizzicato strings à la James Brown's "It's a Man's World," and a throbbing, off-kilter pulse. It's a total reinvention of the formula, and just as powerful as the original.

Apart from King T. who turns up with "the gangsta shit" on "Str-8 Gone." there's little of the hardcore attitude which characterized Dre's work for Death Row. In fact, a couple tracks pointedly repudiate the beat-'em-down posture taken by gangsta rappers, with Dre's "Been There Done That" the most eloquent, verbally and musically. The non-Dre productions suggest a similar change, or at least broadening, of attitude. From the densely layered "As the World Keeps Turning" by an aptly named Miscellaneous, to the slinky, soulful "Please" (produced and performed by Maurice Wilcher, who sounds like a Keith Sweat-in-the-making), this revue makes it clear that *The Aftermath* is more than a one man show.

—J.D. Considine

#### **Bill Evans**

The Secret Sessions (Fantasy)

#### Turn Out the Stars: The Final Village Vanguard Recordings June 1980 (Warner Bros.)

agner had Bayreuth; Bill Evans had the Village Vanguard. Though Evans was by no means the only jazz musician to cut memorable live dates at the late Max Gordon's basement club, the pianist's 1961 Vanguard performances with his quintessential trio featuring bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian established the standard on which his later recordings were evaluated. Now Fantasy and Warner Bros. have simultaneously stepped up with a staggering total of 14 hitherto unheard CDs' worth of Evans' Vanguard material.

The Secret Sessions, as its title suggests, is an eight-disc bonanza of dates recorded between 1966 and 1975 by optical physicist Mike Harris. who bore basically the same relationship to Evans that Dean Benedetti did to Charlie Parker. Like Benedetti, who obsessively captured Bird's music in clandestine club recordings, Harris secretly lugged a Uher into the Vanguard to collect Evans' performances for his own pleasure; unlike Benedetti, he caught entire numbers and not just the leader's solos. Though he wasn't a professional engineer. Harris generally managed to get tapes of high quality with his battery-powered machine: despite their bootleg genesis. The Secret Sessions are excellent. strain-free listening. Culled from dozens of hours of archival material, this boxed set charts the evolution

#### the artist formerly kno

Dylan, a rocking release, and the novel assertion that "relationships based on the physical are over and done...if only one") to a remarkably tender keyboard bass-inflected ballad ("Let's Have Baby") featuring his keening, feline vocals, to the personal revelations of "Friend, Lover, Sister, Mother/Wife." Rarely has the Glyphed One ever peeked out from behind the convenient ambiguities of his character to reveal with such deeply felt emotion.

There are also a wealth of giddy instrumental details worth savoring—nods to the guitar styles of B.B. King and Wes Montgomery, even intimations of Frank Zappa's rhythmic ensemble flourishes—along with a few radio-friendly evocations of the power balad, dancing jams, sly soul covers and pop standards, some truly nasty rhythmatic exorcisms of pent-up rage, and a hip-hopping comment on the vanities of vanity ("Style"). From the tongue-in-

cheek big band jazz of "Courtin' Time" to the futuristic techno of "New World" and "Human Body," this Artist has put his stamp on an amazing range of musical styles. Given the newfound freedom that rings through every note of *Emancipation*, it's clear that for him there's no turning back—he's already way past 1999.—*Chip Stern* 

#### Various Artists

#### Dr. Dre Presents...The Aftermath (Aftermath/Interscope)

aveats first: Though Dr. Dre gets top billing here. this is not a Dre album (it's a sampler of Aftermath artists), nor is it a collection of Dre productions (he's behind the board for just seven of the album's 16 tracks). So if you're expecting *More Chronic*. you're going to be disappointed.

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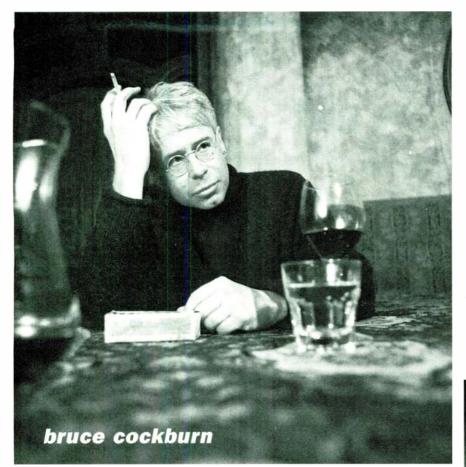
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of Evans' richly lyrical style through various group lineups, most of which feature bassist Eddie Gomez as a constant. Seven different drummers are represented, including long-termers Marty Morell and Eliot Zigmund and ringer Jack DeJohnette, but the most exciting support is offered by Philly Joe Jones, whose propulsive work lights a bright-burning fire under Evans over the course of two CDs. For the most part, though, Evans' more contemplative side is heard here. Fans owe Harris a debt of thanks for his musical espionage.

Turn Out the Stars dates from early June 1980, when Evans brought his then-current trio, which included bass phenom Marc Johnson and drummer Joe LaBarbera, into the Vanguard for four days of recording, with an eye to issuing a two-LP set from the dates. The pianist died three months later, and the tapes remained unissued until recently resurrected as this six-CD set. (For non-completists, a distilled single CD of Evans' favorites, titled The Artist's Choice, is also available.) The pianist was plainly inspired in his last days by the smooth drive of LaBarbera and the throaty, electrifying accompaniment of Johnson, who reaches levels of empathy previously matched only by the sublimely simpatico LaFaro. The highlights of the set lie in four epic readings of Miles Davis' "Nardis," each of which runs over 15 minutes and bears exploratory Evans introductions and thrilling Johnson solos.

Few jazz artists ever left behind such an exciting and definitive testament as Evans did with these searching, cataclysmic sides. —*Chris Morris* 

#### **Bruce Cockburn**

The Charity of Night (Rykodisc)

#### **Pierce Pettis**

#### Making Light of It (Compass)

he world's a dark, ugly place, full of fear and injustice, and sometimes a singer/songwriter can't help but get weary dealing with it. In brief, that's the message of Bruce Cockburn's latest, his debut for Ryko. That means it doesn't sound so much different from the message Cockburn's been sending for the last twenty years. The big difference here is musical context: With a couple of concise exceptions ("Pacing the Cage" and "The Whole Night Sky," top additions to the Cockburn oeuvre), these are less songs than sprawling mood pieces, conjuring a sense of immense natural forces at play.

The stately vibes and authoritative upright bass of guests Gary Burton and Rob Wasserman help the mission greatly, but the main focus for once is Cockburn's amazing guitar playing. "Night Train" features a cathartic, flailing solo, while the leads of "Live On My Mind" are more restrained but no less insightful. Too many "poetic" spoken-word passages threaten to drag the album down; one piece with a recitation at the center is fine to establish seriousness, but four smacks of self-importance (especially when two of them are by far the longest tracks on the album). The closing "Strange Waters" sets things right, though. An apocalyptic dirge with a creepy vocal, it builds momentum by adding layers of crunchy guitars, climaxing with a solo that bites so hard and deep you can practically see the bone coming exposed.

Like Cockburn, Pierce Pettis has just changed corporate affiliations. But the two have more in common than label switching—namely, an unassuming yet virtuosic guitar style (check out "Granddaddy Blew the Whistle" for proof of Pettis' chops); a soulful, slightly raspy vocal delivery (Pettis also owes Leo Kottke in this department), and—need it even be said?—great songwriting talent. Pettis can be just as serious as Cockburn, if not more so. His preoccupation with both Old and New Testaments is plainly laid out in several tracks here, particularly "Miriam." But whereas Cockburn seems to have mislaid his sense of humor on *The Charity of Night*, Pettis hangs onto his on *Making Light of It*. Individ-



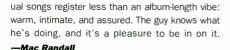
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#### AI Di Meola Al Di Meola plays Piazzolla (Blue Moon)

#### Paco de Lucia, Al Di Meola, John McLaughlin The Guitar Trio

#### (Verve)

egend keeps having it that Al Di Meola is one of the strutting axe-slingers in jazz, full of precisionist perfectionism, romantic hubris, and chops that don't want to quit. But his recorded output, especially in the Nineties, tells a different story. On his World Sinfonia projects and now this homage to the late, great Astor Piazzolla, Di Meola shows a mastery of the acoustic guitar in settings that lean heavily on the coiled passion of the tango.

Piazzolla, master of the nuevo tango, has never been so well represented in our local music stores than in the years following his death of a stroke in 1992. Di Meola's tribute serves his memory well, with enough textural variation to maintain balance



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J. D'Addario & Company, Inc. PO Box 290, Farmingdale, NY 11735 USA E-Mail: strings@daddario.com Home Page: http://www.daddario.com and intrigue. On "Oblivion" and "Verano Reflections," he hunkered down in his studio to arrange and realize the tune's complexities, although the synth textures here pale by comparison to the acoustic splendors of the rest of the album. As a guitarist, Di Meola's exacting intensity befits the music beautifully. Vince Mendoza's string arrangements on "Cafe 1930." "Night Club 1960" and "Bordel 1900" offer a layer of wistful undercoating on music whose power seems to transcend fashion or era. The other hero of this recording is Dino Saluzzi, the powerful bandoneon player who was in World Sinfonia and who supplies the reedy brilliance and virtuosity to act as surrogate for Piazzolla himself, particularly on the "Tango Suite" and "Tango II." The album ends, poetically, with Di Meola's own "Last Tango for Astor."

Di Meola is also playing acoustic on the latest addition to the discography of the super-trio he shares with flamenco master Paco DeLucia and John McLaughlin, their first album since 1983. A title so definitive as *The Guitar Trio* might seem vain, were it not for the relative brilliance of all involved. The record brims with tight, fiery arrangements, daredevil solos, and inventive compositions, especially from McLaughlin's pen. At a time when other guitarists on the world music scene are putting mildmannered flamenco riffs into restaurants and grocery stores, it's nice to hear fretboard firepower in the service of more ambitious musicality.

-Josef Woodard

#### George Ducas Where I Stand

(Capitol)

Ashville is a city of cyborgs these days, where "country" music is manufactured with all the passion of C3PO oiling a particularly squeaky joint. Newcomer George Ducas could be the warm, furry Wookie among all that clanking metal. Listen to his sophomore *Where I Stand* closely, and you'll hear mostly classic pop influences from the late Fifties/early Sixties, not mock-hayseed hokum.

Granted, some of these sounds stem directly from the Duane Eddy-ish guitarwork of producer Richard Bennett. But Ducas deserves most of the plaudits. He spurns twangy formula for tangy retrofitted hooks in the seven songs he's co-cowritten here; in fact, it's only when he resorts to publishinghouse fodder ("I'd Be Lying," "You Could've Fooled Me," and Buddy Miller's regulation two-step "I'm Pretending") that his unique, personable vision begins to falter.

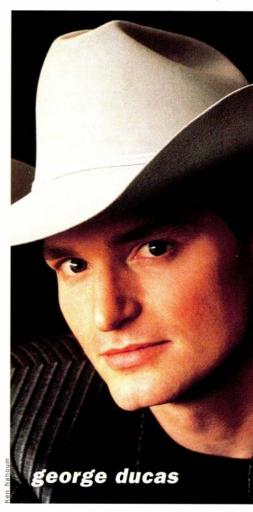
The opening "Every Time She Passes By" sets the sunny pace: A galloping acoustic strum couples with Bennett's surf-frothy vibrato riff, which gives way to Ducas's non-inflected, regular-Joe singing voice—a serviceable instrument that's as good-natured as one of those eager gas station attendants from yesteryear. The lyric schematic is disarmingly simple, but the pieces fit together in perfect Everly Brothers symmetry—hear the tune once, and it'll stick to your ears. Mostly, this is dumb fun that knows it's dumb fun and doesn't put on any high-falutin airs, like most of the best rock & roll and, for that matter, much of country's classic past. With any luck, *Where I Stand* bodes well for its future.

#### —Tom Lanham

#### BeauSoleil

#### L'Amour ou la Folie (Rhino)

BeauSoleil's new disc marks a milestone: the 20th anniversary of the band's founding. Like Los Lobos, they've sustained long careers in and out of the mainstream, playing traditional and contemporary ethnic music replete with unfamiliar pleasures. Two-steps and waltzes become whirlwinds of Cajun bliss, centered around frontman Michael Doucet, whose thick moustache, frenetically bobbing head, and flying hair give the appearance of an unleashed mad professor of the fiddle. The skilled ensemble, which includes brother David Doucet—whose flat-picking style re-invented the possibilities of the Cajun guitar—along with Jimmy Breaux on accordion, Al Tharp on bass and banjo, Billy Ware on multiple percussion and Tommy



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BeauSoleil has recorded for several labels, and some results have been better than others. The finest early discs—including 1984's essential *Parlez-Nous a Boire* (Arhoolie)—invigorate songs previously buried in folklore files. On this one, the band is in full stretch.

For "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie" ("C'est un Peche de Dire un Menterie") and "Danse Caribe," Beau-Soleil reaches east toward New Orleans and beyond, as clarinetist Dr. Michael White interacts with Doucet's fiddle to thrilling effect reminiscent of early jazz combos.

On Augie Meyers' "Can't You See" ("Tu Vas Voir") the band is joined by Meyers himself for a bilingual trip to the honky-tonks of East Texas. The guts and soul of inherited tunes, such as the Amede Ardoin classic "Eunice Two Step," are honored by Doucet's impassioned, high-pitched singing and Breaux's driving accordion. And the title track, with guest Richard Thompson's electric guitar solos, would be equally suitable for either two-stepping or head-banging. The overall result is a record that fully realizes the band's mission to throw down a Cajun dance on the crossroads of tradition and change.

#### —Michael Tisserand



#### Various Artists Gravikords, Whirlies & Pyrophones: Experimental Musical Instruments (Ellipsis Arts)

n theory, this 18-track CD is only a companion piece to the book by Bart Hopkin that shares the same handsome yellow box. To be sure, the book's terrific—an intriguing look at fringe instrument-making through short profiles of 37 of its most notable innovators, from Leon Theremin to Don Buchla, and a hilarious introduction by Tom Waits. But you can only read about bicycle wheel guitars or look at pictures of mammoth ocarinas so long before you want to hear them, and that's where the album comes in. Highlights include Clara Rockmore's dreamy Theremin playing, the kora-ish musings of Jacque Dudon's aquavina, an array of bizarro Harry Partch inventions that sound like an orchestra of slide zithers, and my favorite, Hans Reichel's daxophone—basically, a couple pieces of wood and a bow that produce some of the funniest, and funkiest, sounds known to humanity. A mere sampler, of course, but you gotta start somewhere.

—Mac Randall

#### James P. Johnson

#### The Original James P. Johnson 1942-1945 (Smithsonian Folkways)

hey called him the father of Harlem stride piano, but if that leads you to expect an hour of oompah bass lines, think again. Johnson knew ragtime, boogie, and various forms of classical and jazz inside out, and he used them all in his startling improvisations and pioneering compositions. These Forties sessions, eight of which have never been previously released, marked the end of a decade-plus recording drought for Johnson; he'd left the jazz world and gone full-time into composing for both the Broadway stage and the concert hall (bits of his longform pieces, most notably Yamekraw and the exceptional "Jazzamine Concerto," appear here). In settings as different as a frisky run through the Gershwins' "Liza" and Johnson's own Latin-inflected "The Dream," you can hear the history of 20th-century jazz piano, from Waller and Ellington to the floral arrangements of Art Tatum and the fractured chords of Thelonious Monk. Sure is one swingin' lesson. -Mac Randall



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#### NANCY MIDDLETON BAND

Nancy Middleton put her first band together in 1988, but things have changed a bit since then. The North Carolina-based singer/songwriter/guitarist grew up listening mainly to folk and rock ("Joni Mitchell, Heart, Neil Young---older brothers and sisters-type stuff," says Middleton), but was turned on to country by the time she started playing seriously. "We started out playing covers of old country classics," she explains. "People like Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn."

Her band line-up now consists of a number of Nashville-worthy players who she's hooked up with over the last four years. Together, they create taut, hummable tunes that are informed equally by country, blues and rock. As a



result, they've been compared to artists like Bonnie Raitt and, more recently, Sheryl Crow, "because we've become a bit edgier, I think—we've been rocking out a little more," says Middleton.

Equally important in the band's sound are their exceptional choruses and harmonies. Middleton gets backup from guitarist/keyboard player Tommy

Hartley and bassist Jack Campbell (drummer Ed Butler rounds out the lineup), whose vocals are as strong live as on record.

With two self-released CDs, a solid fanbase around the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill region (their mailing list numbers several hundred), and a load of new material, the Nancy Middleton Group show no signs of slowing down.

#### WITHDUT RUTH

By day, John Reynolds is a country songwriter. By night, he fronts a rock n' roll band. Ironically, it was a songwriting career that lured him to his current home in Nashville, but it was his rock band, Without Ruth (which began merely as a side project with former partner Steve Rosen), that clinched him a spot among Musician's Best Unsigned Bands. Following this success, the two felt the need to assemble a band, which they did—albeit employing "a bunch of session guys," says John. But the chemistry wasn't there. Steve left to concentrate on producing full-time, John assembled a new line-up, and things have really started to click.

"Now I have a band that really is a band—a unit of guys who want to go out, hit the road, play shows, and that don't need to be famous and play with Linda Ronstadt or whomever."

While their sound was described by one local writer as "Steve Earle meets REM or Elvis Costello on acid," John calls them a "visceral, alternative, lyric and guitar-based, tongue-in-cheek, in-your-face bar band."

John also recently signed a publishing deal with Charlie Daniels'

company that allows him to write an equal amount of country songs and rock songs. Luckily, coming up with material is not a problem. "Songwriting comes very easy," he insists. "I came to Nashville (via Boston and New York) five years ago with 500 songs, and I've written a hundred a year since then."

The band plays regularly at Jack's Guitar Bar in Nashville, and will soon be on the road. "The strategy is to get some dates and do the road for as long as it takes to get hot-hot, then start showcasing," reasons John. "In music cities, getting seen by labels is not difficult—the key is having labels see you when you're on fire."

# USICIAN'S 1996 BEST UNSIGN

#### THIRTY PIECES

When Brahm Taylor entered the Best Unsigned Band Competition, his band Nosferatu was essentially a studio project with Marc Kaducak, guitarist and long-time friend ("We've been playing together for 10 years, since before we could drive," notes Brahm). Since then, he's renamed the band ("We found out the name was already taken."), and added new drummer, Jim Vonch. Thirty Pieces, based in Plainfield, Illinois (near Chicago) is now a living, breathing, gigging hard-rock monster feuled by Brahm's songwriting. "Until recently," says Brahm, "It was just me, down in the basement with my eight-track, writing and recording tons and tons of music, and waiting



for something like this to happen."

Musical comparisons have ranged from Metallica to Led Zeppelin. "Flattering," says Brahm. "But I don't think we fit either of those," Instead he describes their music as, "heavy, dark, creative, and usually with a gothic, fantasy, or Biblical influence on the lyrics." For personal influences and faves, he cites Type O Negative, Al

Jourgenson, Nine Inch Nails, Black Sabbath and Uriah Heep, among others.

His songwriting, meanwhile, has also come a long way. Says Brahm, "Luckily I've had some guidance from people in the industry, like, 'Hey Braam, they don't play too many fifteen-minute jams on the radio—maybe you should try to keep your songs within 4-5 minutes'—stuff like that. You learn to create something that can be sold as well as listened to."

"I'm coming off of Black Sabbath," he concludes. "It was different then—they didn't have to worry about getting their stuff on the radio."

#### THE SHADE

The songwriting team behind the Bloomington/Indianapolis-based band the Shade, Brian Depp and David Streets, have been writing songs together since high school. "They kinda sucked at first," laughs Brian. "But we'd caught the bug and had to keep going."

Ten years on, their partnership is thriving, despite a five-year period in between when Brian lived in Los Angeles ("We both had degrees

and white-collar careers," he confesses. "But we bought identical 4-tracks and kept collaborating."). Today, the Shade are one of the hottest bands in the Midwest, where their rough take on heartland rock has been compared to everything from Donovan to R.E.M. to the The pair also Who. share an appreciation for local hero John Mellencamp's accom-



plishments, both musically and career-wise. "Among other things, we admire the way his band sounds together and the fact that he's been able to build his own studio," explains David.

In addition to David and Brian, who handle vocals/songwriting/guitars, their latest line-up features drummer Greg Finke (a student of Kenny Aronoff, coincidentally) and bassist Shawn Nugent. For now, the band are concentrating on gigging and writing before going back into the studio. "We have more than enough material for another record, but we're taking our time because we're going through such a fruitful writing period right now," says Brian. "We don't expect miracles to happen without a bunch of really, really, strong tunes." Although, we think they're already there.

## 1996 WINNERS ANTIHERO, COOLIDGE, THE IRRESPONSIBLES AND SHABAZZ 3 WERE FEATURED IN THE FEB. '97 ISSUE.

#### ALAADEEN & THE DEANS OF SWING

Ask the Kansas City-based saxophonist/composer/arranger Ahmad Alaadeen who he's played with over the years and he'll humbly respond, "Oh, a few different people." They just happen to include the Temptations,



Billie Holiday, the Four Tops, Ella Fitzgerald, Sam Cooke and Mile Davis

He's been playing with his Deans of Swing for about 14 years now, combining originals and standards in their area live shows. "I haven't heard many comparisons with regard to my compositions," says Alaadeen. "As for my sound, they say I have a lot of John Coltrane, which is natural. And you can hear Charlie Parker, which is also natural."

Why? "Because they are two of the biggest influences in music," says Alaadeen. "Charlie Parker is a Mozart—he changed it all around, y'know?"

As a result of his experience, Alaadeen has become something of a father figure on his local jazz scene. "My other goal is to develop the young talent that exists in and around Missouri," he explains. "I'm always on the lookout for new talent and fresh people. On my next CD I have two or three people from the area I want to showcase."

As for the current state of jazz, Alaadeen hasn't heard much that excites him. "There are a lot of extremely well-schooled musicians being churned out by the various music schools, but they all sound like they've come out of the same bag. I'd like to hear a little more diversity in the playing."

"Jazz needs someone to come up from Slobo, Mississippi, whose never heard of The New School or Berklee—just come up outta the mud with their own thing. I think that's what will become the next layer."

And does Alaadeen want to be the one to find him? "I hope so!" he

#### SWINGSET POLICE

If there's one question musicians can always count on being asked, it's the one about who their influences are. The three Braam brothers who make up Swingset Police, Scott (21, guitars), Mike (33, bass/harmonies), and Tom (28, vocals/guitar) are prepared. "We have all taken an oath, specifically for this question, that we will only say one band," says Mike seriously. "Ready guys?"

"Cheap Trick!" answer the three in perfect unison, before collapsing into laughter. Why Cheap Trick? "We figure they embody everything that was ever good about any kind of music," explains Mike. "At any given time, they want to be the Beatles, Zeppelin—they even covered a Dylan song."

Quite simply, "It's rock n' roll with melodies," says Tom. Not unlike Swingset

Police, whose hooky, punky pop has been likened to the Replacements, Plimsouls, the Lemonheads, the Romantics and, natch, Cheap Trick ("But I think that's probably because it's what we keep telling everybody," reasons Mike).

Since entering the B.U.B. Competition, they've released a full-length CD ("Kadickadee Kadickadoo (a true story)") pro-

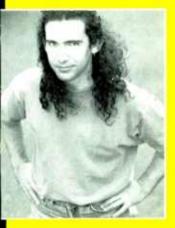
duced by fellow Midwest pop fan Jef Murphy of Shoes, who also released the CD on his own Black Vinyl Records. Currently, the three are focusing on songwriting and playing live. They travel between Tom's apartment in Chicago (where they are forced to use acoustic guitars) and their hometown of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, 90 minutes north, where Mike and Scott reside. "We still rehearse in our parents' basement," reveals Mike. "We give 'em money to go out to dinner," adds Scott. Finishes Tom, "We get a couple of songs done, then they come home and kick us out."



#### SEAN ORISCOLL GROUP

"Everyone wants to be a virtuoso," says guitarist Sean Driscoll. "So do I, but it rarely means as much to the guy off the street. A band that plays well together and plays musically, meanwhile, will have an impact a thousand times greater than some guy playing a million notes with just a band behind him."

Sean's belief is evident in the music of the 6-man, jazz-based instrumental group he assembled while a student at Berklee School of Music, in Boston, in order to record a self-released CD of his music. While they've been compared to the Pat Metheny Group, Sean notes a key difference: "We added a saxaphone, which was a real break from that sort of sound—



more like Weather Report," he explains. "Having a wind instrument in the group completely changes the dynamics and how we have to deal with each other."

The music also shows traces of the progressive rock and jazz/fusion that Sean listened to growing up, albeit with a twist. "The only problem I have with that label is that we're not really related to the jazz/fusion bands of the 70's that that usually calls to mind," laughs Sean. "I like a lot of those bands, but I'd say we're more jazz-evolved. And, most of us in the band listen to a lot of Brazillian and Latin music."

Despite the lack of outlets for up and coming jazz artists around Boston, the group still manages at least a couple of live gigs a month. "I've never had a band like this," enthuses Sean, "We just clicked. And when that happens,

it's gold—you don't find it very often."

And, better still, there are no egos. "If something isn't working, we're good enough players that we can address the problem and fix it."

#### SHADES

"So many artists today think that all they need to do is lay down a good groove," sighs Martin Andrew, the singing half of the soulful pop/R&B duo. Shades. "They think that once they have people bobbing their heads, they're set. But you have to take it further."

"Yeah, those days are over right now," declares Damien Cornwell, his musical partner. "With the advent and affordability of so much new gear in recent years, people were getting all these fat sounds and samples. But now that everybody's had the stuff for a while and played around with it, they're sick of it and trying to get back to more conventional sounds."

"It's not that difficult to just come up with a really nice hardcore groove," confirms Andrew. "We try to write complete songs, with changes, melodies and hooks."

Andrew and Cornwell grew up together in upstate New York. Cornwell listened to such heavilyproduced artists as ELP, Jan Hammer and Asia ("Where I learned about getting a well-rounded, commercial sound."). Martin, meanwhile, was raised on a diet of "hardcore

R&B— Stevie Wonder, Funkadelic, Earth, Wind and Fire." And while both have musical parents, neither, they admit, have had real formal training. Each also have elaborate home studios (although they haven't always had it so good— their winning entry, they confess, was recorded in a bedroom).

And their future plans? "Right now, we write, produce and engineer all of our own stuff." says Andrew. "And we're also working on establishing our own record label and production company."

"We have so much respect for people like Jimmy Jam/Terry Lewis, L.A. & Babyface, Hall & Oates," continues Cornwell. "And we'd like to be next. Our goals go beyond just trying to get a record contract—we have a lifetime commitment to this."



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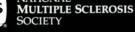
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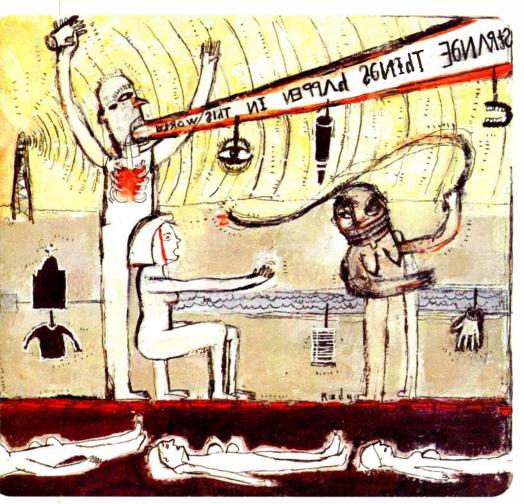
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# Love is Strange

ack around 1958 Mickey and Sylvia told us that "love is strange." With Valentine's Day looming just ahead, it's nice to know that buried beneath the piles of musical Hallmark sentiments and unchained melodies are a few truly strange, twisted, and even downright sick love songs. Here are a few of my faves:

#### "Moody River," by Pat Boone

Pat's woman apparently can't bear the thought of having done the horizontal Macarena with his best friend. To relieve her guilt she jumps in the river, leaving Pat a glove (?) and a suicide note. Unfortunately for rock & roll, he doesn't join her. First line of the song is borrowed from Othello. Features a real whitebread backup chorus.

#### "Pardon Me, I've Got Someone to Kill," by Johnny Paycheck

Banned in '62. Song opens with Johnny thanking a bartender for listening to his troubles and then matter-of-factly mentioning, "'Scuse me, I've got someone to kill." Over the next couple of verses he tells the bartender why he's gonna do it, how he's gonna do it, and where the sheriff can find the murder/suicide note and all three bodies. Garth who? "Radio Lover," by George Jones

A classic. George is an all-night DJ, kiss-

World Radio History

ing his lovely wife goodbye. Little does he know that while he's on the air, his wife is doing a little broadcasting of her own at home. Unfortunately for her, it happens that George has secretly taped the show so he could come home and be with her on this night of their first anniversary.

"I Hold Your Hand in Mine," by Tom Lehrer

Very, very sick tale of a guy who can't let go. Literally. Matter of fact, a hand is all that's left of his recently deceased wife. Put this one in rotation with an album of koto favorites at your next feelings workshop.

#### "The Whipping Post," by Jody Reynolds

Grade-Z Marty Robbins ripoff. Starts out with an ominous male chorus. Over the next two minutes the following occurs: A stranger rides into a Puritan town, in the center of which is a whipping post. He seduces the mayor's daughter, and her dad catches them playing hide the hamster. The stranger is told to leave town. He refuses and gets tied to the whipping post. As the whip descends, the girl runs in front of it and gets hit in the head. The mayor yells stop, forgives the two of them ... and the ominous male chorus shows up again to bring it all to an end. All in under three minutes. "Laurie." by Dickie Lee

J.B. may be the godfather of soul, and B.B. is surely the boss of the blues. But during the early Sixties Dickie Lee was the king of the splatter platter. In this one he meets Laurie at a dance, lends her his sweater on the walk home, escorts her to the door. Goodnight, Oops, forgot the sweater. Goes back, only to be greeted by her irate father, who informs him Laurie died a year ago tonight and observes that Dickie's got a lousy sense of humor. On the way home (as the chorus hums softly), a strange force pulls him to a graveyard, and there on top of Laurie's grave is ... his sweater! Song ends with the chorus swelling as Dickie reminds us, "Strange things happen in this world."

"She's Scattered Everywhere,"

#### by Archibald

A truly amazing cut by this early Fifties contemporary of Professor Longhair. His woman comes in, puts her false teeth on the dresser, her peg leg on the table, and her glass eye in his glass. Archibald is so shook up he starts praying. Then he gets upset because he wants to love her but ... you guessed it, "she's scattered everywhere." Would have made a perfect answer song to "I Fall to Pieces." And next time you hear Bill Medley long for his darlin's touch, don't feel too bad for him—at least she doesn't need reassembling.

Special thanks to Ben Wade and George Lasko for digging up (sorry!) these tunes. Happy Valentine's Day!

-Reverend Billy C. Wirtz

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